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FROM PAGE 1

Houthis Claim a Second Attack on Riyadh's Airport as Saudi Arabia Vows to Retaliate 'Firmly' and Trump Weighs Joining the Fight

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What it means for Japan

For Japan the war matters in one respect above all. The country buys more than 90 per cent of its crude oil from the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are its two largest suppliers. A threat to Saudi production, or to the sea lanes that carry its oil, reaches Japanese petrol pumps and electricity bills.

Tokyo's financial markets are closed on Monday for

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Trump Declares an 'Energy Ceasefire' Between Russia and Ukraine; Zelenskyy Says It Was News to Him, and the Strikes Go On

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imposed sanctions on Russia since 2022, the measure of Sunday's announcement will be simple: whether the strikes on power stations and refineries actually stop.

MIDDLE EAST

'Dawn of Yemen': The Government Offensive That Reopened the War, From Mocha on the Red Sea to the Siege of Taiz

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The fighting that has spread to Saudi Arabia's airports began in Yemen itself, with an offensive launched on October 4 by the forces of the country's internationally recognised government.

The government, which Saudi Arabia backs, called the operation "Dawn of Yemen". Its stated aim is to recapture territory held by the Houthis, beginning with the Red Sea coast.

The targets

Among the first objectives were Mocha, the old port that gave its name to a kind of coffee, and the island of Mayyun, also known as Perim, which sits in the Bab el-Mandeb strait at the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

The government says it has retaken Mocha and the neighbouring district of Dhubab. The Houthis dispute that, and the claims of both sides are hard to verify independently. Control of Mocha would strengthen the government's position on the coast south of the Houthi-held port of Hodeidah, through which much of northern Yemen's food and fuel arrives.

Other fronts

Fighting has spread inland. In Taiz, Yemen's third-largest city, the Houthis have tightened their siege after taking ground to the south, including the town of al-Turbah, earlier this month.

There is also fighting in the governorates of Marib and al-Jawf, east of the capital, Sanaa, where government forces report advances. Marib, with its oil and gas fields, has been one of the most fiercely contested regions of the war.

The claims

A government military spokesman, Colonel Majed Abdullah al-Nazili, said on Saturday that at least 1,150 Houthi fighters had been killed in almost 2,000 operations since the offensive began, and at least 180 Houthi vehicles destroyed. Al Jazeera said it could not verify the figures.

The wider picture

The offensive ended a period in which the war had been largely frozen. A truce arranged by the United Nations in 2022 halted most of the fighting between the Houthis and the Saudi-led coalition, and the ceasefire that followed was broadly observed for several years. It has now collapsed.

American media have reported that the United States has given intelligence and planning help to the offensive, according to Al Jazeera.

For the Houthis, the strikes on Saudi airports appear designed to raise the cost of the offensive for the kingdom that supports it. For the government and its backers, the aim is to push the movement back from the coast, where it has threatened shipping in the Red

Sports Day, so investors there will have their first chance on Tuesday to react to a weekend in which the war in Yemen reached the centre of the Saudi capital.

Many Japanese companies have staff in the kingdom. The Saudi authorities have not said when the airport will reopen.

Sea since 2023.

MIDDLE EAST

Yemen's War in Brief: From the Fall of Sanaa in 2014 to a Truce in 2022, the Red Sea Attacks and the Fighting of This Month

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Yemen, at the south-western corner of the Arabian Peninsula, has been at war in one form or another for more than a decade.

2014-15: the war begins

In September 2014 the Houthis, an armed movement from the north of the country, seized the capital, Sanaa. The internationally recognised government fled, eventually to the southern port of Aden and to Saudi Arabia.

In March 2015 a coalition of Arab states led by Saudi Arabia intervened to restore the government, beginning years of air strikes in Yemen and of Houthi missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia.

A humanitarian disaster

The war produced what the United Nations repeatedly called one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. A study for the UN Development Programme estimated that by the end of 2021 the conflict would have caused about 377,000 deaths, most of them from hunger, disease and the collapse of services rather than from fighting. Aid agencies have repeatedly warned of famine conditions, and millions of Yemenis have depended on food assistance.

2022: the truce

In April 2022 the UN brokered a two-month truce. It was extended twice and formally expired in October that year, but the fighting between the Houthis and Saudi Arabia largely stopped, and the two sides held talks. During the truce commercial flights resumed from Sanaa for the first time in years, and fuel ships were allowed into Hodeidah.

2023-25: the Red Sea

From late 2023 the Houthis attacked merchant ships in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, saying they were acting in solidarity with the Palestinians in Gaza. Shipping lines diverted vessels around Africa. The United States and Britain began air strikes on Houthi targets in January 2024, and the United States designated the movement a foreign terrorist organisation in 2025.

In May 2025 the United States and the Houthis agreed, through Omani mediation, to stop attacking each other, although the movement said its campaign against Israel would continue.

2026: the war returns

This year the movement declared a maritime embargo on Saudi Arabia in July. On October 4 government forces launched their Dawn of Yemen offensive, and the Houthis answered with strikes on Saudi airports that culminated in Saturday's attack on Riyadh.

Through all of it Yemen has remained divided: the Houthis hold Sanaa and most of the populous north and west, while the government and other forces hold much of the south and east. The country even has rival central banks, in Sanaa and Aden.

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MIDDLE EAST

The Mecca Pact: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey Activated 'Deterrence Measures' a Day After the Offensive Began

By the International Desk

Saudi Arabia does not face the Houthis alone. On October 5, the day after the government offensive in Yemen began, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan agreed to activate what they called deterrence measures under a mutual defence pact, and to deploy forces to the kingdom.

How the pact grew

The arrangement began as a bilateral agreement. In September 2025 Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement in Riyadh, under which aggression against either country is to be treated as aggression against both.

Turkey joined this year in an expanded agreement concluded in August and named after Mecca, Islam's holiest city. Military ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan go back decades, and Pakistani officers have long served in the kingdom in training and advisory roles.

Three very different partners

The three countries bring different strengths. Saudi Arabia has wealth and a large arsenal of Western-made weapons. It is also home to Islam's two holiest sites, in Mecca and Medina, and its king bears the title Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. Pakistan has one of the largest armies in the Muslim world and is armed with nuclear weapons. Turkey, a member of NATO, has a substantial defence industry, including the drones it has sold widely abroad.

What activation means

The three governments have not published details of the forces involved or of their tasks. Deterrence, as the word suggests, is meant to discourage further attacks by showing that the kingdom has powerful partners.

Saturday's strike on Riyadh's airport showed the limits of that message so far. Pakistan's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, called the attack heinous.

A changing region

The pact reflects a broader trend among Gulf states to spread their security bets. Saudi Arabia remains closely tied to the United States, its main arms supplier, but has sought additional partners as the region's wars have multiplied.

For Japan, which depends on the Gulf for most of its oil, the stability of Saudi Arabia is a direct national interest, whoever helps to guarantee it.

The coming days will show whether the partners' forces play a visible part in the kingdom's response.

MIDDLE EAST

Al-Kharj: The Province South-East of Riyadh That the Coalition Says a Missile Was Aimed At, Home to an Air Base Used by American Forces

By the International Desk

The coalition that Saudi Arabia leads in Yemen said on Sunday that its forces had intercepted a ballistic missile aimed at al-Kharj, south-east of Riyadh.

The coalition did not say what in al-Kharj the missile had been aimed at, and the Houthis did not comment on it specifically. Neither the coalition nor the Saudi government gave further details of the interception.

The province

Al-Kharj lies in the Riyadh region, roughly 80 kilometres south-east of the capital. It is an area of farms and towns that has grown with the expansion of Riyadh, and it is also home to military installations.

The air base

The best known is Prince Sultan Air Base, near the town of al-Kharj, which has been used by American forces at different times over the past three decades.

American aircraft flew from the base in the 1990s, when the United States and its allies enforced restrictions on Iraqi air operations after the Gulf War. American forces withdrew from it in 2003, after the invasion of Iraq.

They returned in 2019, as tensions with Iran rose. That September, drone and missile attacks on the Abqaiq processing plant and the Khurais oilfield

exposed weaknesses in the kingdom's defences.

Why it matters

The presence of American personnel in Saudi Arabia means that attacks on the kingdom carry a risk of drawing in the United States directly. An American citizen was among the 12 people killed at Riyadh's airport on Saturday, and President Donald Trump has said the United States may join strikes against the Houthis.

Interceptions

The coalition has reported intercepting missiles and drones fired at the kingdom during the past week. The interception reported on Sunday, along with a drone brought down over the Eastern Province, suggests that the Houthis are aiming at a wide range of places across the kingdom.

A wider pattern

The Eastern Province, where the drone was intercepted, is the heart of Saudi Arabia's oil industry, home to the giant Ghawar field and the processing plant at Abqaiq that was struck in 2019, temporarily halving the kingdom's oil output.

Any successful attack there would reverberate through world energy markets, and through Japan's economy, far more than the strikes on airports so far.

MIDDLE EAST

Vision 2030: The Plan to Remake Saudi Arabia Beyond Oil, and the Riyadh Expo That Will Follow Osaka's

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

The war with the Houthis threatens more than airports. It strikes at the heart of Saudi Arabia's plan to transform itself.

The plan

In April 2016 Mohammed bin Salman, then deputy crown prince, unveiled Vision 2030, a programme to reduce the kingdom's dependence on oil by building up private business, tourism, entertainment and new industries.

The changes since have been striking. Women were allowed to drive in 2018. The kingdom began issuing tourist visas in 2019, and cinemas, concerts and sporting events once unthinkable in Saudi Arabia have become common. The kingdom has invested heavily in sport, staging Formula One races, boxing matches and golf tournaments, and the state controls the English football club Newcastle United through its investment fund.

Giant projects are under way, among them NEOM, a planned region on the Red Sea coast, and the expansion of Riyadh into a business and tourism hub. The kingdom's sovereign wealth fund, the Public Investment Fund, is the main vehicle for the plan's investments at home and abroad.

The next Expo

In November 2023 Riyadh won the right to host the World Expo in 2030, beating Busan in South Korea and Rome in a vote of the member states of the Bureau International des Expositions. It will be the next full World Expo after the one held in Osaka last year.

Saudi Arabia was also confirmed in 2024 as host of the football World Cup in 2034.

Japan's role

Japan and Saudi Arabia launched a joint programme, Saudi-Japan Vision 2030, in 2017, the year King Salman made a state visit to Japan, to promote co-operation in areas from energy and manufacturing to culture and entertainment. Japanese companies are involved in projects in the kingdom.

Security and confidence

A plan that depends on attracting tourists, foreign investors and international events depends also on security. Missile strikes on the capital's main airport, and the closure of that airport for days, are the opposite of the image the kingdom wants to project.

That is one reason Saudi Arabia has promised to respond firmly, and one reason it is seeking help from partners, from the United States to the members of its new defence pact.

For Osaka, whose Expo closed a year ago this week and will be followed by Riyadh's in 2030, the kingdom's troubles are a reminder that hosting the world requires, above all, peace.

MIDDLE EAST



Riyadh at dusk, with the Kingdom Centre, centre, and the Al Faisaliah tower, right, in a file image supplied for this edition. The Saudi capital's main airport, King Khalid International, about 35 kilometres north of the city centre, was struck by a missile on Saturday and, the Houthis said, attacked again on Sunday; it remained closed. Airports in Jizan, Najran and Abha have also been attacked in the past week.

MIDDLE EAST

Five Airports in a Week: How the Houthis Carried the War in Yemen to the Cities of Saudi Arabia

Strikes on Jizan, Najran, Abha and twice on Riyadh, a projectile near Dammam and a claimed hit on a refinery; the kingdom says its defences stopped a missile aimed at al-Kharj
By the International Desk

In little more than a week the war in Yemen has moved from the mountains and ports of that country to the airports of its much larger and richer neighbour.

Since government forces backed by Saudi Arabia opened an offensive against the Houthis on October 4, five Saudi airports have been attacked or have had projectiles fall near them, according to Al Jazeera's account of the week.

On Monday last week attacks on King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Airport in Jizan and on Najran International Airport, both near the Yemeni border, wounded three people and caused damage. On Tuesday attacks on the airport at Abha and on King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh killed three people and wounded 36.

The Riyadh airport reopened after that attack. On Saturday it was hit again, this time by a missile that struck the domestic terminals, killing 12 people and injuring 309. A projectile fell near King Fahd International Airport in Dammam on the same day.

On Sunday the Houthis said they had attacked the

MIDDLE EAST

The Week in the Gulf: From the Offensive in Yemen to the Second Attack on Riyadh's Airport

By the International Desk

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4: Forces of Yemen's internationally recognised government, backed by Saudi Arabia, launch the Dawn of Yemen offensive on the Red Sea coast.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5: Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan agree to activate deterrence measures under their defence pact and to deploy forces to the kingdom. Attacks on airports in Jizan and Najran wound three people.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6: Attacks on the airports in Abha and Riyadh kill three people and wound 36. The Riyadh airport later reopens.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10: A missile hits the domestic terminals in Riyadh, killing 12 and injuring 309. A projectile falls near Dammam's airport. At least 291 flights are cancelled. President Trump says of joining strikes: "We may."

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11: The coalition calls the attack a war crime and reports intercepting a missile aimed at al-Kharj. The Houthis claim a new attack on the Riyadh airport, which remains closed.

IN YEMEN ON SUNDAY: Media affiliated with the Houthis report air and missile strikes in Taiz and Saada; the government says it has retaken Mocha, which the Houthis dispute.

THE DEAD ON SATURDAY: four Saudis, two Bangladeshis, and one each from the United States, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, the Palestinian territories and Sudan.

CLAIMED BUT UNCONFIRMED: a Houthi strike

Riyadh airport once more. The civil aviation authority said there were injuries, without giving a number, and the airport stayed closed.

Beyond the airports

The Houthis have also claimed a strike on the Rabigh refinery on the Red Sea coast north of Jeddah, which the Saudi authorities have not confirmed. In July the movement declared a maritime embargo on the kingdom.

On Sunday the spokesman of the coalition that Saudi Arabia leads in Yemen, Turki al-Maliki, said its forces had intercepted a ballistic missile aimed at al-Kharj, south-east of Riyadh, and a drone in the Eastern Province, home to much of the kingdom's oil industry.

Why airports matter

Airports are civilian infrastructure, and attacks on civilians and civilian objects are prohibited by the laws of war. That is the basis of the coalition's description of Saturday's attack as "a full-fledged war crime".

They are also where a war becomes visible to the

on the Rabigh refinery; the government's figure of 1,150 Houthi fighters killed.

TRAVEL: The United States, Canada and Germany are among the countries that have issued warnings.

STILL UNKNOWN: when and how Saudi Arabia will retaliate, and when the airport will reopen.

MIDDLE EAST

King Khalid International: The Riyadh Airport of Pyramid Roofs, Opened in 1983 and Due to Become Part of a Far Larger Hub

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

King Khalid International Airport, the target of the weekend's attacks, is the main airport of the Saudi capital and one of the busiest in the Middle East.

A 1980s landmark

The airport opened in 1983, about 35 kilometres north of central Riyadh. It is named after King Khalid, who reigned from 1975 until his death in 1982.

It was designed by the American architects Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum, whose terminals, built from repeated triangular modules with pyramid-like roofs, were meant to evoke traditional forms while coping with the desert heat. A large mosque stands at the centre of the complex.

The terminals

The airport has several passenger terminals as well as a terminal reserved for the royal family and official guests. Saturday's missile hit the complex of Terminals 3 and 4, which handle domestic flights, according to the civil aviation authority.

Domestic routes are the lifeblood of a country as large as Saudi Arabia, which covers about two

outside world. King Khalid International is the main gateway to the Saudi capital for diplomats, foreign business people and the millions of migrant workers on whom the kingdom's economy depends. The nationalities of Saturday's dead, from Bangladesh to Sudan, reflected that.

Defences under strain

Saudi Arabia has intercepted many of the missiles and drones fired at it over the years, but the week's attacks showed that some get through. Each interception also costs money: the missiles used to stop an incoming weapon are far more expensive than many of the drones they are fired at.

The kingdom has said it will retaliate firmly, and President Donald Trump has said the United States may join it. What form a response takes, and whether it widens the war further, is the question hanging over the Gulf this week.

million square kilometres, more than five times the area of Japan. Flights link the capital with Jeddah, the gateway to Mecca, with Dammam in the oil-producing east and with cities near the Yemeni border.

Growth and a new airport

Passenger numbers have grown quickly as the kingdom has opened up to tourism and business under its Vision 2030 programme.

In 2022 Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced plans for a much larger King Salman International Airport, which is to incorporate the existing terminals and become one of the biggest airports in the world.

Previous attacks

The airport has been targeted before. In November 2017 a missile fired from Yemen was intercepted near it, and Houthi drones and missiles have been aimed at Riyadh many times since.

None of those earlier attacks came close to the death toll of Saturday's strike.

MIDDLE EAST

Japan's Oil Comes From the Gulf: Why a War on the Arabian Peninsula Is Felt at Japanese Pumps, and What Protects the Country

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

Few countries are as exposed to events in the Gulf as Japan, which has almost no oil of its own.

The numbers

More than 90 per cent of the crude oil Japan imports comes from the Middle East. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are by far its biggest suppliers.

Much of that oil is loaded at terminals inside the Gulf and passes through the Strait of Hormuz, between Iran and Oman, on its way to Japanese refineries. Saudi Arabia can also send oil by pipeline across the peninsula to its Red Sea coast, a route that brings it closer to the waters where the Houthis operate.

The cushion

After the oil shocks of the 1970s Japan built up stockpiles of crude and oil products, held by the state and by private companies, which together cover consumption for months. Members of the International Energy Agency are required to hold stocks equal to at least 90 days of their net imports, and Japan holds well above that level.

Those reserves can be released in an emergency, as they have been in coordinated actions by the agency's members in the past.

Prices, not shortages

In practice the greater risk is not that oil stops arriving but that it becomes more expensive. Crude is traded on world markets, so an attack that threatens Saudi output raises prices everywhere, and a weak yen makes every barrel cost more in Japanese terms.

The effect spreads well beyond petrol. Oil and gas costs feed into electricity bills, the price of plastics and packaging, and the cost of moving goods. Food makers cited energy and logistics costs among the main reasons for raising the prices of 3,153 food and drink items this month, according to Teikoku Databank.

Diplomacy

Japan has long cultivated close ties with the Gulf producers, through state visits, investment and co-operation on energy projects. It has also sought to diversify its supplies, with limited success where crude is concerned.

The weekend's attacks are a reminder that energy security begins thousands of kilometres from Japan's shores.

MIDDLE EAST

Hitting a Bullet With a Bullet: How Air Defences Try to Stop Ballistic Missiles and Drones, and Why Some Still Get Through

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Stopping a ballistic missile is one of the hardest tasks in modern warfare, often compared to hitting a bullet with a bullet.

The flight of a missile

A ballistic missile is boosted by its rocket motor, then coasts on a high, arcing path before plunging towards its target at great speed. Riyadh lies more than 1,000 kilometres from the Houthi-held capital, Sanaa, a flight of only minutes for a missile of that range.

Layers of defence

Defenders try to detect the launch by radar or satellite, track the missile and predict its path, then fire an interceptor to meet it. Some systems, such as the American THAAD, engage targets high in the atmosphere; others, such as the Patriot, defend against missiles in the last phase of their flight.

