

awa life

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Nihongo Know-It-All:
It's All in the Eyes

Iya Valley Kazurabashi (Vine Bridge)



Awa Life is a Bi-monthly Publication of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

Happy July, everyone! We hope you are all finding ways to beat the heat this year as we transition from the rainy season to the full-swing of summer. Luckily, summer in Japan is not just the season of high temperatures, it's also the season for festivals and fireworks! In the events section of this edition, we've included a guide with many of Tokushima's summer/fireworks festivals, so make sure not to miss it!

What's more, here in Tokushima, summer is the season of Awa Odori. I don't know about you all, but I love the feeling of walking around town on a summer evening and hearing the beat of the taiko drums from Awa Odori ren practicing in the distance. It always makes me feel like "It's really summer!" Even just thinking about it now, I can practically taste the kakigori and takoyaki from festival stalls. This year, too, before we know it the streets will be lined with spectators waiting to watch the traditional dance.

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

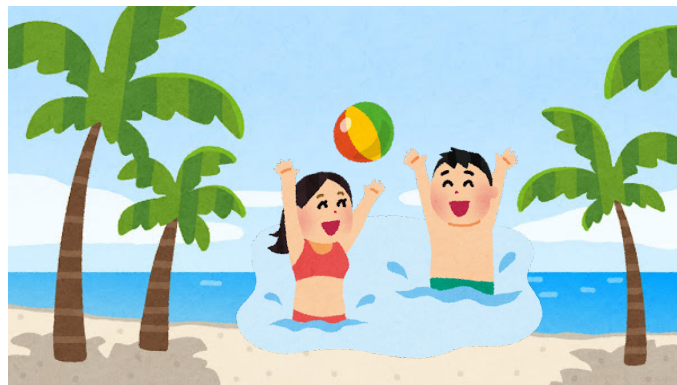
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Download a PDF file of Awa Life or view the online version by going to TOPIA's website!



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JR Shikoku Holds Train Evacuation Emergency Drill

By: Riley Henke

On Wednesday, May 20, I participated in Railway Emergency Evacuation Drill held in Anan, Tokushima by JR Shikoku. Along with me were my fellow CIR, my mom, and a member of TOPIA staff. When we arrived, we met with the person leading the drill and were asked to pretend we didn't know any Japanese during the drill (In reality, my mom doesn't know any Japanese, so she didn't have to pretend). They explained that this was to prepare the railway employees for the (very real) possibility that non-Japanese-speaking people may be on the train in a real emergency situation.

To start, participants were shown how to deboard a train in case of emergency. The first method we were shown was to sit down on the edge of the open doors, grab hold of one of the handles (or in some cases, a special rope attached to the handles) on the sides of the doors, and then slide out. The instructors explained how you shouldn't just jump out of the doors from a standing-up position, because the drop may be quite far, and if you injure yourself on the landing you may struggle to evacuate in time. The second method we were shown was to deboard by walking down a slope that railway employees held up for us, almost like a slide. They also demonstrated several special methods to assist those with mobility issues to get off the train safely.

After learning how to deboard safely, we then hopped on a special train reserved just for that day's evacuation drill and rode about 20 minutes south of Anan station. There, we made an "emergency" stop right alongside the



Practice deboarding the train

ocean between the Yuki and Kiki stations, and the conductor informed us over the intercom system that an "earthquake" was occurring, and that we should take cover and protect our heads. To make it more realistic, they even played the sounds of an earthquake over the train's speakers. Since we "couldn't understand" this, as it was all in Japanese, we looked to those around us and, after realizing they were all taking protective measures, we followed suit. Shortly after the "shaking" had subsided, another passenger called out that a "tsunami warning had been announced," and we needed to evacuate to higher ground immediately. The conductor then opened the train doors, and began making his way through the

JR Shikoku Holds Train Evacuation Emergency Drill

train cars, telling people to disembark and evacuate quickly.

Once again, we were faced with a language barrier. Unlike an earthquake, where the shaking can be felt, a tsunami's approach cannot be felt physically. We ended up getting off the train because that's what everyone around us was doing, and the conductor was motioning to the doors. However, without Japanese comprehension, I don't believe we would have fully understood what was going on, and would probably have been quite panicked. Once we disembarked (the drop was quite a bit steeper this time!), a kind man came up to us and said, in English, "Run! High ground! Run!" and motioned for us to follow the crowd. Following his cue, we did just that and ran as if our lives depended on it for around five minutes until we reached an evacuation area on higher ground.

