

Looking forward to working with you all this year (this section has been quoted from President Komaba's message.)

Happy New Year to you all. Thank you all for your support last year.

Despite only recording around 100 new infections of COVID-19 at the end of last year, the infection rate in Japan has skyrocketed due mainly to the omicron variant since the beginning of the new year. We saw a peak of 54,532 new infections on January 22nd, and this has currently moved across to more than 40,000 new infections on a daily basis. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has posted a series of requests at the top of its website pleading with non-vaccinated people to consider inoculation, and to "please observe all basic infection-prevention measures, including the use of facemasks, ventilating rooms, avoiding the 3Cs, and washing of hands, even after being vaccinated" due to the risk of post-vaccination breakthrough infections. In addition to this, the TV shows are concentrating on the pressure being placed on hospitals on a daily basis.

We have also strengthened our infection-prevention measures at KSK from January 10th, with total bans on movement (between branches and commuting to work), all employees taking PCR antigen tests twice every week, and expanding the scope of telework from home to include team work within branches and between plants.

The global shortage of semiconductors is also continuing and some of our customers have had no choice but to halt operations on certain lines because of this and the spread of COVID-19, and with demand outpacing supply on a worldwide scale, we have prepared ourselves for a dramatic recovery, which is sure to come sooner or later. There are many other issues that we must face this year, including the acceleration of digitalization launched by the government and government agencies, SDGs, startup activities, and the attempt by Japan to lead the industry in achieving carbon neutrality by the targeted 2030.

We intend to keep all of these topics firmly in mind and do everything possible as swiftly as possible to emerge unscathed.

This year is sure to be a year in which we face many issues and have many things to consider with regard to the environment, politics and the economy.

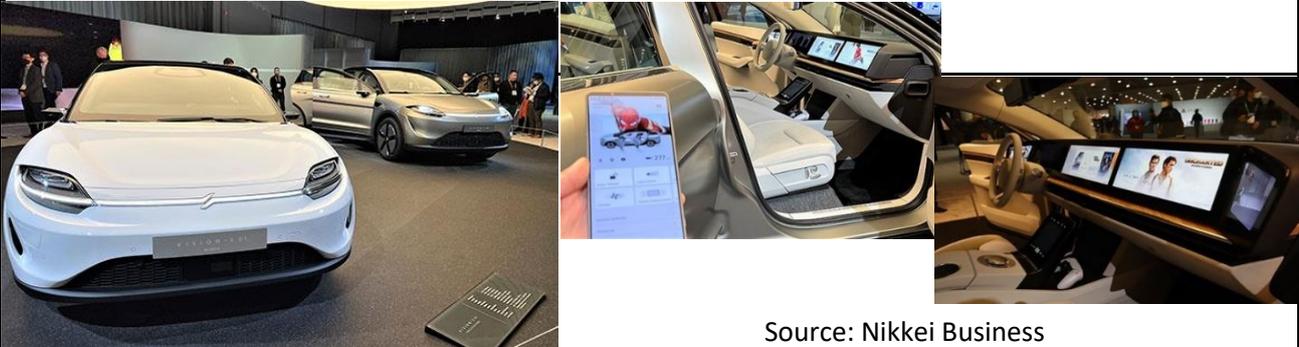
I look forward to receiving your continued support and cooperation in the year ahead.

Automotive area (A real "traveling smartphone" – hands-on experience of Sony's EV in Las Vegas)

The SONY Group announced that it was considering full-out participation in the electric vehicle (EV) market at the CES technology fair held for the media in Las Vegas, America, on January 4th (January 5th Japan time). The item that decorated the press conference was the Vision-S 02, the second models in its trial EV lineup. The vehicle is crammed packed with PC, TV, sensor other technology that SONY has cultivated over the years. Actually sitting inside the car at the fair allowed a wide range of operations to be carried out with the fingertips, and its entertainment value has really turned it into a "traveling smartphone". I arrived at the SONY booth. This was to enjoy hands-on experience of the multi-purpose Vision-S 02 sports type (SUV) EV announced on the 4th. The SONY booth was large and contained various areas for its family PlayStation game console, drones and other items, but it was the EV display that attracted all of the attention.

The first thing I was shown when I got into the car was its connectivity functions. These enable the door locks and lights to be operated and the remaining battery capacity to be checked with a smartphone application. Although this does not appear to be very different from the functions announced by other automobile manufacturers, this is not all that it can do. For example, the "Theme Setup" is one of these. If the movie Spiderman is selected as the theme, for instance, Spiderman appears on the app screen and is also displayed on the display in front of the passenger seat. This is very similar to the function for changing the backgrounds on smartphones and SNS sites (interactive sites) in alignment with one's mood or preference. SONY is considering updating the themes in alignment with the season or events, as well as adding new themes.

