

*This article was created based on information as of February 27, 2025 (all in this issue)

[Front Feature]

25-student classes for all grades in elementary schools!

25-student classes will be expanded to all grades in elementary schools from 2025 onwards. The prefecture will be the first in the country to introduce 25-student classes for first graders at public elementary schools from 2021.

The target will then be gradually expanded, and in 2024 it will be extended to fourth graders.

In response to the results of the verification after the introduction, it has been decided to expand the target grades to fifth graders from 2025 and sixth graders from 2026.

Yamanashi Prefecture will have class sizes that exceed the national standard for all grades in elementary schools.

School teachers have given positive feedback, saying, "We can provide detailed instruction to children" and "It has also reduced the burden on teachers."

How has the environment surrounding children changed as a result of 25-student classes?

We bring you real voices from schools.



〈Field Report〉

○ Nurturing each student's individuality and supporting independent learning

Nirasaki City Amari Elementary School. From the school building windows, you can see the majestic Mt. Fuji. In the classroom of Class 3, the children were reading picture books and having fun with their friends during recess.

The bell rang to signal the start of class. The children rushed to return to their seats. By the time the teacher on duty gave the signal to "stand up, bow, and sit down," they had calmed down, gathered their textbooks and pencil cases, and were quietly waiting for class to start. The second period was math class.

When the homeroom teacher, Ms. Yoshimi Naito, asked, "Does anyone know this?" the children again enthusiastically raised their hands, saying, "Yes, yes!"

Then the student who was called on by the teacher stood up, carefully returned his chair, and headed to the blackboard. During that time, the eyes of the whole class were focused on her.

"I think it's like this."

Mrs. Naito does not answer right away, but calls on other children. "Does anyone think differently?" "What do other people think?" The other children take turns speaking. "I think the same," "I think it would be better if we did it this way." Some children write their answers in their notebooks after hearing their friends' comments.

As they move on to the next question, a child in the back row mutters, "I knew it from the beginning..." to which Mrs. Naito smiles and says, "You knew it."



○ The effects of the introduction are also reflected in the numbers

Yamanashi Prefecture conducted an evaluation of the effects of introducing 25-student classes from 2021 to 2024. The evaluation examined how children's attitudes toward school life and academic ability (the subject in question was math) changed before and after the introduction of 25-student classes.

The results showed that many items in the survey on self-esteem and daily life, such as "Can you talk about your good points?" and "Are you doing your assigned work well?", had a positive effect on the classes after the system was introduced (Figures 1 and 2). In addition, the "no answer rate" for essay questions, in other words, the percentage of students who did not write an answer, was lower in the classes after the system was introduced. This suggests that the teachers' polite encouragement and regular guidance during class have made it a habit for students to persevere in working on problems until the end.

The biggest advantage of a class of 25 students is that it brings students closer to the teacher. Teachers can now provide more thorough support to students who are falling behind in their studies or whose lifestyles are of concern. We have also heard from schools that the closer physical distance has made it easier to respond to a child's monologue in the back of the classroom. Mrs. Naito, the homeroom teacher for Class 3, Year 1, Amari Elementary School, said the following. "In the past, I was in charge of a class of 28 first graders. Now there are 20. It's only a difference of eight, but it makes a big difference. I wonder if there were really eight more students here."

From the students' perspective, it can be said that it has become easier to ask teachers for advice. In the aforementioned survey, the percentage of students who answered "always" to the question "When you are in trouble, can you tell your teacher or friends?" was 4.4 points higher in the classes after the introduction of the system (Figure 3).

[Figure 1] Percentage of students who answered "Can you tell your good points?"

[Figure 2] Percentage of students who answered "Are you doing your assigned work well?"

[Figure 3] Percentage of students who answered "always" to the question "When you are in trouble, can you tell your teacher or friends?"



Created based on the "Reiwa 6 Small Class Education Promotion Review Committee Report"

〈Support teachers with videos that promote the appeal of education!〉

We have created new video content to help raise awareness of education in Yamanashi Prefecture.

The videos include (1) a live-action version that includes interviews with teachers in the prefecture and messages to teachers from children, pupils, and local residents; and (2) an animated version that clearly explains Yamanashi Prefecture's approach to education, how teachers work, and teacher selection tests.

○ How to solve the teacher shortage

On the other hand, a challenge in promoting small class education is the serious teacher shortage nationwide.

For some time now, the prefecture has implemented a system in which the prefecture subsidizes part of the repayment of scholarships from the Japan Student Services Organization, provided that the student works as a teacher at a public elementary school in Yamanashi Prefecture for a certain period of time.

In addition, we regularly hold forums to let people who want to become teachers know about Yamanashi Prefecture's small class education.

By actively continuing to disseminate information about small class education, we have also seen an increase in inquiries from people who hold teaching licenses outside the prefecture.

As long as there is still a teacher shortage, we will continue to operate flexibly, such as by increasing the class size by more than the national standard and adopting "active classes," in which additional teachers are assigned without increasing the number of classes.

In order to cover the personnel costs of teachers to expand small class education, we will secure the necessary financial resources by increasing the amount of the reserve fund and transferring an additional 750 million yen in fiscal 2025 from the revenue of the electric power business account, which is expected to increase due to the management efforts of the Prefectural Enterprise Bureau.