Gathering with all the other participants and railway employees, we all took a moment to catch our breaths and take a big gulp of water from the water bottles being passed out. Looking back at those joining us at the evacuation point, we could see that there was a wide range of people with diverse needs participating in the training; there were elderly folks, families with young children, and wheelchair users amongst the crowd. After everyone had made it to the evacuation point, we all gathered to discuss and debrief on the drill.

To begin, the drill leader gave us a run-down of the time it took us to disembark and make it to the evacuation area. He explained how, in that area, when the Nankai Trough Earthquake occurs the first tsunami waves are predicted to reach land in approximately 12 minutes. In this drill, the last

person reached the evacuation point at just over 11 minutes; we had made it safely, but only just barely. We were then given a chance to speak about our thoughts on the drill. I spoke, briefly highlighting the unique struggles that foreigners may face in emergency situations, after which my TOPIA coworker gave an explanation on how simple Japanese can be utilized to help bridge communication gaps. Finally, the conductor and drill facilitators reflected on the diverse needs of the various participants, stating that they would implement improvements and measures to address such issues in the future. With that, the training came to a close.

Personally, I'm very grateful I had the opportunity to participate in this evacuation drill. Aside from the knowledge we gained about how to disembark trains in an emergency, and how to evacuate effectively, it was also a valuable opportunity to not only think about, but see with our own eyes, the diverse needs of our fellow community members in an emergency. While some foreigners may be fluent in Japanese, some may need instructions in simple Japanese or simple English to understand. Realistically, some may understand neither Japanese nor English. We can't possibly prepare for every situation; the conductor can't be expected to speak every language. What's important is that we prepare ourselves for the

unexpected, and that everyone shares a mindset of "everyone does what they can." Just like the man who took a second to simply tell us "Run!" in English, or the people who helped carry small children, or push the wheelchair user up the hill to safety, we all made it with the support of those around us.



Running to the evacuation point



Riley (right) shares her thoughts on the drill as her mom (left) looks on

Letter from SUKETO NAKAYOSHI

By: Taeko Sanda (Center for Early Childhood Education and Care SUKETO NAKAYOSHI)

As temperatures increase with the approach of summer, in Japan, we have a custom called “koromogae.” This is the seasonal changing of clothing/wardrobes from thick, warm winter clothes to light, airy clothes suitable for the hot summer. For many, once they’ve completed koromogae is when they truly feel that “summer” has begun.



When choosing clothes for children during this season, there are a few things one should keep in mind. Children have a higher average

body temperature than adults, are more active, and as a result, sweat more than adults on average. For these reasons, it’s said that children generally need one fewer layer of clothing than adults in the summer. Furthermore, try and choose clothes that are made with highly absorptive and quick-drying materials. Finally, there can be a difference in temperature between the mornings/evenings and during the day. Make sure to dress your child for the temperature, and have them wear a light jacket or outerwear if necessary.

Cooking Up International Understanding

By: Oscar Avila, ALT

There are few things that straddle the line between hobby and necessity the way cooking does. We all need food to live, and even if you aren’t cooking at home, someone is hard at work making premade conbini meals you might be eating. My family raised me to have a deep love and appreciation for cooking as a way to connect with people, and some of my favorite childhood memories are in the kitchen helping to make tamales or barbacoa for a family event. I loved to take dishes from books I read or movies I watched and try them out to understand a character better. Why was it so funny that a reserved, gruff Greek character had a love of loukoumades? What better way to learn than by making it!