Modern interceptors often destroy their targets by direct collision, relying on the force of impact rather than an explosive warhead.

Why some get through

No system is perfect. Radar coverage can have gaps, decoys and debris can confuse sensors, and an attacker who fires several weapons at once can overwhelm the defences. Even a successful interception can scatter debris over the area below.

Drones present a different problem. They fly low and slowly and can be hard to spot, but they are cheap, so using an expensive interceptor against each one is costly.

Japan's own shield

Japan has built its own defences against ballistic missiles, chiefly with North Korea in mind: destroyers equipped with the Aegis radar system and SM-3 interceptors for targets in space, and Patriot PAC-3 batteries for the final phase.

The lessons from Saudi Arabia, a well-defended country that has nonetheless been hit repeatedly, are being studied by militaries far beyond the Gulf.

Whatever the technology, defenders must succeed every time, while an attacker needs to succeed only once.

MIDDLE EAST

MIDDLE EAST

Twenty-Six Years Ago Today: The Bombing of the USS Cole in Aden, the Attack That Put Yemen on the Map of America's Wars

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Yemen's place in the world's security worries did not begin with the Houthis. On October 12, 2000, 26 years ago today, the American destroyer USS Cole was attacked in the harbour of Aden.

The attack

The Cole, a guided-missile destroyer of the Arleigh Burke class, had stopped in Aden to refuel. Two men steered a small boat packed with explosives alongside and detonated it, tearing a hole in the ship's side at the waterline.

Seventeen American sailors were killed and dozens more injured. The crew fought for days to keep the damaged ship afloat.

Al-Qaeda

The attack was carried out by al-Qaeda, the network led by Osama bin Laden, which less than a year later attacked New York and Washington on September 11, 2001.

The ship returns

The Cole was carried home aboard a heavy-lift ship, repaired at the yard in Mississippi where it had been built and returned to service in 2002. It later deployed to the Middle East again.

A long thread

Since then Yemen has drawn the attention of Western militaries again and again: as a base for al-Qaeda's regional branch, as the scene of a civil war, and, from 2023, as the launch point of Houthi attacks on merchant shipping.

The port of Aden itself later became the seat of the government that now, with Saudi backing, is fighting to push the Houthis back.

The anniversary falls in a week in which the country's war has once again reached far beyond its borders.

POLITICS

How Ministers Leave Office: Dismissal Is Rare, Resignation Is the Usual Route, and Autumn Sessions Have Often Claimed Them

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Japanese prime ministers have the legal power to remove any minister at any time. Under Article 68 of the Constitution the prime minister appoints the ministers of state and may remove them as he or she chooses.

In practice outright dismissals are rare. A minister in trouble usually resigns, often after days or weeks of questioning in the Diet, and the prime minister appoints a successor, sometimes the same day.

Why resignation is preferred

A resignation allows the minister to leave with some dignity, and spares the prime minister the appearance of having misjudged the appointment. It also allows the government to say that the minister took responsibility. In the vocabulary of Japanese politics, a minister who resigns is said to take responsibility even when he denies any wrongdoing.

For the prime minister, the timing is a matter of judgment. Moving too quickly can look like abandoning a colleague under pressure; moving too slowly can let a scandal dominate the Diet and drag down the government's ratings.

Recent precedents

In May last year the agriculture minister, Taku Eto, resigned over a remark that he had never had to buy rice because supporters gave it to him, at a time when rice prices were soaring.

In the autumn of 2022 Fumio Kishida's government lost three ministers within about a month: the economic revitalisation minister, Daishiro Yamagiwa, over his ties to the Unification Church; the justice minister, Yasuhiro Hanashi, over a remark about the death penalty; and the internal affairs minister, Minoru Terada, over questions about political funds.

The pattern

Many of those cases followed the same course. Revelations in the press led to questioning in the Diet, the minister's explanations changed or failed to

satisfy, and the governing party, worried about its standing with voters, concluded that the minister had become a burden. Opposition parties have sometimes kept up their questions for weeks, in the hope that a minister's explanations would begin to contradict one another.

Extraordinary sessions of the Diet in the autumn, when the budget committees question every minister, have often been the setting.

Censure

A censure motion in the House of Councillors has no legal force and does not oblige a minister to resign. Its effect is political: opposition parties have in the past refused to take part in deliberations attended by a censured minister.

The Yana case

Kazuo Yana's case has followed the familiar course so far, with one difference: the prime minister has twice said publicly that she will keep him. The question now is whether pressure from within the LDP, voiced over the weekend by a former prime minister and by lawmakers in his own prefecture, changes that calculation.

POLITICS

Niigata Mayoral Race Begins With Three Candidates: Nakahara Seeks a Third Term Against Two Newcomers, With Population Decline the Central Issue

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Campaigning began on Sunday for the mayoral election in Niigata, the largest city on Honshu's Sea of Japan coast, with three candidates registering for the vote on October 25.

The incumbent, Yaichi Nakahara, is seeking a third term. He is challenged by two newcomers, Manabu Aoki and Jun Hayatake, the Asahi Shimbun reported.

The issues

Population decline and the future shape of the city are at the centre of the campaign, according to the newspaper. Like many regional cities, Niigata has been losing residents as young people move to Tokyo and the birth rate falls.

Urban planning, the question of what kind of city Niigata should become, is the other main theme, the newspaper said.

The incumbent

Mr Nakahara, a former member of the House of Councillors, was first elected mayor in 2018 and re-elected in 2022. He will ask voters to judge his record over two terms.

His challengers are both standing for the mayoralty for the first time, and each will offer voters a different vision of the city's future.

How the vote works

The mayor is elected directly by the city's voters for a four-year term. Candidates usually tour all eight of the city's wards during the campaign. Campaigning lasts two weeks, during which candidates may use loudspeaker cars, speeches and official posters under the rules of the Public Offices Election Law.

Turnout in local elections has been low in many cities in recent years, and all three candidates will be trying to draw voters out to the polls.

Beyond the city

The result will be watched by the political parties as an indication of the mood in the regions ahead of the unified local elections next April. Those elections will include the contest for the Niigata Prefectural Assembly, as well as many of the prefecture's municipal assemblies.

Votes will be cast on Sunday, October 25, and counted that evening.

POLITICS

Niigata: A Treaty Port of 1869, Japan's Rice Capital and Since 2007 the Only Designated City on Honshu's Sea of Japan Coast

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Niigata, the capital of Niigata Prefecture, is the largest city on the Sea of Japan coast of Honshu and the hub of one of the country's most important farming regions.

A treaty port

The city grew up at the mouth of the Shinano, Japan's longest river. It was one of the five ports opened to foreign trade under the treaties signed by the shogunate in 1858, although it did not open until 1869, after the Meiji Restoration.

Rice and sake

Niigata Prefecture is famous for its rice, above all the Koshihikari variety, and for sake brewed with the clear water of its snowy mountains. The prefecture is consistently among the country's largest rice producers.

A designated city

Niigata absorbed a number of neighbouring municipalities in the early 2000s and in 2007 became an ordinance-designated city, a status that gives large cities many of the powers of a prefecture. It is divided into eight wards.

It remains the only designated city on the Sea of Japan side of Honshu, a distinction the city itself likes to point out.

Links across the sea

Its port and airport have long connected the city with Russia, Korea and China, and it has sister-city ties with cities across the region.

A city of snow and rivers

Although parts of the prefecture are among the snowiest inhabited places in the world, the city itself, on the coastal plain, receives far less snow than the mountains inland.

The Shinano and the Agano rivers, which reach the sea near the city, have shaped its geography and its history of flood control and land reclamation.

The challenge

Like most of the country outside the great metropolitan areas, Niigata faces an ageing and shrinking population, which makes the October 25 mayoral election a contest about how a regional city can stay attractive to the young.

POLITICS

The Unified Local Elections: Held Every Four Years Since 1947, They Return Next April With Governors, Mayors and Assemblies

By the Politics Desk

When Toshimitsu Motegi urged the Tochigi chapter to fight as one, he was looking ahead to the unified local elections, which are next due in April 2027.

The origin

The first unified local elections were held in April 1947, just before the postwar Constitution and the Local Autonomy Law took effect in May, when governors, mayors and assembly members were elected across the country at the same time.

Since then elections whose terms end around the same time have been grouped together every four years, in April of the year before a leap year.

Why fewer contests are unified

Over the decades, the share of local elections held on the unified dates has fallen. Mayors and governors resign or die in office, assemblies are dissolved and municipalities merge, and each of these events puts that contest on a different four-year cycle.

The Niigata mayoral election on October 25 is one such contest, held on its own schedule.

Two rounds

The unified elections are held in two rounds, a fortnight apart. In 2023, the most recent, the rounds were held on April 9 and April 23. The first is for governors, prefectural assemblies and the mayors and assemblies of the large designated cities; the second for other mayors and municipal assemblies, including Tokyo's special wards.

Why parties care

For the national parties, the unified elections are a test of their organisation on the ground. Prefectural and municipal assembly members are the backbone of party campaigns in national elections, mobilising supporters and running local offices.

A poor showing in April can weaken a party for years, which is why local chapters are anxious that national controversies do not spill over into their races.

Next spring

The 2027 elections will be the 21st since 1947. Voters will choose, among others, the members of most of the country's prefectural assemblies. With a minister's remarks about road budgets under fire, the LDP in Tochigi has made clear that it wants the matter resolved well before then.

POLITICS

Politics in Brief: The Imperial Couple End Their Aomori Visit, the Opposition Weighs Censure and the ICC Dispute Continues

By the Politics Desk

IMPERIAL COUPLE: The Emperor and Empress returned to Tokyo on Sunday after a two-day visit to Aomori Prefecture for the National Sports Festival, during which they viewed a large Nebuta float and visited a facility that brings together housing for the elderly and a nursery.

CENSURE: Six opposition parties in the House of Councillors are weighing a censure motion against the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, after agreeing on Friday to demand his resignation.

LDP: Former Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba said the minister's remarks about road budgets were highly questionable for a politician.

TOCHIGI: The LDP's Tochigi chapter held its first fundraising party in four years on Saturday. Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, the chapter's chairman, called for unity ahead of next spring's local elections.

ICC: Japan is among the 21 members of the Bureau of the Assembly of States Parties, which has called on Washington to withdraw its sanctions against the International Criminal Court immediately. The American measures take full effect after a grace period of 180 days.

NIIGATA: Three candidates are standing in the Niigata mayoral election on October 25.

MIDDLE EAST: The deaths of 12 people in the missile strike on Riyadh's airport on Saturday included no Japanese, according to the nationalities announced by the Saudi civil aviation authority.

UKRAINE: President Trump's announcement of an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine was news to President Zelenskyy, he said; Japan has backed Ukraine since 2022.

OKINAWA: The curfew from midnight to 5 a.m. that the American forces imposed on their personnel in Okinawa after the killing of a woman in Naha remains in force; it runs for 30 days.

MARKETS: Tokyo's stock market reopens on Tuesday after the three-day weekend.

POLITICS

The Week Ahead: Markets Reopen, Prudential's Sales Halt Begins and the Final Stages of the Climax Series Open

By the Politics Desk

MONDAY, OCT. 12: Sports Day. Tokyo markets closed. Izumo All-Japan University Ekiden. Pacific League Climax Series first stage, Game 3, Seibu v Nippon-Ham at Belluna Dome, 2 p.m. Nobel prize in economic sciences, about 6:45 p.m. Japan time.

TUESDAY, OCT. 13: Tokyo markets reopen. Prudential Life's suspension of new sales, ordered by the Financial Services Agency, begins and runs to January 31. One year since the close of Expo 2025 in Osaka.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14: Climax Series final stages begin: Hanshin v DeNA at Koshien, Hanshin starting one win up; SoftBank v the Pacific League first-stage winner in Fukuoka, SoftBank starting two wins up. Results from ASML, the Dutch maker of chipmaking machines.

THURSDAY, OCT. 15: Results from TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker. Kannamesai at Ise Jingu, to Saturday.

WEEKEND, OCT. 17 AND 18: Kawagoe Festival.

SATURDAY, OCT. 24: Japan Series begins.

SUNDAY, OCT. 25: Niigata mayoral election.

OCT. 29 AND 30: Bank of Japan policy meeting.

IN THE GULF: Saudi Arabia's promised response to the attacks on Riyadh's airport.

IN UKRAINE: Whether the energy ceasefire announced by President Trump takes hold.

POLITICS



Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at the rostrum of the House of Representatives, in a file image. She has twice said that her agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, should stay in his post; over the weekend a former prime minister called his remarks highly questionable, and Liberal Democrats in his home prefecture called his situation severe. (Photo: WPM Productions)

POLITICS

Ishiba Says Yana's Remarks Are 'Highly Questionable' for a Politician as Liberal Democrats Begin to Say Resignation Is Unavoidable

The former prime minister says the agriculture minister does not seem to recognise that a lawmaker represents all the people
By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Former Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has sharply criticised the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, over his remarks about cutting road budgets for municipalities whose mayors had not supported him, the Asahi Shimbun and Kyodo News reported.

Mr Ishiba said the remarks were highly questionable for someone engaged in politics, and that Mr Yana did not appear to recognise that he was a representative of all the people. He also spoke about the minister's future, according to the reports.

The criticism carries weight because of who it comes from. Mr Ishiba led the Liberal Democratic Party and the government until last year, and remains one of the party's best-known figures.

'He can't last'

His comments added to the pressure inside the governing party. Jiji Press reported that voices within the LDP were saying that Mr Yana's resignation was unavoidable, and TV Asahi quoted party insiders as saying that he could not last.

Mr Yana did not answer reporters' questions, according to TV Asahi.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has so far stood by him. On Thursday she told him to stay in his post and repay the public with his work, and on Friday she again ruled out dismissing him when questioned in the House of Councillors.

The remarks

The case concerns remarks made at a party gathering in May, in which a speaker whom Mr Yana has acknowledged was himself said that road budgets for two municipalities whose mayors had not supported him had been cut drastically. The Shimotsuke

Yana Stays Away From the Tochigi LDP's First Fundraising Party in Four Years; Local Lawmakers Call the Situation Severe

By the Politics Desk

Kazuo Yana did not attend a fundraising party held by the Liberal Democratic Party's Tochigi chapter in Utsunomiya on Saturday, citing official business, as criticism of the agriculture minister mounted among his own party's lawmakers in the prefecture, the Shimotsuke Shimbun reported.

It was the chapter's first fundraising party in four years. The LDP had held back from such events after the scandal over unrecorded income from faction fundraising parties, which damaged the party nationally.

Voices from the chapter

Motoi Funabune, who represents the Tochigi 1st district in the House of Representatives, said Mr Yana must give a full explanation. The party had to accept that the situation was severe, he said, adding that whether the minister resigned was a matter for the prime minister and for Mr Yana.

Katsunori Takahashi, a member of the House of Councillors from Tochigi, said voters' reaction to the remarks had been negative, and that character mattered more to them than policy.

Shimbun, the Tochigi newspaper that published the recording, says the two were a city and a town.

Mr Yana has withdrawn the remarks and apologised, and denies ever influencing the budgets. He has said he made an inquiry to the land ministry about road budgets in February but did not lobby, and that there is no record of a meeting.

A phrase from the Constitution

Mr Ishiba's charge that the minister had forgotten he represents all the people echoes Article 43 of the Constitution, which describes the members of both houses of the Diet as elected representatives of all the people.

The point goes to the heart of the case. A lawmaker who boasts of punishing towns that did not back him is suggesting that public money follows political loyalty, which is precisely what the constitutional phrase is meant to exclude.

What comes next

Six opposition parties in the upper house have agreed to demand Mr Yana's resignation and are weighing a censure motion. The budget committees of both houses, where ministers answer questions one at a time, are expected to be the next test of his explanation.

The decision on his future rests with the prime minister, who appoints and dismisses ministers, and with Mr Yana himself. Neither has yet signalled a change of course.

Yoshiyuki Hyugano, the chapter's secretary-general, said the remarks had badly undermined the expectations placed in Mr Yana, and that the chapter, which had endorsed him, bore responsibility too.

Motegi calls for unity

The chapter's chairman, Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, who represents a Tochigi district himself, also attended. According to the newspaper, he called on the chapter to fight as one in the unified local elections next spring.

For Mr Motegi it was a crowded day: on Saturday he also spoke by telephone to the president of the International Criminal Court and to the American secretary of state.

Why the local view matters

The views of a minister's home chapter count for a good deal in Japanese politics. Local chapters select and support candidates, and their members knock on doors at election time. A chapter that publicly calls its own minister's situation severe is sending a message to Tokyo.

The unified local elections in April, in which many prefectural assembly members and mayors face the voters, give the chapter a practical reason to want the matter settled. Candidates do not want to campaign under the shadow of a minister's remarks about punishing towns.

The minister's position

Mr Yana, a member of the House of Representatives from Tochigi, has said he will not resign. He has withdrawn the remarks and apologised, while denying that any budget was cut because of them.

Whether he can hold that position may depend less on the opposition than on how long his own party's patience lasts.

POLITICS

The Yana Case: From the Prime Minister's Backing to the Doubts in His Own Prefecture

By the Politics Desk

THE REMARKS: At a party gathering in May, a speaker Mr Yana has acknowledged was himself said road budgets for two municipalities whose mayors had not backed him were cut drastically. A recording was later made public by the Shimotsuke Shimbun.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5: Mr Yana withdraws the remarks and apologises, denying that he approached the land ministry about either municipality.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7: He denies lobbying and says there is no record of a meeting, after reports that he made an inquiry about road budgets in February.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8: The prime minister tells him to stay and repay the public with his work, and rules out an inquiry within the government.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9: Six opposition parties in the upper house agree to demand his resignation and weigh a censure motion. He is rebuked at an LDP meeting and apologises. Ms Takaichi again rules out dismissing him.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10: He misses the Tochigi chapter's fundraising party, citing official business. Local lawmakers call the situation severe.

THE WEEKEND: Former Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba calls the remarks highly questionable. Jiji Press reports voices in the LDP saying resignation is unavoidable.

NEXT: The budget committees of both houses, and a possible censure motion in the House of Councillors.

WHO DECIDES: Under Article 68 of the Constitution the prime minister appoints ministers and may remove them as she chooses.

THE MINISTER'S LINE: He made an inquiry but never lobbied, and no budget was cut because of his remarks.

INTERNATIONAL

Kharkiv Power Plant Hit After Trump's Post as Zaporizhzhia Mourns 23 Dead; Ukraine Says Putin Has One Answer to Every Proposal

By the International Desk

Hours after President Donald Trump declared an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine on Sunday, a power plant in Kharkiv came under attack, Ukraine's presidential office said, confirming that the strike came after Mr Trump's announcement.

Glide bomb attacks were also reported in the region, according to the Associated Press. Ukraine's air force publishes the number of Russian drones and missiles launched each night, often running into the hundreds.

Zaporizhzhia

In Zaporizhzhia, in the south-east, the search and rescue operation ended after a Russian bombing on Saturday that killed 23 people, among them four children. More than 30 people were wounded, eight of whom remained in hospital, the AP reported.

Strikes in Russia

Ukraine has kept up its own long-range attacks. A Ukrainian drone attack shut down a data centre of the technology company Yandex in Vladimir, the third strike on Yandex facilities in four days, causing outages in dozens of Russian cities and in Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia. No injuries were reported.