○ Support measures for small schools

Currently, for small schools with fewer than 25 students per grade, subsidies are provided for distinctive educational activities, such as projects that utilize the prefecture's educational challenges and local strengths, to enhance education.

Specifically, four options are available: 1) "Free-paced learning" to foster independent learners, 2) "Foreign language education" to expose students to diverse languages and cultures, 3) "Inquiry-based education" to develop local problem-solving abilities, and 4) "Mountain village study abroad/local love" to increase self-esteem through experience = see table on the right. In fiscal year 2024, five towns and villages in the prefecture participated in this project. For example, in Nanbu Town, which is working on foreign language education, three schools in the town jointly implemented "N classes" in which students of the same grade take classes at the same time. Classes were held in which students could enjoy dialogue and exchange while using English as a communication tool.

① Free-paced learning

We support activities in which children learn at their own pace using ICT based on a predetermined "study plan table." In Doshi Village and Nurusawa Village, we are promoting trial and research of "student-centered lessons" in which children discover their own questions and find ways to solve them under the guidance and advice of university professors.

② Foreign language education

We create an educational curriculum that utilizes foreign languages throughout the six years of elementary school, and provide opportunities for students to experience different cultures during school life. We also support exchange activities with foreign countries and other regions using ICT so that students can have a global perspective and develop a respectful attitude toward others.

③ Inquiry-based education

This is a learning activity that values the experience of children seeing and touching the nature, history, and culture rooted in the region. It aims to develop the ability to solve local problems and to foster people who will create a sustainable society. In Kosuge Village, students study wild animals living in nearby forests and consider the ecosystem.

④ Mountain Village Study Abroad/Local Love

This is an education that develops children who have both compassion and local love through interactions with the local community and mountain village students. In Tanbayama

Village, nursery schools, elementary schools, and junior high schools work together to make miso, a local specialty, and work with mountain village students on traditional performing arts, fostering local love.

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Illustration: Miyano Koji

[Special Feature on the FY2025 Budget]

Pursuing Prosperity and Happiness

The prefecture aims to further strengthen the lives of its citizens and turn Yamanashi's eyes to the world.

The prefecture submitted the FY2025 initial budget proposal, which includes this plan, to the February regular assembly.

More than in FY2024, which was positioned as the "first year of strengthening prefectural life resilience," the prefecture will work closely with prefectural residents and utilize collective knowledge from Japan and abroad to elevate each policy to "Strengthening Prefectural Life 2.0."

Furthermore, out of a sense of crisis that Yamanashi's children will not be able to leave a "sustainable future" if they only look at the domestic situation, the prefecture has created a budget that is strongly conscious of raising its sights to "global standards" in its efforts in each field.

<Prefectural Citizen Life Resilience 2.0 Budget>

Aiming for a "country of openness" based on "hometown resilience"

[Left figure] Total revenue: 511.5 billion yen

[Right figure] Total expenditure: 511.5 billion yen

Initial general account budget: 511.5 billion yen

(The graphs do not add up because decimals have been rounded off)

<POINT>

Update to a "global standard" perspective and "Prefectural Citizen Life

Resilience 2.0"

① Evolve and leap forward in efforts to "hometown resilience" and "create a 'country of openness'"

② Actively budget for measures to combat the population decline crisis, realizing a hydrogen society, expanding international exchange, and supporting new challenges

③ Ensure financial soundness and sustainability

[Left figure] Budget allocation of prefectural bonds (excluding temporary financial bonds) and grant tax measures

[Center figure] Trends in the balance of prefectural bonds, etc., which are the actual burden of the prefecture

The balance, excluding disaster prevention and mitigation, has decreased for six consecutive years

[Right figure] Amount of fund withdrawal as a financial resource measure

In order to minimize the burden on the prefecture while maximizing the effect, we have utilized national subsidies and advantageous local bonds that will have a low future burden on the prefecture. As a result, the proportion of the prefectural bond budget, which is the prefecture's debt, that will be borne by the national government in the future remains high at 41%. In addition, the balance of prefectural bonds (excluding disaster prevention and mitigation), which is the actual burden of the prefecture, has decreased for six consecutive years. With these measures, we have reduced the amount of withdrawal from the main fund, which is the prefecture's savings.

<Hometown resilience>

Towards a society where prefectural residents can pursue a high level of wealth and happiness with peace of mind

Update to "Prefectural Resident Life Resilience 2.0". The aim of the initial budget for FY2025 is to evolve into a society where all prefectural residents can pursue a high level of wealth and happiness with peace of mind. Given the current shrinking domestic market, we will be strongly conscious of raising our sights to global standards.

One of the goals of "Hometown Resilience" is to embed a structure that will enable stable profits in all industries in the prefecture into the future, and to build a cycle in which those profits are returned to individuals. This will promote the creation of a society in which everyone can have confidence and peace of mind in their future prospects.

If young people can feel that "if they work hard, they will be rewarded," they will have hope for the future, and having a family and children will help to alleviate the population decline crisis. We will also do our utmost to eliminate the anxiety and risks surrounding daily life, such as supporting caregivers who are becoming more diverse and complex, and strengthening disaster response capabilities. Furthermore, we will move forward as a front-runner in this field toward the realization of a hydrogen society.

〈PLAN 1〉 Support for caregivers and subsidies for the use of free schools

This year, all of the baby boomer generation will be elderly, so we have positioned support for caregivers as a priority policy and are working to realize a society in which no one will have to leave their jobs to care for their loved ones.

