



**Weekly Wire**  
**News from East Asia and Pacific**  
**National Science Foundation**  
**Tokyo Regional Office**  
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**JAPAN: Unsolicited Basic Research Awards to Expand Support for International Collaboration**

The Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), a funding agency for basic research in all academic fields, runs a long-standing unsolicited basic research program named KAKENHI with 230 billion yen (\$2 billion) per year. The award value per project varies between 500 million (\$4 million) and less than 1 million (\$8K) yen. The large-scale awards already financially allow international collaboration, but the middle- and small-scale awards do not. To make it easier for more KAKENHI awardees to conduct internationally collaborative research, JSPS will launch a new program with a budget of 6.4 billion yen (\$52 million). It will allow about 400 KAKENHI award winners to additionally request for add-on funds required to conduct internationally collaborative research each year. The details, including the amount per project, deadline and review method, will be announced in summer 2015 and the award decision will be made late fall 2015. This new program would make U.S.-Japan research collaboration among individual researchers much easier than before. NSF Tokyo Office will share more about the program when it is announced.

*Source: A summary translation of an interview with the JSPS President on Nikkei-June 8, 2015*

**JAPAN: Comprehensive STI Strategy-2015**

The Japanese Government annually designs a Comprehensive Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). The Strategy is announced at the end of June to provide the guidelines for the STI budget request for the next fiscal year (April-March). The draft 2015 version has five points for STI to: (1) create new industries and social innovation; (2) help revitalize local areas; (3) make good use of the opportunity of Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020; (4) improve the environment to enable a chain of innovation; and (5) solve economic and social problems.

To bring about a chain of innovation, the Strategy lists the importance of (1) expanding opportunities for young and women researchers; (2) reforming university and funding systems; (3) promoting basic research; (4) strengthening R&D institutions; and (5) expanding the opportunities for venture, small- & medium-size companies. To solve economic and social problems, the Strategy aims to realize: (a) a clean and economic energy system; (b) long and healthy life; (c) world-leading next-generation infrastructure; (d) new industries by use of Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data; and (e) industrialization of agriculture-forestry-fisheries businesses.

The STI-related ministries and agencies will submit their JFY2016 STI budget proposals to the Council for STI (CSTI) in July, based on the strategy. CSTI then deletes duplication of projects between the ministries and agencies and makes sure strategically focused funding is in place. It is only after CSTI-led coordination that the ministries and agencies send their JFY2016 budget request to the Ministry of Finance (MOF) by the August 31 deadline for their review that will last until December 2015.

*Source: A summary translation of the article on the Cabinet Office website*

### **KOREA: Won \$2 Million Pentagon Robotics Challenge Prize**

A team of roboticists from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology claimed a \$2 million prize that was offered by a Pentagon research agency for developing a mobile robot capable of operating in hazardous environments. Twenty-five teams of university and corporate roboticists competed for the prize proposed by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. The Korean victory is a validation of the work of Jun Ho Oh, the designer of the Hubo family of humanoid robots that he has developed since 2002. The winning Hubo is a clever machine that can kneel and drive on wheels in addition to walking.

*Source: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/07/science/korean-robot-makers-walk-off-with-2-million-prize.html? r=1>*