

awa life

New Year's
Greetings from
TOPIA

My First School
Visit as CIR

January 2026

422



謹
賀
新
年

明けまして

おめでとうございます!

Looking Back on
Osaka Expo 2025

Nihongo Know-it-All:
Year of the Horse

Horse artwork by Hisatoyo Murasawa



TOPIA

Awa Life is a Monthly Publication of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

あけましておめでとうございます！ Happy New Year everyone, and welcome to 2026! We hope you had an excellent holiday break, and that however you chose to spend it, you enjoyed it to its fullest. Did you make any 新年の抱負 (しんねん ほうふ), or New Years Resolutions? If so, we wish you the best of luck!

2026 is the Year of the Horse, or 午年 (うまどし) in Japanese. The Year of the Horse is considered a year symbolizing initiative, energy, and the drive to move forward. Sounds like this bodes well for those resolutions!



For all of those who like writing, please feel free to submit an article to us at any point in time about basically anything. There are a few limitations though, such as you can't write about religion, politics, commercial activities or businesses, or anything that we deem inappropriate. But, other than that, we would be more than happy to receive articles about anything and everything including but not limited to concerts, lectures, other events, culture, sports, community group information or anything cool that's happening in your local community. Additionally, please keep articles around ~400-700 words (if writing in English), or ~1000 characters (if writing in Japanese). If you have any questions or want to check if your topic will work, feel free to reach out to us before you start writing.

We highly appreciate all of your articles and we love reading them. So if that writing bug of yours is buzzing about, grab a pen or a computer and write and send away! Please send all submissions to our email:

awalife@gmail.com

Your editors,
Riley and Lisa

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New Years Greetings from TOPIA

By: Seiji Miyoshi, Director of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

Happy New Year. I hope that everyone is in good health as we step into 2026.

central organization to oversee such policies, amongst other measures.

Last year, while the invasion of Ukraine and the Gaza conflict persisted, the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan opened in April, welcoming over 28 million visitors from around the world. TOPIA's "Arasowaren," an Awa Odori dance group formed of foreign residents living in the prefecture, participated in the "One World through Dance: Tokushima's Awa Odori" event at the Expo on May 3rd, dancing the Awa Odori and connecting with visitors from far and wide.

Furthermore, policies involving foreigners became a key issue in Japan's July 2025 Upper House of Councillors election. Immediately following this election, at the National Governors' Conference held in Aomori City, 47 governors rejected exclusivism and xenophobia, compiling the "Proposal for Accepting Foreigners and Realizing a Multicultural Society." This proposal calls on the national government to enact a basic law forming the foundation for multicultural policies, as well as to establish a



Amidst this, the number of foreign residents in our prefecture continued to rise, reaching a record high of 9,190 as of the end of June 2025. By nationality, Vietnam (2,332) comprised the majority, followed by China (1,617), Indonesia (1,220), Philippines (997), and Myanmar (576). By residency status, the largest groups were Technical Intern Trainees (2,997), Permanent Residents (1,484), and Specified Skilled Workers (1,468).

This trend of increasing foreign residents is expected to continue this year against the backdrop of labor shortages stemming from population decline and aging. Here at the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association, we are undertaking various initiatives to ensure that foreigners can live with peace of mind. These include multilingual consultation services, Japanese language classes that improve proficiency as well as provide a place to connect with others, outreach lectures to raise disaster prevention awareness,

New Years Greetings from TOPIA

dispatching lecturers to deepen residents' international understanding, homestay and home visit programs for international students, and hosting a Japanese speech contest by foreigners to promote cross-cultural understanding.

This year, TOPIA will continue to work as one to further serve the community as flag bearer for internationalization in Tokushima. We are committed to welcoming foreign residents as integral members of our local communities, and

strive to realize a diverse and inclusive society where no one is left out. We will do our utmost to collaborate closely with prefectural and municipal governments, as well as private organizations in order to make this a reality.

In closing, I would like to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous New Year, and I ask for your continued support and understanding for TOPIA in 2026 as well. Thank you.

My First School Visit as CIR

By: Chen Sizhe

Recently, I participated in my first school visit as a guest lecturer, introducing Chinese culture at one of Tokushima's elementary schools. In total there were six lecturers; one from China, Germany, Mexico, India, and two from America. After arriving at the school, we were divided up into three groups of two and each group was assigned a class of sixth graders to present to.