In April, we will begin operating a "Caregiver Support Portal Site" that allows carers to view a wide range of support information and also includes a demonstration of consultation responses using AI generation. We are also considering budgeting for a face-to-face support system to help carers connect to support institutions so that they can receive care services quickly. As family care methods become more diverse and complex, the current situation has emerged in which families with children and students who are not attending school are bearing a heavy burden. In fiscal 2023, the number of children and students not attending public elementary and junior high schools in the prefecture increased 2.7 times in 10 years to 2,189, and it was found that more than 30% of them are not connected to any support.

Therefore, in order to ensure diverse learning opportunities and places for children and students who are not attending school, as well as to reduce the burden on families, we will start subsidizing the use of free schools in cooperation with municipalities.

We will also strengthen our efforts by packaging support measures to combat school absenteeism. One of these is a fact-finding survey to consider measures necessary to restore social connections in families with children and students who are not attending school. In addition, we will consider adding support measures for children and students who are not attending school to the "Caregiver Support Portal Site" and training and increasing the number of school social workers.

〈PLAN 2〉 A virtuous cycle of three ups to overcome the population decline crisis

In order for young people to feel that they want to have and raise children, it is important that they have confidence that they will become wealthy. The prefecture is working to create a virtuous cycle of three ups: improving workers' skills → increasing corporate profits → increasing wages.

As a starting point, we will work to improve the courses offered at Yamanashi Career Up University, which offers reskilling courses for companies in the prefecture to support "skill improvement."

In addition, we will work with municipalities to expand support for home acquisition and renovation costs, mainly for young households and households with children.

In addition, with an eye toward the future opening of the Linear Chuo Shinkansen, we will continue to conduct research and consideration so that the child-rearing generation can be provided with a comfortable, high-quality living environment, including the perspective of "town development," rather than just the size and performance of the house.

<PLAN 3> Strengthening disaster response capabilities

Based on the lessons learned from the Noto Peninsula earthquake, we will conduct the necessary surveys and analyses to consider desirable facility and operating standards for evacuation shelters in the prefecture together with municipalities.

In order to smoothly accept and appropriately allocate disaster volunteers and other external support in the event of a disaster, we will establish a Disaster Volunteer and Welfare Support Center within the Prefectural Social Welfare Council.

In addition, we will work to secure personnel and strengthen practical support capabilities for specialized teams that will provide welfare support at evacuation shelters for people who require special consideration, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, infants, and pregnant women.

<PLAN 4> Efforts to improve safety measures for climbing Mt. Fuji

From fiscal year 2025, the Mt. Fuji conservation contribution will be abolished, while the toll will be raised to 4,000 yen, shelters will be installed on the descent trail, and the opening period of the seventh station first aid station will be extended.

In addition, the gate closing time will be brought forward by two hours to prevent last-minute climbers who aim to do so in a whirlwind climb. Furthermore, in order to prevent lightly equipped climbers, a function will be added to the pass reservation system to check equipment and require people to pledge to comply with the rules, and the guidance system for climbing will be improved by strengthening the guidance authority of Mt. Fuji rangers.

<PLAN 5> Promoting policies to realize a hydrogen society at global standards

The term "hydrogen society" is often heard, but do you have a concrete image of it?

In order to help people have a more concrete image of it, the prefecture will formulate a "Hydrogen Society Realization Strategy" as a comprehensive policy for various hydrogen-

related policies.

The "carbon-free agriculture" initiative that has been underway since fiscal year 2024 will move to a concrete demonstration stage. Currently, greenhouse heaters that use heavy oil will not emit carbon dioxide if green hydrogen* is used. In order to realize environmentally friendly agriculture, we will start a demonstration test of a green hydrogen heater at the prefectural fruit orchard experimental station.

In addition, we will link the image of a hydrogen society to international discussions and promote policies based on "global standards." The international symposium to be held by the "Green Hydrogen Community Consortium" of the Fuji Five Lakes Natural Capital Area Forum will be attended by officials from California, ambassadors to Japan from India and other countries, and hydrogen-related companies. Deepening of the discussion is expected.

*Hydrogen produced using renewable energy without emitting any CO₂ during the manufacturing process. It is said to be the ultimate clean energy.

〈Creating an Open Country〉

Fuji Tram and the reorganization of the transportation network Support for new challenges

Under the concept of "Open Country," which incorporates all possibilities into society, the movement and distribution of people, goods, and events are indispensable "basal metabolism." As a new initiative to strengthen transportation infrastructure, we aim to drastically reorganize the prefecture's transportation network using Fuji Tram and other means.

In addition, if Yamanashi's connections with the rest of the country and the world deepen, various opportunities will arise. In order to make the most of these opportunities, the prefecture will support "all challenges and their realization." The scope of support is not limited to business, but also covers various aspects such as disaster prevention and food. And as introduced in the opening feature, the generous measures for "realizing small-class education" to create an environment to nurture future human resources that will support this foundation are as introduced in the opening feature.

〈PLAN 1〉 **Fuji Tram: Expectations for expanding transportation network reorganization**

In order to maximize the effects of the opening of the Linear Chuo Shinkansen, we must

create a new transportation network using the Fuji Tram, and create a virtuous cycle of improved convenience, increased number of users, and increased number of stops for the Linear Shinkansen.

