

Author Murakami talks about his library plan, writing, music

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Haruki Murakami is planning an archive at his Japanese alma mater that will include drafts of his best-selling novels, his translation work, and his massive collection of music. Murakami, 69, began writing after graduating from Waseda University in 1975, and his latest novel, *Killing Commendatore*, recently hit U.S. bookstores.

Murakami said the archive and library project will develop as he contributes materials in the years to come and he wants to see it stimulate cultural exchanges. The writer announced the plan at his first news conference in his home country in 37 years. Here are some of his comments from the event:

Question: What is the Murakami Library going to be like?

Answer: I hope this (library) would become a place of open international exchanges for literature and culture. And I would definitely want to create a room where we can hold seminars for such exchanges. I also hope to eventually set up a scholarship, which would be perfect. And if I'm allowed to wish even more, I also hope to create a space that functions as a study where my record collection and books are stored. It would be wonderful if



LIBRARY PROJECT. Japanese writer Haruki Murakami, center, poses for photographers with Kaoru Kamata, left, outgoing president of Waseda University, and incoming president Aiji Tanaka, right, during a press conference at Waseda University in Tokyo. (AP Photo/Eugene Hoshiko)

we get to play records for concerts. In my study, I have my own space, such as a collection of records, audio equipment, and some books. The idea (for the library) is to create an atmosphere like that, not to create a replica of my study. I believe a college campus should have an alternative place that you can drop by. I would like to get involved actively and cooperate if there is a chance, though I'm getting rather old so I'm not sure how much I get to do.

Q: What is the significance of literature today?

A: I believe the main power of novels is narratives. If a narrative has enough power to come straight into your heart, then that can be convertible beyond language barriers. I believe novels have an internal power of making breakthroughs by using stories as their strength. ... And I'd be happy if there are people, regardless of their age, who pursue such efforts. I think it would be difficult to develop such strengths if you only stay in a single culture.

Q: Is music inseparable to your stories?

A: I believe the main power of novels is narratives. If a narrative has enough power to come straight into your heart, then that can be convertible beyond language barriers. I believe novels have an internal power of making breakthroughs by using stories as their strength. ... And I'd be happy if there are people, regardless of their age, who pursue such efforts. I think it would be difficult to develop such strengths if you only stay in a single culture.

A: I wake up at 4:00am or 4:30am in the morning and start working. The night before I choose records that I plan to listen to the next day, like I used to put next to my pillow what to take to an elementary school outing. I write listening to the music, and it's my pleasure.

Q: What do foreign books and translation mean to you?

A: I started reading foreign literature as a teenager. It was like opening a window and breathing in fresh air, or seeing different scenery. Because my parents both specialized in Japanese literature, I also wanted to do something different. I extremely enjoy translation, the process of converting one language to another, and I still like it very much. Even today I don't consider translation as work, it's more like my hobby. Translation, however, has been very useful for writing novels. Awareness that a language is exchangeable could make a difference as to what I write. It's not that I try to write sentences that are easier to translate, but I feel differently just with the awareness that this can be converted and read by people in different languages.



IMPRESSIVE ILLUMINATION. Devotees light earthen lamps on the banks of the river Saryu as part of Diwali celebrations in Ayodhya, India. The northern Indian city broke a Guinness World Record by lighting 300,150 earthen lamps and keeping them burning for at least 45 minutes on the banks of the Saryu as part of the annual celebration of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. (AP Photo/Rajesh Kumar Singh)

North Indian city breaks Guinness record with Diwali lamps

By Biswajeet Banerjee
The Associated Press

AYODHYA, India — The northern Indian city of Ayodhya broke a Guinness World Record by lighting 300,150 earthen lamps and keeping them burning for at least 45 minutes on the banks of the river Saryu as part of the annual celebration of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

South Korean first lady Kim Jung-sook attended the record-breaking event after meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a four-day visit to India.

Her presence was significant because of a Korean legend that a princess from Ayodhya travelled to Korea and married a king, becoming a Korean queen in the year 48 C.E.

Yogi Adityanath, chief minister of the state of Uttar Pradesh, was given a certificate certifying the record by Guinness officials who had monitored the attempt with drone cameras.

As dusk fell in Ayodhya, where Hindus believe the god Lord Ram was born and where he returned after 14 years in exile, volunteers lit lamps, called *diyas*, snaking along the river, through lanes and at houses.

A similar attempt failed to break the record last year, when strong winds blew over many of the lamps. The recent feat broke a record from 2016, when 150,009

lamps were lit.

Purnima Shukla, a Saket Degree College student, was among 5,000 volunteers involved in the ceremony.

"Last time we missed it by a whisper but this time we ensured that all the lamps were aglow. Oil was poured frequently, and we used sheets to block wind where it was very windy," she said.

□

Woman wears wedding gown alone after fiancé died on Lion Air flight that crashed

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — An Indonesian woman who was engaged to a man who died on a Lion Air flight that plunged into the sea wore her wedding dress on the day they were to have been married.

Intan Syari's fiancé, medical doctor Rio Nanda Pratama, was among 189 people on the Boeing 737 MAX 8 plane who died when it crashed a few minutes after taking off from Jakarta on October 29.

Syari and Pratama, both 26, were to have been married not long after the plane crash. Pratama, who had attended a seminar in Jakarta and was on his way back to their hometown in Pangkal Pinang, had joked before leaving that if he were late in returning, Syari should take photos with the wedding gown and send them to him.

Japan cabinet OKs bill to allow more foreign workers

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's cabinet has approved a draft bill that would allow more foreign blue-collar workers as the country's fast-aging population faces labor shortages.

The bill, endorsed by the cabinet, is a major revision of Japan's policy on foreign labor. The country has long resisted accepting foreign workers.

The proposed legislation would create two new visa categories for foreigners employed in more than a dozen sectors.

The government hopes the bill will be enacted by next April.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe denied that the relaxed policy on foreign workers means Japan is opening its doors to immigrants.

Media surveys show public sentiment is divided on the issue. Opponents are concerned about crime and jobs taken away from Japanese, while proponents say foreign workers are indispensable in sectors facing labor shortages.

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