



## Keeping Gratitude in My Heart

In this issue of Mimitaro, we interviewed Ms. Clevita Eldrida Mascarenhas (Omihachiman).



It was 22 years ago, when I first came to Japan from Goa state in India. In my hometown, many people work overseas, but choosing Japan as their work location is extremely rare. There are two reasons, why I chose Japan.

First is that I was influenced by a book by Francis Xavier which I read when I was 10 years old. He was a missionary who first spread Christianity in Japan from his base in Goa, India, during the 16th century. The book contains passages praising the Japanese people, and it made me want to get to know Japanese people myself. The second reason is that I've been practicing karate since I was nine years old, and I even won a silver medal in the "kata" category at a competition in India. Earning my 1<sup>st</sup> Dan black belt in karate in Japan was my dream. At university, I majored in chemistry and also acquired IT programming skills. My father passed away young, so after graduating from university, I decided to work in Japan, a country I had always admired, to support my family.

In 2005, while working for an IT company in Osaka, I was assigned as a temporary employee to Hiyoshi Corporation, a company based in Omihachiman that handles environmental conservation and facility management. This led me to move to Shiga. After working in the Analysis and Overseas Department at Hiyoshi for 5 years, I returned to India to get married and have a child. When my child turned five, I was invited back to Hiyoshi. Currently, I work in the overseas business division, managing the India branch and handling translation and interpretation duties.

I came back to Japan with my family, but my husband was transferred to another prefecture for work, and for nearly 6 years I lived alone with our child. Raising a child by myself while having a job was truly difficult. As soon as I finished work, I would frantically pedal my bicycle to pick my child up from the after-school program, and at home I was the mother but also had to do the role of a father. With everything piling up—yellow sand, COVID-19, and a lack of time and mental energy—my son, who occasionally has had asthma issues, suddenly got worse one day and had to be hospitalized urgently. This was the first time, and just when I was feeling

lost, the people around me came to help. There were several more times when I had to call an ambulance or have my son hospitalized, and each time, many people were there to support us. Especially thanks to the chairman of Hiyoshi and the teachers at my son's school and after-school program, who constantly showed concern for him. Their support meant so much to both of us. Even after my son was discharged from the hospital, there was a period when he struggled with health concerns and couldn't attend school regularly, but thanks to the friends who came to pick him up every day, he was able to overcome those days. He has also been able to keep up with his studies thanks to the encouragement he receives from the volunteer teachers at "World Amigo Club."

In Japan, I had wonderful encounters with Japanese people, just as Xavier wrote about in the past. Thanks to such warm-hearted people, my son has now recovered—is in his second year of junior high school, surrounded by good friends, and loves Omihachiman. His studies still need work, but just having my son alive and good friends around is a blessing. Someday, I hope he will become a person who contributes to society and gives back.

I've put down deep roots here, and all my friends are Japanese now. When I first came to Japan, I couldn't speak a word of Japanese, but I gradually picked it up by talking with people. As more and more foreigners are expected to live in Japan, I believe that people can only truly live by connecting with others. For everyone to live together in harmony, foreigners need to build stronger ties with Japanese society. Only then can they understand this society, and be understood themselves. For example, teaching your own culture or language is something anyone can do, and it creates great opportunities for interaction and mutual understanding. I too, have been able to deepen my relationships with people by teaching Indian cooking and yoga at school and at work.

I hope to always remember the gratitude I owe for the support I've received from those around me, and reach out to people in need. Having personally experienced the challenges of raising a child on my own, I strongly feel that single mothers need substantial support. Working to provide that support has now become my next big dream.

## Which Traffic Rules Do You Need to Know to Stay Safe and Secure?

### When riding a bicycle

Bicycles are a familiar and environmentally friendly form of transportation used by people of all ages, from young children to the elderly. Under the Road Traffic Act, bicycles are classified as light vehicles and are considered “vehicles.” When riding on the road, cyclists must basically keep to the left side of the roadway, and when riding on sidewalks, pedestrians have the right of way.



Always follow traffic rules and ride safely.

☆ From April 1<sup>st</sup> 2026, the Blue Ticket (Traffic Violation Notice System) will apply to bicycle violations.

When police officers recognize a bicycle traffic violation, they will generally issue guidance and warnings. However, if the violation is malicious or dangerous and likely to cause a traffic accident, then they will take enforcement measures. (※ Enforcement measures apply to drivers aged 16 and above. For those under 16, guidance and warnings will be issued in principle.)

