

To Help Feel Politics Closer

Ahead of this summer's Upper House election, a class on sovereignty education was held at Matsuyama Commercial High School on March 17, aiming to familiarize students with politics. The class was organized by WONDER EDUCATION, a general incorporated association. About 360 third-year students who will have the right to vote this year gained a greater understanding of and interest in the election.

The school has been conducting sovereignty education classes since 2016 when the voting age was lowered to 18. The students read a list of fictitious candidates and their promises, decided which candidate's promises they could recommend, and shared their opinions. They also learned about election violations that could occur in their daily lives, such as getting involved in an election for a fee, to realize that correct knowledge is the only way to protect themselves.

(April 18, Ehime Shimbun)

Exports from Ehime to the US

According to a report on Ehime's export trends released by the Matsuyama branch of the Bank of Japan on March 14, exports to the U.S. accounted for 4.3%, 33 billion 292 million yen, of the total of 779 billion 615 million yen in 2024.

As the "reciprocal tariffs" announced by the U.S., the Trump administration has caused turmoil around the world, and the Matsuyama Branch Manager pointed out that while the prefecture's ratio to the U.S. is far below the national average of 19.9%, some exports to the U.S. account for a high percentage. He noted that while there is no evidence of any noticeable impact at this time, there are concerns from the manufacturing and fisheries industries. He explained that some businesses are reviewing production systems and procurement sources, as it is difficult to see where the U.S. tariff policy will land. By product category, raw materials to the U.S., such as metal ores and scrap metal accounted for 32% of the exports, followed by electrical equipment at 16%, foodstuffs, such as slices of yellowtail at 13%, and machinery at 13%.

Ehime's export partners include Panama at 21.0% and Liberia at 3.0%, where the tax burden related to ships is light, along with a high percentage to Asia, including China at 17.9%, Taiwan at 13.8%, and South Korea at 8.4%.

(April 15, Ehime Shimbun)

Convenience Bookstore

On April 1, “LAWSON Uchiko-Ikazaki-Interchange”, a convenience store with a bookstore, opened on the site of a former bookstore. This is the first store that opened in Shikoku under the “Machi no Honyasan (a bookstore in town)” brand, which LAWSON is developing in cooperation with Tohan, a major publishing agency, to help relieve the shortage of bookstores.

It is the 14th Machi no Honyasan bookstore since they launched the brand in June, 2009. The area of the bookstore is about 72 square meters, about 30% of the total floor space. A LAWSON representative said, “If we have a good lineup of books, it will be a great way to attract customers. They can buy books as well as other items, 24 hours a day. It is getting hard to run a bookstore on its own, but it might be possible to run in a convenience store.”

According to the Japan Publishing Infrastructure Center, as of December 2024, there were 10,568 bookstores nationwide and 112 in Ehime, both about 30% fewer than 10 years earlier.

(April 2, Ehime Shimbun)

Ichiroku Tart Bitter Chocolate

Ichiroku Co., Ltd., a confectionery manufacturer, started selling a new product “Ichiroku Tart Bitter Chocolate” supervised by Godiva on April 1. It is available at 27 Ichiroku stores, souvenir shops, and the official online store. This product is scheduled to be sold for only a year.

This has been the third collaboration between Ichiroku and Godiva, since “Ichiroku Tart Chocolate” was produced in 2021. Although it had been sold as a Godiva product, it is designated as an Ichiroku product this time.

A chocolate paste made with Belgian bitter chocolate is rolled into a thin cake that cocoa is kneaded into. ¥324 for one, ¥993 for three, and ¥2,916 for eight.

Mr. Tsuyoshi Tamaoki, the president of Ichiroku Co., Ltd. said that the aim was to create a new confection having the same texture and flavor as eating chocolate and hoped that even foreign visitors and children would enjoy it.

(March 31, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Friendship Agreement with Taipei Metro

The Shikoku Railway Company concluded a friendship agreement with the Taipei Metro (Rapid Transit Corporation) which operates a subway and other transportation around Taipei, Taiwan. At the same time, the JR Matsuyama

station and JR Shikoku also concluded a friendship station agreement with Songshan station of the Taipei Metro, since they share the same Chinese characters “松山” in their names.

Shikoku has been welcoming many visitors from Taiwan. The agreements were made to enhance PR activities in order to increase the number of visitors on both sides.

The Matsuyama station had already signed a friendship station agreement with Songshan station of the Taiwan Railway Corporation, Ltd. in 2013. The video to introduce the Taiwan Metro has been shown at Takamatsu, Matsuyama, Tokushima, and Kochi stations. Also, information about the Taipei Metro was added to the exhibits introducing the Taiwan Railway Corporation at Matsuyama station.

(March 27, Asahi Shimbun Digital)