

Chairman Toyoda's address at the 2023-24 Toyota Technical Skills Academy Graduation Ceremony

Allow me to congratulate all the graduates and their families.

I would also like to thank Governor Omura of Aichi Prefecture and our many other distinguished guests for making the time to attend.

Kiichiro Toyoda, the founder of Toyota Motor Corporation, said that "employees are family." As he said, each and every graduate here is an important family member to me.

I had made up my mind that I would always attend the graduation ceremony even after I had gone from being president to chairman.

That is because I have come to this graduation not as president or chairman but as your *Oyaji*, as if I were here to see my own children spread their wings toward their future.

As I look at you from this podium, I can see your posture and the looks on your faces.

You really have grown into trustworthy adults.

I think this is the result of all your hard work and effort.

And to the family members of our graduates.

Thank you for entrusting us with your precious children.

They conquered every difficult challenge they faced here at the Academy and got this far because you have been the pillar of strength they could lean on through thick and thin.

Thank you very much for all of your support.

And to our instructors.

I believe the graduates mirror who you all are.

I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being the role models they needed and leading them by example.

To our high school course students, this year's theme was to "go for it with everything you've got."

I think you really got to see athletes giving it their all when you went and observed the practice sessions of the Miyagino stable sumo wrestlers.

You must have seen that no matter how out of breath they were, they would never slack off and would practice moves like Shiko or Teppo to improve themselves.

After watching the practice session, you all voluntarily cleaned up the practice area following the 4S principles: Sort, Set in Order, Shine, Standardize.

Taking action on your own accord to help others in a place you are visiting for the first time... This is not an easy thing to do.

I am really proud of all of you. Thank you.

Those of you in the professional course had an exchange with the Institute in India.

"Please connect with your Toyota colleagues from around the world and learn how they tackle similar challenges."

You immediately put into practice that request I made in my New Year's greeting.

I heard you had a hard time communicating during the exchange as you couldn't understand each other.

Language is important. But you all have something that is even more important.

Your great mentor Oyaji Kawai said this at Toyota Group's *Oyaji no Kai* meeting.

"Although we work in different companies, we can become friends in 5 minutes because we're kindred spirits. By tomorrow, we'll be just a phone call away whenever we need help."

In reality, I think it's more like 3 seconds rather than 5 minutes.

People who have skills themselves know how hard the other person worked to gain their skills. That's why I think you can connect with them without even putting anything into words.

I would like all of you to become someone who can communicate with colleagues from around the world with your skills.

Last month, we announced the Toyota Group Vision. As one of the leaders of the *genba*, a representative from the Academy attended the event.

"Inventing Our Path Forward, Together."

"Forward" represents the future, and "inventing" represents our Group's origins.

But then, what does "path" represent?

The answer lies within all of you.

I think there should be 249 different paths for each of the 249 graduates. I think that would make life much more interesting.

In closing, I would like to quote a few words from Honorary Chairman Shoichiro Toyoda.

“Creating something new means racking your brains, toiling, and losing yourself in the process. These moments are the ultimate pleasure. There is no greater joy or excitement than seeing someone enjoying or benefiting from a product that you worked hard to make. That’s what drives me to keep learning and striving to create something even better.”

Everyone, please study even more, hone your skills, and make ever-better things.

I am sure that will lead to the next path forward.

I’m looking forward to seeing what new paths all of you will invent. Congratulations to you all on your graduation.

February 20, 2024
Akio Toyoda
Chairman
Toyota Motor Corporation