

Menden Judoki In Myanmar, 4,364 km away from Japan. 🇲🇻
vol.21“Lighting One Lamp to Illuminate the World –The Japan
Cup and Momo Tamaoki’s Visit to
Myanmar”**

Photo 1 – Group photo taken after the Japan Cup



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Introduction: A Sense of Relief After It Was Over

In October 2025, the Junior Judo Japan Cup Myanmar 2025 (hereafter “Japan Cup”) was successfully held through the joint efforts of the Embassy of Japan in Myanmar and Hiranuma Dojo.

This tournament was far more than just another competition.

After years of disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and political upheaval, it represented an attempt to rekindle the long-extinguished “light of judo” in Myanmar.

The Embassy of Japan, Japanese companies, Myanmar companies, the Myanmar Judo Federation, and many dedicated volunteers worked together, allowing us finally to reach this long-awaited day.

At the heart of the event was Ms. Momo Tamaoki, member of the Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Judo Team, who traveled all the way to Myanmar.

Seeing a world-class athlete standing on the same tatami as Myanmar’s children—smiling, teaching, and sharing judo with them—felt almost like a dream.

After the tournament, Ms. Tamaoki traveled to Nay Pyi Taw and conducted training sessions for the Myanmar National Judo Team as well.

These two events—the successful hosting of the Japan Cup and Ms. Tamaoki’s visit—became a major turning point not only for me personally, but for the future of judo in Myanmar.

In a time when official support was difficult, we were able to once again give form to the bond between Japan and Myanmar through judo.

The many efforts and contributions accumulated up to that point finally bore fruit.

In that moment, what I felt more strongly than “achievement” was a deep sense of relief.

After the tournament ended, I suddenly recalled the day I first arrived in Myanmar three years ago.

There were no dojos, no environment for children to continue practicing judo.

Starting from zero, we gradually gathered teammates, developed athletes, and created a place—a stage—where they could compete.

Thinking about this, a warm feeling spread quietly through my chest.

I had pushed myself to the limit and even fallen ill from exhaustion—but beyond all of that awaited a calm satisfaction, and a renewed resolve to take the next step.

**Photo 2 – Tournament venue (Yangon Japanese School)
and event banner**



Video1 - A video message from Sensei Inoue



Judo as a Bridge: Filling the Gap Left by Public Support

The path to hosting the Japan Cup was anything but simple.

It all began early this year, when a member of the Myanmar Judo Federation approached me saying,

“The president of the Federation would like to meet the Japanese Ambassador.”

That was the very first spark.

Later, I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Takeru Kato of the Embassy of Japan in Myanmar.

During our conversation, I shared my hopes for Myanmar judo and the activities I had steadily built up in the country.

This led to an invitation to a dinner at the Ambassador’s residence.

During that meeting, Charge d’Affaires ad interim Shogo Yoshitake asked: can do for judo in Myanmar?”

The Myanmar Judo Federation responded immediately:

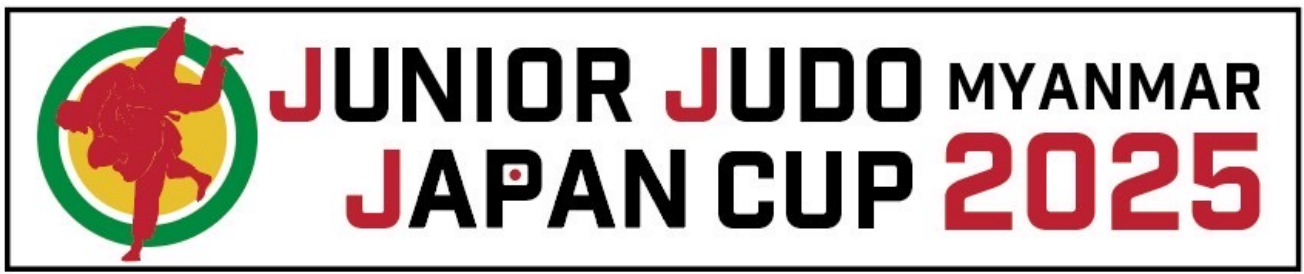
“We would like to revive the Japan Cup, which used to be held in the past.”

Hearing those words, I felt strongly that the moment had finally come—

that Japan and Myanmar could once again walk forward together.

However, this was where the real challenge began.

Photo 3 – Japan Cup logo



As preparations progressed, we suddenly received news that, due to the upcoming national election and the SEA Games schedule, the event might not be allowed to proceed.

To be honest, I felt my heart sink.

But once everything had begun moving, stopping was no longer an option.

“If we don’t do it now, this chance will never come again.”

I kept telling myself this, and continued taking one step at a time.

During this period, I frequently had to leave Yangon for the national team’s training camp in Japan, making it extremely difficult to prepare the event.

Even so, Mr. Kato and many others supported the planning, scheduling, and sponsorship coordination.

In the end, sponsorship exceeded all expectations—

the final budget grew to nearly three times the original estimate.

Never before had so many people in Myanmar invested their time, energy, and resources into the field of judo.

On the other hand, operations on the ground were challenging in a very different way.