In the Bryansk region, which borders Ukraine, a Ukrainian drone strike killed a man and wounded two women, local officials said. Russia has accused Ukraine of attacking civilian targets in its border regions.

'Nyet'

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that Kyiv was ready to stop striking Russian refineries if Moscow halted its attacks on Ukraine's energy system, and asked Mr Trump to press the Kremlin. President Vladimir Putin, he said, had given "one answer to all" of Ukraine's proposals for de-escalation: "nyet".

Mr Trump has for weeks urged Mr Zelenskyy to stop attacking Russian energy infrastructure. Ukraine has used long-range drones against Russian refineries throughout the war, aiming at the fuel and revenue that sustain Moscow's campaign.

Diesel

The diesel deal that Mr Trump struck with Mr Putin on Friday, to buy Russian fuel to bring down American prices before the midterm elections, has been criticised by Ukrainian and European officials, who say it will help to fund Russia's war. A bipartisan group of senators urged the president to reverse course, the AP reported.

A war in the air

On the ground the front lines have changed little, and the war has increasingly become a contest of long-range strikes, with each side trying to damage the other's power supply, fuel production and industry.

The approach of winter raises the stakes for Ukraine, whose power grid has been battered by Russian missiles and drones in each of the past winters.

Whether Sunday's announcement leads to a pause in those attacks depends on Moscow, which had not commented by Sunday evening.

INTERNATIONAL

Popes and the Gemelli: The Rome Hospital That Treated John Paul II After the 1981 Shooting and Francis in His Last Illness

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The Agostino Gemelli university hospital in Rome, where Pope Leo is to have his operation, has become known over the past half-century as the popes' hospital.

John Paul II

Pope John Paul II was rushed there after he was shot in St Peter's Square on May 13, 1981. He underwent hours of surgery and recovered, later visiting his attacker in prison to forgive him.

He returned many times. In 1992 he had a tumour removed from his colon; the Vatican said it was benign. He was treated there for a broken femur, a dislocated shoulder and, in his final months in 2005, for breathing problems. He came so often that he once called the hospital the third Vatican, after the Vatican itself and the papal summer residence at Castel Gandolfo.

Francis

Pope Francis had part of his colon removed at the Gemelli in July 2021 and abdominal surgery there in June 2023.

In February 2025 he was admitted with bronchitis that developed into pneumonia in both lungs. He spent 38 days in hospital, the longest stay of his pontificate, before returning to the Vatican in March. He died on April 21, Easter Monday, at the age of 88.

Francis had also lost part of a lung as a young man in Argentina, after a serious infection.

A suite on the tenth floor

The hospital keeps a suite on its tenth floor for the pope's use, with rooms for his staff and security.

Openness about health

The Vatican's approach to papal health has changed over the years. Earlier popes' illnesses were often concealed or played down. Recent popes have been more open, with regular medical bulletins during Francis's last hospital stay. During that stay the Holy See press office issued updates almost every day.

Pope Leo's decision to announce his operation himself, before it takes place, continues that trend.

The length of a pontificate

Popes are elected for life, although Benedict XVI showed in 2013 that a pope can resign. Their health is therefore a matter of interest well beyond the Church, and the Vatican's handling of it is closely watched.

INTERNATIONAL



Pope Leo XIV at the window above St Peter's Square, in an image supplied for this edition. Speaking after the Angelus prayer on Sunday, the pope said doctors had found a nodule in his lung at a very early stage and that he would have an operation to remove it in the coming days.

INTERNATIONAL

Pope Leo Says He Will Have Surgery in the Coming Days to Remove a Nodule Found in His Lung 'at a Very Early Stage'

The 71-year-old pontiff makes the announcement himself at the Angelus and asks for prayers; the Vatican says he will spend about a week in Rome's Gemelli hospital

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Pope Leo XIV told the crowd in St Peter's Square on Sunday that he would undergo surgery in the coming days to remove a nodule that doctors had found in his lung.

"During some recent medical examinations, doctors found a localised nodule in my lung," the pope said after the Angelus prayer, according to Vatican News. "It was detected at a very early stage and is well localised."

"The doctors believe surgery is appropriate. Following their advice, I have therefore decided to undergo an operation to remove it," he said. "The operation is already scheduled for the coming days."

He thanked the faithful for their spiritual closeness and said he entrusted himself to their prayers.

A week in hospital

The Vatican spokesman, Matteo Bruni, said the operation was scheduled for the first few days of this week and that the pope was expected to stay in hospital for about a week afterwards, according to the Catholic news site Angelus. The operation is to take place at the Agostino Gemelli hospital in Rome, where popes have long been treated.

The Vatican has not said what kind of nodule it is.

A rare announcement

Popes seldom speak about their own health; such news is usually announced by the Holy See press office. It is the first major surgery the pope has disclosed since his election in May last year.

Leo, born Robert Francis Prevost in Chicago in 1955, is the first pope from the United States. He spent

many years as a missionary and bishop in Peru before being called to Rome in 2023 to head the office that advises the pope on the appointment of bishops.

The South American journey

The operation comes less than a month before a 12-day visit to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, the longest foreign journey of his pontificate so far.

The pope gave a sign that he intends to keep to it: on Sunday he thanked a Peruvian brotherhood for its prayers for the pastoral visit he said he would make to Peru.

Prayers from around the world

Church leaders responded quickly. The president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Archbishop Paul Coakley, promised prayers, and the Augustinian order, to which the pope belongs, said it was praying for him and for his doctors.

Leo succeeded Pope Francis, who died in April last year at the age of 88, weeks after leaving the Gemelli hospital, where he had been treated for 38 days for double pneumonia.

For the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, Sunday's announcement was delivered in a manner that seemed designed to reassure: in person, from the window above the square, with the doctors' assessment that the nodule had been caught early.

can often do so through small incisions, using a camera and instruments passed between the ribs, which shortens recovery compared with open surgery.

Early detection

The stage at which a problem is found matters a great deal. Lung cancers detected at an early stage, while still small and confined to the lung, can often be cured by surgery alone.

The pope said his nodule had been found at a very early stage and was well localised, and that his doctors judged surgery appropriate. The Vatican has not said what kind of nodule it is, and it would be wrong to speculate.

Screening in Japan

In Japan many people have chest X-rays as part of annual health checks at work or through their local authority, and lung cancer screening is offered by municipalities. CT screening is also available, particularly through private health checks.

Doctors advise anyone told that a nodule has been found to follow the recommended schedule of check-ups rather than to worry or to ignore it.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

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- Ishiba on Yana's remarks, Page 5.
- Yandex data centres hit, Page 8.
- Prudential's restart plan, Page 7.

INTERNATIONAL

Pope Leo XIV at a Glance: Chicago-Born, a Missionary in Peru and the First American to Lead the Catholic Church

By the International Desk

BORN: Robert Francis Prevost, September 14, 1955, in Chicago. He is 71.

ORDER: The Order of Saint Augustine, which he joined as a young man and later led as prior general.

PERU: Many years as a missionary, teacher and parish priest; Bishop of Chiclayo from 2015 to 2023. He took Peruvian citizenship.

ROME: Called in 2023 to head the Dicastery for Bishops, which advises the pope on the appointment of bishops, and made a cardinal.

ELECTED: May 8, 2025, on the second day of the conclave that followed the death of Pope Francis.

THE NAME: Leo XIV recalls Leo XIII, the pope who in 1891 issued Rerum Novarum, the encyclical on the condition of workers.

THE NEWS: A nodule found in his lung at a very early stage; surgery scheduled for the first days of this week at the Gemelli hospital, with a stay of about a week.

THE NEXT JOURNEY: A 12-day visit to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, less than a month away.

THE FLOCK: About 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide; in Japan the Church is small, with several hundred thousand members.

THE MESSAGE ON SUNDAY: "I thank you for your spiritual closeness and entrust myself to your prayers."

INTERNATIONAL

The Last Energy Truce: How a 30-Day Pause Agreed After a Trump-Putin Call in March 2025 Faded Amid Mutual Accusations

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Sunday's announcement is not the first attempt to stop the two countries from attacking each other's energy facilities.

The call

On March 18, 2025, President Donald Trump spoke by telephone with President Vladimir Putin. Afterwards the Kremlin said Mr Putin had agreed to halt attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure for 30 days, and had ordered his military accordingly.

Mr Putin rejected the broader proposal Washington had put forward, a full 30-day ceasefire, which Ukraine had accepted the week before.

Kyiv's response

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Ukraine would support a halt to strikes on energy facilities, but asked for details of what was covered and how it would be monitored.

Accusations

Within days each side accused the other of violating the arrangement. Russia said Ukraine had attacked an oil pumping station; Ukraine reported Russian strikes on its power facilities. Neither side's claims could easily be checked.

The 30 days expired in April 2025, and attacks on energy targets resumed in earnest.

A claim in September

On September 14 this year Mr Trump said both sides had agreed not to strike each other's energy infrastructure. Nothing came of that either.

What would make a difference

Diplomats generally say that a ceasefire of any kind needs agreed terms, a clear starting time and some way of monitoring compliance. Mr Zelenskyy's request on Sunday, to be told when the ceasefire begins, reflected that.

Without those elements, an announcement can raise hopes without changing what happens on the ground, or in the sky.

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INTERNATIONAL

Why Ukraine Has Not Held a Presidential Election Since 2019: Martial Law, Occupied Territory and Millions Abroad

By the International Desk

President Trump said on Saturday that it was time for Ukraine to get a new president. President Zelenskyy replied that elections could be held if Russia agreed to a 60-day ceasefire.

The last vote

Mr Zelenskyy, a former actor and comedian, won the presidency in April 2019, defeating the incumbent, Petro Poroshenko, in a run-off with about 73 per cent of the vote.

His five-year term would ordinarily have ended in 2024, with an election due in the spring of that year.

Martial law

Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 led Ukraine to declare martial law, which parliament has extended repeatedly since. Ukrainian law does not allow presidential or parliamentary elections to be held while martial law is in force.

Ukraine's position is that the president remains in office until a successor can be elected, and its parliament has backed that view.

The practical obstacles

Even without the legal bar, an election would be difficult. Russia occupies roughly a fifth of the country. Millions of Ukrainians are refugees abroad, and many more have been displaced within the country. Hundreds of thousands are serving in the armed forces.

Polling stations could also become targets for Russian missiles and drones.

Moscow's argument

The Kremlin has used the absence of an election to question Mr Zelenskyy's legitimacy, and has suggested that any agreement he signs could be challenged.

Zelenskyy's offer

By tying an election to a ceasefire of 60 days, Mr Zelenskyy turned the question back on Moscow: if Russia wants a vote in Ukraine, it can stop the fighting to allow one.

The choice of leader, he said on Sunday, belongs to Ukraine's people.

INTERNATIONAL

A Year Into the Gaza Ceasefire, Israeli Strikes Continue and More Than 1,400 Have Been Killed, as the Humanitarian Crisis Persists

By the International Desk

A year has passed since the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip took effect, but the Israeli military has continued to carry out attacks intermittently, and the humanitarian situation remains severe, NHK reported.

More than 1,400 people have been killed in Gaza over the past year, according to figures cited by the broadcaster.

How the ceasefire began

The ceasefire took effect on October 10 last year under a plan put forward by President Donald Trump. Three days later Hamas released the 20 living Israeli hostages it still held, and Israel freed close to 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees.

Mr Trump marked the moment with a speech to the Israeli parliament and a summit of world leaders at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt.

The unfinished plan

The plan envisaged later phases that would include the disarmament of Hamas, the deployment of an international stabilisation force, the reconstruction of Gaza and a role for a body called the Board of Peace. The United Nations Security Council endorsed the plan in November last year.

Progress on those later stages has been slow and contested, and Israeli forces have remained in parts of the territory.

Three years of war

Last Wednesday, October 7, marked three years since the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel in 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed and some 250

INTERNATIONAL

taken hostage, and which began the war.

The situation now

Much of Gaza lies in ruins after two years of fighting, and aid agencies say the needs for shelter, food, water and medical care remain enormous.

Japan's role

Japan has provided humanitarian aid to the Palestinians for decades and has supported reconstruction efforts. It has long backed a two-state solution under which an independent Palestinian state would exist alongside Israel.

For the people of Gaza, the anniversary marks a year in which the large-scale fighting stopped but the killing did not.

INTERNATIONAL

World in Brief: Guterres Condemns the Riyadh Strike, Senators Press Trump on Russian Diesel and the Nobel Economics Prize Is Announced Today

By the International Desk

UNITED NATIONS: Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the missile strike on Riyadh's airport, which killed 12 people on Saturday.

PAKISTAN: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called the attack on Riyadh heinous. Pakistan is a party, with Saudi Arabia and Turkey, to the defence pact under which deterrence measures were activated on October 5.

TRAVEL: The United States, Canada and Germany were among the countries that issued travel warnings after the Riyadh strike, and some foreign missions restricted their staff's movements at the airport.

WASHINGTON: A bipartisan group of senators urged President Trump to reverse his decision to buy diesel from Russia, the Associated Press reported.

BRUSSELS: Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, offered her full support to President Zelenskyy after Mr Trump said Ukraine needed a new president.

RUSSIA: Yandex, the country's largest technology company, has had three data centres hit by Ukrainian drones in four days, in Sasovo, Kaluga and Vladimir.

VATICAN: Pope Leo XIV is to have surgery this week to remove a nodule found in his lung at a very early stage.

GAZA: A year after the ceasefire took effect, more than 1,400 people have been killed in Israeli attacks, according to figures cited by NHK.

STOCKHOLM: The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, the last of this year's Nobel announcements, is due at about 6:45 p.m. Japan time.

YEMEN: Media affiliated with the Houthis reported air and missile strikes in Taiz and Saada on Sunday.

ECONOMY

Food and Drink Price Rises Top 3,000 Items for a Second Month as Liquor Tax Changes Lift Beer-Type Drinks and Chu-Hi

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

Japanese households are facing a second consecutive month of widespread food and drink price increases, with 3,153 items going up in October, according to a survey by Teikoku Databank of 195 major food companies. The survey counts the items whose prices the companies have announced will rise.

The October total is the second highest of the year, after September's 4,965, and the first time since June and July 2023 that the number has exceeded 3,000 in two consecutive months. Together, September and October account for more than 8,000 items, concentrating this year's increases in the autumn.

Drinks lead the way

Alcoholic and other beverages account for the largest share, 1,399 items, reflecting this month's change in the liquor tax, which raises the duty on happoshu, the beer-like drinks known as new-genre beers, and chu-hi.

Seasonings, including mayonnaise, soy sauce and sauces, account for 820 items.

A second year above 20,000

With October's increases, the number of items whose prices are confirmed to rise this year has reached

20,187, the second year in a row above 20,000, according to the survey.

The reasons

Asked why they were raising prices, 91.3 per cent of companies cited the cost of raw materials, 66.0 per cent logistics, 63.8 per cent energy and 63.7 per cent packaging and materials. Labour costs and the weak yen were also mentioned.

What comes next

Teikoku Databank expects intermittent price increases to continue into next year, noting that food costs are sensitive to developments in the Middle East and to movements in the currency.

The weekend's attacks on Saudi Arabia are a reminder of that sensitivity. Higher oil prices raise the cost of fuel for lorries and fishing boats, of heating greenhouses and of making plastic packaging.

The household view

For families, food is the part of the budget that is hardest to cut, and repeated price increases are felt more sharply than rises in less frequent purchases. The government's plan to cut the consumption tax on food, now before the Diet, is aimed squarely at that pressure.

The survey counts the number of items whose prices rise, not the size of the increases, which vary widely from product to product.

ECONOMY

Beer Down, Happoshu and Chu-Hi Up: The Last Step of the Liquor Tax Reform Decided in 2017 Took Effect This Month

By the Business Desk

Shoppers who reach for a can of beer this month are buying a drink whose tax has just been cut, while the cheaper beer-like drinks beside it have just become more heavily taxed. The change took effect on October 1.

A three-stage reform

In 2017 the government decided to unify, over several years, the very different taxes levied on beer and on the cheaper drinks that brewers had developed to compete with it. The changes were made in stages, in 2020, 2023 and now 2026. The tax on beer has been cut at each step, while the tax on the new-genre drinks was raised in 2020 and 2023 and that on happoshu now.

The new rates

From October the tax on beer fell from 63.35 yen to 54.25 yen for a 350-millilitre can. The tax on happoshu, a category that has included the so-called new-genre beers since 2023, rose from 46.99 yen to the same 54.25 yen.

The tax on chu-hi and other sparkling drinks in the same group rose from 28 yen to 35 yen per can.

Why the gap existed

Japan's liquor tax is set by category, and beer has long been taxed heavily. The tax is paid by brewers and importers when drinks leave their premises, and it is built into the price on the shelf. Brewers responded by developing happoshu, which contains less malt, and later new-genre drinks made with other ingredients, which were taxed more lightly and sold more cheaply.

The government argued that the large gaps distorted competition and product development, and that drinks of a similar kind should carry similar taxes.

The effect on prices

The changes help to explain why drinks make up the largest share of this month's price increases in Teikoku Databank's survey. The change lowers the tax on beer and raises it on happoshu and chu-hi; how much of that reaches the shelf depends on each company's pricing.

Sake and wine

Taxes on sake and wine were unified in 2023, when both were set at 100,000 yen per kilolitre, equivalent to 35 yen for a 350-millilitre serving, and were not changed this month.

With October's step, the reform decided in 2017 is complete.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

DeNA sweep the Giants, Page 16.

Judo: team gold in Baku, Page 15.

BUSINESS

Kansai Electric Restarts Mihama 3 After Replacing a Leaking Pipe and Aims to Resume Commercial Operation on November 4

By the Business Desk

Kansai Electric Power restarted the No. 3 reactor at its Mihama nuclear power station in Fukui Prefecture on Saturday, after replacing a pipe that had leaked and forced it to shut the unit down by hand, and plans to resume commercial operation on November 4, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

The restart is the latest step in a difficult year for the reactor, which began commercial operation in December 1976 and will reach 50 years of operation this December.

A troubled year

In May a hole formed in a cap on the high-pressure turbine and released steam, which contained no radioactive material. The company shut the reactor down and brought forward its regular inspection, which began in June.

During the inspection Kansai Electric replaced the damaged cap, checked the safety of all equipment carrying high-temperature, high-pressure steam or water, and replaced 50 sections of piping, including some where the walls had been found to be thinning.

The reactor was restarted on September 12, with commercial operation planned for October 9. But in mid-September the company began to shut it down again by hand after water was found dripping from equipment, a second interruption in the space of a few months.

Back on line

After replacing the leaking pipe, the company started the reactor again at the weekend. It will now go through the final stages of the inspection before commercial operation resumes.

Why it matters

Mihama 3 is an 826-megawatt pressurised water reactor. Kansai Electric operates seven reactors, at its Mihama, Takahama and Ohi plants, all in Fukui Prefecture. For Kansai Electric, whose reactors supply a large share of the electricity it sells, each day a unit is off line means more expensive power from fossil fuels.

The reactor's age also makes it a test case. In 2021 it became the first in Japan to restart after more than 40 years of operation, and it is now approaching half a century.

Local reaction

Fukui Prefecture, home to more reactors than any other prefecture, follows safety problems at its plants closely, and local communities along Wakasa Bay have long lived alongside the industry.

The company has said the steam released in May contained no radioactive material, and no injuries have been reported in this year's incidents.

