

Declaration of the State of Emergency for Fatal Traffic Accidents

The headquarters of the Ehime Prefectural Traffic Safety Campaign consisting of the prefecture, the prefectural police and other related organizations declared a State of Emergency, in reference to the high number of fatal traffic accidents in the prefecture.

According to the prefectural police, the number of traffic fatalities is 31 (+10 in comparison with last year) as of July 6. It is 2.43 deaths per 100,000 people in Ehime, which is the worst in Japan and significantly high, followed by Wakayama 1.93, and Tochigi 1.91. The national average is 0.96.

It is the first time since 2017 that the number of fatalities exceeded 30 in the first half of the year in Ehime. The type of accidents causing the most deaths is by a single vehicle, of which 10. 6 of fatalities were caused by bicycles, which shows drastic growth. 10 fatalities were pedestrians and 7 out of those 10 were elderly people.

The prefecture set a target of less than 33 traffic fatalities a year.
(July 15, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

Attracting Inbound Visitors From Expo 2025

On July 11, a press conference was held at Expo 2025 Osaka, with four mayors from western cities: Matsuyama, Takamatsu, Fukuoka and Kitakyushu. They had organized a “Golden Route to Western Japan Alliance” with about 300 public and private bodies including other cities in May, 2024, in order to attract inbound tourists to the western part of Japan from the Expo.

At the Expo site, they promoted the attractions of each region, such as nature, food, and hot springs. The mayor of Fukuoka, the chairman of the alliance, said, “The whole of Japan is the Expo site. It would be more fun if you could experience the content we are proud of in each region.” The mayor of Takamatsu said, “The number of inbound visitors to Setouchi Triennale 2025 is off to a good start. I think there may be a synergistic effect with the Expo.”

In cooperation with the Japan Association for the 2025 World Exposition, they are providing some model routes around western Japan on their dedicated website.

(July 12, Ehime Shimbun)

<https://japan-west-goldenroute.com>

Difficult Continuation of Saisei-maru

Saisei-maru, the only medical ship in Japan, which patrols around the islands in the Seto Inland sea in Ehime, Kagawa, Hiroshima, and Okayama, is currently facing severe issues to continue operation. It is because of the rising fuel cost, the increased cost of renewal of medical devices as well as the decrease in the number of patients due to depopulation. The branch offices in the four prefectures of the Social Welfare Organization Saiseikai Imperial Gift Foundation, Inc. which operates the ship jointly solicit donations by crowdfunding, targeting 30 million yen to renew X-ray equipment.

The mobile medical service by Saisei-maru was started in 1962 at the headquarters of Saiseikai, supporting the healthcare of people on isolated islands. It has been operated jointly by the four branch offices since 2011. The current vessel, the fourth generation, was launched in 2014. The cruising distance is about 931,000 km, and the number of patients seen was 631,000 as of the end of 2024. It provides medical care and advice for preventive medicine on 60 islands in four prefectures.

The Ehime branch says if more people take interest in the healthcare on these isolated islands there will be more support in the future, and asked for donations to maintain the health of the people living on the islands even under this challenging environment. Crowdfunding open on the website “READYFOR” until August 29.

<https://readyfor.jp/projects/saiseimaru>

For further information: call 089-952-0332 at the Ehime branch.

(July 12, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Bookstore to be Open Around the Clock

Haruya Bookstore, based in Matsuyama, will begin 24-hour operation at the Chuodori store on July 9. They say that from 10 p.m. to 10 a.m. the next day, no staff will be present. The aim is to address labor shortages while improving convenience and boosting sales. The Chuodori store currently operates with staff from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The bookstore will utilize the “Digitail Store” system developed by Nebraska, a company based in Tokyo. According to the company, this is the first time the system has been introduced in Shikoku, not just in bookstores.

During unmanned hours, customers for the first visit have to scan a dedicated two-dimensional code installed at the entrance with their smartphone and add Haruya Bookstore as a friend on LINE. From the second visit onwards, customers can enter the store simply by scanning the two-dimensional code. Payment methods include cash, credit cards, PayPay, and au Pay. CDs and DVDs cannot be purchased during unmanned hours. Security measures are taken with surveillance cameras and entry authentication through LINE.

(July 9, Ehime Shimbun)

Matsuyama Children’s Book Forest Opens

The Matsuyama Children’s Book Forest, which was constructed in the Sakanoue no Ue no Kumo Museum and designed by Tadao Ando, a famous architect, opened on July 28.

The construction of the book forest started in the front yard of the museum in April 2024, and it connects to the 2nd floor of the museum. It was completed in March 2025. The floor size is about 130 m². The main target is elementary and Jr. High students. There are 4,000 to 5,000 books of not only fairy tales, children’s books, and illustrated books, but also books which even adults can enjoy. A reservation is required for use with a 90-minute time limit, and the space accommodates 30 people at the most. Although admission is free, a lending service is not available.

Mayor Katsutoshi Noshi says that it should be the place where children can meet various books, design their dreams and hopes for the future, and find what they want to be.

Reservations can be made in Japanese through their website:

<https://kodomohonnomori-matsuyama.jp>

(June 30, Yomiuri Online)

Cambodian Gifts from Cleared Mine Fields

On June 18, a general meeting was held in Matsuyama by the certified NPO,

International Mine Clearance and Community Development Supporters (IMCCD), based in the city. The NPO is engaged in removing landmines and unexploded shells to help post-civil war reconstruction in Cambodia.

They reported on a local distiller, KUMER JYORYU Co., Ltd. they have supported from scratch, saying that they built a new factory to obtain HACCP certification, an international hygiene management standard. They raised funds through crowdfunding for the new factory construction and by the end of April about 5.38 million yen had been donated, exceeding the target amount.

The distiller uses crops grown on land cleared of landmines and unexploded shells to produce alcoholic beverages under the “SORAKHMER” brand. Since 2023, the distiller has won awards at multiple international competitions. As reported at the meeting, three “SORAKHMER” products won awards at the international competition, IWSC Wine & Spirits 2025, including a shochu made from jasmine rice which was given a silver medal. Distillery website:

<https://sorakhmer.com>

Takayama Ryoji, chairman of the IMCCD aged 78, introduced the new factory to the venue via video in cooperation with local staff online. He said, “Obtaining HACCP certification will enhance their international credibility. We would like to keep helping their industrial development until local people realize Cambodia is a country they can be proud of on the global stage.”

A report also stated that they removed 163 antipersonnel and antitank landmines and 126 unexploded ordnances in fiscal year 2024.

(June 19, Ehime Shimbun)