For example: Riding while holding an umbrella, or double riding on a bicycle is also a violation and will be subject to a penalty fee. For more information: National Police Agency “Bicycle Road Safety”

<https://www.npa.go.jp/bureau/traffic/bicycle/portal/system.html>



To reduce the severity of injuries in traffic accidents, protecting your head is extremely important. Always wear a helmet.

(As of April 1, 2023, all bicycle users now have an obligation to make efforts to wear helmets)

※ In Shiga Prefecture, bicycle insurance is mandatory. Be sure to enroll in “Bicycle Liability Insurance” to cover damages caused to others in bicycle accidents.

### When driving a motor vehicle (cars and motorcycles)

#### ☆ Driver's license

Rules for Foreign Nationals' Driver's Licenses changed on October 1, 2025.

1. To convert a foreign driver's license to a Japanese license, the applicant's residence certificate is generally required, regardless of the applicant's nationality.
2. To renew your driver's license, you must present your current license and one of the following identification documents: your Residence Card, Special Permanent Resident Certificate, or Certificate of Residence.

For more information please check the Shiga Prefectural Police Department Website ↓

Conversion of Foreign Driver's Licenses



<https://www.pref.shiga.lg.jp/police/menkyo/kokugai/301012.html>

Driver's License Renewal



<https://www.pref.shiga.lg.jp/police/menkyo/koshin/104520.html#22>

#### ☆ Car Insurance

There are two types of car insurance, “Compulsory Automobile Liability Insurance (CALI)/ Mutual Insurance” and “Voluntary Insurance/ Mutual Insurance”

CALI/ Mutual Insurance (*Jibaiseki hoken/ Kyosai*): All motor vehicles, including cars and motorcycles (such as electric kick scooters and mopeds), must have CALI. This insurance is mandatory and covers compensation for personal injury accidents. Driving without this insurance is subject to penalties.

Voluntary Insurance/ Mutual Insurance (*Nin-i hoken/ Kyosai*): CALI does not cover property damage to objects caused by an accident, so voluntary insurance is available to cover this. Enrollment is not mandatory.



About Compulsory Automobile Liability Insurance and Mutual Insurance Systems

<https://www.mlit.go.jp/jidosha/jibaiseki/en/about/overview/index.html>

## ☆ Automobile tax

The automobile tax for the full year is imposed on the person who owns the vehicle as of April 1. If you transfer your vehicle to someone else or no longer use it, please make sure to complete the procedures for changing the registration or deregistering the vehicle.

## ☆ Motor vehicle registration

Motor vehicle registration can be done at Transport Branch Office or at Automobile Inspection & Registration offices.

When you purchased a new car • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • Initial registration (*Shinki-toroku*)

When the owner, or the name or address of the user changed • • • Registration of alteration (*Henko-toroku*)

When the owner changes (*Meigi-henko*) • • • • • • • • • Registration of transfer (*Iten-toroku*)

In case of disassembly or export of a vehicle • • • • • • • • • Registration of deletion (*Massho-toroku*)

The registration for motorcycle differs depending on the displacement of the motorcycle.

For motorized bicycle (50cc to 125cc) • • • • • • • • • • • • • • • At the city hall where the new owner is registered as a resident

For light motorcycles, medium-sized and large motorcycles (over 126cc) • • • At the Transport Branch Office that has jurisdiction over the new owner's address

Shiga Transport Branch Office (*Shiga Unyushikyoku*): 2298-5 Konohama-cho Moriyama-shi

## ☆ Parking Space Certificate (*Shako-shomei/ Hokan-basho shomei-shinsei*)

Parking space certificate is required in the following cases:

When you purchase a new car • • • • • • • • • Initial registration (*Shinki-toroku*)

When you purchase a used car • • • • • • • • • Registration of transfer (*Iten-toroku*)

When your address changes due to moving, etc. • • • • Registration of alteration (*Henko-toroku*)

Please apply to the police station with jurisdiction over the location of the parking space.

Parking space notification for Kei cars and other light motor vehicles

In Shiga Prefecture, Otsu-shi (excluding the former Shiga-cho), Kusatsu-shi, and Hikone-shi are designated as areas requiring a parking space notification. When owning a light motor vehicle in these areas, you must submit a parking space notification.

Notification is needed in the following situations:

- When you reside in the applicable area and newly acquire (purchase or receive) a light motor vehicle
- When you move into the applicable area from another municipality and acquire a light motor vehicle

## In case of an accident

If you cause an accident...



