



01 Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) columns

○ Chatting about the weather

Benjamin Moran, British CIR, Kagoshima Prefecture

○ Chinese tourism: Beijing edition

Xu Kui, Chinese CIR, Kagoshima Prefecture

02 The Governor's activities

○ General meeting of the Kagoshima Airport Internationalisation Promotion Council (14th May)

○ Visit to the Indian Ambassador (18th May)

○ Visit from the 2026 Honba Oshima Tsumugi Queens (25th May)

03 Kagoshima event information

○ Seppetobe (7th June)

○ Kajiki Town Spider Fighting Tournament, Aira City (21st June)

🗝️ Coming up in July and August !

Chatting about the weather

Benjamin Moran, British CIR, Kagoshima Prefecture

As we enter into Japan's rainy season here in Kagoshima, I was reminded by a colleague how much British people like to talk about weather. This was probably a barbed comment directed at me; however, for the inspiration it gave me for this article I can forgive it.

Shooting the breeze about the weather in the UK comes naturally to most British people. It is an inoffensive conversation that breaks the ice of many an interaction. Even when the weather isn't particularly notable, conversations about weather are used as a conversational balm to ease all interlocuters into the conversation.

The following scene is typical of a British office worker arriving for a day's work:

Person A: Morning

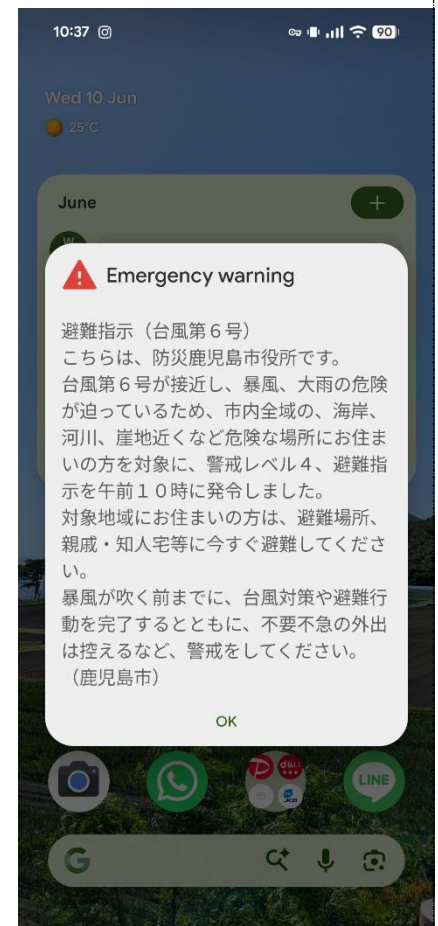
Person B: Good morning!

Person A: Terrible/lovely/windy/rainy/sunny/hot/cold weather today, isn't it!

Person B: Isn't it just! I put my washing out earlier but it still isn't dry/dried immediately/froze/blew away.

This sort of conversation comes so naturally to British people that I believe that many people don't even realise that they are doing it. Thinking back over my conversations as I enter the office, I realise that I have these conversations far more than I thought I did. The truth is that nobody is *really* interested in the weather; it is simply a springboard to get people talking.

Given the fact that Japan has a rainy season and regular typhoons, I expected that people would talk about the weather a lot. Aside from the occasional complaint about the heat, conversations about the weather, even though it is far more severe here than at home, are less frequent in a Japanese office. Perhaps it is that people here are far more used to extreme weather, or maybe



▲Evacuation notice due to strong winds and heavy rain

my colleagues are simply tired of me chewing their ears off all day. Or maybe it is something to do with how people approach conversation more generally.

Research conducted in the Netherlands showed that conversational silence beyond four seconds is uncomfortable for English speakers. A study looking at conversations in a business setting, found that conversational silences of up to 8.2 seconds were considered acceptable in Japan. This made me reflect on my attitudes towards conversational silence and my need to fill the silence.