When I first was accepted into JET, I knew immediately I wanted to teach some community cooking classes. I had heard from many current JETs and JET alumni the importance of integrating yourself into your local community, and I felt confident in being able to teach Mexican recipes. I landed in Tokushima and my BOE let

know that apart from my ALT responsibilities at school, I also was in charge of the Advanced Adult English Conversation course through our town 公民館 (community center). I hoped that this meant they would be open to entrusting me teaching a cooking class but was also nervous they might think I was overextending myself. I

spoke to the foreign resident liaison in town – a former Hiwasa ALT himself – and he suggested that I be as thorough as possible when bringing it up. I decided to suggest a monthly instead of weekly course to make sure I wouldn’t be spread too thin, wrote a list of every recipe I was interested in teaching that year and checked the

grocery stores in town and in southern Anan to put together pricing for ingredients. I remember balking a bit at being so thorough before I knew whether I would even have permission to run the class, but truth be told, it was necessary. Everyone really impresses upon you that you act as a cultural ambassador for your home country, but I hadn’t thought about that in the context of Tokushima as a prefecture having less than a

Cooking Up International Understanding

handful of Mexican restaurants and popups. The class went from something loose and easy to a chance to potentially introduce people to the food I grew up with. When I presented the proposal to the community center staff, they appreciated how thorough I was being, and suggested combining both classes to test run the cooking class.

To start off the cooking class, I picked what I thought would be the simplest recipe in my proposal: Mexican red rice. This was a recipe I had made countless times with my family, and that I had already recipe tested with Japanese short grain

rice. When we started class, I offhandedly asked how many of our students had ever made rice without using a rice cooker and was stunned when only one student raised their hand. I then asked how many students cook at home and was equally surprised when only half the class raised their hands. We prepared our homemade tomato sauce before toasting the rice grains, and I found myself flitting from station to station to make sure no one burned their rice. When the rice was finally cooked, I breathed a sigh of relief before everyone dug in. To my shock there was a round of “ちょっと硬いね” (it's a little hard, isn't it?) comments. I tried everyone's rice, and everything was cooked to the proper texture. I then realized everyone was

comparing it to steamed rice as a benchmark. It was a pretty humbling experience, and I felt a bit embarrassed and nervous about our next session. I swapped recipes around and decided to go for a rice pudding (arroz con leche) since it was closer in texture to steamed rice than Mexican rice was and was jumping for joy when it was a hit.

That was perhaps one of the most important yet difficult to swallow lessons about cultural exchange that my class has taught me: not everyone will enjoy everything from a new culture, and that's okay. There's the reality that palates differ between cultures before you even begin taking into account individual taste. Even if everyone likes something, those positive feelings can still exist on a scale. As much as I wanted everyone to fall in love with my food and culture, that wasn't something I could control, and I had

to learn to be satisfied with honoring the dishes as best as I could.

Another imperative lesson for me

was about access. Living in Hiwasa, we have two main grocery stores, both a bit on the smaller side. If you drive twenty minutes south to Mugi, there's another comparable shop, and forty minutes north to Anan, there's a Hallows and a Seven. The international ingredient and food sections are bit limited, and that's before remembering that the Jupiter location in Amico closed earlier this year.

One of the core principles I had when starting this class was that I wanted my students to easily be able to cook what they learned at home for their families and considering the majority of my students are in their 50s or older, I didn't want anyone to have to drive almost 90 minutes into Tokushima City to be able to buy ingredients. That meant I had

to become comfortable with the seasonality of a lot of produce in Japan, as well as explore local ingredients to substitute in and adapt a number of recipes. What's more, as I get more comfortable cooking with local ingredients, I've been excited to try cooking more Japanese recipes at home too!



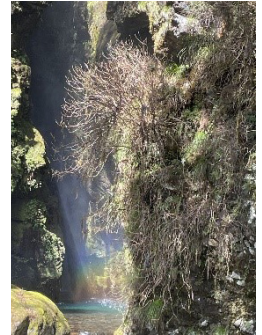
Tokushima Culture and Reading Corner: 轟の滝

By: Ai Ohashi

徳島市から南に車でおよそ2時間、海部郡海陽町にある轟の滝に行ったことはありますか？この轟の滝は、日本の滝百選にも選ばれているほどすてきな滝です。58mもある大きな落差が見どころです。水の落ちてくる大きな音に包まれ、日常とは違う、神秘的な空間で、心がリフレッシュすることでしょう。

また、上流には、大小さまざまな滝があり、それらを合わせて、「轟九十九滝」と呼ばれています。一番上にある滝まで往復で、およそ2時間、遊歩道を歩きながら、滝巡りを楽しめます。