BUSINESS

Prudential Life Plans to Resume Some Sales From February as Its Suspension Begins Tuesday; a Full Restart Could Take 18 Months

By the Business Desk

Prudential Life Insurance Japan plans to resume part of its sales from February next year, after the end of the suspension ordered by the Financial Services Agency, but a full return could take up to a year and a half, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

The suspension of solicitation and new contracts, ordered on Friday, takes effect on Tuesday and runs until January 31.

The order

The agency found 30 cases of violations of the Insurance Business Act involving large or numerous contracts that switched customers from one policy to another, and about 4,000 cases in which sales staff had failed to confirm what customers actually wanted, according to reports.

Former employees reportedly defrauded customers of more than 6 billion yen in total.

A group company, Gibraltar Life, received a similar suspension, from which sales through agencies are excluded. Both insurers are controlled by Prudential Holding of Japan, which received a business improvement order.

The causes

The agency said that a pay system linked to sales performance and the concentration of authority in sales staff had created a breeding ground for misconduct, and that past management had put sales first and failed to review the model.

Prudential sells its policies through its own Life Planner sales force, paid largely on commission, rather than through banks or agencies. The company, part of the American group Prudential Financial, began operating in Japan in 1987, and its Life Planner model was long regarded in the industry as a success.

Existing customers

Existing policies are not affected. Coverage, claims, benefit payments, changes to contracts and cancellations continue as before.

The plan

The companies must submit improvement plans by November 30 and report on their progress every three months. In a joint statement they said they took the action seriously and would work with all their strength to prevent a recurrence and restore trust.

Prudential had already halted new sales voluntarily. The phased restart reported by the Yomiuri suggests that the company expects regulators to want evidence of reform before its sales force returns to full strength.

BUSINESS

Mihama 3 at Nearly 50: The 2004 Pipe Rupture, the First Restart Beyond 40 Years and the New Rules on Ageing Reactors

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The Mihama nuclear power station stands on a small peninsula on Wakasa Bay in Fukui Prefecture, a stretch of coast that has been called the Ginza of nuclear power because of the number of plants along it.

The unit

Unit 3, a pressurised water reactor with an output of 826 megawatts, began commercial operation in December 1976. Units 1 and 2, older and smaller, are being decommissioned. Unit 1, which began operating in 1970, sent trial electricity to the Osaka Expo that summer, hailed at the time as bringing the light of the atom to the fair.

The 2004 accident

On August 9, 2004, a pipe carrying hot water in the turbine building of Unit 3 burst, releasing scalding steam. Five workers who were preparing for an inspection were killed and six others injured.

Investigators found that the pipe's wall had been worn thin over decades and had never been inspected at that point. The accident, which did not involve radioactivity, led to a tightening of pipe inspections across the industry.

Beyond 40 years

After the Fukushima Daiichi disaster in 2011, the law limited reactors to 40 years of operation in principle, with a single extension of up to 20 years if regulators approved.

Mihama 3 received approval and in June 2021 became the first reactor in Japan to resume operation after more than 40 years.

The new rules

Rules that took effect in June 2025 changed the framework. Reactors more than 30 years old must have plans for managing their ageing approved by the Nuclear Regulation Authority at least every ten years, and the time a reactor spends shut down for reasons such as safety reviews can be excluded when counting its years towards the limit.

A new reactor?

In July 2025 Kansai Electric announced that it would begin surveys at the Mihama site with a view to building a new reactor, the first such step by a Japanese utility since 2011.

The questions

Supporters of nuclear power argue that well-maintained older reactors are a cheap and low-carbon source of electricity. Critics say that the more a plant ages, the greater the risk of problems that inspections can miss.

This year's interruptions at Mihama 3, though they caused no injuries or release of radioactivity, will be cited by both sides.

ECONOMY



The Tokyo Stock Exchange at Kabutocho. The market is closed on Monday for Sports Day and reopens on Tuesday; the Nikkei average ended Friday at 69,030.92, down 11.19, while the TOPIX rose 13.35. (Photo: TG2 (CC))

ECONOMY

Tokyo Reopens on Tuesday to a Weekend of Missiles in Riyadh and a Disputed Energy Truce, With Chip Results and Prices Ahead

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

Tokyo's stock and bond markets are closed on Monday for the Sports Day holiday, leaving investors to weigh on Tuesday a weekend in which a missile strike killed 12 people at Riyadh's main airport and President Donald Trump announced an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine that Kyiv said it had not been told about.

The Nikkei Stock Average ended Friday at 69,030.92, down 11.19 points, its third consecutive daily fall, after dropping nearly 900 points in the morning. The broader TOPIX rose 13.35 points to 4,104.81, with more than 70 per cent of shares on the Prime Market advancing.

Wall Street's Friday

American shares rose on Friday after a weak Thursday. The S&P 500 gained 0.6 per cent to 7,811.54 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average 0.8 per cent to 51,654.95, while the Nasdaq Composite added 0.6 per cent to 27,366.17. All three ended the week higher.

The weekend's news

The attacks on Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, matter to Japan's markets chiefly through the price of crude. Japan imports more than 90 per cent of its oil from the Middle East, and higher energy costs feed through to corporate profits and to inflation.

The announcement on Ukraine cuts the other way, if it holds. A genuine halt to strikes on refineries and power plants would ease some of the pressure on fuel markets, but Russia had not commented on it by Sunday evening and attacks continued.

A busy week

The week brings a run of results from the chip industry on which much of the Tokyo market's gains this year have depended. ASML, the Dutch maker of

the machines used to print the most advanced chips, reports on Wednesday, and TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, on Thursday.

Investors will also watch American consumer prices, due on Wednesday, and the start of the results season for the big American banks. At home, the Bank of Japan publishes its index of corporate goods prices for September.

The 70,000 question

Market commentators have said that a recovery above 70,000 faces hurdles: demand linked to artificial intelligence and semiconductors is supporting share prices, while high oil prices and elevated long-term interest rates are holding them back.

Prudential

Tuesday is also the first day of the suspension of new sales at Prudential Life Insurance Japan, ordered by the Financial Services Agency after employees defrauded customers. It runs until the end of January.

The yen and bonds

The yen traded at about 158 to the dollar late last week, and the yield on ten-year Japanese government bonds stood above 3 per cent, levels that market commentators have linked to the gap between Japanese and American interest rates and to concern about the country's public finances.

Derivatives trading continues during the holiday, but for most investors the first real test of the weekend's news comes when the cash market opens at 9 a.m. on Tuesday.

about where consumer prices are heading, and why the Bank of Japan pays close attention to it in setting monetary policy.

Energy and the yen

The import price index in yen terms is particularly sensitive to two things: the price of crude oil and the exchange rate. A rise in oil prices and a fall in the yen together can push it up sharply.

The wider picture

For much of the past two decades corporate goods prices in Japan rose only slowly, if at all. That changed after 2021, when energy and raw material costs surged and the yen weakened, and the index rose at its fastest rate in decades.

How it is published

The index is published monthly, usually in the second week of the following month, and is one of the first indicators of price trends for the month just ended.

This week's figure will reflect September, before the weekend's attacks in Saudi Arabia, but the direction of oil prices from here will shape the readings for the months to come.

BUSINESS

Business in Brief: Shinko to Turn JDI's Mobara Panel Plant Into a Chip Packaging Hub; Renesas Launches Low-Voltage GaN Chips

By the Business Desk

CHIP PACKAGING: Shinko Electric Industries agreed on September 30 to acquire Japan Display's Mobara plant in Chiba Prefecture, formerly JDI's main liquid crystal panel factory, and plans to make it a core site for advanced semiconductor packaging from fiscal 2028, EE Times Japan reported. JDI expects a gain of 51.4 billion yen on the sale.

POWER CHIPS: Renesas Electronics announced on October 6 its first 100-volt gallium nitride power transistors for low-voltage uses, aimed at AI data centres, humanoid robots and factory automation.

ROBOTS: Kawasaki Heavy Industries showed a dog-shaped robot, Home LEO, designed to help elderly people live at home, and plans to sell it from fiscal 2028.

INSURANCE: Prudential Life's suspension of new sales begins on Tuesday; the company plans a partial restart from February.

ENERGY: Kansai Electric restarted Mihama 3 at the weekend and aims to resume commercial operation on November 4.

FOOD: Teikoku Databank counts 3,153 food and drink price increases in October and more than 20,000 for the year.

CHIPS AHEAD: ASML reports on Wednesday and TSMC on Thursday.

OIL: The missile strikes on Riyadh's airport have raised concern about the security of the world's largest oil exporter.

MARKETS: Tokyo reopens on Tuesday after the three-day weekend.

HOLIDAY: Banks and most government offices are closed on Monday; many shops and leisure facilities are open.

TECHNOLOGY

Three Yandex Data Centres Hit by Ukrainian Drones in Four Days, Knocking Out Services Across Russia and in Neighbouring Countries

The first, at Sasovo, housed two of the three supercomputers Yandex uses to build its AI models; the third, in Vladimir, was shut down on Sunday

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

Ukrainian drones have struck three data centres belonging to Yandex, Russia's largest technology company, in four days. Reuters described the first as the first major attack of the war on a Russian data hub.

The first attack, on Thursday, shut down a major data centre at Sasovo in the Ryazan region, south-east of Moscow, according to Al Jazeera. The site houses two of the three supercomputers that Yandex uses to develop its artificial intelligence models.

On Friday drones struck a Yandex data centre in the Kaluga region, south-west of Moscow, and partly put it out of action.

On Sunday a third attack shut down a data centre in Vladimir, east of Moscow, the Associated Press reported. Outages hit Yandex services in dozens of Russian cities and in Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia. No injuries were reported.

'Day and night'

Yandex said the attacks had struck at the core of its operations. "Our teams are working day and night to keep services running," the company said.

The company runs services that many Russians regard as essential, from internet search and maps to ride-hailing, food delivery, music streaming and email.

Kyiv's explanation

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Russia had been attacking Ukrainian data centres and that Ukraine was responding. "We always respond in mirror-like fashion," he said, adding that he could not share all the details.

A new kind of target

Data centres have become as vital to modern economies as power stations and refineries. They store and process the data behind banking, government services, communications and, increasingly, artificial intelligence.

Military planners have long treated electricity and fuel as strategic targets. The strikes on Yandex suggest that computing capacity is now being treated the same way.

Strikes elsewhere

In the same days Ukraine's General Staff reported strikes on Russian missile facilities, including a factory making missile components in the Tver region, and President Zelenskyy said the Lukoil refinery at Ukhta, about 1,900 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, had been hit.

The energy ceasefire

The third attack came on the day President Donald Trump announced an energy ceasefire between the two countries, which Mr Zelenskyy said he had not been told about. Data centres are not power plants, but they consume large amounts of electricity, and the line between energy and digital infrastructure is becoming harder to draw.

For governments elsewhere, including Japan's, the attacks are a reminder that the servers on which daily life depends are physical buildings that can be damaged, and that their protection is a question of national security.

TECHNOLOGY

Yandex: The Search Engine Founded in 1997 That Grew Into Russia's Everyday App, and Was Split in Two After the Invasion of Ukraine

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Yandex is often described as Russia's Google, but its reach in Russian life is in some ways greater.

The search engine

The company's search engine went online in 1997. It was founded by Arkady Volozh and Ilya Segalovich, and its ability to handle the complexities of the Russian language helped it beat Google in its home market.

Far more than search

Over two decades Yandex built an ecosystem of services: maps and navigation, a ride-hailing service, food and grocery delivery, an online marketplace, music and video streaming, a voice assistant called Alice and, more recently, its own large language models.

For many Russians, the company's apps are as much a part of daily life as those of Google, Apple and Amazon are elsewhere.

A listing in New York

The group's parent, registered in the Netherlands, listed its shares on the Nasdaq exchange in New York in 2011, and Yandex became one of the few Russian technology companies with a large international following among investors.

Split by the war

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 put the company in an impossible position between Western sanctions and the Kremlin. Mr Volozh, who had moved to Israel, publicly condemned the invasion in 2023.

TECHNOLOGY

In 2024 the Dutch parent sold its Russian businesses to a group of Russian investors. The parent, renamed Nebius, kept a small set of international operations, including an AI computing business based in Europe.

Supercomputers

The Russian Yandex has continued to develop artificial intelligence, building supercomputers to train its models. Two of the three it uses for that purpose were housed at the Sasovo data centre struck on Thursday, according to Al Jazeera.

The attacks on its facilities this week show how a company that grew up as a symbol of Russia's integration with the global internet has become part of the infrastructure of a country at war.

TECHNOLOGY

Why Data Centres Are Now Targets: Buildings Full of Servers Hold the Economy's Memory, Use Vast Amounts of Power and Are Hard to Hide

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

A data centre is, at its simplest, a large building full of computers, together with the equipment needed to power and cool them.

What they do

Data centres store and process the information behind almost every digital service: online banking, government records, email, maps, streaming and, increasingly, the training and use of artificial intelligence models.

The largest facilities contain tens of thousands of servers and consume as much electricity as a small town. Those built for AI, packed with powerful chips, use even more.

Why they are vulnerable

Data centres are large, easily identified and fixed in place. They depend on a steady supply of electricity and on cooling systems, and damage to either can bring the computers down even if the servers themselves are untouched.

Operators protect against accidents and outages by duplicating equipment and spreading data across several sites, so that services can continue if one fails. Repeated attacks on several sites in a short time, as Yandex has experienced, test that resilience to the limit.

A wartime logic

In wartime, an attacker may see data centres as targets because they support government and military communications, process payments and run the services that keep an economy functioning. The supercomputers used to train AI models can also have military applications.

Under the laws of war, attacks must be directed at military objectives, and civilian objects are protected. Facilities that serve both civilian and military users raise difficult questions about where the line falls.

Japan's data centres

Japan is in the middle of a boom in data centre construction, driven by demand for AI, with many facilities concentrated around Tokyo and Osaka. The government has encouraged companies to build new centres in other regions, including Hokkaido and Kyushu, partly to spread the risk of earthquakes and other disasters.

Spreading facilities around the country also makes the digital economy less vulnerable to damage at any single site, whatever its cause.

The attacks in Russia this week will add a new dimension to discussions about how such facilities should be protected.

TECHNOLOGY

Kawasaki Heavy Shows Home LEO, a Robot Dog That Talks, Fetches and Warns Families if an Elderly Owner Falls or Leaves the Stove On

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

Kawasaki Heavy Industries has unveiled a dog-shaped robot designed to help elderly people continue living in their own homes, and plans to put it on sale in fiscal 2028.

The robot, called Home LEO, was shown at a management briefing in Tokyo on October 6, Jiji Press reported.

What it does

Home LEO holds conversations and moves around the home on its own. It learns its owner's habits and preferences, so that its conversation becomes more personal over time, and it is planned to monitor the owner's health through their daily interactions.

If it detects a fall, a change in the owner's condition or a stove left on, it is to alert family members or carers.

The demonstration

At the briefing the company's president, Yasuhiko Hashimoto, asked the robot where his smartphone was. It replied that it was on the table, went to fetch it and brought it to him.

From factories to homes

Kawasaki is better known for motorcycles, ships, trains and aircraft parts, but it has a long history in robotics. It began making industrial robots in the late 1960s and was one of the first Japanese companies to do so.

In recent years it has also developed humanoid robots and, for the Osaka Expo last year, showed CORLEO, a concept for a four-legged robot that a person could ride.

The market

The company has not announced a price. Its challenge will be to make a robot capable enough to be useful, reliable enough to be trusted with safety warnings and affordable enough for elderly households and care providers.

Why now

Japan's ageing population makes the market an obvious one. People aged 65 or over now make up 29.6 per cent of the population, a record, according to government estimates published last month, and more than nine million older people live alone.

For families who live far from an ageing parent, a robot that can notice a fall or a forgotten stove could offer some peace of mind, although no machine replaces the human contact that the elderly need.

TECHNOLOGY

Robots and Care in the World's Oldest Large Society: 36 Million Over-65s, a Shortage of Carers and the Limits of Machines

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Japan has the highest proportion of elderly people of any major country, and it is looking to technology to help care for them.

The numbers

There were 36.24 million people aged 65 or over in Japan in mid-September, 29.6 per cent of the population, according to estimates released by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications before Respect for the Aged Day. The proportion is a record.

A record 9.43 million people aged 65 or over are in work, about one in seven of all workers, and the number of older people living alone exceeded 9.33 million last year, according to the health ministry.

The National Institute of Population and Social Security Research projects that the elderly population will reach 39.45 million, 36.3 per cent of the total, by 2045.

The shortage of carers

The health ministry has estimated that the country will need about 2.4 million care workers in fiscal 2026, around 250,000 more than were employed in fiscal 2022. Care work is physically demanding and relatively poorly paid, and recruitment is difficult.

What robots can do

Robots and sensors are already used in some care homes: lifting aids that help staff move residents, sensors under mattresses that detect when a resident gets out of bed, and communication robots that talk with residents and lead exercises.

Robots for the home, such as the dog-shaped Home LEO unveiled by Kawasaki Heavy Industries, aim to extend that help to people who live independently, by watching for falls and other dangers and keeping families informed.

The limits

Researchers and care workers caution that machines can support human carers but not replace them. Bathing, feeding and the companionship that keeps older people healthy still depend on people.

Cost is another obstacle. Many care providers operate on thin margins, and elderly households often live on pensions.

The national interest

For a country whose working-age population is shrinking, technology that lets fewer carers look after more people, and lets older people stay safely in their own homes for longer, is not a luxury but a necessity.

TECHNOLOGY

Renesas Launches Its First 100-Volt Gallium Nitride Transistors, Aiming at AI Data Centres, Humanoid Robots and Factory Automation

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Renesas Electronics has launched its first gallium nitride, or GaN, power transistors for low-voltage applications, a family of four 100-volt devices aimed at AI data centres, humanoid robots and industrial equipment.

The Japanese chipmaker announced the products on October 6 and said they were available immediately, together with evaluation boards.

The claims

Renesas said the transistors offered switching losses 40 to 70 per cent lower than comparable devices and up to twice the power density at the level of a whole system, with efficiency 1 to 3 per cent higher than designs based on silicon.

It said they also had zero reverse recovery charge, a source of energy loss in conventional silicon transistors, and came in packages similar to those of silicon MOSFETs, making it easier for engineers to switch designs from silicon.

The figures are the company's own; it compared the devices with unnamed rival products.

Where they will be used

The target applications include the power supplies of AI servers, motor drives for robots and factory machines, power tools and the small inverters used with solar panels.

Renesas noted that AI servers and industrial systems are moving to new power architectures, with 800-volt and 48-volt supply lines and switching at megahertz frequencies, which favour fast, efficient transistors.

Why efficiency matters

Every percentage point of efficiency counts in a data centre, where losses in power conversion turn into heat that must then be removed by cooling systems that themselves consume electricity.

A quote

"Our low-voltage GaN family delivers the efficiency, switching performance and power density designers expect from GaN," said Akhil Nair, the company's senior director for low-voltage GaN.

For Renesas, one of Japan's largest chipmakers, the launch is a move into a fast-growing market for power semiconductors in which Japanese companies have traditionally been strong.

TECHNOLOGY

Gallium Nitride: The Material Behind Blue LEDs and a Japanese Nobel Prize Is Now Remaking Power Electronics

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

Gallium nitride is a compound of gallium and nitrogen that has become one of the most important materials in electronics after silicon.

