

sustainable japan

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The venue is the message for G7 talks host Hiroshima

Roundtable

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CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As the host city for next year's Group of Seven summit, Hiroshima conveys a particularly intrinsic message about humanity's capacity for destructive power. For the prefecture's governor, Hidehiko Yuzaki, that message comes with a particularly heavy burden. "Everyone born and raised in Hiroshima has a mission," he contended. "It's a mission that is given to us whether we want it or not, and we cannot escape from it."

Yuzaki believes that Hiroshima, as the first city to be struck with a nuclear bomb, only to emerge decades later as a beautiful and vibrant center of peace, science and world-class education, has a message for the world. "It's the core message of Hiroshima: just how inhumane nuclear weapons can be, yet with strong will, you can also build prosperity through peace. Both are powerful messages about being human — you can use human power to wipe out a city, or use it to build great prosperity."

Yuzaki took time out from his busy schedule to sit down with Ross Rowbury for The Japan Times Sustainability Roundtable's 24th iteration to explain how he found his mission. He also talked about the importance of eliminating nuclear weapons, how Hiroshima is promoting

peace around the world, why it was of symbolic importance in the current geopolitical climate for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida to nominate Hiroshima for the G7 summit next May, and much more. Rowbury began by asking Yuzaki whether becoming governor was something he had always wanted.

From startup to governor

"You know, it'll take three hours to explain," Yuzaki joked, "but we don't have that much time." He reflected on how he had always been interested in policies from a young age but had never really thought about becoming a politician, or had even considered himself to be much of an entrepreneur.

While working at the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Yuzaki completed his studies as a government-sponsored student overseas, ultimately being transferred to Silicon Valley to work with local venture capital firms, with a broad mission to study and research the Silicon Valley startup ecosystem.

Yuzaki returned to Japan with a venture capitalist mindset and a strong interest in the importance of infrastructure, and identified a need to implement Japan's first broadband network. However, he soon found plans were easier to make than to implement. "You know, as a VC [venture capitalist], you often come up with great ideas," he explained. "You usually make plans, and then find the entre-



Hidehiko Yuzaki, Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture YUIKO TAIYA FOR PHOTOMATE

preneurs to carry them out." However, Yuzaki couldn't find an entity to take on the broadband plan. Not wanting to let it die, he decided he would use his talents and take on the job himself. Despite enjoying his work at the ministry, he reinvented himself as a startup entrepreneur, founding the broadband carrier ACCA Networks. The company went public and applied for a wireless license, but lost the

bid. Yuzaki decided to step down from ACCA Networks, and wondered what to do next. With experience in both managing a startup and working in government, Yuzaki considered that he had a lot to contribute. When then-Hiroshima Gov. Yuzan Fujita decided not to run again, Yuzaki saw a new opportunity to give back to the community.

A dedication to education

As governor, Yuzaki has found some aspects of running a prefecture similar to running a company, although he finds the messages and purposes very different — and the message couldn't be more important in such an iconic city in the human collective experience as Hiroshima.

Yuzaki is very committed to education, and peace studies are part of Hiroshima school curriculums from elementary school to high school. And he knows that the testimony and experiences of the hibakusha, the survivors of the bombings, are still as important as ever, especially as they grow older.

The prefecture is also now home to an internationally focused secondary school called HiGA, the Hiroshima Global Academy. The school is dedicated to bringing non-Japanese and Japanese students together to take part in critical thinking, and equip the ability to cooperate the people with different background, and it includes students from North America, Africa, and Asia. With a third of the class non-Japanese, and the students engaged in critical thinking, "It creates a small world there," Yuzaki said. "Then we pro-



"Peace begins with daily actions" said governor Yuzaki YUIKO TAIYA

vide an English international baccalaureate program, and we train them to be leaders — everything is related to global issues now."

The G7 summit

As the world edges closer toward nuclear war, Yuzaki feels the gravity of Hiroshima being selected as the venue for the next G7 summit, a venue he considers a symbol of the mission. "We are hoping that as the descendants of Hiroshima hosting the summit, the seven world leaders will recognize the destructive power they hold, and hope that they make a strong commitment that what happened to Hiroshima should never happen again."

