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Tart verse for Aso on Valentine's Day

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Prime Minister Taro Aso can expect to receive more than chocolates this Valentine's Day.

Internet service provider Interlink, based in Toshima Ward, Tokyo, announced Friday the winners of a poetry contest for writers wishing to express their feelings for the nation's leader.

The best of these short humorous poems in the "senryu" style will be sent to Aso as a Valentine's Day gift.

Chosen for the top prize among 700 entries was a work by an anonymous poet from Miyagi Prefecture: "Okaeshi wa okina keki de onegaishimasu," which translates to "Please give me great prosperity in return," a reference to the current economic crisis.

In Japanese, "keki" (cake) sounds similar to "keiki" (economy).

Another winner humorously criticized the government's plan to raise the consumption tax. "Shohizei agetara agenai chokoreto," which means "If you raise the consumption tax, I will not give you chocolate." The verb "ageru" means both to raise and to give.

The grand prize winner will receive ¥100,000. Ten other winners will receive a DVD based on the Rozen Maiden comic books that Aso has been spotted reading in public.

According to a spokesman, the company began a senryu competition with an IT theme on its Web site three years ago to raise the company's profile.