

A positive newsstory from Associated Press

Hiroshima mayor, China activists win 'Asian Nobel'

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gBfKpyQ294zWfGxtaohz98nGHRpgD9HB9QR80>

By HRVOJE HRANJSKI (AP) – 3 August 2010

MANILA, Philippines – The three-term mayor of Hiroshima who spearheaded a global campaign for nuclear disarmament and a photographer who documented river pollution in his native China are among the 2010 winners of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards.

The awards announced Monday are considered Asia's equivalent of the Nobel Prize. They are named after a popular Philippine president who died in a plane crash in 1957.

Tadatoshi Akiba was 3 years old when a single American atomic bomb reduced the Japanese city of Hiroshima to ashes. Wanting to keep the memory alive, Akiba had started a travel grants program through which American and other journalists visited and listened to the bomb survivors, called "hibakusha."

As a Japanese lawmaker and later Hiroshima mayor, Akiba painfully recognized that his city had the moral obligation to warn the world of the nuclear danger, the Magsaysay Award organizers said. He led a movement called "Mayors for Peace" that includes more than 4,000 cities in 144 countries.

"I feel it shows a positive assessment of our efforts to realize a world free of nuclear weapons. ... It's a great honor" Akiba said of the award.

He said it encourages him to do even more to realize a world free of nuclear weapons by 2020 and that he would like to accept the award representing atomic bomb victims.

A newspaper photographer from Shenqiu in China's Henan province, Huo Daishan, 56, was so shocked by industrial pollution, poisonous fumes and dead fish in the Huai River — China's third-largest — that he started to document it, armed with a cheap camera, pen and notebook.

A one-man campaign became a full-time mission for Hou in 1998, when he organized a group called "Guardians of the Huai River" and staged his first exhibit by stringing together on a clothesline photographs of the river along a street in his village.

With more than 15,000 images, Hou eventually mounted 70 exhibitions across cities, universities and villages, exposing illegal activities of local officials and factory owners. Although harassed, he did not give up, and succeeded in linking up with local authorities and industries to install deep water wells and low-cost water filters.

His efforts resulted in some improvement although the problem of pollution remains critical, the Magsaysay Award Foundation said.

Two other Chinese from two ends of the state bureaucracy — Pan Yue, vice minister at the Ministry of Environmental Protection, and Fu Qiping, a village chief in Zhejiang province — also received awards for their "bold, constructive work in seizing and creating opportunities to address China's environmental crisis."

Other awardees are physicists Christopher Bernido and wife Maria Victoria Carpio-Bernido of the Philippines, who introduced a novel way of teaching science, and Bangladeshi A.H.M. Noman Khan, who set up service-and-training centers for helping persons with disabilities.

The awards will be formally presented Aug. 31 in Manila.

--

International Development Director &
Executive Advisor Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation

Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign
Sao Paulo, BRAZIL

E-mail: pol@2020visioncampaign.org

Website: www.2020visioncampaign.org

Skype: poltanner