

Nepal protesters urge end to plan to chop trees for airport

KATHMANDU, Nepal (AP) — Around 100 people protested in Nepal's capital to voice their opposition to plans to cut down millions of trees to build an international airport in the southern part of the country.

The protesters picketed the offices of the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal and the Department of Forest in Kathmandu, calling for an immediate stop to the plans to build the airport in Nijgad, about 50 miles south of the capital.

It's estimated that 2.4 million trees would have to be cut down to build the airport, which is expected to cost \$3.5 billion.

The protesters allege that the planned airport would be an environmental disaster because it would destroy forests that are the habitat for wild animals in the area.

"We are demanding the government immediately stop the plans to cut down the trees and destroy the environment of the region to build this airport," said Sunil Yadav, a protester who travelled from his home in southern Nepal for the demonstration.



PROTECTING FORESTS. Nepalese activists shout slogans during a protest outside the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal, in Kathmandu. A small group of protesters demonstrated in Nepal's capital against plans to cut down millions of trees for an international airport in the southern part of the country. (AP Photo/Niranjan Shrestha)

Yadav said an international airport was necessary in the area, but that a new location needs to be chosen where there are no forests or wild animals.

The planned project would also force some 500 families to move from

their villages.

Nepal has only one international airport, located in Kathmandu. During bad weather in winter and the rainy season, international flights to Nepal are sometimes diverted to other countries.

Women, late-in-life new authors expand Japanese literature

By Alex Barreira
The Associated Press

TOKYO — The works receiving one of Japan's most coveted literary awards, the Naoki Prize, have something new in common: For the first time in 85 years, all six of the nominated authors are women.

Japan is home to what many consider the world's first novel, *The Tale of Genji*, written in the 11th century by noblewoman Murasaki Shikibu. Its modern fiction has been defined mostly by long-established male writers such as past Nobel laureates Kenzaburo Oe and Yasunari Kawabata. And for decades it has been dominated by Haruki Murakami, whose surreal blend of magical realism and pop culture has made him an international bestseller.

But Japanese literature is beginning to look different as new voices, including young writers, women, and the elderly, receive domestic and international recognition.

Two women, Natsuko Imamura and Masumi Oshima, are being presented with the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes. Since 1935, the Akutagawa and Naoki have recognized serious and popular fiction, respectively, and provided their winners with a commemorative watch and 1 million yen (a little under \$10,000). Even more valuable is the prestige its winners receive from media attention and, increasingly, a clear path to wider audiences through translation.

Consider, for instance, the 2016 rise of *Convenience Store Woman*. Writer Sayaka Murata's novel inspired by her own jobs has sold more than 600,000 copies in Japan since it won the Akutagawa Prize that year. Murata, then 36, and still working part-time at a convenience store, shared the stage with actress Naomi Watanabe, known as "the Japanese Beyoncé," as one of *Vogue Japan's* "Women of the Year." Two years later, the English translation of Murata's novel was an editor's best-of-the-year choice by the *New Yorker*, the magazine that helped catapult Murakami to stardom.

"International markets grow when talent emerges,"



NEW VOICES. Natsuko Imamura, right, and Masumi Oshima pose with their books after Imamura and Oshima were awarded the Akutagawa and Naoki prizes at a Tokyo hotel. Since 1935, the Akutagawa and Naoki awards have recognized serious and popular fiction, respectively. (Kyodo News via AP)

said John Freeman, who published work from Murata and Murakami as editor of the anthology *Freeman's*. "In the past two-and-a-half decades, there's been an explosion of good writing coming from Japan. ... That wave is cresting now with writers just barely 40 years old."

Publishers in the United States and Britain are seeing a growing audience for novels in translation, experts say. Translations of half a dozen prize-winning works by female authors from Japan were published last year in the United States, with Yoko Tawada's *The Emmissary* taking a 2018 National Book Award for translated work.

"The number of new voices that have been made available to Anglophone readers over the last few years has been encouraging," said David Karashima, a professor at Waseda University who has translated Akutagawa-winning fiction.

Karashima said there are still not as many women published in Japan as men, but this may be changing, in part because there are more women on selection committees for literary prizes. He added that translated Japanese fiction is itself going through a "mini-boom."

"Outside of Japan, over the last five years or so, there

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Urgency for vaccine grows as virus ravages China's pigs

BEIJING (AP) — Scientists are working to develop a vaccine to help protect the world's pork supply from a deadly virus that's ravaging pig herds in Asia.

Farmers have long contained the spread of African swine fever by quarantining and killing infected animals, but the disease's appearance in more countries is intensifying the search for another solution.

The virus hadn't been considered a priority for researchers until it turned up last year in China, home to half the world's pigs. Since then, it spread to Vietnam and Taiwan, killing millions of pigs along the way.

In the U.S., government scientists are studying a possible vaccine that's made by deleting select genes in the virus. Though African swine fever does not sicken people, it is a highly contagious illness that is deadly to pigs.



VIRAL OUTBREAK. Pigs eat feed at a pig farm in Panggezhuang village in northern China's Hebei province, in this May 8, 2019 file photo. As a deadly virus ravages pig herds across Asia, scientists are accelerating efforts to develop a vaccine to help guard the world's pork supply. (AP Photo/Mark Schiefelbein, File)



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