Stepping up to the podium, I felt a wave of nerves hit me all at once. What if I'm met with dead silence? What if the kids don't find my presentation interesting? However, as soon as I got started talking about my home country, my anxieties melted away. My presentation focused on Chinese tourist destinations and culture, introducing sightseeing spots such as historical sites, natural scenery, and modern cities. In the culture section, I covered differences in payment methods between Japan and China, cost of living, and delivery services using drones/robots. I dispersed pop quizzes throughout the lecture, and gave panda stickers to students who answered correctly. The pandas proved to be very popular, with many children eagerly raising their hands. Some even collected multiple stickers, earning them the title "Panda Billionaires."

During Q&A time after the lecture, I was surprised by how much interest the kids showed towards Chinese culture. My worries from before about them not being interested were proven unfounded; instead, they asked so many questions that there wasn't enough time to get to them all. "What

Chinese foods should I try if I visit one day?" "Why is the Chinese flag that design?" "Have you ever ridden an elephant?" "What animals other than pandas are there?" "Do you know 'Labubu'?" Clearly, the questions covered a wide range of topics. In the end I couldn't get to all of their questions, and the time came to part ways. The students reluctantly said their goodbyes, calling out "謝謝" (*xie xie*, thank you) and waving us off with smiles on their faces.

This school visit made me realize how much fun it is to share Chinese culture with Japanese children. The experience was enjoyable and surprising, adding new color to my daily life. The children's pure, curious eyes wiped away my anxieties and strengthened my desire to share Chinese culture. On that day, I felt I was not a simple lecturer, but a bridge connecting different cultures. Seeing the kids' enthusiastic responses and genuine interest filled me with great hope for the future. Perhaps someone among them will develop an interest in China, and go on to one day contribute to China-Japan relations.

From here on out, I want to continue visiting schools whenever possible to speak about my home country, with the hope that these efforts will inspire more people to learn about China and grow to love its culture. This school visit was not merely a cultural introduction lecture; it was an exchange of hearts, a hand extended between cultures. I am more than determined than ever to continue this work.

Expo Legacy Tokushima

Information from Awanavi.jp

To share the achievements of Tokushima at the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo, which concluded last October, the “EXPO LEGACY TOKUSHIMA Gratitude Exhibition” is currently being held in the Prefectural Government Office until March 31, 2026. It includes exhibits from the Tokushima Zone in the Kansai Pavilion, such as indigo-dyed works and woodworkings, and showcases the results of international exchange activities conducted during the Expo. Additionally, the sofas used in the Germany Pavilion have been donated to the prefecture and are being displayed in the



central area on the first floor of the Prefectural Office.

Exchanges between Germany and Tokushima

Prefecture began during World War I, and have since culminated in forms such as sister city relations between German and Tokushima municipalities. During the Expo, the Germany Pavilion, building upon these long-standing relationships, engaged in cultural exchange activities like the Awa Odori dance and indigo dyeing. As a testament to this friendship, the Germany Pavilion donated the sofas to Tokushima Prefecture free of charge.

This sofa set was part of the Germany Pavilion's exhibition themed around the “Circular Economy.” It embodies the future vision of a circular society—a shift from a society centered around disposable resources to one that recycles resources, leaving more for the next generation. It serves as a symbol of exchange with Tokushima Prefecture, which shares this vision. We sincerely hope that through this sofa, people will feel the deep bond between Germany and Tokushima Prefecture, as well as the connection to the wider world.



Looking Back on Osaka Expo 2025

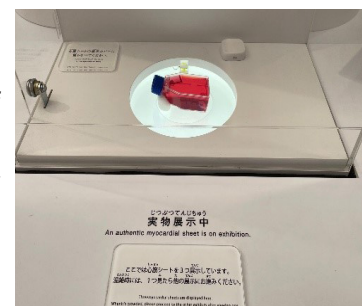
By: Chen Fangyu

Based on the theme “Designing Future Society for Our Lives,” the Osaka Expo was held from April to October 2025 in Yumeshima, Kansai, Japan on a grand scale. The Expo focused on three core concepts—Health, Technology, and Sustainability—and envisioned a future where people and nature, society and technology coexist. I was fortunate enough to experience this great gathering of creativity and wisdom from around the world twice.