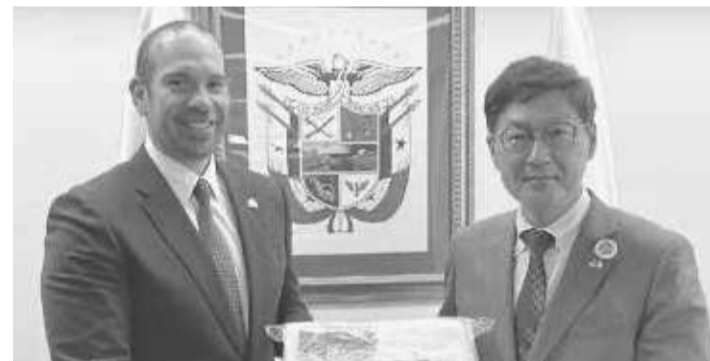
For Yuzaki, the venue is the message, but he still worries that the destructive power of nuclear weapons is still not thought about enough, "simply because the number of nuclear weapons is so high — and you can simply press a button and the Earth will end. It can sometimes be too remote of an idea to even think about, because you can't escape from it — but peace begins with daily actions."

Roundtable is a monthly series of English-language events organized by The Japan Times Cube. For more information visit <https://sustainable.japantimes.com/roundtable>



Hidehiko Yuzaki began his professional career at the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and is currently serving his fourth term as governor since he was first elected in 2009. YUIKO TAIYA

Times Gallery



Celebrating Homeland Month, Ambassador of Panama Carlos Pere receives a courtesy visit by Shigeiki Tokunaga, mayor of Imabari, the sister city of Panama City since 1977, on Nov. 8. EMBASSY OF PANAMA



Indonesian Ambassador Heri Akhmadi and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hayashi Yoshimasa pose at a diplomatic reception in commemoration of the 77th anniversary of the Republic of Indonesia. @KBRITOKYO



Jamaican Ambassador Shorna-Kay Richards (center) and the minister of agriculture and fisheries of Jamaica, Pearnel Charles Jr., meet with Kyoto Mayor Daisaku Kadokawa at the Kyokane kimono store in Kyoto. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA



Italian Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti (left) meets with Maurizio Zanella, vice president of the Franciacorta Consortium and chairman of Ca'del Bosco. THE JAPAN TIMES



Ambassador Aleksandra Kovac of Serbia meets with delegations from sister cities Sabac and Fujimi, headed by Mayors Aleksandar Pajic and Mitsuhiro Hoshino (second from right), during a visit to Fujimi to mark the 40th anniversary of relations between the two cities. EMBASSY OF SERBIA



Ambassador of Romania Ovidiu Dranga meets with Kenji Hongoya, mayor of Matsudo, the host town for Romania's athletics team during the Olympics, on Nov. 1. They discussed ways to expand student exchanges and participation in cultural events beyond sports. EMBASSY OF ROMANIA



Representatives of 18 deserving charities selected by the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan gather at the Nagoya International School to receive ¥3.5 million in proceeds from this summer's Chubu Walkathon. ANDY BOONE



The Odoribe folk dance group performs at the third Hungarian Festival at Ark Hills Karajan Square in Tokyo's Roppongi area on Oct. 22. The festival was organized by the Embassy of Hungary and the Liszt Institute Hungarian Cultural Center. MACIEJ KOMOROWSKI

Tender wagyu, other delicacies hail from clean lands of Tottori

ESG/SDGs

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Among many delicacies in Japan, Tottori Wagyu beef and its history is worth learning to make one's gastronomic life rich. Tottori Gov. Shinji Hirai and Shinsuke Nakajima, Executive Managing Director and Executive Chef of New Otani Co., Ltd. talked about the charms of the wagyu as well as other produce and the blessed environment of the prefecture in a recent interview with the Japan Times. The interview took place at Seisen-tei, a Teppanyaki restaurant located in the Japanese Garden of the New Otani Tokyo hotel where Tottori Wagyu Fair is being held until Dec. 16.