今年は7月12日に轟夏祭りも開かれます。御神輿は龍王寺から滝まで運ばれ、御神輿を担いだまま滝壺に入る「滝渡御」が行われます。餅投げもあり、たくさんの人が集まります。夏でもひんやりする空気に包まれている轟の滝。この暑い夏に行ってみてはいかがですか？



Vocabulary List

らくさ
落差 drop

み
見どころ attraction

にちじょう
日常 daily life

しんびてき
神秘的 mysterious

くうかん
空間 space

じょうりゅう
上流 upstream

おうふく
往復 round trip

ゆうぽう
遊歩道 nature trail

おみこし
御神輿 portable Shinto shrine

かつ
担ぐ to carry on one's shoulders

たきつぼ
滝壺 basin under a waterfall

もちな
餅投げ mochi throwing

It's All in the Eyes

By: Riley Henke

Nihongo Know-it-all

In English, we say "the eyes are the window to the soul." As this phrase suggests, eyes can provide vital information about what someone is feeling or thinking. Naturally, this is not an English-specific concept. In Japanese, too, there are many phrases to do with eyes. In this month's Nihongo Know-it-all, we will take a look at some of these del-eye-tful phrases!



目を丸くする, "to make one's eyes round" – This phrase describes someone opening their eyes wide in surprise or shock.

目を細める, "to narrow one's eyes" – While in English this phrase has a negative connotation, in Japanese, it means the complete opposite. 目を細める is an idiomatic phrase meaning to smile widely, or look at someone with love/fondness. It can also mean "to squint one's eyes," when something is bright, or one is trying to see something far away.

目をつぶる, "to shut one's eyes" – This phrase can be used literally, to describe closing one's eyes, or metaphorically, as in "to turn a blind eye to something" or "to put up with something."

目が高い, "one's eyes are high" – This is a compliment meaning that one is discerning, or good at distinguishing high quality from low quality. In English we might say "you have a good eye."

大目に見る, "to look with big eyes" - This phrase means to be lenient or forgiving about something.

かんようく
「慣用句」

Have you ever heard of 「慣用句」? This word means “idiom” in Japanese. An idiom is “a group of words established by usage as having a meaning not deducible from those of the individual words.” For example, have you ever heard someone say 「頭が痛い」 (my head hurts) or 「耳が痛い」 (my ears hurt) even when they aren't actually sick? That's because these phrases have idiomatic meanings as well as literal ones. Idioms are commonly used in everyday conversation. They can involve parts of the body, animals, food, and more, but today we're going to study a few idioms that use parts of the body.

A: 新しい会社はどうか。

B: 毎日、目が回るほど忙しいですが、先輩たちが親切なので助かっています。

A: それはよかったですね。

B: でも、まだ仕事が多くて、手が回りません。

A: 大変ですね。

B: はい。ほんとうに頭が痛いです。でも、先週、手が足りなくて困っていたときに顔が広い先輩が他の部署に応援を頼んでくれたので、肩の荷が下りました。

A: よかったですね。

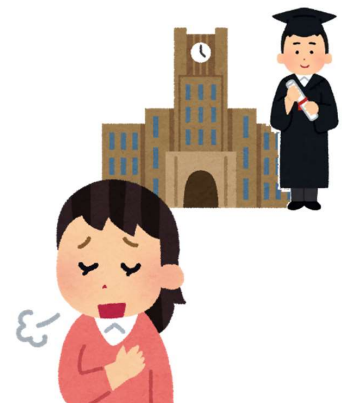
B: 本当に先輩には頭が下がります。

Meanings of the 慣用句 (idioms) used in the conversation above:

- A. 目が回る...To be extremely busy
- B. 手が回らない...To be so busy you don't have the time/a chance to get to something
- C. 頭が痛い...To have a troublesome problem that you don't know what to do about
- D. 手が足りない...To not have enough manpower/workers; to be short-handed
- E. 顔が広い...To have many acquaintances. 「顔」 (face) refers to the scope of one's social circle.
- F. 肩の荷が下りる...To no longer have to worry about the thing you were worried about
- G. 頭が下がる...To feel admiration and a sense of respect for someone