We will proceed with consideration of the drastic improvement of the secondary transportation network throughout the prefecture by extending the Fuji Tram to various parts of the prefecture. In addition, we will begin consideration of the form of the public transportation network throughout the prefecture, including municipalities and transportation operators.

The profitability of the entire business is an important point. We will continue to conduct a wide range of research and studies on the facilities and systems necessary for the operation of the Fuji Tram.

In addition, in anticipation of new air demand due to the opening of the Linear Shinkansen, we have decided to conduct additional research on the possibility and issues of developing an airport in the prefecture.

〈PLAN 2〉 Solving local issues by supporting new challenges

A new corporation will be established to work with the government and private sector to solve local issues. We will build a foundation to solve issues that are difficult for the government to solve alone through co-creation with the private sector.

A facility where diverse talent gathers and innovations are born one after another. Aiming to create such an exciting place, the "Startup Support Center" will be completed in November to provide seamless support to startups (emerging companies) according to their growth stage.

It's not just business. We would like young chefs to hone their skills in Yamanashi. We will introduce a system that utilizes the Regional Revitalization Cooperation Team system to build relationships with local producers while training at famous restaurants in the prefecture.

〈POINT〉

Organizational restructuring to meet the needs of the prefecture's residents' perspective
The main organizational restructuring is as follows.

Advanced Policy Bureau

The Governor's Policy Planning Bureau will be reorganized and strengthened to proactively identify issues facing the region and society, and to turn administrative knowledge and experience, as well as rich imagination, into action and pioneer new policies.

Young staff members will also be boldly selected.

Citizen Support Bureau

In order to comprehensively realize support that is in line with your lifestyle, we will reorganize and strengthen the Child-Rearing Support Bureau, Diversity and Human Resources Development Bureau, and Childcare Support Bureau.

Innovation and Regional Development Bureau

We will reorganize to comprehensively and strategically promote important projects that will increase the appeal of the region from both cultural and economic perspectives, such as the Fuji Tram, the Yamanashi brand, and the Fuji Five Lakes Natural Capital Region Concept.

[Special Feature 3] Smartphone Generation, Update Your

Community! Start of DX from Within the Community

Enjoying SNS* and online shopping on your smartphone.

Digital technology is used as a matter of course in our lives.

However, when you hear the term "DX (digital transformation)", many people may feel that it sounds difficult or has nothing to do with their lives.

*A service that allows you to post text, photos, videos, etc. on the network and interact with many people. Abbreviation for Social Networking Service.

○ Make DX your everyday use

Yamanashi Prefecture aims for "DX from within the community". DX talent cultivated within the prefecture will solve local issues, and we will create a society where all prefectural residents can "use digital technology on a daily basis". While incorporating excellent technologies from outside, we are promoting sustainable community development by cultivating talent within the prefecture who can master digital technology and connecting it to the next generation.

A certain incident led to the number of customers at the barber shop "Hair House Ogawa" in Showa-cho more than doubling. The secret to their success was taking advantage of the prefecture's "DX literacy improvement project." First, they used Google's "Business Profile" function to enhance the store's information registered on Google Maps. Then, by introducing an online reservation system, they were able to make reservations 24 hours a day, which led to an increase in new customers, especially from the younger generation. With the advice of the support staff, they also improved their Instagram*. "I can check the reservation status on my tablet, and the number of customers has steadily increased, which is a big help," says Kota Ogawa.

He uses part of his father Norihiko's store as his own workplace, and not only has sales increased 2.7 times in the six months since the introduction of DX, but it has also led to more efficient management, such as reducing the hassle of managing reservations.

*SNS mainly for posting photos and videos



○ Also for population decline

The serious population decline problem is the background to Yamanashi Prefecture's promotion of DX. If they put off measures because "we're not in trouble now," there is a possibility that they will not be able to maintain local services in five or ten years. Therefore, the prefecture is supporting the creation of a system that uses digital technology to improve business efficiency and provide high-quality services with limited personnel.

In addition to supporting DX for small and medium-sized enterprises, the prefecture is also focusing on nurturing DX talent for the next generation. As part of this, it is conducting

a "DX Leader Development Training" for university students. Through a nine-day intensive training course, participants can acquire digital skills such as web design, SNS utilization, and video production. In fiscal year 2024, about 30 DX leaders will be born. Graduates may be issued a certificate by the prefecture, which is also an appealing point in job hunting. In addition, we provide an environment where participants can gain practical experience by using the skills they have acquired to support companies, while also receiving rewards for their results.

DX leaders will also serve as mentors for junior and senior high school students. The prefecture aims to establish a "DX talent development ecosystem" where talent who have learned DX will train the next generation of leaders, and the grown talent will then train the next generation, so that this type of talent development will continue.

Tenjin, a long-established textile manufacturer in Fujiyoshida City, wanted to "spread Japan's traditional techniques to the world." To realize this desire, the DX leaders they trained collaborated with the company. The three university students who were dispatched to "Hataori no Machi" apparently created a promotional video for the event and a sales flyer. Tenjin CEO Shinji Kobayashi said, "I hope that the quality of linen made on traditional looms can be conveyed."



○ Take a new step!

"But maybe it's too early for me..." If you feel that way, don't worry.

From March 2025, "DigiSapo! Yamanashi" will be launched, where DX leaders will provide DX support for small and medium-sized enterprises. They will handle everything from small consultations to support regarding DX, such as creating websites and using SNS. The first step in DX is the feeling of "let's try it out first." Yamanashi Prefecture will fully support your DX!

