

Put Happiness of Members First, SGI President Says COURTESY OF SGI NEWSLETTER

The following is a summary of a speech by SGI President Ikeda at the Okinawa Training Center, Onnason, Japan, on Feb. 25.

SGI President Ikeda discussed the characteristics of effective leadership today, sharing the example of the late president of Japan Air Lines, Shizuma Matsuo. Mr. Matsuo, known for his perfect safety record during his more than 10 years at the helm of Japan's largest carrier, always made passenger safety his first priority.

Mr. Ikeda recounted the JAL executive's conviction that not only was character important but a strong sense of responsibility was essential as well. Mr. Matsuo, he continued, felt it vital to be alert every second, saying that one can never afford to be careless when people's lives are at stake.

The SGI leader related that Mr. Matsuo was sensitive to the important contributions of those who worked behind the scenes and always did his utmost to express his heartfelt thanks to his employees for their work. Often, he said, the airline president could be found chatting with members of the ground crew and maintenance personnel.

Noting that 24 hours a day somewhere in the world SGI members are engaging in activities to spread and deepen understanding of the Daishonin's Buddhism, Mr. Ikeda stressed the need for leaders to have the same spirit of concern and appreciation as shown by Mr. Matsuo. In fact, the higher one's position in the organization, he continued, the greater attention one must pay to such fundamental leadership responsibilities. A few simple words of appreciation for the sincere efforts members make, for example, can be a great source of encouragement and inspiration.

The SGI president also quoted the letter "General Stone Tiger," in which Nichiren Daishonin expressed how worried he was about Shijo Kingo's safety on a return journey from visiting him at Mount Minobu, urging him not to take needless risks when traveling and giving detailed instructions on the precautions he should take in the event of being ambushed.

The Daishonin above all encouraged Shijo Kingo to maintain strong faith so as to continue enjoying the protection of the Buddhist gods. Strong faith, by its very nature, explained the SGI leader, also encompasses such qualities as prudence, courage, compassion and wisdom. In conclusion, Mr. Ikeda expressed his sincere hope that the members of Okinawa would continue their efforts to establish an indestructible fortress of capable people.

He said that he would continue to pray wholeheartedly that each member can pilot their way skillfully and safely in their daily life and in SGI activities toward the destination of happiness.

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