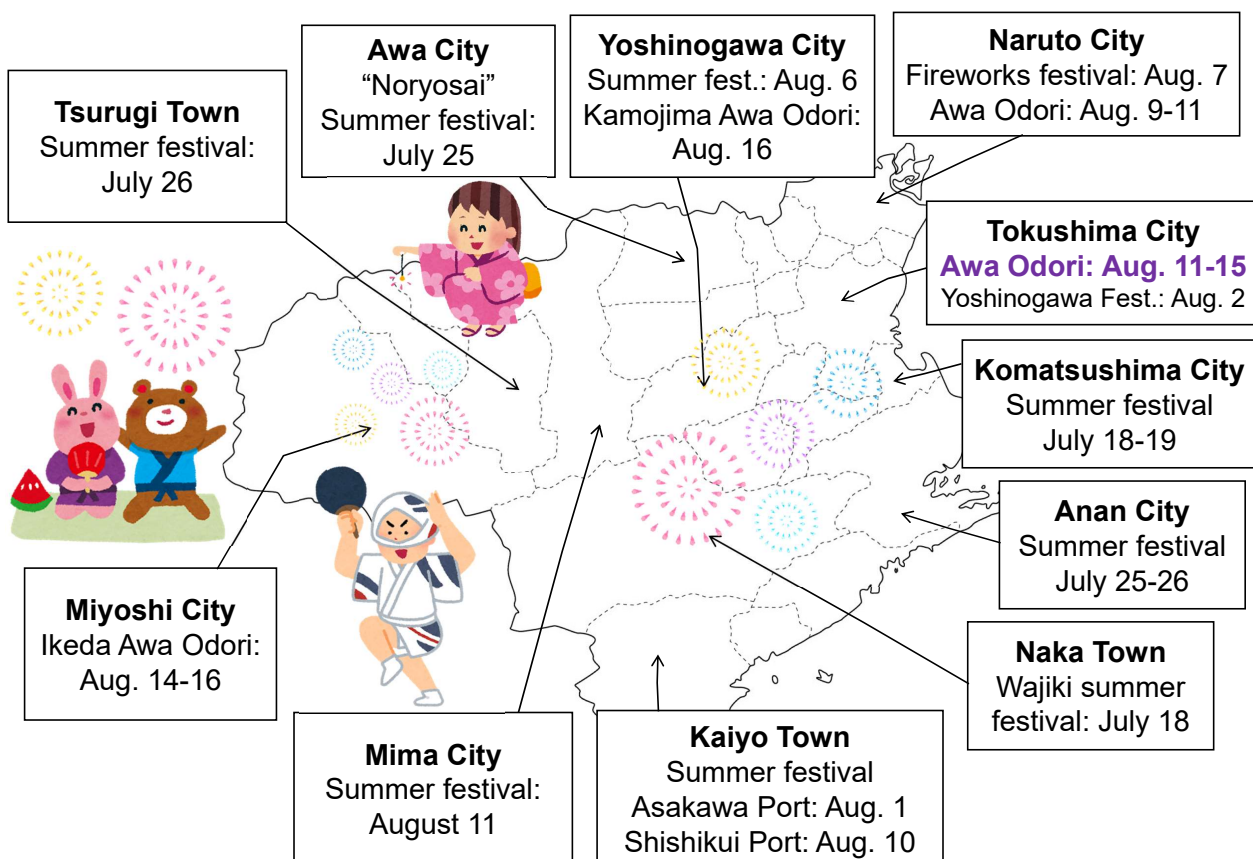
Let's Practice! Using the 慣用句 (idioms) listed A~G above, complete the following sentences:

- ① 鈴木さんは()から、頼めば、だれか紹介してくれると思うよ。
- ② 朝は仕事、昼は銀行と市役所で書類をもらって、午後からは子どもの学校と、()ような一日でした。
- ③ 子どもが3月で大学を無事、卒業することができて()しました。
- ④ 結婚式の準備が大変で、ほかのことには()。
- ⑤ 田中さんは日曜日も公園の掃除をボランティアでしている。ほんとうに()。
- ⑥ 子どもが学校へ行きたくないと言いだした。()問題です。
- ⑦ 明日、おばさんが引っ越しするんだけど、()から、手伝いに行ってほしい。



Events & Memoranda

Tokushima Summer Festivities Map 徳島県夏祭り案内図



Tokushima Prefectural Japanese Speech Contest 外国人による徳島県日本語弁論大会

The Tokushima Prefectural Japanese Speech Contest will take place on July 18 at Awagin Hall. Admission is free, so everyone is welcome to join the audience and support your friends and peers!