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[Feature 4] Building relationships with the world through hydrogen

As rapid climate change becomes a global issue, hydrogen is attracting attention as a clean energy.

Yamanashi Prefecture is beginning to build new relationships with the world through its hydrogen technology.

○ Towards Yamanashi leading the way with "global standards"

Yamanashi Prefecture is leading the country in the production of green hydrogen* using large-scale solar power generation and hydroelectric power generation at Komekurayama (Kofu City). However, it is not limited to the domestic market, and is beginning to turn its attention to the world with hydrogen technology as its axis. The goal is to establish a solid position that "Yamanashi is synonymous with green hydrogen." Like Silicon Valley in California, the prefecture aims to become a major hub that brings together high-tech companies and human resources from all over the world.

*Hydrogen produced using renewable energy without emitting any CO₂ during the manufacturing process. It is said to be the ultimate clean energy.

○ Discussion on green hydrogen begins worldwide

Green hydrogen is a new field in which discussion has just begun internationally. What constitutes a hydrogen society? The creation of rules, such as definitions and standards, is a future issue.

In order to become a world leader in this field, Yamanashi Prefecture has started with personnel exchanges. In addition to collaboration and cooperation in hydrogen-related projects with advanced organizations in California, USA, Yamanashi Prefecture is steadily expanding its international network, such as promoting mutual exchange in a wide range of fields with Uttar Pradesh, the state with the largest population in India, where economic growth is expected, and where many universities are located.

• Expanding circle of exchange

California is already participating in the International Hydrogen Consortium, organized by the Fuji Five Lakes Natural Capital Region Forum (headquartered in Yamanashi Prefecture), which works to realize a region that combines resort areas rich in nature with the functions of the capital region. In the future, the consortium aims to collaborate with even more countries, including India. This initiative is not limited to technology exchange. It is expected to develop into international exchange in a wide range of fields, such as tourism and education. Yamanashi's hydrogen technology is a bridge to the world.



○ A base for developing human resources who will lead the future

Hydrogen is also the starting point for human resource exchange and development. Yamanashi Prefecture aims to be a place where engineers and researchers from all over the world gather, learn, and grow. With fuel cell technology research at Yamanashi University, demonstration experiments at Komekurayama, and practical applications at companies in the prefecture, the prefecture has the world's best environment for learning about hydrogen. As the talent cultivated here goes on to play an active role around the world, Yamanashi-standard technology and ideas will spread around the world. This is the future we envision.

In particular, we have a track record of developing a power-to-gas (P2G) system that produces hydrogen using renewable energy since May 2018. In June 2021, we began supplying green hydrogen produced by this system for the first time in Japan, and are supplying hydrogen produced in the prefecture to various companies and organizations. In addition, the Suntory Hakushu Factory is currently introducing the largest P2G system in Japan, and plans are underway to supply the hydrogen produced here not only to the company's Hakushu Factory but also widely within and outside the prefecture.

In the future, Kanadevia Co., Ltd. (Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture), which manufactures the core equipment for hydrogen generation devices, plans to build a new factory in Tsuru

City, which will also function as a mass production base for hydrogen-related equipment.

Having such a rich environment in both theory and practice is a major strength for Yamanashi Prefecture as it aims to become the world's center of hydrogen technology.



○ A challenge that has just begun

At the International Conference on Climate Change held online in California in February 2025, the Governor of Nagasaki announced the prefecture's efforts to utilize hydrogen. Discussions toward realizing a hydrogen society will finally begin in earnest.

The hydrogen revolution that began in Yamanashi has only just begun. However, the door to the world is certainly opening.

Connecting the world with clean energy. Yamanashi Prefecture has taken a big step in that direction.

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I want to play the role of a man | This year's role of Shingen will be played by Shibuki Jun

51st Shingen Festival

The 51st Shingen Festival will be held from April 4th (Fri) to 6th (Sun).

Since the postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been held in October for a while, but this year, for the first time in six years, it will be held in April to commemorate the death anniversary of Takeda Shingen.

This time, the role of Shingen will be played by Shibuki Jun, a former top star of the Takarazuka Revue's Moon Troupe and currently active as an actress. Following on from the last time, a woman will play Shingen.

How does Shibuki, who has supported Takarazuka's glamorous dream stage as a male role, want to play Takeda Shingen, a warlord from the Warring States period?

We asked Shibuki about his thoughts on the festival.

Actress Shibuki Jun After graduating from the Takarazuka Music School, she was assigned to the Takarazuka Revue's Flower Troupe. She was selected for leading roles in many productions, and in 2001 she became the top of the Takarazuka Revue's Moon Troupe. She left the Takarazuka Revue in March 2004 and is currently active as an actress. Her hobbies are traveling, cooking, and belly dancing.

- How did you feel when you were selected to play the role of Shingen?

Since graduating from Takarazuka, you have played various male roles in musicals and other events. Therefore, when I first heard about the role, I thought for sure that it would be just one of those roles on stage. However, when I heard more about the details, I remember being very surprised to learn that it was the role of Shingen in a festival that began in 1970 and is eagerly awaited by the prefecture's residents.

- Please tell us if you have any ideas about how you would like to play Shingen at this point.

