

Poems Themed Bright New Year

On January 14, the annual imperial event, *Utakai Hajime no Gi*, the New Year's Poetry Reading, took place in the Imperial Palace. This year's theme was *Mei*, meaning "Bright," and *waka* poems composed by the Emperor and Empress, members of the imperial family, and 10 other people, were recited in the distinctive melodies. The 10 people whose poems had been chosen as the 10 most excellent out of the 14,600 entries from the public were invited.

His Majesty's poem was a prayer for peace, gazing at Venus shining in the winter sky before dawn on New Year's Day. The Empress wrote a poem expressing her joy at conveying "congratulations" in sign language to the medalists of the swimming competition at the Tokyo Deaflympics held last November.

On the same day, the Imperial Household Agency announced the 14 second most excellent poems, which were to be read by the Emperor and Empress. Among them were two poems composed by two second-year students at Matsuyama Nishi Secondary School.

One student's poem expressed the joy and embarrassment she felt when a first-year student waved to her for the first time after she became a second-year student. The other wrote a poem about the cruelty of war using the word "tomorrow" after learning about war in class.

The two students wrote their poems in Japanese class at school. While they said, "It doesn't really feel real, but we're happy," they also expressed regret, saying, "We wish we'd been selected as one of the 10 most excellent and could have had our poems read out loud at the venue."

Please refer to the Imperial Household Agency website: <https://www.kunaicho.go.jp>
(January 15, Ehime Shimbun)

Prefectural Ski Promotion Video

Ehime prefecture created a promotion video to invite foreign technical interns to ski resorts in the prefecture and uploaded it to YouTube. In the video, Vietnamese trainees who are interested in snow visited the resort. They came chatted with Governor Nakamura there, and enjoyed skiing together. Easy Japanese and some Vietnamese are used.

It is a 2-minute video, and can be found on the official Ehime prefectural YouTube channel. The prefecture has already created three videos shot at the Ishizuchi Ski & Snowboard Resort, Kuma Ski-land, and Sol-da Oda Ski Gelande, and gotten more than two million views.

According to the Ministry of Justice, the number of foreigners in Ehime is 19,069 as of June 2025. Most, 4,586, are from Vietnam and 4,325 are from Philippines where almost no snow falls. In the video, the prefecture encourages them to go to the ski resorts to enjoy

skiing, which is a fun and sport.

(January 14, Ehime Shimbun Online)

Deaflympics Medalists Visited Hometown Office

On January 6, three athletes from Ehime who participated in the Tokyo Deaflympics held last November, visited the prefectural office to report on their wins. This was the first Deaflympics held in Japan, and was watched by an audience of approximately 280,000, far exceeding expectations.

The gold medal winners were a women's basketball player Hashimoto Juri, from Matsuyama, and a women's volleyball player Kurabayashi Ami, a student at Matsuyama Shinonome Women's College. A men's volleyball player Kano Takuya, a doctor at Juzen General Hospital in Niihama, placed sixth.

Hashimoto and Kurabayashi explained to Governor Nakamura Tokihiro how they value communication for improving their team performance for the next Deaflympics in Greece. Kano reflected that it was a very meaningful event for both the athletes and society, making a good opportunity for people to think about hearing impairment.

The three athletes were each presented with the Ehime Culture and Sports Award.
(January 7, Ehime Shimbun)

Highly Skilled Nepalese Playing a Big Role in Ehime

Human resources have been a target of races between businesses in Japan because of the labor shortage. This is especially true for IT professionals, who are essential for improving productivity and digital transformation.

Due to the difficulty of securing talent domestically, the Ehime prefectural government is looking overseas to support prefectural companies in recruiting foreign talent. Using prefectural programs for the fiscal year 2024, 35 Nepalese people, who acquired IT skills at top universities in Nepal, have been employed at 21 companies in Ehime. They are playing a vital role as valuable assets.

