9. NAGANO

From then on, the races I took part in gradually got harder. The reason was simple. For an unknown runner like me to collect funds, it was necessary to attract the attention of the media. This meant longer distances, quicker times, tougher conditions.

Following the Great Sahara Marathon, I ran in the Australian Marathon, 200 km in four days. In Oslo, where an anti-landmine conference was taking place, I set a new personal record for the full marathon. In Dublin I succeeded in breaking the 5 hrs barrier for the first time. Whatever country I ran in, people lined the streets and cheered me on. All this helped to increase interest in the anti-landmine movement.

In time I got some great news. ICBL was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. I thought it fantastic that landmines had finally been recognized as a problem worldwide. Then, on 3 December 1997, 121 countries including Japan signed the Ottawa treaty. And that was not all. News reached me that Japan was interested in sending to the world a message about landmines and peace at the Nagano Winter Olympics due to start two months later.

The person in charge of the opening ceremony of the Olympics was Keita Asari. He came to London to see me. 'Japan bears some responsibility for wars in the 20th century,' he said. 'That is why we want to send a peace message for the 21st century. The Nagano Olympics --- the last Olympics of this century --- will be a good moment to send that message. As a symbol of that message, we want you to be one of the final torch runners.' I was moved by this request. I shared the hopes of the Japanese people. The next morning, I went for my daily jog with new energy.

Early on the morning of 7 February, 1998, I went to the site of the opening ceremony. I had never dreamed that I might some day take part in the Olympics. I would be seen on television all over the world. The thought of three billion people watching me made me nervous. I wondered whether I would be able to run properly.

The big moment finally came. The torch was handed to me and I began to run into the stadium. As the roar of the cheers filled my ears, I saw before me many children. Opening their arms wide, they welcomed me into the stadium with a great smile.

At that moment, I recalled the children in Cambodia. I thought of the little girl who stepped on a mine and lost both legs on her way to get water. I remembered the boy who picked up a mine that looked like a butterfly and lost his sight. And there were others. The war has ended, but the effects of the war live on. The Nagano Olympics will send a message of hope for tomorrow, but each day of the games about 70 people will step on landmines and lose their limbs, or their lives.

After handing over the torch, I joined hands with the girls on either side of me. I do not usually wear my artificial arm when I run, so before the start of the opening ceremony I spoke to the girl who would be on my right: 'I have no right arm, so I won't be able to join hands with you. I'm sorry.' But the girl, who was blind, clung happily to the upper part of my arm, and together we set off at a light pace. As we followed the children, my heart was filled with joy. In all my life I had never enjoyed running so much.

The children, wearing sweaters like the flags of many countries, seemed to me the best symbol of peace in the 21st century. The suffering and sadness of war should not be allowed to touch them. I want to go on running until every landmine has been removed from the face of the earth. I believe that day will come.

EXERCISES (9)

Ａ　本文の内容に合うものにはＴ、合わないものにはＦを書きなさい．

(1) To attract the attention of the media, I took part in harder races. ( )

(2) Keita Asari asked me to be one of the final torch runners in Nagano. ( )

(3) I could not join hands with the girl on my right, and the girl was sad. ( )

(4) The children wore sweaters that looked like the flags of many countries. ( )

Ｂ　日本文の意味に合うように、（　）に適語を入れなさい．

(1) 国際会議が京都で開かれた．

The international conference took ( ) in Kyoto.

(2) 兄はこの４月に卒業することになっている．

My brother is ( ) to graduate this April.

(3) 青木先生は７組の担任だ．

Mr. Aoki is in ( ) ( ) class 7.

(4) 彼は息子に会社を引き渡した．

He handed ( ) the company to his son.

(5) ここでは禁煙です．

You are not ( ) to smoke here.