The day before the event, I was told that “around 20 referees and staff will come,”

but on the actual day, only six showed up.

Even after triple-checking the match lists, new corrections and missed entries kept appearing on tournament day.

Resolving each issue, one by one, while keeping the event running—it reminded me how different event management is here compared to Japan.

During preparations, one Japanese collaborator said something I can never forget:

“Working with Myanmar staff takes three or four hours...
but the same task takes only thirty minutes with Japanese staff.”
Efficiency is undoubtedly lower.

And yet, I felt deeply that accomplishing something in Myanmar is not about “speed” but about
“people’s feelings.”

Connecting one person’s sincerity to another’s—

this is the only real way to build something meaningful in this country.

Through the Japan Cup, I learned that ideas and ideals alone cannot move reality.

Reality moves only through practical work, coordination, and trust.

Those small accumulations form the foundation of the future.

This tournament became more than a competition of wins and losses—

it became a bridge, connecting people and nations through judo.

Photo 4 – Tournament program and list of sponsors

PROGRAM [SCHEDULE]

017:30 - 8:00
Tournament Registration

028:00 - 9:00
Opening Ceremony

039:00 - 12:00
Tournament Start

0412:00 - 13:30
Lunch Break

0513:30 - 15:30
Tournament Start

0615:30 - 16:30
Awarding Ceremony

0716:30 - 17:00
Closing Ceremony

SPONSORS

JAPAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, MYANMAR

YANGON JAPANESE ASSOCIATION

MITSUI SUMITOMO INSURANCE CO., LTD.

NICE MYANMAR TRAVELS & TOURS COMPANY LIMITED

OHMIDAS MYANMAR CO., LTD.

THE TOKYO ENTERPRISE CO., LTD.

MEIKI HIGH SCHOOL

ONE ASIA LAWYERS

MARUBENI CORPORATION YANGON BRANCH

MIYAKO FOOD MYANMAR CO., LTD.

JAPAN OUTSOURCING SERVICE CO., LTD.

MITSUI & CO., LTD. YANGON OFFICE

METRO COMPUTER MYANMAR CO., LTD.

GROWTH MYANMAR CO., LTD.

JP SMART SIM

TOKIO MARINE & NICHIDO FIRE INSURANCE CO., LTD.

KIRI RESTAURANT & BAR

MAO MAO CHINESE RESTAURANT

KAMAKURA MARINA JAPANESE RESTAURANT

VELBON MYANMAR CO., LTD.

KUBOTA MYANMAR CO., LTD.

AR YU INTERNATIONAL HOSPITAL

JAPANESE MEDICAL DESK

DODO YANGON

SHIMIZU TOMOYASU

OKAMURA HITOSHI

ZUIKI NOZOMU

SUNADA MASANORI

SUZUKI ATSUKO

HAYASHI SHIGEAKI

DATE NAOTO

VOLUNTEERS OF NAYPYIDAW JAPANESE ASSOCIATION

VOLUNTEERS OF JICA MYANMAR OFFICE STAFF

VOLUNTEERS OF EMBASSY OF JAPAN STAFF

ORGANIZER

EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN MYANMAR
HIRANUMA DOJO

COOPERATION

YANGON JAPANESE SCHOOL
MYANMAR JUDO FEDERATION



JUNIOR JUDO JAPAN CUP MYANMAR 2025



Date : 5 October 2025 (Sunday)
Time : 8:00 AM - 17:00 PM
Venue : Yangon Japanese School
No.1 Thantaman Road, Dagon
Township, Yangon

Photo 5 – Tournament venue



Momo Tamaoki: A Lamp That Lit Many Others

Ms. Momo Tamaoki of the Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Judo Team visited Myanmar in conjunction with the Japan Cup.

A world-class athlete teaching judo techniques to children in a distant country,
sweating together on the same tatami—
it was truly a dreamlike scene.

Throughout the tournament day, Ms. Tamaoki spoke gently to the children,
always smiling, always teaching with genuine care and enthusiasm.

Watching her, I thought:

“This must be the essence of what it means to be a true judoka.”
She also shared a message with the athletes:

“Do what others don’t see.
Do what others don’t do.
Do what makes you different—and your results will be different.”

Photo 6 – Ms. Tamaoki teaching children at the Japan Cup



That single message ignited something powerful in the young athletes.

Two boys who had recently returned from training in Japan immediately approached me saying,
“We want to do extra training.”

When the others heard this, they too said,

“We want to train together.”

One person’s action sparked another.

And at that moment, the phrase came to mind:

**“Light one lamp to illuminate the corner;
many lamps will illuminate the entire nation.”**

Ms. Tamaoki’s visit brought hope not only to the athletes but to society at large.

The Embassy of Japan, company representatives, and the Myanmar Judo Federation were all deeply moved:

“A top Japanese athlete came all the way to Myanmar.”

Her training in Yangon was widely covered by media both in Japan and Myanmar.