My image of Takeda Shingen is a big, powerful man, a real "man". Since I'm a woman, I

think my appearance will inevitably change. That's why I want to put my soul into the line "Let's go to battle". As a former Takarazuka member, I want to surprise everyone with a deep, deep, loud voice.

- I think there are many people who are looking forward to seeing Shingen played by the top star (male role) of the Takarazuka Moon Troupe.

Thank you. Takarazuka is a world filled with "the ideal image of a man" for women. I often hear from fans that they were "cool" or "excited". So the Shingen I play might... smell nice (laughs).

By the way, when I act, I'm the "itako" type, where the role comes to me naturally. So, there are some parts that I can't predict the moment I put on the armor. I hope you look forward to that part too.

- I heard that you often come to Yamanashi Prefecture.

I've been there many times in my private time. I feel that I have a connection to Yamanashi Prefecture. For example, there is a popular inn in Yamanashi Prefecture that is always on a waiting list, but I suddenly thought, "I wonder if it's available tomorrow?" and when I checked, by chance, there was a vacancy. Also, when I invited a friend in the entertainment industry who I usually don't have time for, "Can you go to Yamanashi tomorrow?" ... He said, "I'm available tomorrow!" and things progressed smoothly. And then I was offered this opportunity. I feel like Yamanashi is calling me. What will happen next? Maybe I'll meet my future husband in Yamanashi, who I've never been able to find until now.

- (laughs). Finally, do you have a message for everyone who is looking forward to the festival?

I love performing on stage with a "live" feeling. I think that in a live performance, the performers send out energy, and the audience sends energy back to them, creating a circulation of energy. What's more, this is a festival. I'm sure it will be the best live performance ever. Nothing would make me happier than being able to create a truly enjoyable time with the people of Yamanashi Prefecture.

<51st Shingen Festival>

Koshu Corps Departure April 5th (Sat)

Departure Schedule

▼Victory Prayer Ceremony @Takeda Shrine 13:15-13:35

- ▼Corps Assemble @Maizuru Castle Park 15:15-
- ▼Departure Ceremony @Maizuru Castle Park 16:00-16:30
- ▼Corps Departure 16:30-18:40
- ▼Return Ceremony @Maizuru Castle Park 18:40-19:00

*Please check the official Shingen Festival website for the route.

4/4 (Fri)

- Shinmei Fireworks at Kofu Castle

Location: Maizuru Castle Park

4/5 (Sat)

- Koshu Corps marches out

: The world's most valiant and magnificent warrior procession

- Super Fuirinkazan Performance Contest

Location: Maizuru Castle Park

: A national competition where Shingen and the Koshu Corps compete in performances

- "Wind, Forest, Fire, Mountain" Dance

Location: Joto Street

: A spectacular dance by 1,000 members of the Fuirinkazan Dance Troupe

4/6 (Sun)

- Children's Warrior Procession

Location: Around Maizuru Castle Park

: A valiant procession of cute child warriors and naginata troupes

<Events held at the same time>

- Bustling Castle Town

Location: Maizuru Castle Park, Yuukibashi Street

: A variety of stalls line the streets

- ~Bistro Warring States Feast ~

Location: Paraka Kofu City Central No. 1 Parking Lot

: A delicious menu using local ingredients is sold in a jinya-style dining area

- 5th Yamanashi Bacon Festival

Location: Assist Engineering Yochabare Square

- Shingen Festival Special Sake

Location: In front of the Prefectural Office Annex

: Free sake to commemorate the registration of traditional sake brewing as a UNESCO
Intangible Cultural Heritage 11:00/14:00

- Tea Ceremony in Memory of Shingen

Location: In front of Crystal Earth, north exit of Kofu Station

*Ends when Japanese sweets run out

[Contact] Shingen Festival Executive Committee TEL 055-231-2722 FAX 055-221-3040



〈Interviews with Prefectural Residents Who Aim for the Future〉

[Series] Yamanashi Kenjin

〈To Make Yamanashi a Place Where Foreigners Can Live with a Smile〉

Working to Support Foreigners: Yamada Norakon

More than 22,000 foreigners, nearly 3% of the population, live in Yamanashi Prefecture.

While they are expected to play an active role, they are often confused by the differences in language and culture.

In the series introducing prefectural residents who are working hard to live for the future, Yamanashi Kenjin tells the story of a woman from Thailand who works hard to support lost foreigners.



〈Here's a Hint〉

Yamanashi Prefecture provides consultation and information on daily life for foreigners living in the prefecture. In addition to providing consultation for problems close to home, people appointed as "Yamanashi Prefecture Foreigner Community Life Supporters" provide generous support by connecting them to public support such as the "Yamanashi Foreigner Consultation and Support Center". Supporters are paid 5,000 yen per month as activity expenses after submitting a performance report, but they are essentially volunteers.

HISTORY

1979: Born in Bangkok, Thailand

2002: Graduated from a university in Thailand. Worked as a graphic designer

2014: Came to Japan. Married a Japanese man in 2016

2024: Supports foreigners living in the prefecture as a "Yamanashi Prefecture Foreigner Community Life Supporter"

○ More useful than Google

Yamada Norakon (45), who works at a Thai restaurant, is often asked questions by foreigners living in the prefecture. How do I apply for a visa? What does this say? How do I get to the embassy? It's not "OK Google," but "Tell me, Norakon."

At the end of last year, a Thai woman at work asked me, "Where can I buy winter clothes?"

