

O-mamori

You would be hard put to find a Japanese person who doesn't have at least one *o-mamori* somewhere. People often have one attached to a key holder, hanging off a handbag, or tucked inside a wallet—*o-mamori* are made to be carried around wherever you go.

The *o-mamori* is a talisman to protect against disaster or to ward off evil. It is actually a small bag or pouch, containing a piece of paper with a charm or the name of a Buddhist or Shinto deity written on it. In olden days, such pieces of paper were often stuck on the pillars or walls of a building, or placed on the household shrine. The paper was also sometimes put in a small bag and hung from the neck or waist by a cord, and this is the origin of the present day *o-mamori*.

These days there are specific *o-mamori* to cover all eventualities—to protect from traffic accidents, to ensure a safe birth, to bring success at exams, even to bring luck in finding a marriage partner. *O-mamori* are usually round or square, and come in all different colors and patterns. Some have popular cartoon characters on them, there are *o-mamori* which can only be bought in particular regions, and even seasonal *o-mamori*, such as those that protect against accidents or food poisoning in summer.

As long as you have your *o-mamori*, you are safe from unforeseen disaster and your wishes will come true. You should never leave home without one.



Letters

Readers are invited to send in their opinions on any topics raised in any issue of *APP: Japan+*, or indeed on any topic relevant to Japan and the Asia-Pacific region. Letters are welcome either by e-mail (j-plus@jijigaho.or.jp) or by post (*APP: Japan+*, Jiji Gaho Sha, Fonte Akasaka Building, Akasaka 7-10-17, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107-0052, Japan).

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In your article on "Energy" in the July issue, you had an interview with Mr. Tsutomu Toichi of the Institute of Energy Economics, who states that the government "sees nuclear power as a valuable energy source." Valuable it might be, but little mention was made of the long-term dangers posed by nuclear power. As Mr. Toichi pointed out, 17 nuclear reactors had to be shut down for emergency safety checks—this is a frightening statistic indeed.

The reality is that we need energy—and lots of it—to power our modern societies. This energy has to come from somewhere, and even "clean" energies have their problems; for example, hydroelectric power is clean, but build-

ing dams takes a huge toll on people and on the environment. However, reliance on nuclear power is not a far-sighted option. I hope Japan will invest more heavily in some of the other options you showed in your article, such as wind power or biomass energy, and phase out reliance on nuclear power.

Matthew Lane
 Pittsburgh, USA

I am glad to learn that the new government policies of Japan are paving the way to establish new horizons of stronger interaction, particularly with the Southeast Asian countries. My faculty members and a large number of

our undergraduate students have also enjoyed reading articles about contemporary Japanese society and culture. We are happy that you have made a good attempt to incorporate a few articles on the role of Japan as a member of the Asia-Pacific Community. I will take this opportunity to congratulate you for producing a highly informative magazine that will work as an ambassador for Japanese society.

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