In a time filled with uncertainty and hardship,
this was the brightest news we had seen in a long time.
Seeing the children smiling brightly in the news footage, speaking to Ms. Tamaoki,
my chest tightened with emotion.
Judo has the power to move people's hearts,
to bring back smiles,
and to serve as a form of wordless diplomacy—
uniting people and nations without language.
But what struck me most was Ms. Tamaki's character.
Despite being a world-level athlete, she was never arrogant, always humble,
constantly expressing gratitude—
“Thank you,” “This is wonderful,” “This is delicious.”
She brought warmth to every space she entered.
Watching her, I realized:
“True strength lies not only in winning,
but in one's ability to share light with others.”
Ms. Tamaki became a “lamp,”
and I watched as her light spread to the children,
to the national team,
and to the coaches across Myanmar.

Photo 7 – Article published in Sankei Newspapers Online

THE
SANKEI
SHIMBUN

トップ 速報 ランキング 政治 国際 社会 経済 スポーツ エンタメ ライフ オピニオン イベント

野球 MLB サッカー バレー ラグビー バスケット ゴルフ 相撲 陸上・マラソン 総合 冬季スポーツ バラスポーツ

ヤンゴンで日本主催の青少年柔道大会 銀メダリスト、玉置桃選手らジュニア世代を指導

2025/10/5 18:21

✕ ポスト ✕ 反応

     記事を保存

スポーツ | 総合



ミャンマー・ヤンゴンで開催された「ジュニア柔道ジャパンカップ」=5日（共同）

ミャンマーの最大都市ヤンゴンで5日、日本政府などが主催する柔道の全国大会「ジュニア柔道ジャパンカップ」が開催された。大会に合わせて世界選手権女子57キロ級の銀メダリスト玉置桃選手も駆け付け、参加選手らに特別指導をした。

在ミャンマー日本大使館の吉武将吾臨時代理大使は開会式で「ミャンマーでの柔道普及は教育や文化など、さまざまな分野のリーダー育成につながる」とあいさつした。



産経新聞オンラインから引用

Learning Together: The Differences Between Judo in Japan and Myanmar

Although the techniques we use on the tatami are the same, the environments surrounding judo in Japan and Myanmar differ greatly.

What both countries share is a deep cultural respect for others—

respect for elders, the value of courtesy, and the influence of Buddhist values that foster humility.

This is one reason judo is naturally embraced by Myanmar's children.

However, Japan possesses a highly developed system supporting judo:

- school education and club activities
- police, Self-Defense Forces, and corporate teams
- career paths such as judo therapists and teaching professions
- postgraduate studies and research opportunities

Japan's "entry-to-exit system" is what sustains its judo culture long-term.

In contrast, Myanmar's judo relies heavily on individual passion and personal sacrifice.

Training environments are limited, and the future pathways for athletes are unclear.

And yet—

the people who support judo in Myanmar do so with remarkable dedication.

Their sincerity and love for the sport are powerful driving forces.

I have often been deeply moved by their effort. Still, for true growth, systems must be built.

A structure is needed to support judo beyond the efforts of individuals. Without it, progress halts when people change roles.

If Japanese judo represents a "completed model," Myanmar is in the process of building its model from scratch.

This is not a weakness but a sign of tremendous potential. Judo is ultimately the way of human development. Facilities and systems are important, but at the core, it is always "people."

Myanmar also teaches Japan something important—

the warmth of human connection, and the spirit of helping one another,

qualities that modern society is gradually losing.

The Path of “Unity of Knowledge and Action”

Photo 8 – Hiranuma Dojo athlete winning by ippon with a seoi-nage during overtime



The Japan Cup and Ms. Momo Tamaoki’s visit to Myanmar—not simply events, but lessons.

Through these experiences, I was reminded of the importance of taking action.

Thinking alone is easy. Turning thoughts into reality is the difficult part.

During preparations, I hit many obstacles:

miscommunication, unexpected delays, political uncertainties.

But by continuing to move forward, more people began to help, and new paths opened.

Thoughts alone cannot reach others.

Actions alone cannot last.

Only when thoughts and actions unite does true progress begin.

This is the essence of “Chi-Ko-Go-Itsu”—the unity of knowledge and action.

Finishing the tournament brought a deep sense of relief, but also the realization:

“This is not the end—this is the beginning.”

Building a tournament is not the goal. Learning from it, connecting it to the future,

that is where real development begins. Judo is not just about teaching techniques.

It is about sharing ways of thinking and ways of living. To teach judo is to continue learning oneself.

“To nurture people through judo.”

This will remain my guiding principle.

A single action inspires another. A small light spreads—and eventually, lights a nation.

Seeing Ms. Tamaki’s influence on the children, I am more certain of this than ever.

Moving forward, I will continue to build—step by step—

a future for judo in Myanmar, uniting “knowledge” and “action,” and striving to grow as a human being.

Reference

1. ヤンゴンで日本主催の青少年柔道大会 銀メダリスト、玉置桃選手らジュニア世代を指導 . 産経新聞オンライン . <https://www.sankei.com/article/20251005-REEIDEBMZRNODMYP6L6FT5ODGY/> . 2025/11/11閲覧
2. ジュニア柔道ジャパンカップ2025を開催 . 在ミャンマー日本大使館 embassy of Japan in Myanmar . https://www.mm.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_ja/20251010-JJJB.html . 2025/11/11閲覧

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