

LOCAL TOPICS

～A Selection of Local News Articles～

Shiki and Soseki Appear in Dogo

On August 13, two actors playing the roles of Masaoka Shiki (a great haiku poet from Matsuyama) and Natsume Soseki (a great novelist who lived in Matsuyama a short time) put on a short play in front of the Botchan mechanical clock in Dogo in Matsuyama. The play was set with Shiki and Soseki in the present day, and they entertained tourists with their dialogue and songs, helping to attract them to the Shiki Memorial Museum nearby. The actors are active in the Botchan Theater in Toon City and elsewhere. One actor also played the role of Shiki in the Botchan Theatre musical "52 Days - Gudabutshan, Two Great Writers" (2017-2018).

August 27 marks the 130th anniversary of Shiki and Soseki's sharing a house called Gudabutsuan, and the museum organized this event to commemorate this milestone. Two performances, each lasting about 10 minutes, were held in the morning. Shiki appeared in *hakama*, traditional Japanese clothing, while Soseki wore a checkered suit. The two characters expressed their joy at returning to Dogo and performed a song with lyrics based on Shiki's haiku. While soaking their feet in a footbath, they asked tourists where they were from, bringing smiles to the audience.

A tourist said, "I was surprised when Shiki spoke to me. It's moving to think that the two were once such good friends." His eldest daughter, aged 14, said, "We have a copy of 'Botchan' at home. I've decided to read it properly."

The short play will be held irregularly once a month until March next year. The next one is scheduled for September 27.

(August 14, Ehime Shimbun)

Matsuyama Castle Ropeway Celebrated 70th Anniversary

On August 7 the Matsuyama castle ropeway celebrated its 70th anniversary since the operation had started. Stakeholders got together around the city to wave and see off the special operation to celebrate that special day.

According to the city, the ropeway started on August 7, 1955. It connects the foot with the 8th station of the castle mountain, which is 327m long. Two gondolas accommodating 35 passengers make round trips of a 62m elevation difference. It takes 2.5 minutes one way. The single chairlift was installed in 1966. Both still help visitors going to the Matsuyama castle tower.

The fare is ¥520 round trip, and ¥270 one way. 561,176 passengers used the ropeway last year.

(August 8, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

Angry Jizo the Witness

The atomic bomb that struck Hiroshima 80 years ago brought devastation not only to countless people, but also to plants, animals, buildings, and even Jizo statues. The "Angry Jizo," known for its angry expression, still bears witness to the devastation. A memorial service was held on August 6 at Ryusen-in Temple in Matsuyama, which has been preserving the Jizo for generations.

Misao Nishihara, the grandmother of the temple chief priest, who lived in Hiroshima, found a headless Jizo statue in the ruins of the atomic bombing. Feeling sorry for the Jizo, she asked a stonemason to attach a head, and then the statue's face appeared to be

angry. She enshrined it at the entrance to her home along with six other Jizo statues she had found. In 1969, she moved to Matsuyama and came to live at the temple, where her daughter had married into. She took the seven Jizo statues with her from Hiroshima and enshrined them on the temple grounds. Despite her frail health, she continued to care for the Jizo statues until her death in 1973 at the age of 78. The Angry Jizo statue was once featured in a picture book, and even today, people from inside and outside the prefecture take their children to visit the Jizo.

This was the first memorial service in 18 years that invited the general public to participate. It came after the deputy chief priest heard from an elementary school teacher from Osaka that children have less opportunities to hear war stories directly. He realized the importance of passing on these stories and planned this event to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the war.

On the day, at 8:15 a.m., the time of the atomic bombing, the deputy chief priest recited sutras. Citizens put hands together and prayed for a peaceful world without war. (August 7, Ehime Shimbun)

Marked Lower Rates on National Test

The Ehime prefectural board of education announced the summary of results for Ehime of the national academic achievement test which is conducted by the country for 6th grade students of elementary school and 3rd grade students of jr. high school. The averages for mathematics and science were lower than the national average.

The test covered Japanese, mathematics, and science. All public schools in Ehime having the target grade students, including special needs schools, participated in this program.

According to the compulsory education department of the Ehime prefectural board of education, the average for Japanese for 6th graders and science for 3rd year jr. high showed the biggest gap with the national average. Both were lower by 2 points, although it had been 1 point lower last year. Science, which was implemented for the first time in 3 years, was conducted online for the first time.

In the questionnaire, the rates of the students having a goal or dream for the future were higher than the national average both for 6th graders and 3rd year jr. high. This might be the result of the prefecture putting effort into job experience classes and carrier education.

On the other hand, the rates of the students indicating they understand their classes very well were lower than the national average for all the subjects. The compulsory education department says that they will organize the seminars for teachers to improve class contents and develop new apps for the students to enhance reading comprehension.

(August 1, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

To Improve Japanese Language Education

On July 26, a training session was held in Matsuyama to review methods of support for children of foreign origins, who have one or both parents from overseas. About 40 participants, including teachers, learned how to teach Japanese language tailored to each child's level of comprehension. It was hosted by the Ehime Japanese Language Education Human Resources Network, and was led by Mr. Yoshida from Saijo Elementary School, who conducts the prefecture's first "Japanese Language Instruction Classroom" to provide well-tailored instruction. In this school 39 students have used the classroom so far.

Mr. Yoshida explained that it takes a different length of time to acquire everyday

language and to acquire language used in academic settings, so it is necessary to link the language learning processes. He said that he has his students listen to important expressions, such as "*Sensei, toire, ii desu ka.*" meaning, "Excuse me, can I go to the bathroom?", and repeatedly practice speaking them. He also added that incorporating gestures is a good way if they have difficulty understanding. He mentioned challenges that they face, such as creating a system where students can continue to study Japanese after entering junior high and senior high school, and increasing the number of staff with specialized knowledge.

After his lecture, he said, "It's best to treat each child as an ordinary individual, not as special. We should think about what kind of support we can give them to help develop their strengths."

(July 28, Ehime Shimbun)

New Departments in Matsuyama University

Matsuyama University disclosed their plan to add a new "Global Communications" department to the faculty of humanities (English department) which would admit 110 students at the maximum to the University, and an alternate 2nd commercial "Regional Management" department at the jr. college which could admit 100 students. The applications will be submitted to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in April 2026, and both new departments are planned to be launched in April 2027.

There will be two courses in the Global Communications Department: professional English and practical communication. The students will learn English and knowledge about communication in practical ways.

The new department will add a teacher training course for elementary school to the jr. and sr. high school courses currently existing. Also, the university will work together with the high schools in the prefecture to offer a consecutive 7-year learning opportunity. They will hire and welcome new professors on communication as well as literature & culture course in the English department.

Mr. Masato Ikegami, the president, said that the university aims for the students to build the strength to establish a connection/collaboration with others to solve problems through talking with the people with different perspectives.

Matsuyama Jr. College will drop the night course which has been offered for the working students for more than 70 years, and open a day course instead. It is because they see that the night course is no longer needed due to the decrease of working adult students. Help to obtain various certificates and Internship opportunities will be offered at the Regional Management department. They will also strengthen the leadership to transfer to other universities.

(July 25, Ehime Shimbun Online)