こくさいタイムズ in English 創刊号 SEP. 12th, 2025 中井中学校 国際教室

『こくさいタイムズ』始めます！ “Kokusai Times” is just getting started!

At Nakai Junior High School, we have the "international classroom." Nakai Junior High is home to many students with roots in other countries, but you might not know what countries or cultures your classmates come from.

We hope that “Kokusai Times“ will change those "I didn't know" moments into "Oh, I see!" moments. We'll be creating a newspaper that's easy to read and helps you learn about different countries, cultures, and languages.

『国際教室』って何してるの？ What is the role of the International Classroom?

Currently, Nakai Junior High School has 179 students. The International Classroom's main purpose is to support the learning of students with international roots, who make up about 10% of the student body. Some of these students came to Japan for the first time as junior high students. Therefore, a major role of the International Classroom is to teach them the basics of Japanese, such as how to read and write the 50 hiragana characters, as well as essential phrases and expressions they need for daily life, like "Hello," "Thank you," "I have a stomachache," and "Please help me."

For you who are residents of Nakai Town, this classroom might seem normal, but Nakai Junior High School and Inokuchi Elementary School are the only two schools in the western part of Kanagawa Prefecture that have an International Classroom. It was first established in 2018, so this is its seventh year now in 2025.

中井町データ Nakai Town Data

Total Population: 8,855【as of June 1, 2025】 Breakdown of Foreign Residents:

Philippines: 226 Vietnam: 117 Peru: 28 Brazil: 21 China: 18 South Korea: 6

Other countries: 31 **Total foreign residents: 447**【as of December 31, 2024】

中井町に外国出身の人たちが多いのは…？ Why are there so many people from foreign countries in Nakai Town?

As you can see from the data above, foreign-born residents make up about 5% of Nakai Town's total population. Compared to neighboring towns, such as Ninomiya Town (325 people/26,486 total), Oiso Town (247 people/30,566 total), Oi Town (195 people/17,160 total), and Matsuda Town (166 people/10,223 total), this number is quite high.

[Number of foreign-born residents / Total population of each town: from the Kanagawa Prefecture HP]

Because the Tomei Expressway runs through the northern part of Nakai Town, logistics are very convenient. Taking advantage of this, a number of companies and factories have been established here in Nakai Town, and some of them employ people from foreign countries. North of Nakai Junior High School is an industrial park called "Green Tech Nakai."

Another advantage of living in Nakai Town is the convenience of transportation, as you can get to Odakyu Hadano Station or JR Ninomiya Station on a single bus ride. Also, because it's not "too close" to a station, housing costs don't get too high. There are convenience stores all over, and a large shopping mall in the Inokuchi area. These factors—easy living and a workplace close by—are likely why Nakai Town is chosen as a place to live and work.

今回は…「フィリピン」特集 vol.1 A Special Feature on the Philippines, Vol. 1

The data in the top right shows that people from the Philippines are the largest group of foreign residents in Nakai Town. At Nakai Junior High School, there are students with Filipino roots in almost every class.

So, over the next few issues, we'll be doing a special feature on the Philippines, a country you may think you know but perhaps don't know very well. Let's start with a geographical overview!

*Please note that in the following text, we'll use the kanji character "比" to represent the Philippines. In the past, the country was written as "比律賓". This was during the same period when America was written as "亜米利加".

Like Japan, the Philippines is an island nation. It's made up of 7,641 islands of varying sizes and has a total population of about 109,035,000 people.

[Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Philippines Basic Data"]

For reference, Japan has 14,125 islands and a total population of about 123.4 million people.

[Source: Geospatial Information Authority of Japan and Statistics Bureau of Japan]

The Philippines can be broadly/roughly divided into 3 main geographical areas:

1. Northern Luzon area

This region centers on the island of Luzon, where the capital city of Manila is located. It is the political and economic hub of the country. The official Filipino language is based on Tagalog, which is spoken in and around Manila. While it's often called "ルソン" in Japanese, the more common pronunciation in the Philippines is "ルゾン."

2. Central Visayas area

This area centers on the famous tourist destination of Cebu Island, and the Cebuano language is mainly spoken here. Leyte Island, which was the setting for the "Battle of Leyte Gulf" during World War II where the Japanese Imperial Army suffered a major defeat to U.S. forces, is also in this region.

3. Southern Mindanao area

This region centers on the large southern island of Mindanao. Its main city, Davao, has prospered as a port for banana and pineapple exports, and it's home to many descendants of Japanese immigrants.

The Philippines is the only Christian nation (with a majority of its citizens belonging to Catholicism, the largest denomination, led by the Pope in the Vatican) in ASEAN. However, this region is home to many Muslims. Differences in religion often lead to differences between countries, and this area has a strong and persistent movement seeking separation and independence from the current Philippine government centered in Manila.