

AWARD OF MEDALS

The Seventy-six Annual Award of Medals was held on Monday, June 9, 1986, at 10:00 a.m., in the presence of His Majesty the Emperor.

The function was opened with an address by the President, in which he made a brief statement of each award. Then the Medals and Prizes were presented to the respective recipients.

After this, congratulatory addresses were given by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education, Science, and Culture.

The function was closed at 11:30 a.m.

THE RECIPIENTS OF PRIZES AND THE SUBJECTS OF THEIR STUDIES

Masao ITO

Studies of the Cerebellum:
Neural Mechanisms and Learning of Movement

Dr. Masao Ito started his career of neurophysiology in 1954 in Kumamoto with a study of membrane properties of dorsal root ganglion cells. He then joined Sir John Eccles in Canberra (Australia) for the period of 1959–1962 and was engaged in studies on ionic mechanisms of inhibitory synapses in spinal motoneurons. His finding of peculiar multiexponential properties of motoneuronal membrane is notable.

After returning to Tokyo in 1962, Dr. Ito found the general inhibitory action of cerebellar Purkinje cells. Before this, a general belief was that only a limited population of cells having short axons are specialized for inhibition. Therefore, Dr. Ito's discovery that Purkinje cells, which provide the sole output of the cerebellar cortex, are specialized exclusively for inhibition has led to radical reformulation of the general idea about the central inhibition and its mechanisms. This finding was accompanied by specification of GABA as inhibitory neurotransmitter of Purkinje cells. The whole study by Dr. Ito and his colleagues at that time was introduced in the monograph "The Cerebellum as a Neuronal Machine" (Springer-Verlag) by Eccles, Ito and Szentágothai (1963), and contributed a great deal to the remarkable advancement of our understanding of neuronal machinery structure of the cerebellum in the 1960s.

In the 1970s, Dr. Ito continued his study on the neuronal mechanisms of the cerebellum. He thoroughly dissected neuronal connections