Hatada, a confectionery manufacturer in Niihama City, is one example. In this rural prefecture, especially in areas far from the prefectural capital, there were few applicants, making it extremely difficult to find talent with the desired skills.

Hatada took advantage of the prefecture's Nepalese talent matching program. Although the company must pay a maximum of 450,000 yen per hire to the prefecture's contractor, the program includes some kinds of support such as pre-employment Japanese language training and interview sessions with an interpreter. Hatada believes this program marked an unprecedented step in hiring highly skilled foreign talent.

Hatada had considered outsourcing the system that manages customers' reservation data, when a 30-year-old Nepalese joined the company last April, leading to a reduction in

outsourcing costs. Now he is referred to as "extremely skilled" by other employees,

Another example is Himegin Soft in Matsuyama. Himegin Soft saw an increase in requests from customers regarding artificial intelligence, but the lack of knowledgeable employees had been an issue. A 29-year-old Nepalese who joined the company in April 2023, quickly became a core member. He had worked on AI research and development at a university and graduate school in Nepal.

He is currently demonstrating his skills on multiple projects, saying "It's fun to be able to use my skills." Himegin Soft considers him a successful example of foreign talent recruitment. The company strengthened its system by hiring two more foreign professionals in 2024.

However, there is still a risk of employees leaving companies due to poaching from urban businesses. Nine of the 35 employees, who were employed at prefecture-based businesses by the fiscal year 2024, had resigned by mid-December 2025.

The president of Himegin Soft has high hopes for the three new Nepalese employees, saying that if they could not provide suitable tasks to highly capable and ambitious employees, it would lead to the loss of employees.

(January 5, Ehime Shimbun)

“Wildfire”, the Word Most Used Search Ehime in 2025

Google Japan announced the word searches which showed incredible growth in comparison with last year. The survey was conducted from January 1 to November 20, 2025. The words having been used with the name of 47 prefectures for search were also released.

The no. 1 word for Ehime was “wildfire”, which occurred on March 23 in Imabari. It was extinguished completely on April 14. The burnt area was 480 hectares including a part of Sajio. There were 4 injured, and 27 houses were damaged.

No. 2 was “Ehime no Shokutaku 1970”. This is the orange juice bar in Matsuyama which was designed to reproduce dining tables in the 1970's. There are many taps of various kinds of orange juice.

No.3 was “Prefectural assembly by-election”. There was a by-election in Niihama on July 13, and it was a fierce battle with four new candidates.

No. 4 was “Exhibition of Yoshitake Shinsuke”. “It might be Yoshitake Shinsuke Exhibition” which showcases his art works as the picture book author came to the Museum of Ehime History and Culture in Seiyo. It was his first exhibition in Shikoku, and received many visitors.

No.5 was “Donmusu”. It is a huge rice ball: a heavy meal which can satisfy even big eaters.

(December 30, Asahi Shimbun Digital)

New Night Bus to Hokuriku Region

The Kotohira Bus Co., Ltd. will start a night express bus service between the Shikoku and Hokuriku regions on February 19. This route had been operated by another company in the past. It will be the first time in six years.

“Kotobus Express Fukui/Kanazawa/Toyama” departs Kotohira to Fukui station, Kanazawa station and Toyama station via Takamatsu station, Tokushima station, and the Naruto Interchange, and vice versa. It makes a round trip every day. The bus accommodates 28 passengers with three rows of seats and there is a toilet. It takes about 10 hours from Takamatsu station to Kanazawa station. The fare is from 7,200 yen to 9,700 yen.

Shuttle buses from Matsuyama and Kochi connect to the express night bus at the Naruto Interchange.

The night express bus connecting the Shikoku to Hokuriku regions operated from June 2019 by the JR Shikoku Bus Co., Ltd. It was suspended from April 2020 due to the COVID pandemic.

The person in charge of the Kotohira Bus Co., Ltd. says that they are hoping for more than 10,000 passengers a year.

(December 21, Asahi Shimbun Digital)