

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama City (76) November 22nd, 2016 Issue

【Attracting Muslim Tourists Beyond Cultural Differences】

Hello, I'm Mr. Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

From 15th to 17th November, promotional activities were conducted in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Jakarta, Indonesia in order to attract Muslim tourists, whose population is over 1.6 billion in the world and who are expected to lead the inbound tourism market going forward.

This was the part of “Okayama-Style Health Tourism Hub Strategy”, promoted by Okayama Associated Central Urban Area which City of Okayama was allying with Maniwa-city and Kibichuo-cho. The mayor of Kibichuo-cho and I delivered a sales presentation. Especially in Malaysia, where Japanese cherry blossoms are popular among people, promotions in November were said to be the best for their tour planning for next spring. We were thus invited to convey Okayama's attractiveness.

At the sightseeing seminars held in two countries on 15th and 17th November, we appealed charms and sightseeing spots of two cities and one town of Okayama. We also publicized exchange programs, such as “Shamisen Mochitsuki”, with tourist-friendly guides and locals who were knowledgeable enough about foods, worships and Muslims' customs. Furthermore, in Kuala Lumpur, local travel agencies and we concluded on a memorandum of understanding on setting a target number of tourists to Okayama as 480 people per year instead of 240.

On 16th November, we were on a live information TV program by the Malaysian State-Owned Broadcasting (Newscasters there were a Chinese man and an Indian

woman, which was multiethnic indeed) to promote tours to Okayama. We also visited a local travel agency in Jakarta for sales on 17th November.

I am confident that we have delivered fruitful promotional activities in such a short stay like three days. In inspection tours which will be held in Okayama for travel agencies and relevant parties of Malaysia and Indonesia in the coming December and January, I would like them to feel Okayama's beauty through various activities.

By the way, when I visited Jakarta I heard something delightful from Mr. Tomioka, Executive Director at National Tourism Organization (JNTO) Jakarta Office, who belongs to the marathon runners' society. He told me that many of his running mates who participated in Okayama Marathon praised it as a truly heart-warming event.

That was when I had just finished 4.5km Fun Run on the previous Sunday (13th November), so his story told in a faraway land-Jakarta was a great surprise. At the same time, I made up my mind again to make Okayama Marathon more attractive to win as many Okayama fans as possible.