The woman is married to a Japanese man, but she can't speak Japanese well, so she communicates with her husband using Google Translate. That night, after finishing work, Norakon took the woman to a large supermarket. After teaching her how to use the self-checkout, the woman was able to buy a sweater by herself. "I want to help people in need. It's not that hard at all. When someone says kob kung ka (thank you in Thai), I feel happy too."

She is originally from Bangkok, the capital of Thailand. She loves Japanese anime, and in high school she was so obsessed with it that she bought a Sailor Moon magic wand and stuffed toys. "I want to go to Japan someday." She realized her dream at the age of 34. "I love Yamanashi, which is rich in nature, not Tokyo or Osaka, which are like crowded Bangkok! I prayed at Takeda Shrine that I would be able to live here forever."

She extended her three-month language study abroad to two years, and in 2016 she married a Japanese woman introduced to her by an acquaintance.

In 2020, something big happened to Norakon. A Thai woman in her 70s, a friend of hers, was diagnosed with cancer.

"When a foreigner gets sick, the biggest problem is the Japanese language. They asked me to interpret because they couldn't understand the doctor's explanation. I'm not good at Japanese, but I felt sorry for the crying grandmother, so I did my best."

She studied medical terminology using dictionaries and the Internet, and spent three days translating the four-page medical questionnaire and examination instructions. She accompanied her to the hospital once a month and also attended gastroscopy and CT scans as an interpreter. A year and a half later, when the doctor told her that she was cured of cancer, the woman grabbed Norakon's hand in the examination room and shouted, "Koopkun-ka!"

○ Spreading the circle of happiness

Someone was touched by Norakon's actions. It was Keiko Sakagami of the Yamanashi International Association. "What Nono-chan had done was exactly the same as the activities of the Yamanashi Prefecture Foreigners' Community Life Supporter established by the prefecture."

With Sakagami's recommendation, it was decided that she would be appointed as the supporter in July 2024.

"It is often only after hearing the reports that we realize that foreign residents are having trouble with these issues. By making their troubles visible and sharing them with the prefecture, we hope to be able to provide detailed support," said Sakagami.

On her own Facebook page, "We love Yamanashi," she also translates prefecture news and event information into Thai and posts it.

"Nono-chan is a person who gives off "light." Everyone is drawn to her cheerful personality," said Sakagami.

To ensure that everyone can live in Yamanashi with peace of mind, she responds to any inquiries with a cheerful "OK!". For foreigners who are anxious or lonely in an unfamiliar place, she is like a guidepost.

In a speech contest that Sakagami encouraged her to enter, she spoke on the theme of "happiness." There is a saying in Thailand that goes, "When one person laughs, the other person always laughs." I want to create a world where everyone helps each other and is happy, regardless of nationality. She sang Michael Jackson's "Heal the World" with all her heart, and the whole venue was filled with smiles.

Norakon's supporter activities keep her busy. But she says with a big smile, "Mai Pen Rai! (It means 'It's okay' in Thai) because it's fun to be able to interact with people from all over the world."

In the spring, she plans to take some time off from her job at the restaurant to volunteer as an interpreter for the ASEAN Pavilion at the Osaka Expo.





Fureai Square

PHOTO SPACE

Would you like to post your photos on Fureai?

We look forward to your best shots!

• Traditional festival

: Sekisonsai Festival, which has been held for over 300 years in Misaka-cho, Fuefuki City.

Men in loincloths, known as Okoritori, splash water on each other to pray for good harvests and good health.



• A delicious final meal

: Sisenryuuto in Shimoyoshida, Fujiyoshida City. You'll never forget the tantan noodles once you've tried them.



- **Freshly baked in a pot**

: At the countryside cafe Orchard in Happy Park in Minami-Alps City, they bake delicious pizza in their own pot.



- **Fantastic mood**

: The herb garden in Katsunuma-cho, Koshu City, is celebrating its 20th anniversary. The garden illuminations add a different touch.



- **Half White**

: At Ashiwadayama in Narusawa Village, I came across Mt. Fuji, half covered in snow.



- **Watching the first sunrise with my mother**

: This year, I watched the first sunrise with my mother and my dog.



Q & A SPACE

This section answers your questions about prefectural government.

[Click here for this issue's questions.](#)

〈Answers〉

Imamura Yuki (Agricultural Marketing and Export Division Chief)



Q: What is ethical consumption?

Ethical consumption is consumption that takes into consideration the environment, social issues, and animal welfare.

Q: Why is the prefecture putting so much effort into promoting ethical consumption?

According to the Consumer Affairs Agency's Consumer Life Awareness Survey, awareness of ethical consumption is increasing year by year, reaching 29.3% in fiscal year 2023. The prefecture is supporting the production of agricultural and livestock products that meet the growing interest. The ethical efforts of producers create high added value and lead to increased income. They also increase competitiveness with other production areas. Ultimately, this should lead to "sustainable agriculture."



Q: What measures are you promoting to increase consumption?

In addition to the "Yamanashi 4 per Mille Initiative Agricultural Products Certification System" and the "Yamanashi Animal Welfare (AW) Certification System," we are promoting "Yamanashi Gibier," organic farming, and agricultural-welfare collaboration efforts. The 4 per Mille Initiative is an activity that increases the amount of carbon in the soil by 0.4% per year. For example, it is a farming method in which pruned fruit tree branches are carbonized and spread on fields. Agricultural products certified by the prefecture are sold with a logo mark (see photo below). AW is a breeding method that takes into consideration the comfort of livestock. There are 10 farms that have obtained certification to use the logo mark.