A Japanese story

Its first great success was the blue light-emitting diode. In the late 1980s and early 1990s Isamu Akasaki and Hiroshi Amano at Nagoya University, and Shuji Nakamura at Nichia Corporation in Tokushima, overcame the difficulties of growing high-quality gallium nitride crystals and produced efficient blue LEDs.

Blue light made white LED lighting possible, and the three shared the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2014.

A wide band gap

Gallium nitride is a wide-bandgap semiconductor, meaning that its electrons need more energy to break free than in silicon. That lets devices made from it withstand higher voltages and temperatures and switch on and off much faster.

Faster switching means smaller components and less

energy lost as heat, which is why GaN has spread into power electronics.

In your bag

Many people already carry GaN in their bags: compact phone and laptop chargers that are smaller than older designs for the same power often use gallium nitride transistors.

Bigger jobs

The next frontier is in data centres, electric vehicles, robots and renewable energy, where power must be converted efficiently between different voltages. Silicon carbide, another wide-bandgap material, competes in the highest-voltage uses.

Japanese strength

Japan's position in the field rests on decades of research and on companies that make the wafers, the equipment and the devices.

From the laboratory benches of Nagoya to this month's product launches, gallium nitride remains one of the clearest examples of Japanese science turning into global industry.

TECHNOLOGY

From Screens to Chips: Shinko Electric Buys JDI's Mobara Panel Plant to Make It a Core Site for Advanced Semiconductor Packaging

By the Technology Desk

A factory that once made liquid crystal displays for smartphones is to become a centre for the packaging of advanced chips for artificial intelligence.

Shinko Electric Industries signed an agreement on September 30 to acquire the Mobara plant in Chiba Prefecture from Japan Display, or JDI, EE Times Japan reported. The handover is scheduled for March 31 next year.

The plans

Shinko intends to make the plant a new core factory for advanced semiconductor packaging, expanding its production of flip-chip packages for AI accelerators and similar chips, and to begin operations in fiscal 2028.

It will transfer the western part of the site, about 233,000 of its 373,000 square metres, to a partner company, FICT, which plans to use it to make substrates for semiconductor packages.

The price

The price has not been disclosed at the buyer's request. JDI expects to record a gain of 51.4 billion yen on the sale in the January-March quarter of next year. The book value of the assets at the handover is estimated at 26.6 billion yen.

JDI's retreat

JDI, formed in 2012 by combining the small display businesses of Sony, Toshiba and Hitachi, ended production at Mobara in November last year, earlier than planned, and has concentrated its domestic manufacturing at its plant in Ishikawa Prefecture.

Why packaging matters

As it becomes harder and more expensive to shrink transistors, the way chips are packaged and connected has become a key to performance. The most powerful AI processors combine several chips and stacks of memory in a single package, and the substrates and packaging technology involved are in short supply.

Japanese companies, including Shinko, Ibiden and Resonac, are among the world's leading suppliers of the materials and components for such packages.

A second life

The conversion of a display plant into a chip packaging factory reflects a broader shift in Japanese manufacturing, as companies move out of consumer electronics, where Asian rivals now dominate, and into the components and materials on which the global chip industry depends.

For Chiba Prefecture, it promises to keep a large industrial site in use, and the jobs that come with it.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

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TECHNOLOGY

TECHNOLOGY

The Week in Technology: Data Centres Under Fire, a Robot Dog, New Power Chips and Results From ASML and TSMC Ahead

By the Technology Desk

SEPTEMBER 30: Shinko Electric agrees to buy JDI's Mobara plant in Chiba, to be turned into a chip packaging site from fiscal 2028.

OCTOBER 6: Renesas launches its first 100-volt gallium nitride power transistors, aimed at AI data centres and robots.

OCTOBER 6: Kawasaki Heavy Industries unveils Home LEO, a robot dog for elderly people living alone, for sale in fiscal 2028.

OCTOBER 8: Drones shut down a Yandex data centre at Sasovo, home to two of its three AI supercomputers.

OCTOBER 9: A second Yandex data centre, in the Kaluga region, is partly put out of action.

OCTOBER 11: A third, in Vladimir, is shut down; outages reach Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia.

WEDNESDAY: ASML, the sole maker of the extreme ultraviolet machines used for the most advanced chips, reports its results.

THURSDAY: TSMC, the world's largest contract chipmaker, reports its results.

THE THEME: The physical side of the digital economy, from factories and power chips to data centres that can be attacked.

THE NUMBER: 29.6 per cent, the share of Japan's population aged 65 or over, the market at which robots such as Home LEO are aimed.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1988: Steve Jobs Unveils the NeXT Computer, the Black Cube That Failed in the Market but Gave Birth to the Web and the Modern Mac

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

On October 12, 1988, three years after he was forced out of Apple, Steve Jobs walked on to the stage of the Louise M. Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco to show the world what he had been working on.

It was the NeXT Computer, a matt black magnesium cube about a foot on each side, accompanied by a large greyscale monitor. Jobs presented it as a machine for universities and their students.

Ahead of its time

The NeXT was packed with ideas. It used a Motorola 68030 processor and included a digital signal processor for sound, which allowed it to play music of CD quality and to handle tasks such as early speech recognition.

Instead of a hard disk it came with an optical drive using rewritable magneto-optical cartridges that held 256 megabytes, an enormous amount at the time. It also came with digital editions of the complete works of Shakespeare and a dictionary.

The software

Its most lasting contribution was its operating system, NeXTSTEP, built on the Mach kernel and Unix, with a graphical interface that used Display PostScript to show on screen exactly what would be printed.

Developers wrote programs in Objective-C using tools such as Interface Builder, which let them design applications by dragging and connecting components. Programmers who used it said they could build in weeks what took months on other systems.

Canon's bet

The machine had a strong Japanese connection. In 1989 Canon invested 100 million dollars in NeXT for a stake of about one-sixth, and supplied the optical drive and printers.

Commercial failure

At 6,500 dollars for the basic machine, and more once a printer and a hard disk were added, the NeXT was too expensive for most students and too unusual for most businesses. It shipped in small numbers, and the company stopped making hardware in 1993 to concentrate on software.

The web and Doom

Yet its influence was enormous. At CERN in Switzerland, Tim Berners-Lee used a NeXT to write

the first web browser and web server in 1990. A few years later id Software developed the game Doom on NeXT machines.

Back to Apple

In December 1996 Apple, struggling to produce a modern operating system of its own, agreed to buy NeXT for about 400 million dollars. The deal brought Jobs back to the company he had founded, and within months he was running it.

NeXTSTEP became the foundation of Mac OS X, released in 2001, and through it of the iPhone's operating system. Every Mac, iPhone and iPad today runs software descended from the black cube unveiled 38 years ago today.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1847: Werner Siemens and Johann Georg Halske Found a Telegraph Workshop in Berlin, the Start of a Company Tied to Japan for 160 Years

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

On October 12, 1847, an artillery officer named Werner Siemens and a precision mechanic, Johann Georg Halske, founded the Telegraphen-Bauanstalt von Siemens & Halske, a telegraph construction company, in a backyard workshop in Berlin.

Siemens had improved the pointer telegraph, in which a needle indicated letters on a dial, making it more reliable. Halske had the skill to build it.

Lines across a continent

The company grew quickly. In 1848 it built a telegraph line from Berlin to Frankfurt am Main, then one of the longest in Europe, to carry news of the National Assembly meeting there.

In the decades that followed it laid telegraph lines across Russia and helped to build the Indo-European line that linked London and Calcutta in 1870.

The dynamo

In 1866 Werner Siemens described the dynamo-electric principle, showing that a generator could use its own current to create the magnetic field it needed. The discovery made the large-scale generation of electricity practical and opened the age of electrical engineering.

In 1879 the company showed the world's first electric railway for passengers at a trade fair in Berlin, and two years later it opened an electric tram line in Lichterfelde, near the city.

The Japanese connection

Siemens dates its relationship with Japan to 1861, when a Prussian mission presented pointer telegraphs to the shogunate. The company opened an office in Tokyo in 1887.

In 1923 Siemens and Furukawa Electric established a joint venture, Fuji Electric, whose name combined the first syllable of Furukawa with the Japanese pronunciation of Siemens.

In 1935 Fuji Electric spun off its telephone equipment business as Fuji Tsushinki, the company known today as Fujitsu.

A global giant

Werner Siemens was ennobled in 1888, becoming Werner von Siemens. The company that bears his name has since built power stations, trains, medical scanners and factory automation systems, and remains one of Europe's largest industrial companies.

Few companies founded in a backyard have left such deep roots, in Japan as much as in Germany, as the workshop opened 179 years ago today.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1887: The Date Yamaha Counts as Its Founding, When a Repairman in Hamamatsu Set Out to Build Japan's Own Reed Organ

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Yamaha, one of the world's largest makers of musical instruments, counts October 12, 1887, as its founding date.

Its founder, Torakusu Yamaha, was a man of many trades who had studied watchmaking and repaired medical equipment. In Hamamatsu, in what is now Shizuoka Prefecture, he was asked to repair an American-made reed organ at an elementary school.

Building his own

Having taken the instrument apart and understood how it worked, he decided that he could make one himself, and that Japan, whose schools were beginning to teach Western music, would need many.

He built a reed organ with the help of a metalworker, Kisaburo Kawai, carried it to Tokyo to have it assessed, and set about improving it. His organs soon found buyers in schools across the country.

Nippon Gakki

In 1897 he established Nippon Gakki, the company that would become Yamaha. It produced its first upright piano in 1900 and its first grand piano two years later, and its logo of three crossed tuning forks remains in use.

Beyond instruments

The company's skill with wood and metal took it in unexpected directions. During the war it made aircraft propellers, and in 1955 it spun off its motorcycle business as Yamaha Motor, whose first model, the YA-1, became known as the Red Dragonfly.

Electronics

Yamaha became a pioneer in electronic music. Its Electone organs brought electronic keyboards into Japanese homes and schools from 1959, and in 1983 it launched the DX7 synthesiser, which used frequency modulation synthesis licensed from Stanford University and became one of the best-selling synthesisers ever made.

Its sound chips went into home computers and game consoles, and in the 2000s it developed VOCALOID, the singing voice software behind the virtual singer Hatsune Miku.

The name

Nippon Gakki changed its name to Yamaha Corporation in 1987, the centenary of its founding, honouring the man whose curiosity about a broken organ started it all.

Hamamatsu, where Yamaha and its rival Kawai both have their headquarters, still calls itself the city of music.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1919: Takachiho Seisakusho Is Founded in Tokyo to Make Microscopes; as Olympus It Would Invent the Gastrocamera and Lead the World in Endoscopes

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

On October 12, 1919, a lawyer named Takeshi Yamashita founded Takachiho Seisakusho in Tokyo to manufacture microscopes and thermometers, instruments Japan then largely imported.

A name from the mountains

Its first microscope, the Asahi, appeared in 1920. From 1921 the company sold its products under the brand Olympus, after the mountain home of the Greek gods, echoing the name Takachiho, the mountain in Japanese myth where the gods descended to earth. The company took the name Olympus Optical in 1949.

Cameras

Olympus built its first camera in 1936 and became one of Japan's best-known camera makers. The Olympus Pen of 1959, a compact half-frame camera designed by Yoshihisa Maitani, was a huge success, and his OM-1 of 1972 was celebrated for being much smaller and lighter than rival single-lens reflex cameras.

The gastrocamera

Its most important invention, however, was medical. In 1950 Olympus engineers, working with doctors at the University of Tokyo hospital, produced the world's first practical gastrocamera, a tiny camera on the end of a flexible tube that could photograph the inside of the stomach.

The development, later dramatised in fiction and on television, transformed the diagnosis of stomach cancer, then the most common cancer in Japan. Olympus went on to develop fibre-optic and then video endoscopes.

Crisis

In 2011 the company was shaken by a scandal when its British chief executive, Michael Woodford, exposed the concealment of investment losses over many years. Senior executives were prosecuted and

the company was forced to restate its accounts.

A medical company

Olympus has since reshaped itself as a medical technology company. It sold its camera business in 2021 to the investment fund Japan Industrial Partners, which continues the brand under the name OM System, and later sold its microscope business.

It remains the world's leading maker of gastrointestinal endoscopes, used in hospitals around the world to detect and treat disease.

From a workshop making microscopes 107 years ago today, Olympus became the company whose instruments let doctors see inside the human body without surgery.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1950: Paul Otellini Is Born; Intel's First Chief Executive Without an Engineering Background Brought Apple to Intel but Passed on the iPhone

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Paul Otellini, who led Intel from 2005 to 2013, was born in San Francisco on October 12, 1950.

A career at one company

He joined Intel in 1974, after studying economics and earning a master's degree in business at the University of California, Berkeley, and spent his entire career there.

Unlike his predecessors, among them Robert Noyce, Gordon Moore and Andy Grove, he was not an engineer. He rose through sales, marketing and the management of Intel's relationships with its biggest customers.

The Apple deal

His most celebrated achievement was persuading Apple to switch its Mac computers to Intel processors. The move was announced in 2005, the year he became chief executive, and the first Intel Macs went on sale in 2006.

The missed opportunity

His most famous regret concerned Apple too. Intel was approached about making the processor for the first iPhone, and declined, judging that the volumes would be small and the price too low. Mr Otellini later said that he had got it wrong.

The smartphone market came to be dominated by chips based on designs from Arm, made by other companies, and Intel never caught up in mobile devices.

Strong results

Under his leadership Intel's revenue grew strongly as personal computers and data centre servers spread around the world, and the company remained the world's largest chipmaker by sales for most of his tenure.

He retired in 2013 and died in 2017, at the age of 66.

His career is remembered as a lesson in how a company can thrive in its main market while missing the next one.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1975: Bram Cohen Is Born; His BitTorrent Protocol Taught the Internet to Share Big Files by Splitting Them Into Pieces

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

Bram Cohen, the programmer who created BitTorrent, was born on October 12, 1975.

A simple idea

Before BitTorrent, downloading a large file usually meant fetching it from a single server, which could be overwhelmed if many people wanted the same file at once.

Cohen's protocol, released in 2001, turned that around. A file is divided into many small pieces, and each person downloading it also uploads the pieces they already have to others. The more popular a file, the more sources there are, and the faster it spreads.

Wide use

BitTorrent became one of the most widely used protocols on the internet in the 2000s. It was used to distribute legitimate software, such as versions of the Linux operating system, and game updates, but also, on a vast scale, to share copyrighted films and music without permission.

TECHNOLOGY

That made it the target of legal action by the entertainment industry against websites that helped users find files, although the protocol itself is neutral.

The Japanese parallel

Japan had its own file-sharing controversy. Isamu Kaneko, the developer of Winny, a Japanese file-sharing program released in 2002, was arrested in 2004 on suspicion of aiding copyright infringement by its users.

He was convicted at his first trial, but the conviction was overturned on appeal, and in 2011 the Supreme Court upheld his acquittal. The case became a landmark in the debate over whether developers can be held responsible for how others use their software.

Later work

Cohen founded a company, BitTorrent Inc., to develop the technology commercially, and later started Chia Network, which works on a cryptocurrency designed to use less energy than Bitcoin.

The principle behind his protocol, that every user can also be a supplier, still underpins many systems for distributing large amounts of data efficiently.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1931: Ole-Johan Dahl Is Born; With Kristen Nygaard He Created Simula, the Norwegian Language That Gave the World Object-Oriented Programming

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Ole-Johan Dahl, one of the founders of modern programming, was born in Mandal, on the southern coast of Norway, on October 12, 1931.

Simulating the world

At the Norwegian Computing Center in Oslo in the early 1960s, Dahl and Kristen Nygaard set out to create a language for computer simulation, a way of modelling systems such as queues, ships in a harbour or the operations of a factory.

The result was Simula, first in a version known as Simula I and then, in 1967, Simula 67.

Objects and classes

Simula introduced ideas that are now taken for granted. Programs could be organised around objects, each combining data with the procedures that act on it. Objects belonged to classes, and new classes could inherit the properties of existing ones and add their own.

Those concepts, known as object-oriented programming, made it easier to write and maintain large programs by modelling them on the things they represented.

Its descendants

Simula itself was never widely used outside research and teaching, but its ideas spread through its descendants. Alan Kay drew on it in creating Smalltalk, and Bjarne Stroustrup, a Danish computer scientist who had used Simula as a student, built its concepts into C++.

Java, C#, Python and many other languages used today owe a debt to the work done in Oslo.

Recognition

Dahl and Nygaard received the Turing Award, often called the Nobel Prize of computing, for 2001, and the IEEE John von Neumann Medal in 2002.

Both men died in 2002, Dahl in June and Nygaard in August, within weeks of each other.

Every programmer who writes a class today is using an idea that took shape in the minds of two Norwegians more than 60 years ago.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 1984: Reagan Signs a Crime Bill That Contains America's First Federal Computer Crime Law, Passed in the Shadow of the Film WarGames

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

On October 12, 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act, a sweeping measure that changed many aspects of American criminal law.

Among its many provisions was one that has grown steadily in importance: the Counterfeit Access Device and Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, the first federal

law aimed specifically at computer crime.

What it covered

The 1984 provisions made it a federal crime to access a computer without authorisation to obtain classified information, financial records or credit information, or to use or damage government computers.

WarGames

The law was passed at a time of growing public anxiety about hackers. The film WarGames, released in 1983, in which a teenager unknowingly breaks into a military computer and almost starts a nuclear war, was cited during the debate in Congress as an illustration of the danger.

The 1986 law

Two years later Congress expanded the provisions into the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act of 1986, which has been amended many times since and remains the main American law against hacking.

Its broad wording has been controversial, with critics arguing that it can criminalise conduct such as breaching a website's terms of service. In 2021 the Supreme Court narrowed its interpretation.

The rest of the act

The Comprehensive Crime Control Act also created the United States Sentencing Commission, abolished parole for federal offences and reformed the insanity defence after John Hinckley's acquittal for the shooting of Reagan in 1981.

Japan's law

Japan's own Act on the Prohibition of Unauthorised Computer Access was enacted in 1999 and took effect in 2000. It bans the use of another person's identification without permission to access a computer, and has been strengthened as cybercrime has grown.

Forty-two years after Reagan's signature, laws against computer intrusion are a standard part of criminal codes around the world, and the threats they address have grown far beyond what the authors of the 1984 provisions imagined.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 2004: Microsoft Releases Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005, Its Bid to Make the PC the Heart of the Living Room

By the Technology Desk

On October 12, 2004, Microsoft released Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005, the third version of a special edition of Windows designed to turn a personal computer into an entertainment centre.

The ten-foot interface

Media Center offered a simplified, full-screen interface that could be used from across a room with a remote control, rather than at a desk with a keyboard and mouse. Users could watch and record television, play music, view photographs and watch DVDs.

Extenders

The 2005 edition added support for Media Center Extenders, devices that let other televisions in the house, including those connected to Microsoft's Xbox games console, share the content stored on the PC.

It also improved television recording, added the ability to burn recorded programmes to DVD and refreshed the look of the interface.

The battle for the living room

The software was part of a broader contest among technology companies to control the entertainment hub of the home, a contest that also involved games consoles, cable boxes and, later, streaming devices.

Its fate

Media Center was folded into the consumer editions of Windows Vista and Windows 7, and won a loyal following among enthusiasts who used it to record broadcast television.

