

United Nations for the Future

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of the United Nations, a ceremony called "Blue Star of Life" was held in Matsuyama on December 13, praying for global environmental protection and world peace.

Dewi Sukarno, a former First Lady of Indonesia and now serving as special advisor to this event, gave a speech, saying, "Protecting the environment is our act for survival and love for future generations. Choose peace, and we will create a future where humanity and the Earth shine together."

Ten international students from seven countries and other students spoke about the challenges of the international community and the importance of cooperation. They planned to go to Tokyo and convey the content of their speeches to Speaker of the House of Representatives on December 15.

A ceramic plaque was unveiled, which bears calligraphy of praying for peace by the late Sadako Ogata, former United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. More than 20 pebbles bearing messages from Dewi Sukarno, former Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and others were donated to the UN in the ceremony.

In 1995 a globe-shaped monument made of Tobe ware called "Blue Star of Life," was created by a potter from Tobe Town, donated by the town, and established at the United Nations European Headquarters. The plaque with the calligraphy will be displayed by the monument. The pebbles with the messages will be put inside it. (December 14, Ehime Shimbun)

The ski season arrived

The ski season has come to Ehime. The Kuma Ski Land at Higashi-myoin in Kuma-Kogen opened December 8, which was the earliest in the prefecture. Many skiers and snowboarders enjoy the white slopes.

It takes just about an hour by car to get to the Kuma Ski Land from the center of Matsuyama. There are snowmaking machines installed to add to the slopes. The slopes whose length is 610m in total for beginners and intermediate skiers are covered by about 50cm of snow. According to the Kuma Ski Land, they are happy to announce the most snow in the last 5 years this season since there were severely cold days in November. (December 9, Yomiuri Shimbun Online)

Urban Winery at Okaido

An urban winery opened in the Okaido shopping arcade on December 2. It makes and sells wine using grapes from Ehime and within Japan. They are now in the process of making wines with grapes cultivated in Nagano and Kuma-kogen, and they will be enjoyed from the middle of December. It is expected to attract locals and foreign visitors, and stimulate the area's economy.

BLUE WAX WINERY was launched and is operated by DenkaShinki Co., Ltd. which sells photovoltaic systems. It is a glass building with an area of about 430 square meters. There is a winery, a shop and a bar on the 1st floor and a restaurant on the 2nd floor.

They are currently in the process of making red wine, 3,000 liters of Merlot grown in Nagano, and 300 liters of Cabernet Sauvignon grown at Kuma-kogen. They are planning to make wine with grapes grown at their own farms in the future.

They sell about 400 varieties of wine, mainly domestic natural wine, and offer original dishes prepared by local products at the restaurant.

The total project cost 400 million yen. The national government and Matsuyama city gave 50 million yen in support since it was selected as a national project to vitalize the local economy.

(December 2, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Young and Vibrant Country, Indonesia

A business seminar for companies in Ehime considering expanding into Indonesia or utilizing foreign talent was held on November 27 at the Ehime Bank Training Center in Matsuyama. Two Japanese representatives working for J Trust Bank Indonesia explained the current state and appeal of the Indonesian economy.

One representative described the country as young and vibrant, with a population of 280 million, the fourth largest in the world, and an average age of 29.7. He emphasized its usefulness considering the population and labor cost, whose minimum wage is about 20,000 to 50,000 yen per month. Recognizing differences in common sense and etiquette, he said, "A good company can be created by teaching them how people and work should be and nurturing them."

The other explained that there are about 170,000 Indonesian workers in Japan, and the number is growing with the second-highest growth rate among all countries. He stated that in this global era, employing international students and people will be a massive asset for companies. He introduced examples of companies that have accepted technical intern trainees and highly skilled personnel.

The seminar was held as part of a business partnership agreement signed between the two banks in April. About 80 people, including those attending online, participated from manufacturing, food processing, and nursing care and welfare industries in Ehime.

(November 28, Ehime Shimbun)

People from Overseas Living in Ehime Nearly Doubled

On November 22, it was announced that the numbers of international residents increased in all 47 prefectures, 1.78 times more compared to 10 years ago. Ehime had the 11th highest growth rate, with an increase of 1.99.

About the growth rate, among Ehime's 20 cities and towns, Ozu saw a 3.37-fold increase, followed by Uchiko, Yawatahama, and Masaki, each of which more than tripled,

while Ainan, Toon, Saijo, Tobe, Niihama, and Imabari more than doubled. Kuma-kogen was the only one with a decrease. Ehime has 18,296 international residents, with Matsuyama having the highest number (5,028), followed by Imabari (4,283), Saijo (2,007), Niihama (1,785), and Shikoku-chuo (1,172).

Nationwide, the numbers living in 10 prefectures have more than doubled. Kumamoto Prefecture, home to the semiconductor industry, topped the list with a 2.92-fold increase from 9,896 to 28,883 people. The top five prefectures were Hokkaido, Kumamoto, Miyazaki, Kagoshima, and Okinawa. Located in the north and south of the Japanese archipelago, they form economic zones geographically separated from the three major metropolitan areas. Kyushu and Okinawa are closer to neighboring Asian countries and regions.

Looking at Japanese residents, there is a clear trend toward population decline outside the Tokyo metropolitan area. As the depopulation and labor shortage progress, international residents are becoming the driving force behind local activities even in the areas where it was previously scarce. In an effort to secure highly skilled talent, some prefectures are supporting the development of international students in their local communities. Ehime has released a promotional video for employment with Vietnamese subtitles on YouTube to boost its name recognition.

The populations listed in the Basic Resident Register as of January 1, 2015, and 2025, were compared. Kyodo News compiled the data. (November 23, Ehime Shimbun)

Ito-en Cafe at Matsuyama-shi-eki

ITO EN LTD., a beverage giant, opened “Saryo Ito-en” a cafe at the Iyotetsu Matsuyama Shieki station on November 21. It is a collaborative project with IYOTETSU group Co., Ltd., one of 15 cafes in Japan and the first in Shikoku.

They offer drinks and desserts made with tea grown in Japan. They can be enjoyed not only at the cafe, but also at a counter inside the platform at the station.

A coffee roaster was installed in the cafe, which was the first in Japan. “Matcha White Mocha” that is a mixture of home-roasted coffee and matcha with white chocolate, a nice combination of bitterness and sweetness, is available only at this shop.

ITO EN LTD., has been working closely with IYOTETSU group Co., Ltd. such as ad-wrapping of “Oi Ocha” for Botchan-Ressha. The cafe project was suggested by the IYOTETSU group November 2024 to celebrate the renovation of the Matsuyama Shieki area.

The cafe is operated by ITO EN FOOD SERVICE CO., LTD., an affiliated company of ITO EN LTD.

(November 20, Yomiuri Shimbun Online)