- Stop driving immediately and pull over to a safe place
- If the other person is injured, call an ambulance (119)
- Next, report it to the police (110)
- Wait until the police arrive, then report the accident details and follow the police's instructions

※ By reporting the accident to the police, you can apply for a "Traffic Accidents Certificate (*Kotsujiko shomeisho*)."

This certificate is necessary for various procedures to receive support after an accident, so be sure to report any accident to the police. Also, if you are involved in an accident, even if you feel you are uninjured or only slightly injured, symptoms may appear later, so be sure to have a doctor examine you.

※ "Traffic Accidents Certificate" can be obtained by applying to the Japan Safety Driving Center.

Japan Safe Driving Center (*Jidosha Anzen Unten Center*) Tel: 077-585-3456

2294 Konohama-cho Moriyama-shi (Within Shiga Prefectural Police Headquarters Driver's License Center)

# Mimitaro Information

Happy New Year!

Best wishes for 2026

Year of the Horse      Mimitaro



☆The Year of the Horse is said to be a time when energy and motivation are heightened. Why not take on something new?☆

## ◆ Biwako Valley

The ski slopes are open, come and enjoy winter activities!

1547-1 Kido Otsu-shi

## ◆ Nagahama Bonbai Exhibition

A constant display of 90 plum bonsai trees can be seen throughout the exhibition

Period: January 10<sup>th</sup> (Sat) – March 10<sup>th</sup> (Tue)

Venue: Keiunkan 2-5 Minato-cho Nagahama-shi

## ◆ Setsubun Festival Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> (Tue)

Various shrines hold events for *Yakubarai*, a ceremony to ward off misfortune

Taga Taisha      604 Taga Taga-cho

Minakuchi Jinja      3-14 Miyanomae Minakuchi-cho  
Koka-shi

Zensui-ji      3518 Iwane Konan-shi

## ◆ “Hino Hina Festival”

### *A Journey Through Time and Town*

Hina dolls are displayed throughout the streets of Hino

Period: Early February to early March

Venue: From Hino-cho Okubo to Murai, Nishioji



## ◆ BIWAKO MARATHON 2026

March 8<sup>th</sup> (Sun) 8:20am start

Start/ Ojiyama Track and field stadium (Otsu-shi)

Goal/ Karasuma Hanto (Kusatsu-shi)

## ◆ Sakura Matsuri (Cherry blossom)

Best time to see: from late March to early April

Miidera      246 Onjoji-cho Otsu-shi

Hikone Castle      1-1 Konki-cho Hikone-shi

Hoko-en (park)      Koen-cho Nagahama-shi

Nango Fisheries Center      4-4-1 Kurozu Otsu-shi

Next issue of Mimitaro is scheduled in April

# Mimitaro News



## ◆ Free HIV / STI Counseling and Testing Available

- Tests can be taken anonymously.
- Testing for Syphilis, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C are also available.
- Venue: Public health centers (Otsu-shi/ Kusatsu/ Koga/ Higashiomori/ Hikone/ Nagahama/ Takashima)
- Please check the website for date and time
- Reservations are required by phone.

INQ Health centers in the prefecture

(In Japanese only) If you need an interpreter, please call Shiga Foreign Residents Information Center. Tel: 077-523-5646

<https://www.pref.shiga.lg.jp/ippan/kenkouiryouhukushi/yakuizi/15267.html>



## ◆ Immigration Services Agency email distribution service

The Immigration Services Agency provides a service to send useful immigration-

<https://www.moj.go.jp/isa/publications/publications/mail-service.html>

related information, such as residence procedures and system guides, to registered email addresses. If you register your period of stay, you will receive a notification email shortly before the expiration date.



## ◆ Period to file for final tax returns (*Kakutei-Shinkoku*) Feb 16th (Mon) to Mar 16th (Mon)

If you need to claim deductions for high medical expenses or a housing loan, if you have business income, or if you receive income from multiple employers, please file a final tax return at the tax office. e-Tax (electronic filing) is also available.

## Correction and Apology

There was an error in the emergency notification provided on page 3 of Mimitaro No. 157.



The correct information is as follows:

Error #110 Police → Correct 110 (# not needed)

Error #119 Fire department → Correct 119 (# not needed)

## Shiga Foreign Residents Information Center

(within Shiga Intercultural Association for Globalization)

We offer support in various languages.

Free legal consultations are also available.

Tel: 077-523-5646 Fax: 077-510-0601

email: [mimitaro@s-i-a.or.jp](mailto:mimitaro@s-i-a.or.jp)