

December ! How did we get here so fast! Popoki wants to have a warm, happy, safe holiday and hopes you do, too!



Popoki's Hot News!



“Popoki’s Mask Gallery – Living the Covid-19 Pandemic”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BjT1ZjVUsm8&t=3s>

Piece of Peace

One of Popoki's friends, **Ritanyan**, sent the following piece of peace.



Просто очень необходимо научиться принимать себя в разных ситуациях жизни. Хочется плакать, плачь. Хочется смеяться – смейся. Только люби – и в первую очередь люби в себе душу. Тогда она обязательно притянет к себе родственную душу.

It is important to accept ourselves in any situation. If you want to cry – then cry. If you want to laugh – laugh! But love yourself and your soul in the first place. By accepting and loving ourselves we attract soul-mates into our lives.

What sort of 'peace' did you encounter today? Please let us know by sending a message to Popoki's e-mail: [ronniandpopoki \(at\) gmail.com](mailto:ronniandpopoki@gmail.com) !

Attending Online Ponenkai!

Ronyan

This year, we can't get together and have a meal, so we decided to have Ponenkai online. And, as long as we were doing it, I wanted to do something in keeping with Popoki. So, in order to reflect on this year, I suggested we use photos and other things and talk about what makes us feel safe and peace. In preparation, everyone was to map places in their everyday lives that made them feel safe and peace. The easiest way to do it is to take photos or make drawings. For those who wanted more of a challenge, I suggested they make a map of where they walked, and place the photos, etc. on the map.

I was worried if people would come, and if they would bring photos, but when the starting time arrived at 19:00 on 11 December, Popoki's friend's faces began appearing on my screen. And everyone had brought photos. Some people even made maps. Everyone thought deeply about what to bring.

First is Poga! Then everyone described their selections. There were travel photos, pictures with friends, favorite views and pictures of nature, family, home cooking, homemade crafts, places with childhood memories.... I brought a photo of a rainbow. I was taking a walk one day, and for some reason looked back, and there was a big rainbow! As I watched, it turned into a double one! It hadn't been raining so why was there a rainbow? I had been feeling a bit lonely that day, and so I felt especially happy and encouraged by the rainbow. Nature is so huge, and I am so small. My worries are just tiny! Is it strange to feel safe, and maybe even peace, in the face of a rainbow?



We talked about so many things, many of which we do not usually talk about at Po-kai or at the university. Before we knew it, two hours had passed and it was time to end our meeting. We confirmed that we feel safe and peace when we connect with friends and family. Many of us also feel safe and peace in nature. We had a hard year in 2020, but we were able to reconfirm the things and people that are most important to us.

I reconfirmed my commitment to Popoki, and my feelings of commitment to all of Popoki's friends, as well as those who have yet to get to know him. We had a good evening and thanks to everyone, we can end 2020 with warm feelings. Minanyan, thank you!



Popoki's Interview

* We have started a new series of interviews with Popoki's friends in different places. We are asking about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. This time we have a report from Bashirnyan about Rohingyas who have fled to Bangladesh.

Interview by Bashirnyan

The following interview was conducted couple of months ago with a Rohingya refugee (the name has been kept anonymous for confidentiality). More than 1 million Rohingyas fled from persecution in Myanmar and took shelter in Teknaf areas in Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh since 2017. In order to know the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic there, we had the following conversation:

How long have you been in this refugee camp?

I have been here for around 3 years.

How many family members do you have?

I have seven family members including my parents.

Can you tell us how you ended up here?

Back in 2017 when the militaries in the Rakhine state were burning and killing all the villagers, we managed to escape the massacre, and crossed the Naf River in order to take the refuge here in Teknaf.

Can you describe the situation of your shelter?

Our shelter is small, but we can adjust. We have two small rooms for living including a kitchen. We can live here safely, but sometimes there is not enough gas for cooking. We have a common toilet.

Can you move freely around or go outside of your shelter?

Yes, I can move freely. I can go outside, of course. I go to the market to buy the groceries and daily necessities.

What is the current situation of Covid-19 here?

Well, the overall situation is not good. As you may know that Covid-19 has caused many deaths in the country, people here are also panicking, especially considering the contagious effect of the virus in a crowded place like this. As far as I know, there have been more than 60 confirmed cases and 7 deaths to date. We are quarantined here for many days for safety reasons.