During the Edo period (1603-1867), the horse and cattle market in Daisen in Tottori prospered as one of the three major markets of the kind in Japan. Ketaka cattle bred in this area won the first national contest organized by the Wagyu Registry Association in 1966 and became the ancestry of many wagyu brands produced across the country.

At the 11th contest in 2017, Tottori's Hakuho 85-3 cattle won the first place, which led to the boost in the price of Tottori wagyu's calves. At the calf auction held in January, a Tottori wagyu calf was sold for ¥8.91 million, the highest price ever. In recent years, new technologies including genomic analysis are used to produce new breeds of seed bulls such as Takafukunari and Motohanae. "Scientific approaches have been employed in what to feed the cattle as well as how to raise and breed them to continue improving the quality in every aspect," Hirai said.

One of the main reasons why Tottori Wagyu is tasty is the high content rate of

oleic acid that defines the flavor and texture of beef. "Producers of Tottori Wagyu have been making constant improvements in terms of oleic acid content and flavor components as well," Hirai said. This is due not only to the quality of the cattle's pedigree, but also to Tottori's rich natural environment. Surrounded by the Sea of Japan and mountains including the famous Mt. Daisen, Tottori Wagyu is raised in a healthy and stress-free environment blessed with clean air and mineral-rich underground water.

To promote this wagyu, Tottori Prefecture collaborated with 10 restaurants in Tokyo to offer special menus using Tottori Wagyu during November. At The New Otani Tokyo hotel, the Tottori Wagyu Fair is held at seven restaurants for two months from Oct. 17. The hotel has been hosting the fair every year since 2018. A staff member of Sekishin-tei, one of the restaurants where the fair is taking place, commented that among many foreign guests who have enjoyed Tottori Wagyu during this year's fair, there was one guest staying Japan for the first time in three years who remembered having the wagyu there three years ago. "I have a full confidence in serving our foreign guests Tottori Wagyu as the top-quality wagyu. In particular, its tenderness has no comparison," Nakajima said. "Tourists are starting to come back to Japan. What they eat here for the first time in a few years will define Japan's status as a tourism destination after the pandemic," Hirai said.

Tottori has more delicacies to offer. The population is the smallest in the country, which is an advantage because the rich natural environment is kept intact, and the air is so clean that the sky in Tottori is full of stars. Hoshizoramai is a new brand of rice produced in Tottori, and the name means "starry sky dance." Even though dunes are not suitable for vegetable production, the Tottori Sand Dunes have become Japan's top producer of Japanese leeks after numerous efforts including the application of Japan's first sprinkler system. Nijisseiki or the 20th Century Pear is also a signature product of Tottori.

In addition to abundant agricultural prod-



Tottori governor Shinji Hirai (left) with Shinsuke Nakajima, executive managing director at the New Otani Hotel THE JAPAN TIMES

ucts, Tottori offers a wide variety of marine products thanks to the plankton-rich area off the coast where the Tsushima Warm Current from Kyushu and the cold current from Hokkaido converge.

Hirai, who is committed to promoting the prefecture internationally, said: "Tottori is blessed with all these agricultural and marine products thanks to the continuous efforts of the producers. It is our responsibility to make them better known to the world. Tottori Wagyu is starting to be recognized domestically, and we are now reaching out to the world." He also said that Tottori offers many attractive features from diverse food products to places that represent prominent works of Japanese animation and manga such as the Mizuki Shigeru Road in the city of Sakaiminato where the author of "Gegege no Kitaro," a series of manga and anime featuring yokai (monsters), was born, and the town of Hokuei where Goshō Aoyama, the author of "Detective Conan" was born.

Nakajima and Hirai shared the hope that the Tottori Wagyu Fair serves as a place of encounter for people to get to know more about the prefecture, encouraging them to visit Tottori to enjoy the beautiful nature and unique culture.

Tottori is a member of the Sustainable Japan Network, a group of companies that cooperate with this newspaper in spreading information about sustainability in Japan. You can also be part of the network; scan the QR code for more details.



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