The first time I visited the Expo 2025, I was able to enter various countries' pavilions, such as France, China, America, and Japan. Seeing people from all corners of the globe gather and talk and laugh together, it felt like the whole world had become one. The second time I visited was October 11, a mere two days before the Expo ended. Although it was only 8am when we arrived, already the crowds stretched endlessly. After waiting an hour

in line, we were finally able to enter the gates, rushing straight to the nearby Osaka Healthcare Pavilion after hearing of its popularity.

Stepping into the Pavilion, the first thing that caught my eye was something called a “myocardial sheet.” This was developed by the team of 2012 Nobel Prize laureate Professor Shinya Yamanaka, using iPS cells. The cells are cultured and multiplied, then



Myocardial Cell Sheets

grown into cardiomyocytes. Using cell sheet technology, a myocardial sheet measuring several centimeters in diameter and just 0.1 millimeters thick is created from hundreds of millions of myocardial cells. Three of these myocardial

Looking Back on Osaka Expo 2025

sheets can be attached to a weakened heart to restore its function. In addition to the myocardial sheets, the Healthcare Pavilion showcased numerous other cutting-edge technologies such as the Mirai Ningen Sentakuki (“human washing machine of the future”), which automatically cleans one’s entire body, making cleanliness and health more accessible. We also witnessed the power of life-saving technology, such as rescue equipment capable of quickly detecting life signs beneath rubble after a major earthquake. Furthermore, the Healthcare Pavilion advocated for a “food revolution” originating from Osaka and introduced initiatives toward the goal of “Zero Hunger.” Throughout the pavilion, visitors could experience cutting-edge technologies in healthcare, welfare, and disaster prevention up close, deeply feeling the warmth and strength born from the fusion of technology and humanity.



Mirai Ningen Sentakuki

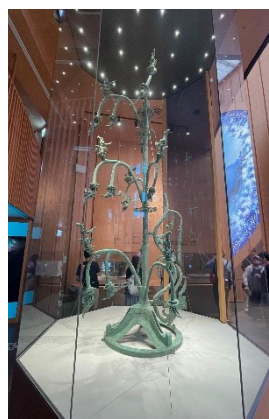


View from the Grand Ring

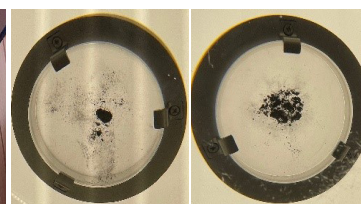
feet stretched a colorful rooftop garden, while in the distance, pavilions from countries around the world sprawled. By the waterfront, fountains shot high into the air, shimmering in the sunlight. The spray reflected the colors of people and buildings, creating a futuristic scene.

In the China Pavilion, where we next visited, one can experience the profound depth of Chinese culture and the remarkable achievements of modern technology from multiple perspectives. In the ancient bronze artifacts exhibition, one could sense the history of an enduring civilization. Next, in a dynamic space depicting the changing

seasons and the shift in light between day and night, we experienced the beauty woven by nature and time. Furthermore, the “China-Japan Friendship Gallery” warmly depicted the deep friendship between the peoples of both nations, and the Future City exhibition presented new lifestyles guided by smart technology. Particularly striking were the lunar soil samples collected from both the near and far sides of the moon displayed within the pavilion. These symbolized China's astonishing achievements in the field of space exploration. The China Pavilion skillfully blended traditional culture, modern science and technology, and international exchange, creating a diverse, open, and vibrant cultural experience.

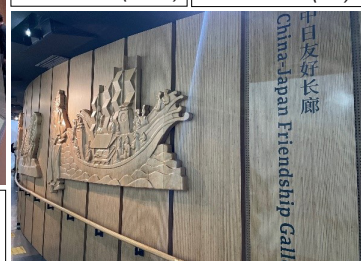


Various exhibits in the China Pavilion



Lunar soil (near)

Lunar soil (far)



While I couldn't secure reservations for some of the more popular pavilions my second visit, the experience still far exceeded my expectations. As night deepened, I enjoyed dazzling fireworks, the “Water and Air Fantasy Show: Blue and Night Rainbow Parade,” and a magnificent drone show. Music, lasers, and fountains harmonized perfectly, weaving a fantastical world of light and shadow that felt dreamlike. In that moment, I understood the true meaning of the Expo's theme, “Designing Future Society for Our Lives.” The fusion of technology and nature; the symbiosis of humankind and the Earth. Witnessing the power of science and technology, I sensed humanity's shared pursuit of a better life. This “radiance of life” continues to resonate within me still.

Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: リバーサイドしでの家^{いえ}

By: Yukari Nagata

美馬市にある^{み ま し} 穴吹川は、日本一の^{にほんいち} 清流^{せいりゅう}です。その中流^{ちゅうりゅう}の 仕出原^{ししゅつげん}（しではら）に、美馬市森林空間活用施設「リバーサイドしでの家^{いえ}」があります。夏場^{なつば}は、キャンプや 川遊び^{かわあそ}で たくさんの人^{ひと}が 訪れ^{おとず}、地元^{じもと}の人^{ひと}との交流^{こうりゅう}スポットとして 賑わ^{にぎ}います。またこの地域^{ちいき}は、ブルーベリーや 八朔^{はっさく}（はっさく）の 産地^{さんち}であり、収穫^{しゅうかく}を楽し^{たの}しむことも 出来^{でき}ます。



TOPIA は、徳島県事業^{とくしまけんじぎょう}である「とくしま農山漁村^{のうさんぎょそん}（ふるさと）応援^{おうえん}し隊^{たい}」の一環^{いっかん}で、在住外国人等^{ざいじゅうがいこくじんとう}と八朔狩^{はっさくが}りの応援^{おうえん}に 参加^{さんか}しています。この事業^{じぎょう}は、人手不足^{ひとでぶそく}が 課題^{かだい}である 農山漁村^{のうさんぎょそん}に、作業^{さぎょう}のお手伝い^{てつだ}や 地域^{ちいき}と交流^{こうりゅう}したい人^{ひと}が 赴^{おもむ}き、協働活動^{きょうどうかつどう}を通じて 地域^{ちいき}を保全^{ほぜん}する 仕組み^{しく}です。ぜひこの事業^{じぎょう}に 参加^{さんか}して、地域^{ちいき}の人^{ひと}と 一緒^{いっしょ}に農作業^{のうさぎょう}をして 汗^{あせ}を流^{なが}し、交流^{こうりゅう}を 楽^{たの}しみませんか。

Vocabulary List

せいりゅう 清流 clear stream

はっさく 八朔 Hassaku orange

おもむ 赴く to head towards, proceed

なつば 夏場 summertime

いっかん 一環 part (of a plan, etc.)

きょうどうかつどう 協働活動 joint activities

かわあそ 川遊び river activities

しゅうかく 収穫 harvest

ほぜん 保全する conservation

にぎ 賑わう to be bustling; lively

ひとでぶそく 人手不足 labor shortage

Year of the Horse

By: Riley Henke

Nihongo Know-it-all



To celebrate the New Year, in this month's Nihongo Know-it-all we're going to talk about horses, since 2026 is the year of the horse! While the "year of the ____" concept actually comes from the Chinese zodiac, it's still a concept very close to home for Japan. You can see goods of the animal of that year not only at stores, but many shrines and temples as well. If you see an onslaught of calendars, ornaments, charms, etc. with horses on them this year, now you know why!

Have you ever written a wish on an *ema* at a shrine or temple? In ancient Japan, horses were regarded as sacred, and it was customary to offer them as donations to shrines. However, this was something only the very wealthy could afford to do, and so the common people came to instead dedicate a wooden tablet decorated with a picture of a horse. This is the origin of *ema*—in fact, the kanji that make up the word *ema* (絵馬) mean "picture" and "horse"! These days, *Ema* can be seen at buddhist temples as well as shrines, and come in many shapes/patterns other than just horses.

Horses also appear in many Japanese phrases and proverbs. For example, the phrase 馬が合う^{うま あう} ("the horse matches") is used for when people get along well, based on the idea of riders being a good fit with their steeds. Or 馬の耳に念仏^{うま みみ ねんぶつ} (literally "Like saying *nenbetsu* (a buddhist chant) in a horse's ear"), meaning when somebody will not even try to listen or understand what you're saying, similar to English's "like talking to a brick wall." Or finally, 馬脚を露す^{ばきゃく あらわ} (to reveal the horse's legs), meaning to show one's true colors or shortcomings. This phrase comes from the theater, as in to accidentally show the actors playing the horse role (think two people playing the front and back legs). Oops!