I have come to the conclusion that, come rain, typhoon or shine, people like me who cannot bear the lull of a conversation will continue to blabber on about the weather. I hope that the people who have to put up with these conversations about weather can put this little cultural annoyance down to 'international exchange'.



▲Gloomy day in the UK

○Chinese tourism: Beijing edition

Xu Kui, Chinese CIR, Kagoshima Prefecture

When you think of Beijing what comes to mind? Is it the Forbidden City, the world's biggest palace? What about the great wall? It's said that only once you've visited can you then become fully fledged adult. I lived in Beijing for 6 years and in this article, I will introduce you to this ancient and mysterious place.

Pilgrimage to a sacred spot

1. Imperial Palace (Forbidden City)

Since the palace was built by the Yongle Emperor in 1420, 24 emperors have lived and ruled from palace which is home to over 500 years of Chinese history. Located in the centre of Beijing, you can see Beijing's iconic tourist spot as you leave Tiananmen Square. Around the palace there are a lot of places where you can rent traditional clothing of old. Why not get dressed up as the Emperor or Empress and live the Imperial Palace experience?



Imperial Palace

2. Great Wall of China



Great Wall of China

The wall was built in pieces during the Spring and Autumn period in the 7th century BCE to defend against invasion. Under Qin Shi Huang of the Qin Dynasty, the country was unified and the existing walls of the various states were joined creating the first fully connected Great Wall. This was the start not just of the wall as a place of defence but was also a mechanism to establish control within the borders which symbolised a fortitude of spirit within the Chinese people.

3. Sanlitun

On top of its historical areas, Beijing also has popular spots where many young people hang out. Sanlitun, Beijing's trendiest area has various bars and shopping malls and is home to China's first complex Uniqlo flagship store. If you want a taste of trendy Beijing, you should definitely make your way to Sanlitun.



Sanlitun

Food recommendations

1. Peking Duck



Loved by people across the world, Peking Duck can well be said to be the iconic Beijing food. Formerly a preserve of the aristocracy, today it can be enjoyed by everyone. For those who want good service, Qianjude (全聚德) is a good option, and those on a budget should try Zi Guang Yuan (紫光園).

◀**Peking Duck**

2. Zhajianguan and douzhi

Good old-fashioned Beijing pick-me-ups include douzhi (mung bean milk) and jiaoquan (fried doughnuts), and at lunchtime there is no greater pleasure than zhajianguan (ground pork over wheat noodles). As Douzhi is made from fermented soy beans, it is said to be good for you. However, its bitter taste and smell can put off quite a lot of people. If you have a day in Beijing, please do give it a try!



▲Zhajianguan,
dhouzhi

02 The Governor's activities

○ General meeting of the Kagoshima Airport

Internationalisation Promotion Council (14th May)

We held the general meeting of the Kagoshima Airport Internationalisation Promotion Council.

At the general meeting, the actions and financial status of the council for the 2025 financial year was discussed as well as motions adopted for the actions and financial settlement for the coming 2026 financial year.

Since the COVID pandemic, four of Kagoshima Airport's international routes have resumed; however, the Shanghai and Hong Kong routes remain suspended.

Going forward, we intend to use our new social media presence to promote group tours and other programmes with a view to increasing the use of the international routes through Kagoshima Airport.



General meeting▲

○ Visit to the Indian Ambassador (18th May)

I paid a visit to the Ambassador of India to Japan, Nagma Mohamed Mallick. Ambassador Mallick spoke to me about the spread of Kagoshima produce in India, exchange in finance and we exchanged views on Indian workforce talent.

I expressed my gratitude to the ambassador for her ongoing support for exchange between Kagoshima Prefecture and India and my desire to see us work together to continue to grow our relationship going forward.



▲ Commemorative photo with the Ambassador



▲ Discussions with the Ambassador

○ Visit from the 2026 Honba Oshima Tsumugi Queens (25th May)

The newly crowned Honba Oshima Tsumugi Queens, Koriyama Nika and Miyashita Chiyuri paid a visit to the Prefectural Office.

