

ago, its members kicked off a movement to demand that the expressway be either relocated or dismantled.

They collected signatures and presented them to the Diet, while engaging patiently in various tasks, such as scrubbing the bridge with water, to keep it well-maintained. But it was only last summer that the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the Tokyo metropolitan government began to take the society's campaign seriously. During a meeting last month, a specific proposal was made to move underground a 1.2-kilometer section of the expressway, including the part that runs right above Nihonbashi Bridge.

However, with the cost of this project estimated at several hundreds of billion yen, some people are balking at it. I myself have heard them questioning why Nihonbashi Bridge alone should receive special treatment, and that the money would be better spent on building nursing care facilities for the elderly and daycare centers for children.

These are totally legitimate arguments. Still, the sight of a massive "lid of iron" looming over the bridge is heartbreaking. We should recall that, for a certain period during the Showa Era (1926-1989), we Japanese were simply too unmindful of the scenic beauty and history of our towns around the nation. A 100-year plan to restore them to their original charm, with Nihonbashi Bridge as the starting point, may not be a bad idea at all.

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