What are the main challenges you face during this lockdown?

The main challenge is to live in a small shelter with many people where the space is not enough. So, it is difficult to maintain social distancing, but we are trying our best. Another challenge is internet connection problem. Due to the lack of internet connection, we can't get connected with the outer world. Food and medical supplies by the NGOs have been decreased a little bit due to the lockdown, which is another challenge. On top of the pandemic, the coastal flood is another major challenge to cope with.

Please tell us about your major concerns regarding the current situation.

The number of infected people is rising not only here, but all over the country, which really scares me sometimes. It can be easy for the virus to spread where many of us live in a small shelter. Around one million refugees are taking shelter in Bangladesh, so we also understand the limitations of the government.

What measures have been taken to prevent the disease so far?

Government and various organizations are providing us sanitizers, masks, soap, and other logistics to fight against the spread of the virus. There is no doubt that Bangladesh has been hard-hit by the pandemic, which will cause a long economic downturn in the country. So, I understand that it is a big challenge for the government to deal with such a situation.

Do you have any concerns regarding how to improve the situation?

I am very thankful to Bangladesh that it has given us shelter and saved our lives. We need to stay in solidarity and follow the rules in order to be safe and healthy. No need to panic.... I hope good days will come again.

Thank you very much for your valuable time!

Thank you, too!



Naf River. Rohingyas crossed this river from Myanmar (the far side) and came to Bangladesh (this side) to seek refuge.

Photo credit: Bashir Uddin, 2019



Good-bye 2020!

It was a hard year. Tears, pain, frustration, loss, loneliness....

But it was also a year for reflection, connection and new starts.

Here are some of the things we learned and want to take with us to give us hope in 2021!

* I learned the joy of working as a female leader. (TAMURA Kasumi)

* COVID-19 is sad, but it makes me a warm person. I start to care more about family and cherish every moment with friends, partners, and teachers since it was not easy to meet in person at any time. (Yi-Ching Peng {Lauren})

* What was good and made me happy this year. Many friends and acquaintances encouraged me, and with my family's help I was able to overcome a sudden injury. I am grateful for everything. (NAKATA Yuki)

* Pandemic changed our notion of what we consider ESSENTIAL in our lives. We humans, eegardless of our differences are fragile and our strength lies in our communities-both local and global. COVID highlighted our connectedness. People have come together in remarkable ways to help each other. (Parvin Ghorayshi)

* The report meeting of Tohoku Friendship Story was held online but we were happy that many people joined. (TAKATSUKI Nagisa)

* I am so lucky to make new friends through Popoki in this unusual year~~~ (Jeanyan)

* What made me happy this year: I was happy to have a time to take care of our garden. I sometimes overheard neighbours talking and enjoying seeing our flowers and vegetables while taking a walk. It warmed my heart. (Yakonyan)

* "What helped me to grow"

A lot of time I couldn't go to school but I learned self-management skills (Shiorinyan)

Skills to comfort everyone (Koumenyan)

Health management for my family (Kakonyan)

* **A message of hope from Lanyan:** 2020 was a difficult year in many ways – but it gave us an opportunity to reevaluate our daily lives, taught us to be thankful and learn more about what is important for us. So I am thankful to this year for all the challenges it brought and all the hope it evoked in people.

* A thought: It was a difficult year to come and go from one country to another, but we could hold the international peace programs through the web. It was our first time, but we tried new things with everyone's ideas. (Michiko Matsuda)

* I suddenly realized that I've engaged in many new challenges. (Satonyan)

* Every night, when I engaged in my task of drawing Popoki's mask gallery, I was able to see that there were many brightly colored things around me, and felt joy in being able to give others comfort and something to think about. Also, everyone's 'like' made me happy. I am grateful to you, all of Popoki's friends, to Popoki, and for being able to experience the power of reflection! (Ronyan)

Thank you for a good year!

Let's enjoy working, learning, laughing and thinking with each other and Popoki next year, too!



POPOKI'S EASY POGA

Lesson 152 This month's theme is training with a towel! *Special year-end edition!