「外国人による徳島県日本語弁論大会」が7月18日、あわぎんホールで開催されます。入場は無料です。みなさん、観客としてご参加いただき、出場者を応援してください！

Date: July 18th, 2026 (Saturday), 13:00 - 16:30
Venue: Awagin Hall, Small Hall (5F)

日時：2026年7月18日（土）13:00～16:30
場所：あわぎんホール 小ホール（5階）

TOPIA Summer School TOPIA サマースクール

Are you looking for a fun (and free!) way for your child to study Japanese this summer? Why not enroll them in the summer school Japanese lessons for elementary, junior, and high school students held at TOPIA!
For more details and to find out how to apply, scan this QR code! →



今年も「夏休み子ども日本語教室」を開催します！日本語を母語としない、小学生・中学生・高校生が対象です。日本語の先生といっしょに宿題をしたり、ゲームやクイズをしたりしながらみんなでたのしく日本語を勉強しましょう！
←詳細はQRコードで確認してください！

Events & Memoranda

Registration for Arasowaren 2026 Now Open あらそわ連で一緒に踊りましょう！参加者募集開始

Arasowaren was formed in 1981 around the belief that the Awa Odori can help bring about world peace. Regardless of our nationality, race, or religion, we believe that we are able to gain mutual understanding and unite as one through dance. This year, too, we will dance together at the Tokushima City Awa Odori festival on August 14. We would love for you to join us! Applications are now open. For more details or to apply, visit TOPIA's website.



あらそわ連は、徳島県が誇る伝統的な郷土芸能である阿波おどりを、世界各国の人々と一緒に踊ることにより、国籍、人種、宗教などに関わらず、お互いに理解し合い、平和な世界をつくっていかうという願いを込めて、1981年に結成されました。今年も、8月14日に徳島市の阿波おどりで踊ります！一緒に踊ってみませんか？募集が開始しました。応募や詳細はTOPIAのホームページで確認してください！

Traditional Indonesian Culture at Yoshinogawa Festival インドネシア伝統芸能～アンクルン演奏と民族衣装ショー@吉野川フェスティバル

Indonesian residents will take the stage to introduce traditional Indonesian music and clothing! In addition, you can enjoy various activities, food, fireworks, and more at the Yoshinogawa Festival! Date and Time: Sunday, August 2, 16:00-16:15 Location: Yoshinogawa Riverside Stage

徳島に住んでいるインドネシアの方が登壇し、インドネシアの伝統文化を紹介します！今回のイベント他、吉野川フェスティバルで各種イベント、屋台、花火などが楽しめます！日時：8月2日（日）16:00～16:15 場所：吉野川河川敷 ステージ

Disaster Prevention Center Study Tour 防災センタースタディーツアー

If an earthquake or other natural disaster occurs, what will you do? TOPIA will be holding a study tour for foreign residents at the Tokushima Prefecture Disaster Prevention Center to provide information on what to do in case of a natural disaster. Participants can experience simulated earthquakes, strong winds, learn how to extinguish a fire, and more. Let's learn about the importance of disaster preparedness together!

Date: Sunday, Sept. 13, 2026, 13:00-15:45
Venue: Tokushima Pref. Disaster Prevention Center
For more details, please visit TOPIA's website.

大きな地震などの災害が起きたら、あなたはどうしますか？徳島県と公益財団法人徳島県国際交流協会（TOPIA）では、徳島に住んでいる外国人の方に災害について勉強してもらうため「徳島県立防災センター・スタディーツアー」を開催します。このスタディーツアーでは、地震の体験や、強い風の体験、そして火を消す体験などをします。この機会に、防災の大切さを勉強しましょう。

日時：2026年9月13日（日）13:00～15:45
場 所：徳島県立防災センター
参加できる人：徳島に住んでいる外国人の方
詳しくは、TOPIAのホームページをご覧ください。

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 tourist information to overseas residents and visitors. When necessary, we will refer you to the appropriate organization that can assist with your needs. Consultation in English, Chinese, and Japanese is available in person, and in other languages via interpretation service and/or phone. 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)
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)