

## The 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Japanese Language Festival (JLfest 2014) at MJIIT

MJIIT as the proud host co-organized the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Japanese Language Festival (JLfest) last May 2014 together with Japan Foundation, Japanese Language Society, Malaysia Ministry of Education and Japan Embassy in Malaysia. The festival aims at enhancing the understanding and appreciation among Japanese language learners on the culture and language of the Japanese people by providing them an interactive and experiential Japanese-speaking opportunity and environment, whereby classroom language learning is brought into the real world of the learners.

About 46 Cultural Workshop booths were set up attracted about 1,500 secondary school students as participants from all over Malaysia. The programme was divided into 3 sessions. In the morning session, participants joined one workshop each from group A and B which they had earlier registered online. The A category consists of cultural activities such as Calligraphy, Kirie, Kirigami, Igo, Ikebana, Haiku, Furoshiki, Origami, Hamaguri Doll, Manga Drawing, Paper Doll and Craft, Anime Paper Craft, Kodomo no Asobi and Chirimen Zaki. In B category there were Yukata wearing, Algorithm Taiso, Ninjutsu, Odori, Yosakoi, Aikido, Kendo, Singing, Okonomiyaki, Tamagoyaki, Udon, Chanko Nabe, Takoyaki and Mochitsuki workshops. The most captivating and much anticipated were when each school performed their very own Soran Bushi dance, the crowd cheered excitedly. Though each group demonstrated the same dance and technique but each showed their skilful, teamwork discipline and a lot of sweating hard work effort for that highly spirited yet artful performances performed as each group swayed to the beat.



Professor Ir. Dr. Wahid Omar, UTM Vice Chancellor in his foreword said that, MJIIT as an institution under the second wave of the Look East Policy is indeed committed to promoting the technology, culture and values of Japan to learners in UTM in particular, and Malaysia in general. He urged the participants to take the opportunity to gain invaluable knowledge pertaining to Japanese technology, culture and values, which could be emulated in our aspiration to become a developed nation by 2020.

In the afternoon session, the crowd manned the Japanese Language Market booths which highlighted some yummy Japanese and local foods. While to attract customers to the Japanese Bargain Sales booth, the potential buyer was persuaded to talk in Nihongo, because the more you talk in Nihongo, the lower the price of some merchandise. And as an early stage of promoting, booths on MJIIT, JLPT and Teikyo Language Institute were set up for the participants early planning and look through the opportunities of studying either local or abroad.

Apart from Soran Bushi dance competition, other JLFest game competitions were Sugoroku, Koinobori, Sugoroku, Story Reading, Drawing, Calligraphy, Haiku and Mr. & Ms. Yukata. For the public culture demonstration, Datin Ho Choy Meng showed how to fold Origami while Mr. Fujino Hisashi demonstrated Kendo.



Mr. Takashi Yokoyama, the Director of Japan Information Services in Embassy of Japan in Malaysia in his message said that, language and culture are two inseparable aspects of gaining a deeper insight into an ethnic group of a nation. It can be said that learning Japanese is the window towards understanding Japanese culture and life. Embracing the cultural experience of a language can bring life and vitality into language learning.

Mr. Edward Lee, The Japanese Society of Malaysia President said that due to the event popularity no matter how much they expand the capacity of the festival each year yet many were turn away. Immersion is the key to any successful language acquisition. You learn by doing. You understand by experiencing. And you master by living through it.

There were also Japanese food corners which were sold to the public such as Takoyaki, Chicken Teriyaki, Udon and Mochi cake which sold like what Malaysian people used to say it “macam goreng pisang panas” (very fast selling).



During the closing ceremony, the finalists of Soran Bushi dance, Story Reading and Mr. and Ms. Yukata had to compete for the finale round. Apart from that, Annual Japanese Choral Speaking for the 4<sup>th</sup> time also held that day. H.E. Dr Miyagawa Makio, Japan Ambassador to Malaysia gave away the prizes to the winners.

I enjoyed this event very much but rather felt a bit of regret since it was a closed event and you cannot simply moved freely to catch up with the uniqueness of each booth as it was set up for participants workshops. Therefore I missed a lot of opportunity to take photos of each booth. As I recalled back it may look like MJIT was captivated by a bunch of young active and robust teenagers with full volumes of noises everywhere, happily chatting, be it at the lobby, café area, in front of the elevator, along the corridor, at the beverage slot machine etc. Judging by their happy faces I knew that the event was successful even though some participants were turned down. As Mr. Edward Lee (President, Japanese Language Society of Malaysia) put it, “....you never know how much you would gain or enjoy doing something you have not thought before. With a little of positivity and an open-mind, you will discover a new world. Be it as a contestant giving all his best or as a spectator cheering for his favourite, it would definitely be entertaining, educational and inspirational”.

Article by : Azma (Kuala Lumpur office)