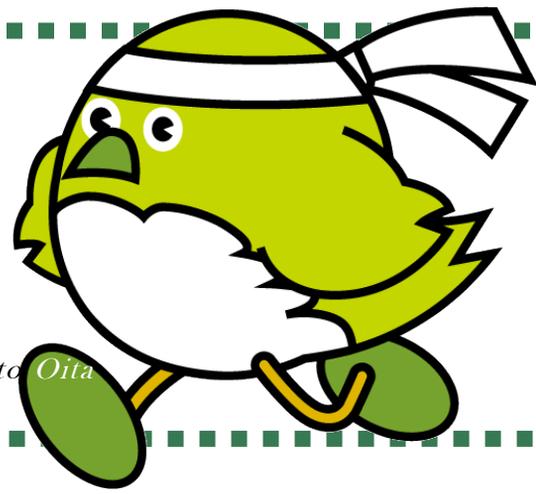


What's up,

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Bringing the latest from Oita, Japan to all those connected to Oita thriving all across the globe.



Preparatory Activities for the Rugby World Cup 2019 in Oita

A series of preparatory activities preceding the Rugby World Cup 2019 convened on August 24, just a month before the opening of the major event itself.

Aside from the unveiling ceremony for large-scale artworks, the day's programme also contained a talk session with retired Tongan-Japanese rugby union player Sinali Latu and the distinguished model Yukipoyo, followed by a public viewing of a match between Australia and New Zealand.

Before the viewing, audience received a recital of the national anthems of the two participating countries from musician Murata Takumi and the students of Oita and Taketa's Rugby Schools, whose performance set the venue alight with tremendous energy.

With the streets breaming with excitement for the upcoming Rugby World Cup 2019, Oita is fully ready to share the once-in-a-lifetime sensation with rugby fans from around the world!



The Korean Language Speech Contest, an event where I participate in as a judge every year, ran for the 22nd time at the Mt. Takasaki Monkey Museum. Twenty-one high school and university students participated in the contest this year and demonstrated their Korean language abilities that they've garnered over the years. The themes of the speeches ranged from favourite K-pop idols to other aspects of Korean culture, and words like 'I want to study Korean further', 'I want to study abroad in Korea' and 'I want to make friends with Koreans' were all very heart-warming. The techniques of the participants only increase in quality each year, with this year being particularly difficult to judge as I felt that everyone deserved an award.

As I watched high school students who spoke about their dreams of becoming bridges for Japan-Korean relations, I was reminded of the time six years ago where I had entered a Japanese speech contest as a participant myself, and the memory filled me with profound emotions. I truly hope that the students before me would be able to fulfil their dreams.

- Jina Kim, CIR from Korea



Although this year's Himeshima Bon Odori was postponed to the weekends due to typhoon, I was able to see it since I happened to have work at the time.

The delightfulness of local children who had forgotten their dance moves, the fluidity of other dancers, the incandescence of their passion, and the occasional comedic episode all contributed to a thrilling evening. I was able to meet most of the children in Himeshima's primary and middle schools since I went to the event with a local ALT, and their reactions were simply adorable. However, it was a tad embarrassing since my friend and I were the only ones wearing yukata – I will make sure to check everything out before going to a festival next time!

Riding the ferry, we were able to see a sky dyed crimson red on our way to the island only to be greeted by a beautiful full moon as we departed, making the evening all the more special.

- Sarah Backley, CIR from UK

Monthly staff corner

Tsurusaki Odori Festival



As we slowly approach the end of the year, the weather becomes more temperamental and bringing an umbrella wherever you go becomes an increasingly good idea. Nonetheless, the locals' enthusiasm for fun shows no sign of waning despite the harsh sun and torrential rain. The end of August brings us the delightful Tsurusaki Dance Festival, an almost 450-year-old event that is listed as a National Intangible Folk Cultural Property.

A little historical background always makes something more interesting. The performance of Tsurusaki Odori originated from the Eiroku era (1558-1569); it is said that Otomo Sorin, the lord of Bungo province (present day Oita prefecture), became so engaged in wine and merrymaking that he became negligent in his duties. Tobe Akitsura, Otomo's chief retainer, brought in beautiful dancers from Kyoto to gain an opportunity for a meeting with the lord – thus began the *Mitsuhyoshi* (*Sarumaru-Dayu*), the first form of the Tsurusaki Odori.

Despite its beginnings, the Tsurusaki odori is now not only for warlords to enjoy. The dance festival is

held every year at the Oita Tsurusaki Park Ground, spanning over the two evenings of the first weekend following the old Bon Festival. On the evening, around 1,000 dancers dressed in decorative costumes embroidered in gold and silver move gracefully to the rhythm of *hayashi*, which features an ensemble of traditional flutes and percussion instruments. Perhaps the most distinctive accessories were the huge paper cranes sitting on the dancers' heads, a wordplay on the *tsuru* in Tsurusaki, a kanji that denotes 'crane'.

As for the dance itself, there are two main forms. The first is the *Sarumaru-Dayu*, a slow dance with a gracious air about its movements, while the latter is called *Saemon*, a slightly more upbeat dance with a light tempo. The dancers move slowly with fluidity, their delicate accessories jingling to the beat of the music. Due to its fine movement, in particular in regards to footwork, Tsurusaki odori is said to be one of the most difficult traditional dances of Oita. To appreciate the dance in its true form, make sure to check out the schedule for next year's event.

- Xin Lan Xie, CIR from Australia