But the rise of streaming services and smartphones changed how people watched, and Microsoft dropped Windows Media Center from Windows 10 in 2015.

The lesson

The idea behind it, a single device bringing together television, music and photographs on the biggest screen in the house, did come true, but through smart televisions and streaming boxes rather than the personal computer.

In Japan, where recorders with large hard disks

became popular for recording broadcasts, dedicated machines filled much of the role that Media Center played elsewhere.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12, 2015: Dell Agrees to Buy EMC for About 67 Billion Dollars, the Largest Technology Takeover Ever at the Time

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

On October 12, 2015, Dell announced that it would buy EMC, the data storage company, for about 67 billion dollars, a deal that was then the largest in the history of the technology industry.

Two companies in transition

Dell, founded by Michael Dell in his university dormitory in 1984, had become one of the world's biggest makers of personal computers. In 2013 Mr Dell and the investment firm Silver Lake took it private, freeing it from the pressure of quarterly results as the PC market shrank.

EMC, based in Massachusetts, was a leader in the storage systems used by large companies to hold their data, and owned a majority stake in VMware, the pioneer of virtualisation software that lets one server run many virtual machines.

The financing

The deal was financed with a combination of cash from Mr Dell and his investment firm, Silver Lake and debt, together with a tracking stock linked to the VMware shares.

Dell Technologies

The takeover was completed in September 2016, creating Dell Technologies, a company that could sell businesses everything from laptops to servers, storage and software.

What followed

Dell spun off its stake in VMware in 2021, and VMware was later bought by the chipmaker Broadcom. Dell returned to the stock market in 2018.

The AI era

Today Dell is one of the largest suppliers of servers for artificial intelligence, a business that did not exist in its current form when the EMC deal was struck. The same need to store and process enormous amounts of data that drove the takeover now drives demand for AI data centres.

In Japan

Dell has a large business in Japan, where its computers and servers are widely used by companies, universities and government bodies.

The 2015 deal showed how far the centre of gravity in computing had shifted from the personal computer to the data centre, a shift that has only accelerated since.

TECHNOLOGY

October 12 in Technology

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

1847: Werner Siemens and Johann Georg Halske found their telegraph company in Berlin.

1887: The date Yamaha counts as its founding, when Torakusu Yamaha set out to build a reed organ in Hamamatsu.

1919: Takachiho Seisakusho, later Olympus, is founded in Tokyo to make microscopes.

1931: Ole-Johan Dahl, co-creator of Simula and object-oriented programming, is born in Norway.

1950: Paul Otellini, chief executive of Intel from 2005 to 2013, is born in San Francisco.

1975: Bram Cohen, creator of BitTorrent, is born.

1984: President Reagan signs the crime act containing the first federal computer crime law.

1988: Steve Jobs unveils the NeXT Computer in San Francisco.

2004: Microsoft releases Windows XP Media Center Edition 2005.

2015: Dell announces its agreement to buy EMC for about 67 billion dollars.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Ishiba on Yana's remarks, Page 5.

The pope's operation, Page 6.

Yandex data centres hit, Page 8.

Prudential's restart plan, Page 7.

Bear attack in Toyota, Page 14.

WEATHER

Today's Weather: Sunny in Northern Tohoku and Niigata, Sun and Some Cloud in the West, 29 Degrees in Nagoya and Kagoshima and 30 in Naha

By the Weather Desk

Sports Day brings sunshine across northern Tohoku and Niigata, and sun with some cloud over much of western Japan, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency forecasts shown on today's map.

Naha is forecast to reach 30 degrees, the highest on the map. Nagoya and Kagoshima, at 29, share the highest reading on the main islands. Kyoto, Osaka, Kochi and Fukuoka expect 28, Tokyo and Hiroshima 27, and Kanazawa, Matsue and Takamatsu 26.

Nagano is forecast to reach 25, Akita and Niigata 24, Aomori 23, and Sapporo and Sendai 22. Akita and Niigata, both sunny all day, share the warmest highs on the Sea of Japan coast north of Kanazawa.

Kushiro, which stays cloudy all day, has the coolest high of the 19 cities, 18 degrees. Sapporo and Sendai share the next coolest, 22.

Sun and cloud

Aomori, Akita and Niigata are sunny all day. Tokyo, Nagano and Kagoshima start sunny and cloud over later, while Takamatsu clears after a cloudy morning. Takamatsu is the only city on the map whose sky improves during the day.

Sapporo, Matsue, Kyoto, Hiroshima, Nagoya, Osaka and Kochi are sunny with some cloud at times.

Sendai, Kanazawa and Fukuoka are mostly cloudy, with some sunshine. Naha is cloudy, with showers at times.

This morning's lows

Aomori was the coldest of the 19 cities this morning, at 11 degrees. Sapporo, Akita and Nagano fell to 13, and Kushiro and Niigata to 14.

Tokyo, Kanazawa and Matsue recorded 17, Sendai, Kyoto and Takamatsu 18, Nagoya and Kochi 19, and Hiroshima and Osaka 20. Hiroshima and Osaka shared the warmest morning on Honshu. Fukuoka and Kagoshima's lows were 22, and Naha's 26, the warmest morning on the map.

The lows are the minimum temperatures observed up to 9:40 a.m. Aomori and Nagano have the widest range between morning and afternoon, 12 degrees, while Kushiro, Sendai and Naha have the narrowest, 4.

Where the events are

In Aomori, where the National Sports Festival continues, the day is sunny with a high of 23 after the coldest morning on the map. Matsue, the nearest city on the map to the Izumo Ekiden course, is sunny with some cloud and a high of 26. Tokyo, the closest city on the map to Tokorozawa, where Seibu and Nippon-Ham play their deciding game, is sunny before clouding over, with a high of 27.

The north and the south

Kushiro, on Hokkaido's Pacific coast, has a low of 14 and a high of 18, a range of only 4 degrees. At the other end of the map, Naha's morning low of 26 degrees was 15 degrees warmer than Aomori's, and its high of 30 is the only reading of 30 or more among the 19 cities.

The typhoons

Typhoon No. 29, Koguma, heads north far east of the Ogasawara Islands and weakens tonight; No. 28, Nolo, has become a tropical depression. Neither threatens the main islands, but their swell is still reaching Pacific coasts.

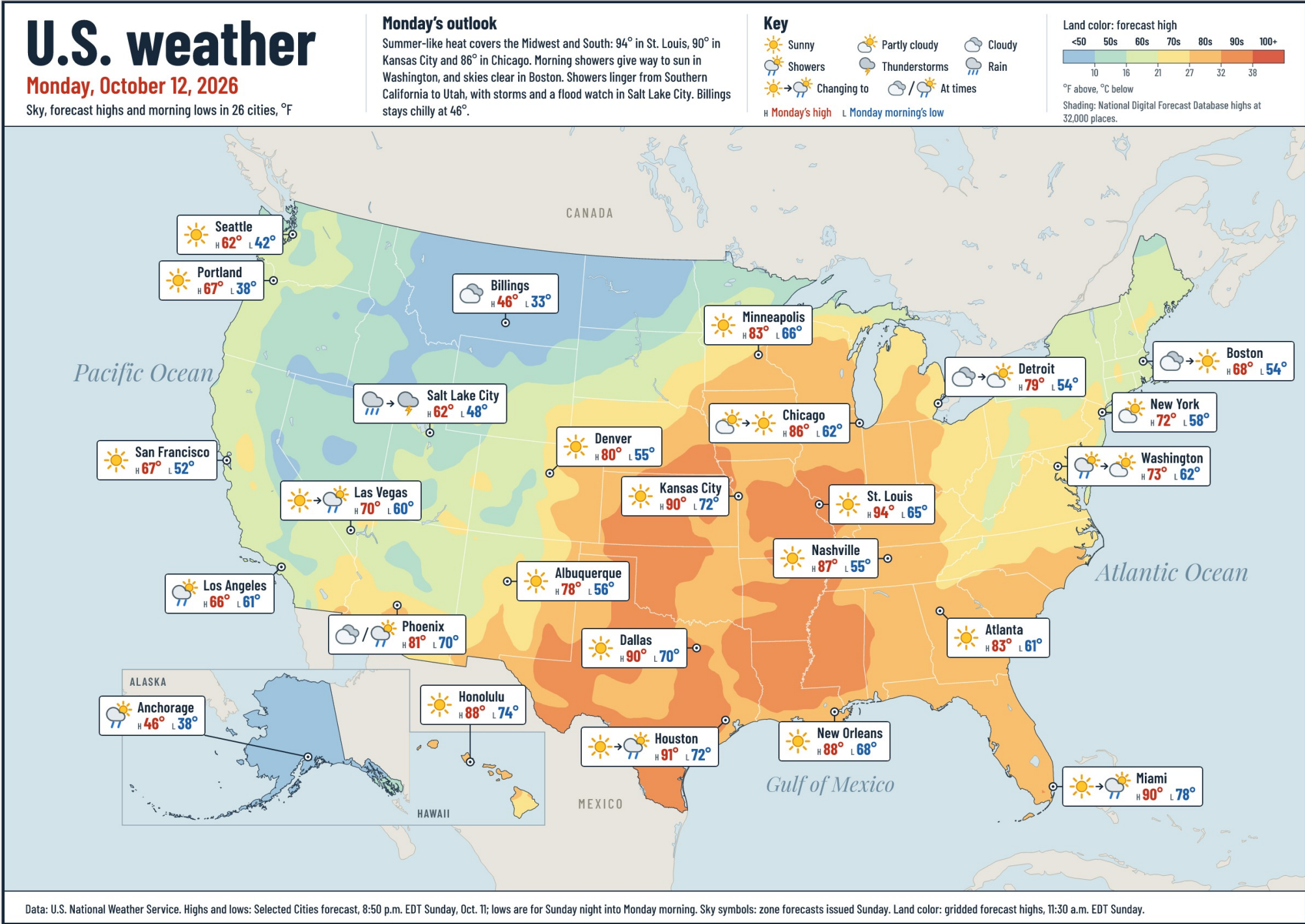
The holiday

The weather is kind to the many outdoor events of Sports Day, from school and community sports days to the Izumo Ekiden in Shimane Prefecture. With highs of 27 to 29 degrees in much of central and western Japan, people taking part should drink water regularly.

Mornings are cool in the north, where Aomori started the day at 11 degrees; a jacket will be welcome early and late.

In Tokyo the sun rises at 5:44 a.m. and sets at 5:11 p.m. With the moon less than two days past new, the night sky will be dark.

WEATHER ABROAD



SOCIETY



A sign warning of bears, in Japanese and English, in a file image supplied for this edition. A man in his 50s was clawed in the head by a bear at the entrance to his home in the Obara district of Toyota, Aichi Prefecture, on Sunday morning; the city has recorded 48 sightings this fiscal year.

SOCIETY

Man Clawed in the Head by a Bear at His Own Front Door in Toyota; the Aichi City Has Logged 48 Sightings This Year, More Than Last Year

The attack in the hills of Obara, where a camera caught a bear on October 3, is believed to have been by an Asian black bear; the man is conscious and his life is not in danger

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

A man in his 50s was attacked by a bear at the entrance to his home in Toyota, Aichi Prefecture, early on Sunday morning and suffered injuries to his head, according to reports.

The attack happened at about 7:20 a.m. in the Obara Kitamachi district, in the hills in the north of the city. The man was conscious, and his life was not in danger, according to reports.

Claw marks on his body suggested that the animal was an Asian black bear, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

A rising number of sightings

Toyota had recorded 48 bear sightings this fiscal year as of October 9, more than last year, according to reports. A camera captured a bear in the Obara area on October 3.

Police have urged residents to be on their guard.

Obara

Obara, a former village that merged into Toyota in 2005, is a district of forested hills and small farming settlements best known for its shikizakura, cherry trees that bloom in both autumn and spring. In November visitors come to see the pale blossoms alongside the red and gold of the autumn leaves.

Toyota, home of the carmaker that bears its name, is Aichi's largest municipality by area. The mergers of 2005 brought mountainous districts such as Obara,

Asuke and Inabu within its boundaries, and with them the forests where bears live.

An autumn danger

Autumn is one of the most dangerous seasons for encounters with bears. The animals feed intensively to build up fat before hibernating, and when the acorns and beech nuts they depend on are scarce they come down to villages in search of persimmons, chestnuts and other food.

Across the country last fiscal year, bear sightings and the number of people injured both reached the highest levels on record, according to the Ministry of the Environment.

A danger at home

What makes Sunday's attack especially alarming is where it happened. Many encounters occur in the mountains, while people are gathering wild vegetables or walking forest trails. This one took place at the door of a house, in the early morning, when a resident might reasonably feel safe.

Local authorities advise residents in areas where bears have been seen to remove fruit left on trees, keep rubbish indoors until collection and take care when going outside early in the morning and at dusk.

Experts also point to longer-term changes. Rural depopulation has left fields, orchards and woodland edges untended, letting bears move closer to settlements, and the number of hunters has fallen as the population has aged.

A new power to shoot

Under a revision of the wildlife protection law that took effect in September last year, municipalities can authorise the emergency use of guns against bears that enter residential areas, when certain conditions for safety are met. Previously, firing guns in such areas was generally not allowed.

This year

Bears have continued to appear in towns this year. Thirty-one prefectures have strengthened their measures for the current fiscal year, including training specialist staff and surveying bear populations, Kyodo News reported in March.

The attack in Toyota shows that the problem is not confined to the snowy north-east. Wherever forests meet houses, residents are being told to stay alert through the autumn feeding season.

SOCIETY

If You Meet a Bear: Make Noise to Avoid Surprises, Never Run, Back Away Slowly and Protect Your Head and Neck if Attacked

By the Society Desk

With bears appearing in residential areas this autumn, local authorities and the Ministry of the Environment have issued advice on how to avoid encounters and what to do if one happens.

Avoiding an encounter

Bears generally avoid people. Most attacks happen when a bear is surprised at close range, so the first rule is to let bears know you are there.

In areas where bears live, carry a bell or a radio, or talk and clap from time to time, especially where visibility is poor. Avoid going out alone at dawn and dusk, when bears are most active.

At home

Do not leave food or rubbish outside. Pick fruit such as persimmons and chestnuts promptly, or remove fruit trees that are no longer tended, and keep compost and livestock feed secured.

Check for bear sightings announced by your municipality, and take care when opening doors or going outside early in the morning.

If you see a bear

Stay calm. Do not run: a bear can run much faster than a person, and running may trigger a chase. Do not shout suddenly or throw things.

Keep your eyes on the bear and back away slowly, putting distance between you. Never approach a bear, and be especially careful of cubs, as the mother is likely to be nearby.

If attacked

If a bear attacks, lie face down, cover the back of your neck with your hands and protect your head and face. Bear spray, carried by many people who work or walk in the mountains, can drive off an attacking bear if used at close range.

Report it

After any sighting in a town, call the police or the municipality. In an emergency, dial 110.

Most people who live near bears never meet one at close quarters. Following these rules makes that even less likely.

TYPHOONS

When a Typhoon Stops Being a Typhoon: Tropical Depressions, Extratropical Lows and Why the Bulletins End

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

In the space of a few days this week, the Japan Meteorological Agency will have issued its last bulletins on two typhoons for two different reasons.

The definition

In the agency's usage, a typhoon is a tropical cyclone in the north-western Pacific or the South China Sea whose maximum sustained winds reach about 17 metres a second, or 34 knots, or more.

Internationally, storms at the lower end of that range are called tropical storms; in Japan they are all numbered and called typhoons.

The depression

When a typhoon's winds fall below that threshold, it becomes a tropical depression. That is what happened to Nolo on Sunday afternoon, and with it the agency issued its last typhoon bulletin.

A tropical depression can still bring heavy rain, and the agency continues to watch such systems.

The extratropical low

Koguma is expected to end differently. As a typhoon moves north over cooler water and into the westerly winds of the mid-latitudes, it loses the warm core that powers it and begins to draw its energy from the contrast between warm and cold air masses.

At that point it is called an extratropical low, the kind of system that brings much of the weather in temperate latitudes. The agency forecasts that Koguma will become one by Wednesday morning.

Not always weaker

An extratropical low is not necessarily harmless. Some former typhoons grow larger and bring strong winds over wide areas after the transition, and the agency warns against assuming that the danger has passed when a typhoon is reclassified.

The intensity scale

Japan grades typhoons by their maximum winds: strong from 33 metres a second, very strong from 44 and violent from 54. Koguma was very strong on Monday morning, with winds of 45 metres a second.

Its size, measured by the extent of its winds of 15 metres a second or more, is described separately, which is why a typhoon can be both small and very

strong.

SOCIETY

The Emergency Door Cock: A Safety Device Made Mandatory After the Sakuragicho Fire of 1951, When Passengers Could Not Escape a Burning Train

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Most Japanese trains carry a small device, usually behind a cover near the doors or under a seat, that allows passengers to open the doors by hand in an emergency. It is known as the emergency door cock.

How it works

On many trains the doors are held closed by air pressure or by an electric mechanism controlled by the crew. The cock releases that force, so that the doors can be pushed open by hand.

Instructions are printed beside it. On many trains operating it alerts the crew, and on some it also brings the train to a stop.

The Sakuragicho disaster

The device owes its importance to one of the worst disasters in Japanese railway history. On April 24, 1951, a train caught fire at Sakuragicho Station in Yokohama after a pantograph became entangled with a fallen overhead wire.

Passengers were trapped inside the burning carriages. The doors could not be opened from inside, and the windows were too small to climb through. A total of 106 people died.

The lessons

After the fire, railway operators were required to fit emergency door cocks and to mark their locations clearly, and to make carriages more fire-resistant and connect them with passages so that passengers could move between them.

A double-edged device

The cock is a life-saving device in a fire or after a crash. But used at the wrong moment, it can be dangerous: passengers who step out of a stopped train between stations can be hit by other trains or touch live rails.

Railway companies therefore ask passengers to follow the instructions of the crew whenever possible, and to use the cock themselves only when there is an immediate danger.

Modern safeguards

Many modern trains are designed so that doors cannot open while the train is moving at speed, even if the cock is operated, as happened on the Tsukuba Express on Sunday.

The balance between letting passengers escape quickly and keeping them safe from falls is one that engineers have had to strike ever since 1951.

SOCIETY

One Year After Expo 2025 Closed, Fans Gather for Anniversary Events as Yumeshima Turns to Its Next Chapter

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Tuesday marks one year since Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, closed its gates on Yumeshima, the artificial island in Osaka Bay, and fans of the exposition have been gathering for anniversary events over the holiday weekend.

Universal Studios Japan is holding a music event, EXPO Beat Jam, from Sunday to Tuesday to mark the first anniversary, and a commemorative event called the EXPO2025 Futures Summit has been organised, with attendance at the venue limited to invited guests.

The Expo

The exposition ran for 184 days, from April 13 to October 13 last year, under the theme of designing future society for our lives. More than 25 million people visited.

Its symbol was the Grand Ring, a wooden roof structure about two kilometres around that was certified by Guinness World Records as the largest wooden architectural structure in the world.

Its mascot, Myaku-Myaku, a red and blue creature with many eyes, was greeted with puzzlement when it was unveiled but became hugely popular, and its merchandise sold in great quantities.

SOCIETY

After the Expo

Most of the pavilions have been dismantled. Part of the Grand Ring is to be preserved as a reminder of the event.

