

Calling for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons

On January 13, a report session was held in Matsuyama, where a member of the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (Hidankyo), appealed for the importance of continuing to take action toward a nuclear-free world. Hideto Matsuura, aged 79, living in Matsuyama City, participated in the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony in Oslo, Norway as a representative director of Hidankyo, on December 10th last year.

At the session, he reflected on the speech given by the chairman of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, saying, "The chairman was well versed in the history of Hidankyo, and I could fully understand that he spoke with deep knowledge, not just as a courtesy." He also said, "At the University of Oslo, I spoke to some 360 students about my experience as an in-utero A-bomb survivor. I told them that the atomic bomb is an inhumane weapon, which not only causes direct death but also tortures victims for their whole lives. Many students asked me to shake their hands and take photos, and I felt that my thoughts were received." He concluded by saying that he would continue to call on the Japanese government to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This report session was organized by an executive committee made up of volunteers and was attended by about 250 people.
(January 14, Ehime Shimbun)

Matsuyama City Introduces "Familyship"

Matsuyama-city will start granting "Certificates of Partnership" to two people who are not in a legal relationship such as marriage. It is a program recognizing two people who recognize each other as "Family" even if they are the same sex or in de facto relationship. Their children and parents can also be included in the certificate.

The certificate can be issued if both or either of them are citizens of Matsuyama, or are planning to move to the city. Another condition for applying for the certificate is that the applicant and the partner are neither married nor in a partnership or familyship with another person. Although this program does not have legal validity, it entitles the use of some public services which are designed for family use.

According to the city, Uchiko-town has already introduced the Familyship program, and Imabari-city and Ozu-city will follow.

Matsuyama-city is planning to make an effort to convince private enterprises to provide their services targeting families for Familyship members, too. This program will start on February 3, 2025.

For further information: 089-948-6604

(Matsuyama-city Human rights/Cohesive Society Promotion Department)

(January 9, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

Iyotetsu Kaikan to be Rebuilt

The IYOTETSU Group Co., Ltd. announced that the Iyotetsu Kaikan located on Okaido will be demolished in spring 2026, and they will construct a brand new eight story building for commercial and office use. It is to open at the end of 2028.

The total size of the floor of new building will be 8,000 square meters. The 1st floor will accommodate a commercial facility, and the 2nd to 8th floors will be offices. The total size of the rental space will be 5,500 square meters. A parking tower will also be built.

The current Iyotetsu Kaikan which has six floors and a basement was completed in 1960 at the center of the city, and was the tallest building at that time. It has been used as a wedding venue, a beer garden, etc., and the first Starbucks in Ehime opened there on the first floor in 2003.

The IYOTETSU Group says that they will continue doing their best to make Matsuyama more attractive.

(January 5, Yomiuri Shimbun Online)

Employees' Happiness Assessment to Improve Productivity

What is your happiness? It's a simple question, but many people may have trouble answering it. A research company called Three Fields Research in Uwajima City, southwestern Ehime, has developed a diagnostic tool that answers that difficult question from the perspective of clinical psychology.

The tool called "Well-Being Check Plus" is available for corporations for 990 yen per user, and aims to improve motivation and productivity. It has been adopted by Iyogin Holdings (Matsuyama City) and Dydo DRINCO (Osaka City), and others. The researcher said, "When you talk to those around you based on the diagnosis results, you can take your colleagues' happiness as a reference and notice the existence of happiness that you may have overlooked. If you take that as if it were your own, you will have more opportunities to feel happy."

According to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, the word "well-being" refers to being good physically, mentally and socially, and is a concept of not only short-term happiness but also sustainable happiness into the future, such as a sense of purpose and meaning in life. In economically developed countries, emphasis has been placed on the idea of the people capturing happiness, including not only economic wealth as indicated by gross domestic product but also mental wealth and health.

(January 3, Ehime Shimbun)

Happy New Year From the White Snake

There is an auspicious white snake at Tobe Prefectural Zoo. The male Burmese python has shining heart patterns on his body. As 2025 is the year of the snake, it may become more and more popular this year.

The albino snake has a beautiful yellow and white body due to a lack of pigment, and it is thought to have been kept as a pet before. In the autumn of

2008, it was found in a residential area near the JR Niihama Station. A police officer "rescued" it, and took it to the zoo. A zookeeper at the time named it "Matsuri" after the Niihama Taiko Matsuri (meaning festival).

It has grown to be 2.8 meters in length, 12 kilograms in weight, and 12 centimeters in girth. It is by far the most beautiful snake of the ten snakes of seven species in the snake house, and most visitors there search for the heart patterns. A 38 year-old zookeeper, Keiichi Kitamoto, has been in charge of Matsuri and taking good care of it since April, 2024. Saying that it seemed to have run away, the keeper said, "My mission is to help it live happily for as long as possible. I wish people have a wonderful year by seeing it."
(January 1, Ehime Shimbun)

The Termination of Matsuyama-Kokura Ferry

The Matsuyama-Kokura Ferry Co., Ltd. operating the ferry service between Matsuyama and Kokura announced the service will be terminated on June 30, 2025.

The ferry route between Matsuyama and Kokura was established in 1973. In 2013, the Matsuyama-Kokura ferry Co., Ltd. took over the route from the Ishizaki Kisen Co., Ltd., their parent company. The frequency of service has been reduced since July 2024, and has become every other day. It was determined that it would be impossible to maintain the service because of the drastic decline of passengers and trucks since the pandemic of COVID, the fuel cost rise, and the deterioration of the vessels. According to them, it is expected that the route will be discontinued since there is very little possibility that a successor for this service could be found.

(December 28, Asahi Shimbun Digital)