

SUMO DECLINE The purpose of a sumo wrestler is not to knock out his opponent but break his balance. That happens when he's pushed from the "dojo," the fight zone. Losing means being forced to surrender integrity, understood as physical strength and morale.

That might also define what's happening to the sport in Japan, which is in decline after years of scandals, including match-fixing, doping, illegal betting and links with the local underworld. **For the first time since World War II, major tournament was canceled after wrestlers in two classes as well as a former coach admitted they'd rigged the outcome of their fights in exchange for payouts.**

The Japan Sumo Association's decision to cancel the Spring Grand Sumo Tournament reflected what its chairman, Hanaregoma, called the "the greatest stain on the history of sumo." He said he would suspend fighting until "we have completely eradicated the corruption in the sport..." That may not be easy. The latest investigation comes only a year after four people, including former wrestlers, were arrested on suspicion of organizing illegal gambling on pro baseball games. A total of 39 sumo members later filed written reports with the police admitting their involvement.

For some, the criminal connection isn't surprising, since key members of the Yakuza, the Japanese Mafia, have for years sat in the front rows during major tournaments. They wanted the seats to lift the morale of imprisoned members watching the bouts from jail.

There's also the sad case of a veteran sumo commentator and wrestler who as early as 1996 alleged that the Yakuza was procuring drugs and prostitutes for its favorite wrestlers. Both men died suspi-

cious deaths on the same day. The list of superstar wrestlers banned for drug use is legion. The religious and military honor once connected to sumo seems a thing of the past.

ELITE GREEN In the heart of the lush Indonesian island of Bali lies a school built only from bamboo and dried mud bricks. The inside furniture and curtains are made from leftover wood and sails from



Jiji Press / AP / Getty Images

local vessels. Electricity is produced by solar panels and by hydroelectric plants that tap the nearby Ayung River. Water comes from local wells and meals comprise foodstuffs harvested from surrounding fields, including tomatoes, watermelon, coconut, cocoa, honey, and all kinds of tropical fruits and vegetables.

The so-called "Green School" was founded in 2007 by Cynthia and John Hardy, a pair of Canadian jewelers who, having sold their luxury jewelry design business, decided to devote themselves to promoting a new model of education. **The system seems to be working, at least in Asia, since schools similar to their model will soon go up in China, India and Vietnam, thanks to funding from local philanthropists.**

Mongolian-born sumo "yokozuna," or grand champion, Hakuho, right, bows before the start of a Tokyo press conference.

CHINA'S ROVING EYES "Big Brother is watching you" went the obsessive slogan in George Orwell's "1984," the idea being that everyone was being monitored by a mysterious larger authority.

The Chinese appear to have taken the idea to heart when it comes to the city of Urumqi, the capital of northwest Xinjiang. Tens of thousands of cameras keep a vigilant eye on the population.

The city was the site of brutal 2009 rioting between the Uighur minority and the majority Han. Beijing wants no repetition. It also wants to keep separatist impulses under close check.

In the spirit of Peter Weir's "The Truman Show," the cameras are hidden and armed with anti-tampering systems.

A poster with the famous words "Big Brother is Watching You" from a 1965 BBC TV production of George Orwell's classic novel "1984."



Express/Getty Images / L. Ellis

The original Bali Green School houses about 180 students ages 3-to-14. In addition to traditional subjects, they're taught how to reduce waste, how to live without air conditioning, how best to exploit the available energy and how to build buildings that have a low environmental impact. **The goal is to transform students into responsible adults able to meet the needs and rhythms of the planet.** "The idea is to stimulate thinking and enable young kids to figure out what is going to be required to save the planet and to live in the next century," says Cynthia Hardy, "because we're delivering them a whole bunch of problems—way too much carbon in the atmosphere, too big of a population, no control, trash and toxins."

Parents choose the fairytale school to keep children from spending the most carefree years of their lives in concrete classrooms. To get in, children must meet academic standards recognized by the

Cambridge. At the same time, they're called upon to spend several hours a day attending to fields and caring for nature.

Unfortunately, the majority of students are not Indonesian. Only 35 local students were admitted, and those thanks only to generous scholarship. Fees are high: \$7,800 annually for kindergarten, \$8,700 for primary school, and for \$9,750 for middle school. Innovative, yes, but innovation for the elite. *Claudia Astarita*

WITCH TAX Witches, wizards and fortunetellers and other members of the occult industry are up in arms against a Romanian government law that imposes taxes on those who charge for their services. Bucharest authorities have been warned to repeal the measure or face a slew of hexes. A new fiscal fraud law went into effect on Jan. 1 and assigns levies to astrologers and fortunetellers.

Some 40,000 have been installed throughout Xinjiang, in buses, along roads, inside schools and shopping centers. At least 17,000 are in the capital itself, and Mayor Jerle Isamudinhe says the number is expected to grow. **The riots produced 197 deaths and hundreds of injuries. A crackdown followed. Internet and telephone communications were cut off for months and 5,000 additional police sent to the city.**

The Uighurs object to discrimination by the Han, China's leading population group, and insist they have a right not only to defend free speech, but also their culture and Muslim faith. Chinese authorities reject that the Uighurs are the subject of bias and point out the billions

of dollars in investments they have shelled out to improve Xinjiang.

China's northwest is rich in oil and gas, heightening the stakes and making Beijing vigilant toward other potential trouble spots, including Tibet. But the hidden camera system isn't limited to restive provinces. Surveillance cameras are the norm throughout the country; much to the dismay human rights activists who say the Chinese government is depriving its population of the right to privacy. The newspaper "China Daily" in Beijing has reported that the Chinese capital has more than 400,000 operating cameras. Perhaps, as Orwell wrote, "Big Brother is the way in which the party chooses to show itself to the world."

Some occultists rushed to the Danube, pouring in poisons and warning of curses in store. **The threats, though scientific-suspect, ruffled Romanian feathers since the country has long been home to myths and superstitions. Dracula, after all, was a Transylvanian.** President Traian Basescu and his assistants often dress in purple to ward off the evil eye.

Ahead of the last vote, Basescu enlisted the support of parapsychologist Aliodor Manolea, while rival Mircea Geoana attributed losing to "negative energy that was in the air during the final campaign rally." Even the late Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and wife Elena had a personal magician.

The person who may have the most to lose is young MP Alin Popoviciu from Timisoara, who came up with the idea of taxing supernatural operators after a woman came to his office begging him to help recover €2,500 extorted in a fortunetelling scheme (the average monthly salary in Romania is about €340).

All supernatural "workers" will now be compelled to sign up as a professional category and be taxed at a 16 percent rate, which is standard for all professions. "It's a stupid law," said one self-styled Romanian witch. "What's to be taxed if you barely earn anything?"

The showdown between Romania's IRS and the occult is only its early phases, but enforcing the law will be difficult. Payment to fortunetellers and astrologers are usually made in cash and are generally very low: between 20 and 30 lei for a consultation, about €5-6. Not all the masters of the occult are incensed. "It's a good law," said witch Mihaela Minca. "It means that we're finally officially recognized and that I can open my business to the public." *Sanja Lucic*