Yumeshima is now the site of Japan's first integrated resort with a casino, which is being developed by a consortium including MGM Resorts and Orix and is scheduled to open in 2030.

A divided verdict

The Expo's legacy remains a subject of debate. Supporters point to the visitors it brought, the attention it drew to Osaka and the technologies it showcased. Critics point to rising construction costs and question how much lasting benefit it will bring to the region.

The fans

For the many people who visited repeatedly, some dozens of times, the Expo was a shared experience, and the anniversary events offer a chance to relive it.

The question for Osaka is how to turn the memory of six months on an island into lasting benefits for the city and the Kansai region.

SOCIETY

When the Coach Is No Longer the Teacher: What the Move of Junior High School Clubs to Local Communities Means for Families

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

For generations, junior high school sport in Japan has meant the school club: practice after lessons and at weekends, coached by a teacher, with matches against other schools.

That model is changing. The government is moving club activities at public junior high schools out of the schools and into local communities.

The timetable

Guidelines issued in 2022 by the Sports Agency and the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which covers cultural clubs such as brass bands, set out the plan. The three years from fiscal 2023 to 2025 were designated a period for promoting reform and preparing the ground.

This spring the country entered what it calls a reform implementation period, running until fiscal 2031. Its goal is to transfer all weekend club activities to community organisations, such as local sports clubs and associations, and to accelerate the transfer of weekday activities.

Why

Two pressures drove the change. Teachers' working hours are among the longest of any profession, and supervising clubs at weekends was a large part of the burden. And with fewer children, many schools can no longer form teams on their own.

What changes for families

In the new system, children from several schools may train together in a community club, coached by local people with experience of the sport. Teachers who wish to continue coaching can do so as part of the community organisation.

Families may have to pay fees, arrange transport to venues and take on more of the organising, and the cost to households is one of the concerns most often raised about the reform.

Progress

Progress varies widely. Some municipalities have moved quickly; others are still searching for coaches and venues. In Akita Prefecture, for example, municipalities are proceeding according to local conditions, and many students still take part in weekend activities through their schools, the Akita Sakigake Shimpo reported in May.

The government has substantially increased funding for the reform, more than doubling it in effect when this year's budget and last year's supplementary budget are combined, Kyodo News reported.

The stakes

Supporters see a chance to give children better coaching and more choice, and to relieve teachers. Critics worry that children in rural areas and those from poorer families could lose opportunities that school clubs once provided for free.

The success of the reform will be measured by whether, in 2031, more children or fewer are playing sport.

SOCIETY

How Japan Measures Its Fitness: A Survey Begun in the Olympic Year of 1964, a Test of Eight Events and Scores Out of 80

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Japan measures the physical fitness of its people more systematically than most countries, through two government surveys.

The long-running survey

The Physical Fitness and Motor Ability Survey has been carried out every year since 1964, the year of the Tokyo Olympics. It now covers people from the age of six to 79, sampled across the country, and its results are published each autumn around Sports Day.

In fiscal 1999 the tests were overhauled and a new set of tests introduced, which allows comparisons over more than a quarter of a century.

The national survey of pupils

Since fiscal 2008 the government has also tested all fifth-grade primary pupils and second-year junior high school students, in what is known as the National Survey of Physical Fitness, Motor Ability and Exercise Habits. It was not held in 2011, after the Great East Japan Earthquake, or in 2020, because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The tests

Children take eight tests: grip strength, sit-ups, a sitting forward reach to measure flexibility, side steps, a 20-metre shuttle run or an endurance run, a 50-metre sprint, a standing long jump and a ball throw. Each is scored out of 10, giving a total out of 80.

Pupils also answer questions about how much they exercise, how much time they spend on screens, how much they sleep and whether they eat breakfast.

What the latest results show

The results of the pupils' survey for the last fiscal year, published in December, showed fitness scores rising from the previous year in all four groups, but only junior high school boys back at pre-pandemic levels.

The share of children exercising for less than an hour a week outside lessons rose, as did the share spending three hours or more on screens on weekdays, outside study.

Why it matters

Long-running data of this kind lets the government and schools see trends that would otherwise be invisible, and judge whether policies are working.

The figures do not tell the whole story of a child's health, but on Sports Day they are a useful reminder of where the country stands.

SOCIETY

Society in Brief: Police Investigate the Danjiri Accidents, the Kokusupo Continues in Aomori and Fine Weather Holds for Sports Day

By the Society Desk

DANJIRI: Police in Osaka Prefecture are investigating how two festival floats overturned at street corners in Izumisano and Izumiotsu on Saturday, killing two men and injuring 16 people, according to most reports.

TOYOTA: A man in his 50s was injured in the head by a bear at the entrance to his home in the Obara Kitamachi district on Sunday morning.

TSUKUBA EXPRESS: The doors of one carriage opened about 15 centimetres before a train stopped at Moriya on Sunday; a passenger had operated the emergency door release.

AOMORI: The Emperor and Empress returned to Tokyo after viewing a Nebuta float and visiting a facility for children and the elderly.

KOKUSUPO: The National Sports Festival continues in Aomori this week.

EXPO: Tuesday is the first anniversary of the closing of Expo 2025 in Osaka.

NIIGATA: Campaigning is under way for the city's mayoral election on October 25.

OKINAWA: The curfew on American service personnel from midnight to 5 a.m. remains in force.

WEATHER: Sunny in northern Tohoku and Niigata and across much of western Japan; showers at times

in Naha.

SWELL: Waves remain high on Pacific coasts as Typhoon No. 29 moves away.

SPORTS

Tatsu Shuts Out Seibu for Six Innings and Nomura's Double Decides a 1-0 Duel as Nippon-Ham Level the Series and Force a Deciding Game

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

The Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters beat the Seibu Lions 1-0 at Belluna Dome in Tokorozawa on Sunday to level their Pacific League Climax Series first stage at a game each and force a deciding third game on Monday.

Kota Tatsu pitched six scoreless innings for the Fighters, allowing three hits and striking out seven, and was credited with the win. The Fighters have been managed since 2022 by Tsuyoshi Shinjo, the former major leaguer.

The only run

The game turned in the top of the fifth. Yua Tamiya led off with a hit and reached second base on a battery error. With two outs, Yuki Nomura drove him in with a double.

It was the only run of the afternoon. Both starters dominated: Seibu's hitters managed three hits against Tatsu, and Nippon-Ham's five against Takahashi.

Takahashi's effort

Seibu's starter, Kona Takahashi, pitched seven innings, throwing 127 pitches. He allowed five hits and four walks and struck out four, giving up just the one run, but took the loss as his team's hitters failed to score.

The bullpen

After Tatsu left, Ren Fukushima and Mizuki Hori held Seibu scoreless in the seventh and eighth innings, and Taisei Yanagawa pitched the ninth to earn the save.

What it means

Seibu, the second-placed team, had won the first game in 10 innings on Alexander Canario's walk-off home run on Saturday. Sunday's defeat means that everything rests on Monday's game.

As the higher-placed team, Seibu will advance if the series ends level, including if Monday's game is a tie. Nippon-Ham must win. Nippon-Ham finished third in the regular season, behind SoftBank and Seibu.

The prize

The winner meets the league champions, the Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks, in the final stage in Fukuoka from Wednesday. SoftBank begin that series with a two-win advantage under this season's rule.

For the Fighters, a single run was enough to keep their season alive for at least one more day.

SPORTS

Japan Beat Russia 4-1 to Regain the World Mixed Team Judo Title in Baku, Their Eighth Since the Event Began, With Los Angeles Two Years Away

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Japan won the mixed team title at the world judo championships in Baku on Sunday, beating Russia 4-1 in the final to regain the crown they lost last year.

It was Japan's eighth world mixed team title since the event was introduced in 2017. Georgia won it last year, when Japan finished with the bronze. The championships were held at the National Gymnastics Arena in Baku from October 4 to 11.

The final

Shiho Tanaka, the 2025 world champion at 70 kg, gave Japan the lead, beating Madina Taimazova with a yuko in golden score, according to the International Judo Federation.

Sanshiro Murao, who won the individual world title at 90 kg this week, made it 2-0 with a uchi-mata for a yuko against Egor Andoni. Murao won the silver medal in the same category at the Paris Olympics. Mao Arai then beat Daria Rechkalova in golden score, countering an attack, to make it 3-0.

Russia's Tamerlan Bashaev won the heavyweight bout, but Akari Omori clinched the title for Japan, scoring a waza-ari with a sode-tsuri-komi-goshi with

about a minute left.

The road to the final

Japan beat China in the semi-finals. Russia, appearing in their first mixed team final, beat Uzbekistan after a golden score contest.

Georgia beat China and Uzbekistan beat Mongolia in the bronze medal matches.

'Super happy'

"Last year we lost, so I'm super happy that we won this year," Murao said.

A strong week

The team title capped a successful championships for Japan, who won seven individual gold medals, among them those of the siblings Hifumi Abe and Uta Abe, as well as two silver and three bronze medals. Four of the individual titles were won by women and three by men, according to NHK. Uta Abe, the Olympic champion at 52 kg in Tokyo, won the world title at that weight once more.

Los Angeles

The mixed team event is also part of the Olympic programme, and Japan's target is the Los Angeles Games in 2028. France beat Japan in the Olympic final in Tokyo in 2021 and again in Paris in 2024, and Japan have yet to win the Olympic mixed team title.

Sunday's victory showed that Japan's depth across the weight categories remains formidable, but the heavyweight division, where Russia took their only point, is still a concern.

SPORTS

Sakamoto, 37, Will Play a 21st Season for the Giants After a Year in Which He Hit His 300th Home Run but Batted Below .200 for the First Time

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Hayato Sakamoto, the Yomiuri Giants' veteran infielder, will continue his career next season, his 21st as a professional, NHK reported.

Sakamoto, 37, had a difficult year at the plate, finishing with a batting average below .200 for the first time in his career, according to reports. He nonetheless produced some memorable moments.

The 300th home run

On May 13 he hit the 300th home run of his career, a three-run walk-off homer against the Hiroshima Carp in the 12th inning. On July 17 he hit another three-run walk-off homer, against the Chunichi Dragons.

In his own words

"It was a season in which I could not really help the team, right to the end," he said. "It was disappointing, so I will think things through carefully and carry on."

A long career

Sakamoto joined the Giants in 2007 as the first-round draft pick out of Kosei Gakuin High School in Aomori Prefecture, and became the team's regular shortstop in his second season. He has spent his entire professional career with the club.

He won the Central League batting title in 2016 and was named the league's most valuable player in 2019. He has also won several Golden Glove awards at shortstop. In November 2020 he became the second-youngest player to reach 2,000 career hits in Japanese professional baseball.

Childhood teammates

Masahiro Tanaka, the former New York Yankees pitcher who joined the Giants last year, will also continue next season, according to reports. Tanaka, also 37, won 24 games without a loss for the Rakuten Golden Eagles in 2013 before moving to the Yankees. The two played together on the same boys' baseball team in Itami, Hyogo Prefecture, where Sakamoto pitched and Tanaka caught.

Sunday

On Sunday Sakamoto appeared as a pinch hitter in the eighth inning of the Giants' 4-1 defeat by DeNA, which ended their season in the Climax Series first stage, and fled out. The Giants had finished second in the Central League, behind Hanshin.

His decision to continue means that one of the most popular players of his generation will have another chance to end his career on his own terms.

SPORTS



Yokohama DeNA BayStars players celebrate by tossing a member of the team into the air, in a file image supplied for this edition. DeNA beat the Giants 4-1 at Tokyo Dome on Sunday to complete a two-game sweep of the Climax Series first stage, and play Hanshin in the final stage at Koshien from Wednesday.

SPORTS

DeNA Sweep the Giants 4-1 to Reach the Final Stage for a Third Straight Year; Watarai Leads Off With a Homer Again and Maki Adds Another

Yutaro Ishida holds the Giants to a run in five innings and four relievers close it out; Hanshin await at Koshien from Wednesday with a one-win advantage

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The Yokohama DeNA BayStars beat the Yomiuri Giants 4-1 at Tokyo Dome on Sunday to complete a two-game sweep of the Central League Climax Series first stage and reach the final stage for the third consecutive year.

DeNA will play the league champions, the Hanshin Tigers, at Koshien Stadium from Wednesday. It will be their fifth appearance in the final stage.

A fast start

As in the first game, DeNA struck first. Ryuki Watarai hit a home run to lead off the game, his second leadoff homer in as many days, and Keita Sano drove in a second run with a single later in the first inning.

The Giants cut the lead to 2-1 when Bobby Dalbec hit a solo home run in the fourth.

Pulling away

DeNA restored their two-run advantage in the seventh, when Yasutaka Tobashira drove in a run, and Shugo Maki hit a solo home run in the eighth, his second in as many games, to make it 4-1.

Yutaro Ishida started for DeNA and allowed one run on five hits over five innings. Four relievers, Iwata, Ise, Hamachi and Reynolds, kept the Giants scoreless for the rest of the game.

Sakamoto's turn

The Giants' veteran Hayato Sakamoto, who has said he will play a 21st professional season next year, came up as a pinch hitter in the eighth inning and flied out.

For the Giants, who finished second in the league and played both games at home, the series ended without a win. Their hitters managed only two runs in two games against DeNA's pitching.

The final stage

The final stage is played entirely at Koshien. Hanshin start with a one-win advantage as champions, so they need three more victories to reach four, while DeNA need four.

DeNA have reason to believe. In 2024 they finished third, won both stages of the Climax Series and went on to win the Japan Series, an upset their fans have not forgotten.

Momentum

Clinching on Sunday also gives DeNA two days' rest before Wednesday, allowing their pitching staff to reset. Their hitters arrive in form, with home runs from Watarai and Maki in both games at Tokyo Dome.

The Japan Series begins on October 24.

The other league

In the Central League, DeNA have already completed their sweep of the Giants and will face Hanshin at Koshien from Wednesday.

The result of Monday's game will be reported in Tuesday's edition.

SPORTS

The Final Stages: DeNA at Koshien Against a Hanshin Side One Win Up, and SoftBank Two Wins Up at Home in Fukuoka

By the Sports Desk

With the first stages almost complete, Japanese baseball's play-offs move on to their final stages on Wednesday.

The Central League

Hanshin, who won the Central League, host DeNA at Koshien Stadium in Nishinomiya. As champions they begin with a one-win advantage, so they need three more wins to reach four. DeNA need four wins. The series can last at most six games. Hanshin last won the Japan Series in 2023.

All the games are played at Koshien, the ground famous for its ivy-covered walls, its passionate supporters and the national high school baseball tournaments held there each spring and summer.

The Pacific League

SoftBank, the Pacific League champions, host the winner of Monday's game between Seibu and Nippon-Ham in Fukuoka. Their home is the Mizuho PayPay Dome. Under this season's rule they begin with a two-win advantage, a larger cushion than in previous years.

Ties

As in the first stage, ties count in favour of the higher-placed team. A champion that avoids defeat therefore has an advantage beyond its head start.

Rest and rhythm

Champions often go a week or more without a competitive game before the final stage. Some managers worry that their hitters lose their timing, while challengers arrive sharp from the first stage.

DeNA's sweep has given them two days of rest before Wednesday, while the Pacific League survivor will play on Monday and then travel to Fukuoka.

The Japan Series

The winners of the final stages meet in the Japan Series from October 24.

For DeNA, the path is the one they followed in 2024, when as a third-placed team they reached and won the Japan Series. Hanshin, with home advantage and a head start, will aim to stop them.

SPORTS

Akasaki Runs 2:05:47 for Ninth in Chicago as Osako Finishes 14th; Kipruto Wins in 2:01:09 and Yuka Akasaki Beats the MGC Standard

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Satoru Akasaki finished ninth in the Chicago Marathon on Sunday in 2 hours 5 minutes 47 seconds, the best performance by a Japanese man in the race, according to Kyodo News. Some reports gave his time as 2:05:48.

The race was won by Amos Kipruto of Kenya in 2:01:09. Kipruto won the London Marathon in 2022. The Chicago course record, 2:00:35, was set by his compatriot Kelvin Kiptum in 2023, then a world record.

The Japanese men

Akasaki, who finished sixth in the marathon at the Paris Olympics in 2024, moved up the list of the fastest Japanese marathon runners with his time.

Suguru Osako, who holds the Japanese record of 2:04:55, set in Valencia last December, finished 14th in 2:07:34. Tomoki Ota, running his first marathon, was 26th in 2:11:52.

The women

In the women's race Yuka Akasaki finished 11th, inside the time required to qualify for the Marathon Grand Championship, the race that will select Japan's team for the Los Angeles Olympics. Reports gave her time as 2:23:11 or 2:23:18; the standard is 2:23:30.

Chicago

Chicago is one of the World Marathon Majors, along with Tokyo, Boston, London, Berlin, New York and, since last year, Sydney. Its flat course and cool autumn weather make it one of the fastest in the world.

The road to Los Angeles

The Marathon Grand Championship, known as the MGC, was introduced before the Tokyo Olympics to replace a selection system that had been criticised as opaque. Runners qualify by meeting time standards or finishing high in designated races, then race each other for places on the Olympic team.

For Japanese marathon runners, the autumn races in Chicago and Berlin are an important opportunity to post fast times and qualify.

Osako's season

Osako, 35, has been one of Japan's leading distance runners for more than a decade. His Japanese record in Valencia showed that he remains competitive, although Sunday's race did not go as well.

For Akasaki, Sunday's run strengthens his position as he sets his sights on Los Angeles.

SPORTS

Matsushita Breaks the Short-Course World Record in the 400 Metres Individual Medley, Taking 0.48 Seconds Off Seto's 2019 Mark

By the Sports Desk

Tomoyuki Matsushita set a world record in the men's 400 metres individual medley in a 25-metre pool on Sunday, swimming 3 minutes 54.33 seconds at the Japan Short Course Championships in Saga.

The time beat the previous world record of 3:54.81, set by Daiya Seto in 2019, by 0.48 seconds. Seto's mark had stood for almost seven years.

The swimmer

Matsushita, a student at Toyo University, won the silver medal in the 400 metres individual medley at the Paris Olympics in 2024, behind France's Leon Marchand.

His record came on the second day of the championships at the SAGA Sunrise Park pool. Seto was 25 when he set the old record in December 2019, at a meeting in Las Vegas.

A demanding event

The 400 metres individual medley is one of swimming's hardest events. Swimmers cover 100 metres of each stroke, butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, in that order, and must pace themselves to finish strongly.

Short course

Short-course races are swum in 25-metre pools, rather than the 50-metre pools used at the Olympics. The extra turns, and the push-offs from the wall, make times faster, so short-course and long-course records are kept separately. In a 25-metre pool a 400-metre swimmer makes 15 turns, against seven in a 50-metre pool.

A Japanese tradition

Japan has a strong record in the individual medley. Seto, whose record Matsushita broke, won world titles in the event, and Kosuke Hagino won Olympic gold in the 400 metres individual medley in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Matsushita's swim suggests that the tradition is in good hands, with the Los Angeles Olympics two years away.

The championships continue in Saga.

SPORTS

Ohtani Bats Fourth as the Dodgers Open the NLCS in Milwaukee, With Skubal Facing the Brewers' Misorowski in Game 1

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

The Los Angeles Dodgers opened the National League Championship Series against the Milwaukee Brewers at American Family Field on Sunday night, Monday morning in Japan, with Shohei Ohtani batting fourth as the designated hitter.

