

New Year's Message for 2020

January 6, 2020

First, let me wish a happy new year to each and every one of you. May this year be a healthy one for you, and may you find new resolve to meet your ever-changing challenges.

In May of last year, the new emperor was crowned and the Reiwa period began. Last year saw many impressive achievements: Dr. Akira Yoshino won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and Japan defeated high-ranking teams such as Ireland and Scotland in the Rugby World Cup, advancing to the quarterfinal round. I was greatly moved by these exciting achievements.

According to the zodiac, 2020 is the Year of the Rat. The word used to describe this year, Kanoene, signifies that plants will grow and change anew, and seeds will begin to bud and grow, as a characteristic of rats is their ability to make new offspring at an amazing pace. The Year of the Rat is the first year of the zodiac cycle, so it is appropriate that the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics are scheduled to be held this year. This is a major milestone for Japan, and our university as well must continue to grow and develop into the future.

As I pointed out last year in my annual analysis of world affairs, the world continues to be confused and chaotic. The US-China trade war tariffs continue to escalate. President Trump seems to have temporarily called for a truce, perhaps aiming for reelection this year, but the problem has not been solved and the future remains uncertain. China's rapid rise has provoked a great sense of crisis in the US. In particular, Huawei preceding the US in 5G technology was unforgivable for the US, but having left measures until it was too late was their mistake. Japan must also be careful about the measures it takes.

However, the situation may be affected by the continuing protests in Hong Kong and the Taiwanese presidential election, in which the incumbent president Tsai Ing-wen is said to be the leading candidate.

For the US, not only the situation in East Asia but also the situation in the Middle East is a cause of tension. The drone strike on January 3rd, 2020 that killed Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani of the IRGC caused intense anger in Iran. The situation is critical, with concerns about the possible outbreak of a fresh wave of terrorism.

North Korea held an extraordinary four-day meeting of the Workers' Party Central Committee led by Chairman Kim Jong Un at the end of December, strongly curbing the US. South Korea postponed their abandonment of GSOMIA, but the situation remains

tense.

Looking at Japan, late last year Carlos Ghosn, former chairman of Nissan, illegally left the country. He escaped although under strict surveillance, which sends a message to terrorists that the surveillance system in Japan is inadequate. This is a major issue that may affect our international security. According to newspaper reports, Japan's economic security strategy will be decided by the National Security Council within the year, the Air Self Defense Force will become the Aerospace Self Defense Force, and our security system will be upgraded. However, comparing with other countries, regrettably we must admit that in the fields of AI, IOT, 5G and cyber security we are laps behind.

Look back on last year, a good news was the approval of the facility budget and staffing of the Institute of Enology and Viticulture by the national budget bill. In addition, a high-performance pathology dissection system for the medical school was also approved.

The biggest event last year was the founding of the General Incorporated Association University Alliance Yamanashi. In May of last year, Governor Kotaro Nagasaki of Yamanashi Prefecture, President Kazuhiko Shimizu of Yamanashi Prefectural University, and I signed a partnership agreement, and the association was officially established on December 18, last year, after half a year of preparation. This new corporation, formed between a national university and a prefectural university, is the first of its kind in Japan. The Planning Division played a central role in coordinating it. I am the representative, President Shimizu of YPU is the Deputy Representative, and the Directors will be Directors Hayakawa and Sodeyama from University of Yamanashi. In addition, counsellor Shirasawa will serve as Senior Managing Director. We will work to enhance the student learning environment by providing joint lectures, enhancing liberal arts subjects, and jointly managing special graduate school education programs. This year, our goal is to be approved by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology as a University Cooperation Promotion corporation. This will enable deregulation in areas such as the double counting of teachers. We will try our hardest to improve education. Our efforts were noticed by the Central Council for Education, and the presentation we did at the university subcommittee in November of last year was well received. As such projects seem not to be proceeding smoothly in other prefectures, we have received multiple requests for advice from members of the National Universities Association.

The second great achievement of last year was the approval of National University Innovation Creation Environment Enhancement Project by the Cabinet Office in the first year of the Reiwa Period. At first this goal seemed unattainable, but with great efforts

by our research promotion and social cooperation facilities, and my own all-out presentation, only University of Yamanashi was selected out of the 55 regional universities that applied. We are working hard in areas such as the establishment of the Innovation Creation and Support Headquarters, and by the end of this March, we will make further achievements and will strive for continued acceptance in the new fiscal year. We appreciate your continued support and cooperation.

Our third great achievement last year was reform of our business decision process. It became clear that it was possible to significantly reduce costs in the business decision process in the areas of facility maintenance and procurement of goods, in activities done by the facility/environmental department, medical department administration department management section and so on. We held multiple in-house workshops and launched a market research team on October 1st. We emphasized that we can decrease our costs only if each employee has cost awareness and try to negotiate without being bound by conventional practices. I would like to thank all for their cooperation in this effort.

Our fourth project concerns the affiliated University of Yamanashi Hospital. This year, the second stage of construction on Hospital Ward II is scheduled to be completed. The redevelopment of the central clinic is an urgent issue, and this project has had various problems such as bloated costs. We must find the best solution, aiming to create an excellent central medical unit that can be used for the next 30-40 years at least.

Many more difficult problems face us in the coming year, but with the help of each and every one of you, we would like to work as one team throughout the university to overcome this difficult situation and strive to manage the university with a view to the future. We would like to ask for your continued support and cooperation.

Let me conclude my New Year's greetings with my sincere prayer that this new year will be an even more fulfilling and meaningful year than the last.