

“O’SHIKOKU” – JR Shikoku’s New Brand

The JR Shikoku Group launched a new brand “O’SHIKOKU” in corporation with a PR agency. They expect that the sales of food and drink and merchandise will grow by introducing and delivering the charm of Shikoku through the new brand. They announced that a special version of Besshi ame (=candy) made from local products in Shikoku was nominated as the first item for this brand. It will be available in markets on March 18 to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of Takamatsu Orne, a commercial station building in Takamatsu.

The new brand campaign has been prepared by the JR Shikoku group and the Saylor Advertising Group since June last year as a new product developing project. New products should contain both “new” and “nostalgia” in Shikoku and the name of the brand “O’SHIKOKU” stands for “WOW!” which means the person was impressed by the item and service of this brand.

The first item was developed based on Besshi Ame which is a candy produced by Besshiame Hompo Ltd., a long-established confectionery company in Niihama. Besshi ame was created in 1926 and is a soft candy with milk flavor. For the campaign, shio-milk flavor using salt made on Hakata island, Ehime, a rich-strawberry flavor using Sanuki-hime strawberries made in Kagawa, and *kabuse-cha* (shade-grown tea) flavor using Shingu-cha in Ehime. A packet contains 8 candies of each flavor for 540 yen.

It is available at the Shikoku Meguru Marche and the Harenohiya at Takamatsu Orne, the Graceful Gift Shop by Harenohiya at Matsuyama station, the Kochi Meihinkan at Kochi station, the Tokushima Meihinkan at Tokushima station and the Seven-Eleven stores in various stations in Shikoku.

(March 20, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

Scidmore’s Cherry Trees’ Connection with Matsuyama

~We would like many people as many as possible to know that Matsuyama has a connection with Ms. Eliza Scidmore. ~ A Scidmore cherry tree sapling was planted by volunteers and the Matsuyama Central Lion’s Club in the compound of Bansuiso on March 9.

3,000 cherry trees which Japan gave to Washington D.C., the capital of the U.S., in 1912 were planted along the Potomac River and are appreciated as a symbol of the friendship between the two nations. Ms. Eliza Scidmore, an American journalist, was the advocate of the plan, and introduced Japan’s culture to the western countries. An organization, Yokohama Scidmore Sakura,

brought back cuttings from the Potomac trees in 1991 and planted one in front of her grave in Yokohama to commemorate her, and a Yokohama nursery trees is growing them. They have been planted as 'Scidmore cherry trees' at various places related to her, especially in the Kanto region of Japan.

A book written by Scidmore is set in Matsuyama *As the Hague ordains; Journal of a Russian Prisoner's Wife in Japan*. The story is told from the perspective of a wife nursing her Russian husband who is a prisoner of war, and it depicts her interactions with the people in Matsuyama.

Mr. Shiraishi, a representative of the Scidmore's Cherry Tree in Matsuyama Club, established the organization to let people know the connection between Ms. Scidmore and Masuyama. The site for planting the sapling is Bansui-so.

The planting ceremony was attended by Governor Nakamura, Ms. Yuka Shimizu, the Japan Sakura Queen and Ms. Chiaki Umemoto, the representative of the organization of Yokohama Scidmore Sakura. A lecture and social gathering were also held to discuss peace, friendship and goodwill.

(March 9, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Feel the Earth Alive

A traveling exhibition "A Journey Through Earth's Time" is currently being held at the Shikoku Seiyo Geo Museum in Seiyo City. <https://seiyo-geomuseum.jp/en/> Through rocks and landscape photographs collected from geoparks across Japan, visitors can feel closer to the workings of the Earth.

The exhibition is divided into four chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on the relationship between the land, life, and ecosystems. It introduces how well tourism and agriculture thrive and how different plants and animals live by taking advantage of the terrains shaped by Earth's activities such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes.

Chapter 2 focuses on the rocks. While they seem ordinary, a closer look at them reveals a collection of various minerals, resembling colorful works of art. Visitors can learn about the profundities of the rocks that hold the history of the Earth.

The final chapter, using smartphones as an example, illustrates how heavily our convenient lives are supported by natural resources.

A curator says, "Knowing the formation of the Earth and the wonders of nature makes familiar landscapes look different. I hope this also provides an opportunity to consider how to protect our limited resources."

The traveling exhibition runs until May 10. It's closed Tuesdays until the end of March, and Mondays and Tuesdays from April onwards.