The first thing that attracts the attention when getting into the car is the long display that stretches from the drivers' seat through to the passenger seat. This consists of three large screens. with two small screens located at both ends on the left and right sides. I was astounded to hear that the screens on the edges were the side mirrors, etc. Having experienced this SONY Car once again reminded me of how advanced the technologies cultivated by SONY really are. I got the feeling that the combination of screens, cameras, speakers and other components have produced an overwhelming level of interior entertainment quality.



Source: Nikkei Business

Keihin Seimitsu Kogyo (Progress report on AM technology)

Our first trial of using AM technology (3D metal printer) is progressing with the molding of dies for the purpose of “solving all internal problems (the welding joints for dies split into two experience many water leaks, and too many repairs shorten their lifespans)”.

We have molded two suggested dies using different metals and different manufacturing processes, and will decide to move ahead with one of these suggestions after confirming the lifespans of both in July 2022. We will then move ahead with establishing several milestones and carrying out reviews while remaining mindful of the fact that the new technology will solve the problems of the current technology. We intend to report on additional progress as soon as more details are known.

Post-editorial Notes: (Walking ancient roads – Nikko Oushu Road)

I decided to walk the entire length of the Nikko Oushu Road as a follow-up to my success in spending more than three years between May 2016 and August 2019 walking the length of the Tokaido Road. (I wanted to follow the course of Matsuo Basho's *Oku-no-Hoso-Michi* (Narrow Road Through the Provinces), but unfortunately, I was unable to find any documentation.)

I walked from Nihonbashi to the Kasukabe (Kasukabe) Post Station in May 2018, so at the beginning of this year I decided to walk the opposite route from the Koga Post Station through to the Kasukabe Post Station. I departed from Koga Station on the JR Utsunomiya Line at 08:00, and walking along the Nikko Road that runs alongside National Route No. 4 under sunny skies for the first time in about two-and-a-half years brought back nostalgic memories. My first impressions when compared against the ancient Tokaido Road as I started walking along this road were that it was colder, had fewer shops and the soles of my shoes were much colder. Despite this, this nostalgic walk took me through the Koga Post Station, the Kurihashi Post Station, the Satte Post Station, the Sugito Post Station, the Kasukabe Post Station and across the Tone River, where I went astray a little and met up with the Nikko Line, but I enjoyed myself as I continued to wander off course. I stopped for lunch at the Kitakata Bannai restaurant. The ramen noodles sold here are absolutely outstanding! I toasted myself with a beer while I finished everything right through to the soup for the first time in a long time, and then returned to my walk feeling fantastic in body and soul in the afternoon sunshine.

Having reached Kasukabe, I boarded the Tobu Urban Park Line and traveled to Omiya, which I know from way back (where the Goddess of Thunder's family home is located).

After checking in at the hotel, I visited the W bar. I ordered a bottle of beer with fried soybean sprouts and tsukune meatballs, which went well with the pleasant sense of fatigue that I was feeling, and the beer worked wonders in quenching my winter-parched throat, so I then ordered a jug of hot sake and some sashimi... Feeling slightly tipsy, I began to think back on my journey. The basic route is to start on the Oushu Road from Nihonbashi and travel through to the 27th stop at the Shirakawa Post Station, but

there are also many other stops after this, including the Fukushima Post Station, the Sendai Post Station, the Morioka Post Station, and the Aomori Post Station, until one reaches the end of the Tsugaru Peninsular and then has to cross the sea to the final stop at Hakodate Post Station, which is the 114th stop from Nihonbashi.

Wondering if I would be able to get that far... Inside my mind I was on the ferryboat gazing at the winter panorama of the Tsugaru Straits.

I returned to the hotel where I listened and sang to wide variety of songs while drinking sour splits.

Midway through this, a passionate song about a young couple called *Mirai Yosouzu II* (Map of the Future II) by Dreams Come True came on, and listening to the lyrics saying "The map of our future I drew in my heart is unfolding just as I predicted (toward marriage and happiness)" caused my eyebrows to freeze over as my emotions were rocked by the disparity between this song and my own marriage... The whole family celebrated my younger daughter's birthday, but I was unable to celebrate my elder daughter's birthday due to being away on a business trip... I sent her an e-mail telling her to enjoy her celebration and telling her how important she was to me with her selfless heart, and she replied with a warm arrow into my heart stating, "Thanks for always listening to me when I need to discuss my work! I'll never forget your "selfless heart" comment!"... My eyes filled with tears...

It was freezing cold outside, and defiantly fighting back against the axiom suggesting that "everybody dies alone," I became strongly aware of just how much support I received from my children... It was with a warm mood and body temperature that I spent that night alone in an inn.