Q: Where can I get ethical agricultural and livestock products?

The "Yamanashi for a Delicious Future" website introduces the e-commerce websites of farmers and agricultural corporations. For inquiries about agricultural, livestock and marine products, please follow the links.

[Contact] Agricultural Marketing and Export Division, TEL 055-223-1602, FAX 055-223-1599

〈School on the cover〉

Improving the quality of education through detailed instruction

As it has been decided that the number of grades eligible for 25-student classes will be expanded from 2025, we visited Nirasaki City Amari Elementary School (Principal Nakamura Hirofumi). The classrooms for 5th and 6th graders, who are not yet eligible, seemed a little cramped due to the large size of the children. In the first grade class, it was impressive to see lively comments from all over the classroom.



〈There must be even more charms to Yamanashi!〉

At "Fureai Square," we are looking for photos from the prefecture's residents.

Please share your favorite spots in your town, places that make you mysteriously excited, a photo that captures the changing seasons, etc., along with an episode from when you took the photo. We also welcome any questions about the prefecture's initiatives.

〈Delivering the latest news〉

Yamanashi Prefectural Government News

〈01 High added value〉

Utilizing local fruits

Sweets skill improvement seminar

Held with the theme of "Yuzu"

On January 19, 2025, the prefecture held a skills improvement seminar for pastry chefs in the prefecture to improve their skills in sweets using local fruits and deepen their understanding of ingredients.

The venue was Museum café Sweets lab Budoya kofu in the Prefectural Museum (Fuefuki City). On this day, a technical seminar was held on sweets using yuzu, a specialty of Fujikawa Town, as the main ingredient. The instructors, Chef Kaneko Hirofumi of Ginza West Aoyama Garden, and food and confectionery journalist Namiki Makiko, explained the recipe and confectionery techniques for "Yuzu Assiette" and also gave a demonstration.

Chef Kaneko advised the students, "Sweets reflect the thoughts of the creator. By carefully considering the changes that arise from different ways of handling the ingredients, you will be able to increase the number of variations."

Participants commented, "I was able to dispel my fear of how to handle yuzu," and "I was satisfied with the structure of the seminar, which allowed me to learn from various angles, including lectures that deepened my understanding of the ingredients and demonstrations." It seems that the skills acquired in the seminar will be put to use in making their own sweets.

Through such efforts, the prefecture aims to provide high-quality sweets with high added value using locally produced fruits and to become recognized both within and outside the prefecture as a sweets kingdom.



<02. Support for carers>

Childcare and nursing care

Challenges of double care

Governor talks with relevant parties

"Talking with the Governor: Building Yamanashi," a direct dialogue between Governor Nagasaki Kotaro and the prefecture's citizens, was held on February 7, 2025, at the Kofu Disaster Prevention Building. He invited people who have experience with double care, who simultaneously raise children and care for the elderly, and people from support groups to exchange opinions on the burdens and challenges of balancing these two roles.

People who have experience with double care said, "The hardest thing is not having anyone around you to talk to," and "It would be good to have a specialized office where you can easily consult even if there is no one around." There was also an opinion that expressed hope that understanding would spread throughout society, saying, "I hope that we can create a society where many people, not just professionals in childcare and nursing care, can support carers."

People from support groups said, "It would be good to have a central office where you can get support information," and "Many elderly people are reluctant to receive nursing care services. It is also necessary to change the attitude of those receiving care."

Governor Nagasaki stated, "I believe that the situations of caregivers vary widely, but we would like to be able to provide support that is tailored to each individual's situation."



〈03 Business location〉

Toward the realization of a hydrogen society

A location agreement was signed

On February 7, 2025, the prefecture, Tsuru City, and Kanadevia Co., Ltd. (Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture), a manufacturer of hydrogen generation equipment, signed a location agreement with the city of Tsuru to revitalize the local economy and realize a hydrogen society.

In response to the construction of a new Kanadevia factory in Tsuru City aimed at completion at the end of fiscal year 2028, the prefecture and city have agreed to cooperate on the procedures for the location and securing employees, while Kanadevia will increase its employee recruitment in the area and utilize local companies for the construction of the factory and the business after it begins operations. The establishment of a mass production factory for hydrogen generation equipment is expected to have an economic ripple effect on a wide range of fields. The addition of a new piece of mass production to the prefecture, which already has a rich research environment for hydrogen, is expected to accelerate the transition from demonstration to implementation.



<You're an adult from 18! Be careful when signing contracts>

At 18, you're an adult and can sign contracts on your own. Unscrupulous businesses target young people who have just become adults and are not familiar with signing contracts.

If you sign a contract as recommended, you may end up with a large loan. Be careful when signing contracts to avoid trouble.

- Before signing a contract, think carefully about whether it is necessary.
- Don't sign a contract that would put you in debt.
- Even if you are pressured into a contract, it is important to have the courage to firmly

refuse.

If you are in trouble, please contact the following.

- Yamanashi Prefectural Counseling and Consumer Affairs Center: 055-235-8455
- Consumer Hotline: 188 (Iya-ya) *Nationwide

(We will guide you to the nearest city, town, village, or prefecture consumer life consultation office)

The Prefectural Counseling and Consumer Affairs Center provides information on its website to prevent consumer troubles.