Ukraine-born Ms. Koriyama was dressed in the iconic blue of her country and Ms. Miyashita came wearing high quality white Oshima, showing off the true appeal of Oshima Tsumugi.

Ms. Koriyama told me that she hoped to spread widely the appeal of traditional Oshima Tsumugi and act as a bridge between Ukraine and Japan. Ms. Miyashita, an English teacher, told me that she wanted to use her language skills to actively promote Oshima Tsumugi far and wide.

I hope for the continued success of both our Queens.



▲ Koriyama Nika and Miyashita Chiyuri

03 Kagoshima event information

○Seppetobe (7th June)

Seppetobe, a rice planting festival was first held in the 4th year of the Bunroku era (roughly 420 years ago) in the Hiyoshi district .Young men form a circle in a field, drink alcohol, sing songs and jump up and down. The festival has its origins in stamping and tamping down the earth, crushing harmful bugs and praying, surrounded by mud, for a good year of farming. Local citizens and youth organisations came together, danced with rods, performed a buddhist dance (*komuso*) and lit up the town.



▲Seppetobe 「© K. P. V. B」

Seppetobe has the meaning of ‘jump with all your might’ (*sei-ippai tobe*).

○Kajiki Town Spider Fighting Tournament, Aira City (21st June)

The start of this tradition was when Shimazu Yoshihiro, made famous as he fought

through the midst of enemy fire during the battle of Sekigahara in the Imjin War (1592-98), made female argiope amoena spiders fight in order to bestow some energy on his troops on the front line. The tradition was revived in March 1991 when the Spider Fighting Tournament was established and held every year on the third Sunday in June and has attracted attention from abroad over its history. At this year's event, participants from elementary school to adults entered, among nearly 120 participants. The passion of the volunteers was evident, and today this traditional event helps bring positive attention to our region from all over the country.



▲Spider Fighting Tournament! © K. P. V. B.J ▲

🔑 Coming up in July and August

◇ July

18th and 19th Kirishima-Kokubu Summer Festival (Kirishima City)

24th until 9th Aug 47th Kirishima International Music Festival
Kagoshima (Kirishima City)

25th Chiran Neputa Matsuri (Minamikyushu City)

◇ 8月

1st 2026 Kanoya Summer Festival (Kanoya City)

11th Kaimon Summer Festival (Ibusuki City)

16th Sendaigawa River Fireworks Display (Satsumasendai City)

29th Kagoshima Kinko Bay Summer Night Fireworks Display
(Kagoshima City)

Please do pay a visit!



Editor's note (International Strategy Division, Policy Planning and Coordination
Department, Kagoshima Prefectural Government)

Hello everyone! I hope you're all having a lovely June. We entered full force into the rainy season!

In English, the *ajisai* is Hydrangea, in Chinese it's 绣球花 and in Korean it's 수국.

If anyone reading this knows what a 紫陽花 (big leaf hydrangea) is in different languages, do let us know!

The hydrangea's colours change depending on the acidity of the soil meaning that it is sometimes referred to as the *shichihenge* (seven changes flower). Given that it changes its colours, the hydrangea's impermanence and tendency to change easily can said to be reflected in humans. To us, it is a lesson in appreciating the little things and the day-to-day. (Source: JTA Sightseeing Database, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Tourism)

As July begins, let us appreciate the day-to-day. The temperature will continue to rise, so do be careful not to get heatstroke.

I look forward to speaking to you in our next issue!

The Kagoshima Southern Wind Tidings is accepting submissions on the following topics:

☆**Kagoshima photo gallery**

We are looking for photos that have a Kagoshima feel to them, or photos of Kagoshima that you have found overseas. Please send them with a brief description of the photo (e.g mountain of volcano ash collection bags).

We are also accepting any other information or stories you would like to share with our readers.

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