1. First, as always, sit up straight and look beautiful.
2. Now, stand with your legs at shoulder distance apart. Hold the towel in both hands, pulling gently as if you were stretching out wrinkles. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Without moving your legs, use your outstretched hands and upper body to make figure eights in the air. After 5 times, change direction!
3. Next, hold the towel at your waist. Bring the towel up along your body until your arms are stretched as high as they can go. Now go down the back side to your bottom, and then come back. You can stop and start at your waist, or go all the way down to your ankles! Repeat!
4. Okay! Now, holding the edges of the towel, stretch your right arm out to the right. Now, keeping your muscles taut, pull the towel from the right side all the way to the left. When your left arm is outstretched, pull the towel back. Repeat 10 times!
5. It is the end of the year, so here's an extra step! Lie on your back. Hook the towel around your foot, ankle or calf. Now lift your leg and stretch! Repeat 10 times with your right leg and your left leg.
6. Did it? Even if you didn't succeed, you tried! It is time for the 'success pose.' Congratulations! Do you feel refreshed? Please remember to relax, breathe, laugh and practice for 3 minutes every day.

Please join us!



Next Po-kai: 2020.2.1 @ zoom* & Ponenkai! 19:00~**

* It is always the same link but please contact Popoki if you need it.

Book Suggestion from Popoki's Friends

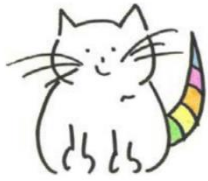
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What Popoki Means to Me

Sasanyan

My first contact with Popoki was 3 years ago. Ronyan introduced him to me.

He was very sweet. I met him many times. I learned that Popoki often goes to my hometown Iwate and does peace activities.

When the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake occurred, I was in the train on the Tohoku main line in Iwate. I waited for rescue people on the train for 2 hours, and I got off at a small station. After that, I managed to call my father, and we went home by his car in a snowstorm. It was hard going due to the weather and to power outages. It was night when I arrived home. My family and I were safe. I didn't know that the tsunami had hit the coast. When I knew about it later, I was shocked.

I know that a lot of people were hurt and filled with grief. I learned Popoki has always been close to their heart. I felt I would like to join this peace project. Kobe, where Popoki is, has also experienced a big earthquake "the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake". I think it was meant for me to come to Kobe, meeting Popoki and seeing everyone of Po-kai. I cherish this wonderful encounter.

I joined this peace project after COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 gives us invisible fear and anxiety. At such a time, I watch the Popoki's mask gallery. I feel heart-warming and safe. I joined the Peace and Health Workshop "What Colour is Health?" It made me think about COVID-19 and peace again. I viewed COVID-19 calmly. There are various difficulties around us, such as diseases, disasters, and conflicts, etc. Through this Popoki peace activity, I would like to think about peace and society and how everyone can feel calm and safe.

My favorite view



IWATE



KOBE

PLEASE HELP SUPPORT THE POPOKI PEACE PROJECT!

The Popoki Peace Project is a voluntary project which uses Popoki's peace book and DVD to promote peace through various activities such as peace camps, peace workshops, seminars and other activities. Since the March 2011 earthquake, we have also worked in the disaster area and in 2012 published a book about that work: *Popoki's Friendship Story - Our Peace Journey Born Out of the Great Northeastern Japan Earthquake. Popoki, What Color is Peace?* has been translated into Thai, Chinese, Korean, Khmer, Indonesian, Tetun and Bengali, Vietnamese, Arabic and Hebrew. Spanish, Farsi, Lao, Swahili, translations are underway. If you would like to translate Popoki, or have a way to have the book sold at your local bookstore, please let us know.

How to purchase Popoki's books: *Popoki, What Color is Peace? Popoki's Peace Book 1, Popoki, What Color is Friendship? Popoki's Peace Book 2, Popoki, What Color is Genki? Popoki's Peace Book 3 and Popoki's Friendship Story*

From outside of Japan

1. Go to your local Japanese bookstore: Kinokuniya, Maruzen, etc. (or their website)
2. Write to us at ronniandpopoki@gmail.com and we'll figure it out!

From Inside Japan

From the publisher, Epic: TEL: 078-241-7561 · FAX: 078-241-1918

From Amazon.co.jp or your local bookseller

From the Popoki Peace Project ronniandpopoki@gmail.com



Contributions are always welcome!

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THANK YOU FROM POPOKI!