(March 9, Ehime Shimbun)

Increasing Foreigners, Decreasing Crimes

On February 28, Kyodo News revealed the number of foreigners' arrests by prefecture over a 25-year period. The data, excluding permanent residents and US military personnel, was compiled into five-year totals for comparison. It was based on an analysis of crime statistics from the National Police Agency. From 2001 to 2025, the number of foreigners living in Japan doubled from 2.01 million to 3.95 million, while the proportion of those involved in crime decreased. Between 2021 and 2025, 56706 foreigners were arrested nationwide a decrease of 40% from the peak of 93,899 between 2001 and 2005. Some areas, such as Ibaraki, saw an increase.

In Ehime, the number of foreigners' crimes decreased from 349 between 2001 and 2005, to 132 between 2021 and 2025. The decline in the crime rate was 62.2%, the third highest in the country, following 73.2% in Nagano and 72.7% in Tokushima.

Looking at the single-year data, the number of foreigners arrested nationwide in 2025 increased by 607 (5.0%) compared to the previous year. This represents a rebound from the temporary decrease in crime due to the COVID-19 pandemic, making the third consecutive year of increase. Considering that the annual growth of the number of foreigners residing in Japan is over 300,000, the number of arrests hasn't increased as much.

Amid an increase of xenophobic posts on social media claiming the increase in foreigners deteriorates public safety, a calm and data-driven discussion should be required.

(March 1, Ehime Shimbun)

The Number of Foreign Workers Hits a Record

Labor Bureaus in each prefecture in Shikoku announced the employment status of foreign nationals (as of October 2024). The numbers of both foreign workers and establishments hiring foreign workers have been the most in all the four prefectures since 2007 when the report on foreign workers became mandatory.

According to labor bureaus in each prefecture, the prefecture where the most

number of foreign workers are living is Kagawa in Shikoku which is 16,557 (+14.8% in comparison with last year). There are 2,358 establishments where foreign workers are working (+8.9%) in Kagawa. By nationality, Indonesians are the most at 23.8% of all the foreign workers in Kagawa, followed by Vietnamese 23.5%, and Filipino 14.2%. The number of Indonesians shows significant growth at +33.5% compared to last year.

As for Ehime, the number of foreign workers is 15,925 (+9.5%). The number of establishments for foreign workers working is 2,559 (+9.0%). By nationality, Vietnamese is the most by 31.3% of all foreign workers, followed by Filipino at 26.0%, and Indonesian at 14.7%.

As for Tokushima, the number of foreign workers is 7,324 (+13.5%). The number of establishments for them working is 1,400 (+7.8%). By nationality, Vietnamese are the most at 31.3% of all the foreign workers, followed by Indonesians 16.1%, and Chinese 13.9%. The number of Indonesian shows significant growth at +27.7 compared to last year.

As for Kochi, the number of foreign workers is 5,916 (+11.8%), and the number of establishments for them working is 1,332 (+9.5%). By nationality, Vietnamese is the most by 33.9% share of all the foreign workers, followed by Indonesian 22.9% and Filipino 13.7%.

By industry, the manufacturers hired the largest number of foreign workers in Kagawa, Ehime and Tokushima, and in Kochi the most are in agriculture and forestry. The industry having the second most foreign workers is wholesale and retail in Kagawa, medical and welfare in Ehime and Tokushima, and the manufacturing in Kochi. In terms of size of the establishment, the most common size in all four prefectures was one with less than 30 employees.

According to the people in charge at the labor bureau of all four prefectures, the reason why the number of foreign workers is the most is because of the labor shortage in all four prefectures, and it is predicted that the number would continue increasing. Advice and guidance on the appropriate employment management for them are required.

(February 28, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

Voices From Those with Experience of Juries

On February 25, an opinion-exchange meeting was held at the Matsuyama District Court involving seven former lay juries and some judges, to incorporate the voices of those who had experienced juries into the system's promotion and

to improve operation. Many of them expressed positive reactions, such as "I understood the weight of judging others, and it was a valuable experience," and "I want others to actively participate." Some also said they felt closer to the judicial system.

Attendees included lay judges and alternate lay judges from trials involving murder and robbery resulting in injury held between November 2024 and October 2025, along with judges, prosecutors, and lawyers. A man from Shikokuchuo City reflected, "I found the purpose of the system is to evaluate evidence and determine the sentence with one's own judgment."

Regarding evidence such as weapons, a man from Saijo City said, "Seeing the actual weapons conveyed the vividness of the crime better," but some argued that photographs were enough, unnecessary to see actual weapons. Some voices called for a clearer summary of the case's events, while others pointed out that participation is difficult without understanding from the workplace due to staff shortages and other factors there.

Since the system started in 2009, 163 jury trials have been held at the Matsuyama District Court, with a total of about 1,290 people selected as juries. (February 26, Ehime Shimbun)