「～間」 「～間に」 「～まで」 「～までに」

The sentence patterns 「～間」 「～間に」 「～まで」 「～までに」 sound very similar, but each have different meanings. This month, we'll study how to use them.

Two mothers with children in grade school are talking.

A: 子どもが学校に行っている間、家は静かですね。

B: ええ。その間に買い物ですませます。

A: わたしは、家事をして、そのあとは子どもが帰るまで、
自分の時間を楽しみます。

B: 子どもさんは、何時に帰りますか。

A: そうですね、いつも3時までに帰ります。



Sentence pattern	Meaning	How to use/explanation	Example sentence
<u>A間</u> 、B	While action/state A continues, B also continues/is being done the whole time	A and B continue simultaneously	子どもが寝ている <u>間</u> 、母は本を 読んでいました。
<u>A間に</u> 、B	B happens once during the time action/state A continues	B occurs for only a moment during state/action A.	子どもが寝ている <u>間に</u> 、母は買 い物に行きました。
<u>Aまで</u>	Indicates the end point time or place A. (until A)	The end point of an action or state.	5時 <u>まで</u> 仕事をします。
<u>Aまでに</u>	Indicates that something occurs/ends <u>before</u> point A (By/before A)	Indicates a deadline.	5時 <u>までに</u> この仕事を終えます。

Let's Practice! Insert the appropriate option from 「～間」 「～間に」 「～まで」 「～までに」 into the sentences below.

- 山田さんは毎日、5時（ ）、仕事をしています
- 東京にいる（ ）、スカイツリーに行きたいです。
- 夏休みが終わる（ ）、家で家族とすごします。
- 明日の朝9時（ ）、レポートを出してください。
- 雨が降っている（ ）、外で遊ばせん。
- 映画が始まる（ ）、チケットを買わなければなりません。
- 夏休みの（ ）、富士山にのぼりたいです。
- 友だちが旅行している（ ）、犬の世話を頼まりました。



Events & Memoranda

Ebisu Festival at Jurobe Yashiki 2026 阿波十郎兵衛屋敷えびす祭り 2026

The Tokushima Prefectural Awa Jurobe Yashiki is ringing in the new year with the Ebisu Festival! Join in the festivities and watch one of the many pupper theater performances, or enjoy the special goods being sold. Additionally, there will be a video screening showing an inside look at the life of the local people and the puppets that support their faith. Please enjoy the gorgeous, festive, and auspicious traditional culture of Tokushima, and bring home plenty of good luck for the New Year.

Date and Time: Sat. January 10 - Sun. January 11
Morning show: 11:00-12:00
Afternoon show: 14:00-15:00

Location: Tokushima Pref. Awa Jurobe Yashiki

Inquiries: Tokushima Pref. Awa Jurobe Yashiki
Phone: 088-665-2202

新しい年を祝うとともに、皆様の豊かな1年を願う「阿波十郎兵衛屋敷えびす祭り」を開催します。阿波人形浄瑠璃の演目を上演する他に、えびす祭り当日には、和田島のちりめんや、勝浦町産のみかんといった物販も行います。また、映像の放映もあり、舞台だけでは見ることのできない地域の人々の暮らしと信仰を支える人形の姿をお楽しみいただけます。華やかで、めでたく、縁起の良い徳島の伝統文化で、1年の福をお持ち帰りください。

開催期間：2026年1月10日（土）・11日（日）
午前の部 11:00～12:00
午後の部 14:00～15:00

開催場所：徳島県立阿波十郎兵衛屋敷

お問い合わせ：徳島県立阿波十郎兵衛屋敷
TEL：088-665-2202

Indigo Dyeing Classroom 藍染め教室

Enjoy indigo dyeing from a scientific perspective! Using indigo leaves grown at the Science Center, learn the science behind indigo dyeing while dyeing your own handkerchief! Advance registration required. Jan. 24th: Children's Course (Elementary/Junior High), Jan. 25th: Adult Course (High School and older). Registration opens Sunday, January 11 at 9:30 AM. Apply via website (QR code).



Participation fee: 500 yen per person

Date and Time: Sat. Jan. 24 - Sun. Jan. 25, 2026
13:30-15:00

Location: Anan City Science Center
阿南市那賀川町上福井南川淵 8-1

Inquiries: Anan City Science Center
Phone: 0884-42-1600

藍染めを科学の視点で楽しもう！
科学センターで育てた藍の葉を使い、藍染めの仕組みを学びながら、ハンカチを染めてみよう！
事前申し込み制。1/24 子どもコース（小中学生）、1/25 大人コース高校生以上。子どもコース 20組40名程度、大人コース 20名程度（各コース先着順）。1月11日（日）9:30より申込み受付を開始。申込みはHPにて（QRコード）。



参加費：一人 500 円

開催期間：2026年1月24日（土）・25日（日）
13:30～15:00

開催場所：阿南市科学センター
阿南市那賀川町上福井南川淵 8-1

お問い合わせ：阿南市科学センター
TEL：0884-42-1600

Events & Memoranda

Udatsu Flower Festival with Shogo Kariyazaki 華道家 假屋崎省吾 うだつをいける ～彩りひなまつり～

In the 18th annual "Udatsu wo Ikeru" festival, flower arrangement artist Shogo Kariyazaki weaves beauty in the form of flowers throughout the historic Udatsu townscape. Enjoy the beauty of Tokushima's famous cymbidium flowers and Otani ceramics.

Date and Time: Sun. Jan. 18 - Sat. Feb. 28, 2026
9:00-17:00 (Last entry: 16:30)

Location: Udatsu Townscape, Wakimachi, Mima
Yoshida House, Anmitsukan, Odeonza Theater

Opening Event: An opening day event will be held Jan. 18, 2026 at the famous Yoshida house in Udatsu. Will include an autograph signing, shamisen performances, and a live calligraphy performance.

Special Event: A special event will be held Feb. 21-23, 2026 at the Odeonza Theater. Will include a live flower arrangement demonstration by Shogo Kariyazaki, a talk show, and an autograph session.

Weekly Event: There will be a flower arrangement workshop every Thursday during the event period. Participation fee is 500 yen per person.

Inquiries: Mima Tourism Bureau
Phone: 0883-53-8599
Mima City Tourism Exchange Division
Phone: 0883-52-5610

「うだつをいける」は、今回で18回目の開催。歴史ある景観が残るうだつの町並みを舞台に、華道家・假屋崎省吾が美を紡ぐ美しく華やかな華道展「うだつをいける」。シンビジウムや大谷焼など、徳島が誇る美の競演をご堪能ください。

開催期間: 2026年1月18日(日)～2月28日(土)
9:00～17:00 (最終入館 16:30)

開催場所: 美馬市 脇町うだつの町並み
吉田家住宅・あんみつ館・オデオン座

☆オープニング特別イベント
2026年1月18日(日) 藍商佐直 吉田家住宅
假屋崎省吾サイン会、元祖井内組三味線もちつき、
四国大学生による書道パフォーマンス

☆特別イベント
2026年2月21日(土)～23日(月・祝) 脇町
劇場 オデオン座 假屋崎省吾デモンストラ
ション、トークイベント&サイン会

☆期間中イベント
毎週木曜日 フラワーアレンジメント体験
1人500円ほか

お問い合わせ: 美馬観光ビューロー
Tel: 0883-53-8599
美馬市観光交流課
Tel: 0883-52-5610



Consultation Service at TOPIA・トピアの相談窓口

TOPIA provides consultation on everyday life, education, labor, medical institutions, and disaster prevention as well as information on sightseeing spots to overseas residents and visitors. When necessary, we will refer you to the appropriate organization that can assist with your needs. Consultation is available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese. Please note that although every effort will be made, we may not be able to deal with all cases.

Japanese, English, Chinese: Everyday, 10:00 - 18:00 (closed during the New Year's holidays)

Vietnamese: Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays, 10:00 - 14:00

Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays, 10:00 - 18:00 (closed during the New Year's holidays)

Tel: 088-656-3312 or 088-656-3313 (allows for three-way conversations with an interpreter)