The first pitch was scheduled for shortly after 8 p.m. Eastern time, after 9 a.m. on Monday in Japan.

The pitchers

The Dodgers started Tarik Skubal, the left-hander, who had a 1.97 earned run average in seven career post-season starts, according to MLB.com. The Brewers started Jacob Misorowski, who led the league in earned run average, at 1.80, in strikeouts, with 252, and in WHIP this season, according to MLB.com. Skubal won the American League's Cy Young Award in 2024 and 2025 with the Detroit Tigers, and Misorowski, 24, made his major league debut last year.

The line-ups

The Dodgers' batting order was Mookie Betts at shortstop, Freddie Freeman at first base, Will Smith at catcher, Ohtani as designated hitter, Teoscar Hernandez in left field, Max Muncy at third base, Andy Pages in centre field, Kyle Tucker in right field and Kike Hernandez at second base.

The Brewers led off with Jackson Chourio, followed by Brice Turang, William Contreras, Jake Bauers, Andrew Vaughn, Garrett Mitchell, Cooper Pratt, Luis Lara and Joey Ortiz.

The stakes

The Dodgers are seeking a third consecutive World Series title, which no National League team has achieved. They beat the Brewers in the NLCS last year, sweeping them in four games.

The Brewers have home-field advantage this time, with Games 1 and 2 and, if needed, Games 6 and 7 in Milwaukee.

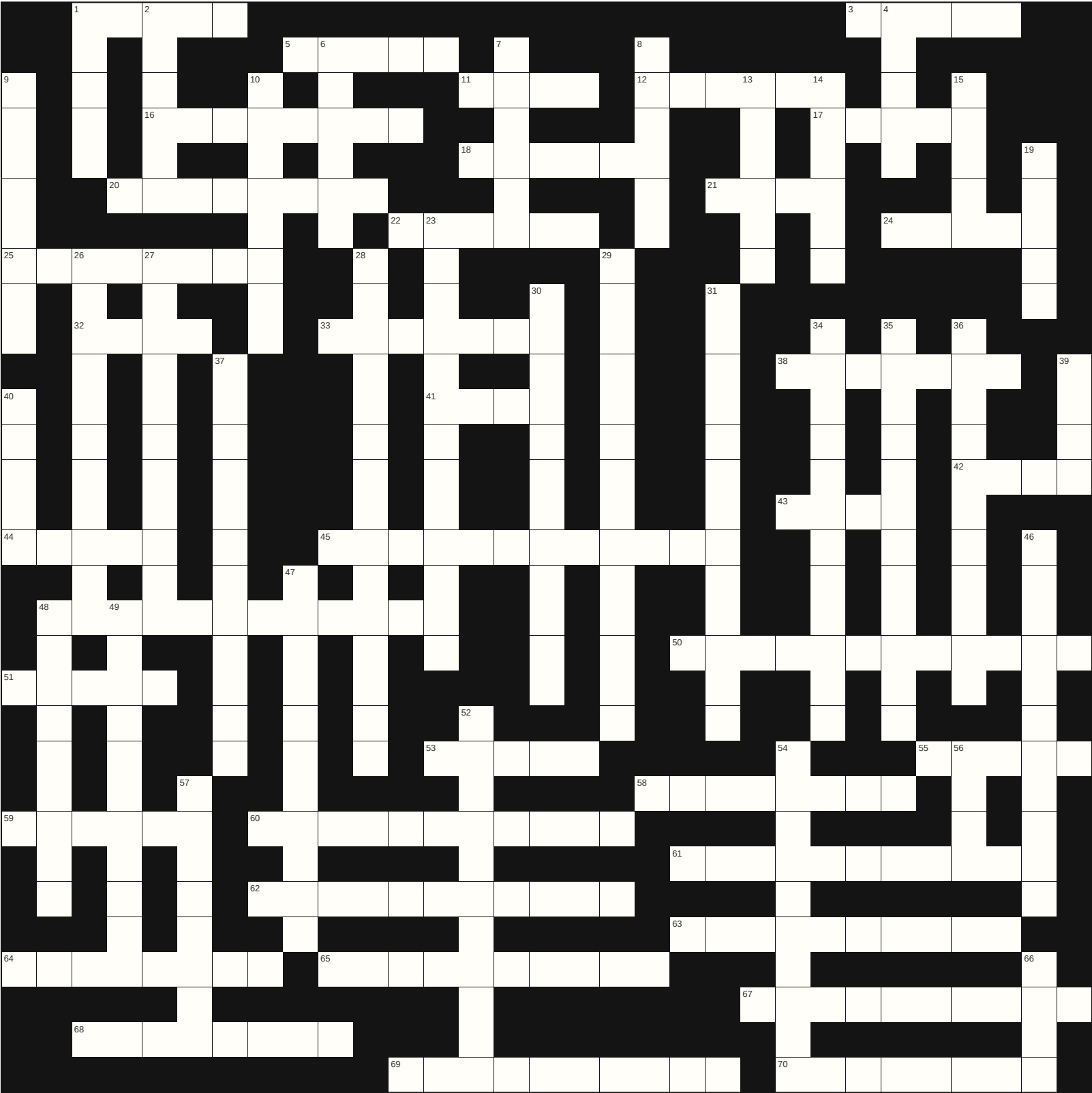
Japanese viewers

With Ohtani, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Roki Sasaki on the roster, the Dodgers' games are watched by large audiences in Japan, where the morning starts of evening games in America have become part of the routine of the post-season.

The result of Game 1 will be reported in Tuesday's edition.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 72 Words



Solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Puzzle difficulty: Professional.

SPORTS

The World Judo Championships in Baku: Japan's Week

By the Sports Desk

MIXED TEAM: Gold. Japan 4, Russia 1 in the final. Bronze: Georgia and Uzbekistan.

THE FINAL: Shiho Tanaka, Sanshiro Murao, Mao Arai and Akari Omori won for Japan; Tamerlan Bashaev won for Russia.

INDIVIDUAL GOLD MEDALS: seven, won by Hifumi Abe, Uta Abe, Wakana Koga, Ryuga Tanaka, Akari Omori, Haruka Kaju and Sanshiro Murao.

THE ABE SIBLINGS: Hifumi at 66 kg and Uta at 52 kg won on the same day for the first time in three years.

SILVER: two, among them Michihiro Arai at 100 kg.

BRONZE: three.

TOTAL: 12 individual medals.

HEAVYWEIGHTS: no Japanese medal. The men's over-100 kg title went to Inal Tasoiev of Russia, and the women's over-78 kg title to Lee Hyeon-ji of South Korea.

TEAM TITLES: Japan have now won eight of the nine world mixed team events held since 2017.

NEXT: The Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, where the mixed team event is on the programme.

SPORTS

The Izumo Ekiden Opens the University Relay Season Today, Six Stages From the Grand Shrine to the Dome Under Mostly Fine Skies

By the Sports Desk

The university relay season begins on Monday with the Izumo All-Japan University Ekiden in Shimane Prefecture, the first of the three big races that culminate in the Hakone Ekiden at New Year.

Teams run six stages totalling 45.1 kilometres, from near Izumo Taisha, the grand shrine, to the Izumo Dome.

The contenders

Komazawa, Waseda and Chuo are among the universities taking part, along with the other leading distance-running schools from around the country.

A race for speed

Izumo's stages are short compared with those of Hakone, where each runner covers about 20 kilometres. That makes Izumo a test of speed rather than endurance, and teams with several fast runners can do well even if they lack depth.

The weather

The forecast for western Japan is for sun with some cloud, and highs in the upper 20s in much of the region, warm conditions for runners in mid-October.

The season

The All-Japan University Ekiden follows in early November, and the Hakone Ekiden on January 2 and 3. Coaches use Izumo to test their runners' form and to decide on line-ups for the longer races to come.

Ekiden

The ekiden, a relay in which runners pass a sash known as a tasuki, is one of the most popular sports in Japan. Its roots are often traced to a long relay from Kyoto to Tokyo held in 1917.

On television

The Izumo race is broadcast live nationally, a Sports Day fixture for many families.

The results will be reported in Tuesday's edition.

SPORTS

Scoreboard

By the Sports Desk

CLIMAX SERIES, CENTRAL LEAGUE, FIRST STAGE, GAME 2 (Tokyo Dome): DeNA 4, Giants 1. DeNA win the series 2-0. HR: Watarai, Maki (DeNA); Dalbec (Giants). W: Ishida.

CLIMAX SERIES, PACIFIC LEAGUE, FIRST STAGE, GAME 2 (Belluna Dome): Nippon-Ham 1, Seibu 0. Series level 1-1. W: Tatsu. S: Yanagawa. L: Takahashi.

JUDO, WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, BAKU, MIXED TEAM FINAL: Japan 4, Russia 1. Bronze: Georgia, Uzbekistan.

MARATHON, CHICAGO, MEN: 1, Amos Kipruto (Kenya) 2:01:09. 9, Satoru Akasaki 2:05:47. 14, Suguru Osako 2:07:34. 26, Tomoki Ota 2:11:52.

MARATHON, CHICAGO, WOMEN: 11, Yuka Akasaki, inside the MGC standard of 2:23:30.

SWIMMING, JAPAN SHORT COURSE CHAMPIONSHIPS, SAGA: Men's 400 m individual medley, Tomoyuki Matsushita, 3:54.33, world record.

ACROSS

- Korean city beaten by Riyadh in the Expo vote (5)
- Toyota district of the bear attack (5)
- Mountain district merged into Toyota in 2005, like Asuke (5)
- Partner taking part of the Mobara plant site (4)
- First quartz wristwatch (6)
- Chipmaker that bought VMware (8)
- Judoka who clinched Japan's team title (5)
- Individual ____, Matsushita's event (6)
- City of the third Yandex strike (8)
- Hatsune ____, the virtual singer (4)
- New name of Yandex's Dutch former parent (6)
- Camera maker that invested in NeXT (5)
- Beaten by Uzbekistan for a judo bronze (8)
- Holder of the old short-course 400 m medley record (4)
- Last year's world judo team champions (7)
- Dodger batting second, at first base (7)
- Matsushita's university (4)
- Japanese partner in the casino resort (4)
- Laboratory where the first web browser was written (4)
- Yandex's voice assistant (5)
- Radio ____, broadcast since 1928 (12)
- Olympus invention of 1950 (12)
- Site of an 1881 electric tram (12)
- Governorate east of Sanaa where fighting has spread (5)
- Celebratory tossing (5)
- Fighters starter with seven strikeouts (5)
- University among today's Izumo contenders (8)
- Fukui plant whose No. 3 reactor restarted (6)
- Missile fired to stop another (11)
- Prudential salesperson (4,7) (11)
- Station of the 1951 train fire (11)
- ____ Peoples' Day (10)
- Lawmaker for the Tochigi 1st district (8)
- Sports Day's old name (6,2,2) (10)
- Creator of C++ (10)
- Minister who quit over Unification Church ties (8)
- Country that lost two citizens in Riyadh (10)
- Niigata mayor seeking a third term (8)

DOWN

- Vatican spokesman Matteo ____ (5)
- Dodgers' Game 1 starter (6)
- It lies on the ground in the cartoon (5)
- Tokushima company of blue LED fame (6)
- City of the Nada fighting festival (6)
- Island at the mouth of the Red Sea (6)
- 1983 film cited in Congress (3,5) (8)
- Japanese judoka beaten by Geesink in 1964 (8)
- Red Sea refinery the Houthi claim to have hit (6)
- Fighter whose double drove in the only run (6)
- Border city whose airport was hit a week ago (5)
- Japanese file-sharing program of 2002 (5)
- What Koguma becomes by Wednesday (13)
- City of Koshien Stadium (11)
- Munich festival begun in 1810 (11)
- What Trump announced for Russia and Ukraine (6,9) (15)
- Papal summer residence (6,8) (14)
- Ukrainian city where 23 were killed on Saturday (12)
- Egyptian resort of last year's Gaza summit (5,2,6) (13)
- Air base near al-Kharj (6,6) (12)
- Leo XIII's encyclical on workers (5,7) (12)
- Yemeni government offensive launched on October 4 (4,2,5) (11)
- Nickname of the YA-1 (3,9) (12)
- Console that could act as a Media Center extender (4)
- Refinery town 1,900 km from Ukraine's border (5)
- Sudden-death extra time (6,5) (11)
- System that moved holidays (5,6) (11)
- Wooden symbol of the Expo (5,4) (9)
- Cherries that bloom in autumn and spring (11)
- Sakamoto's high school in Aomori (5,6) (11)
- Judo bronze medallists who beat Mongolia (10)
- Port where a destroyer was bombed in 2000 (4)
- Nichia researcher who shared a Nobel (8)
- Bear, in Japanese (4)

TODAY: Climax Series, Pacific League first stage, Game 3, Seibu v Nippon-Ham, 2 p.m. Izumo All-Japan University Ekiden.

MLB: NLCS Game 1, Dodgers at Brewers, Monday morning Japan time.

WEDNESDAY: Climax Series final stages begin. Hanshin v DeNA at Koshien; SoftBank v the Pacific League first-stage winner in Fukuoka.

OCTOBER 24: Japan Series begins.

CULTURE

From Taiiku no Hi to Sports Day: How the Opening of the 1964 Olympics Became a National Holiday, Moved to a Monday and Changed Its Name

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Monday is Sports Day, a national holiday whose roots lie in one of the proudest days in Japan's postwar history.

October 10, 1964

On October 10, 1964, the Emperor Showa opened the Tokyo Olympics at the National Stadium, the first Olympic Games held in Asia. The ceremony, under clear autumn skies, came to symbolise Japan's recovery from war less than two decades earlier.

A holiday is born

Two years later, in 1966, October 10 was made a national holiday, Taiiku no Hi, usually translated as Health and Sports Day. The law described its purpose as to become familiar with sport and to cultivate a sound body and mind.

Happy Monday

From 2000, under the so-called Happy Monday system, which moved several holidays to Mondays to create three-day weekends, the holiday was shifted to the second Monday of October. That is why it falls on October 12 this year.

A new name

In 2020 the holiday was renamed Sports Day, Supotsu no Hi. Its purpose was rewritten as to enjoy sport, cultivate a spirit of respect for others and wish for a healthy and vibrant society.

In 2020 and 2021 the holiday was moved to July, to coincide with the planned and then postponed opening of the Tokyo Olympics.

School sports days

For generations of Japanese, the holiday was associated with undokai, the school and community sports days of relay races, tug-of-war and family picnics. Many schools held theirs on or around the holiday.

Some schools now hold their sports days at other times of year, including the spring, but the image of children running under autumn skies remains a powerful one.

The holiday's message, set out in its new wording, is that sport is for everyone: not only the athletes on television, but the families on the school ground and the elderly residents on the gateball court.

CULTURE

Happy Monday: Why Sports Day Falls on October 12 This Year, and How Four Holidays Were Moved to Mondays to Create Long Weekends

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Older Japanese still sometimes refer to October 10 as Sports Day, and with reason: for more than three decades that was its date.

The original date

When the holiday was created in 1966, it was fixed on October 10, the anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, a date often said to be one of the most reliably sunny of the year.

The change

In 1998 the Diet amended the law on national holidays to move two holidays from fixed dates to Mondays, beginning in 2000. Coming of Age Day moved from January 15 to the second Monday of January, and the sports holiday from October 10 to the second Monday of October.

A further amendment moved Marine Day from July 20 to the third Monday of July and Respect for the Aged Day from September 15 to the third Monday of September, from 2003.

The reasons

The aim was to create more three-day weekends, encouraging people to travel and spend, and giving workers more opportunity to rest. The tourism and leisure industries supported the change.

The objections

Critics argued that moving holidays away from their dates cut them off from their meaning. Sports Day

CULTURE

was meant to commemorate a particular day in 1964; Coming of Age Day had been linked to the traditional calendar's Little New Year.

Silver Week

The Monday system occasionally combines with other holidays to produce longer breaks. When Respect for the Aged Day falls two days before the autumnal equinox, the day between them also becomes a holiday, creating a five-day weekend known as Silver Week. This year was one such year, with holidays from September 19 to 23.

This year's calendar

Because October 12 is the second Monday this year, Sports Day falls two days after the anniversary it commemorates. Next year it will fall on October 11.

For most people the long weekend is reason enough to welcome it.

CULTURE

The Games That Gave Japan a Holiday: Sixteen Gold Medals, the Witches of the Orient, a Dutch Judo Champion and a Final Torchbearer Born in Hiroshima

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The Tokyo Olympics of 1964, whose opening day Sports Day commemorates, remain a defining memory for the generation that saw them.

The torch

The final torchbearer, who lit the cauldron at the National Stadium on October 10, was Yoshinori Sakai, a 19-year-old runner born in Hiroshima Prefecture on August 6, 1945, the day of the atomic bombing. His selection carried a message of peace and renewal.

A transformed city

The Games transformed Tokyo. They were the first Olympics held in Asia, with athletes from 93 countries and regions. The Tokaido Shinkansen, the world's first high-speed railway, opened on October 1, nine days before the ceremony, and new expressways, hotels and a monorail to Haneda Airport were built in time.

The medals

Japan won 16 gold medals, third in the table behind the United States and the Soviet Union.

The women's volleyball team, nicknamed the Witches of the Orient, beat the Soviet Union in the final in a match watched by a huge share of the country's television audience.

Judo's debut

Judo made its Olympic debut, and Japanese judoka won three of the four titles. But in the open category, the Dutchman Anton Geesink beat Akio Kaminaga, a result that stunned the nation and showed that judo had become a global sport.

The marathon

In the marathon, Abebe Bikila of Ethiopia won his second consecutive Olympic title, and Kokichi Tsuburaya took the bronze medal, the only Japanese track and field medal of the Games.

Technology

The Tokyo Games were the first Olympics broadcast live overseas by satellite, and Japanese electronics companies showcased their technology, from timing equipment to television.

The legacy

At the closing ceremony on October 24, athletes of many nations entered the stadium together, mingling informally, a scene that became a tradition at later Games. The confidence the Games gave the country helped to carry it through the years of rapid growth that followed, and the holiday created in their memory is a reminder each autumn of what a nation can achieve when it sets itself a goal.

CULTURE

The Stopwatch of 1964: How Seiko Became the First Japanese Official Timer of the Olympics, and Led to the Quartz Wristwatch

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The pocket stopwatch in today's editorial cartoon recalls a piece of Olympic history in which Japanese engineering played a leading part.

A Japanese timer

For the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, Seiko served as the official timer, the first time a Japanese company had been entrusted with timing the Games, a role long dominated by Swiss watchmakers. The company's founder, Kintaro Hattori, had opened a watch shop in Tokyo in 1881.

The equipment

The company developed a range of timing equipment for the Games, including stopwatches and a portable quartz clock, the Crystal Chronometer, which was far more accurate than mechanical timepieces and could be carried to the venues.

Printing timers recorded results on paper, a forerunner of the electronic systems used today.

The quartz revolution

The work on quartz timing for the Olympics fed into Seiko's next great product. On Christmas Day 1969 the company launched the Astron, the world's first quartz wristwatch.

Quartz watches, which keep time using the vibrations of a quartz crystal driven by a battery, were far more accurate than mechanical watches and, as production costs fell, far cheaper. They transformed the watch industry worldwide in the 1970s and 1980s.

Hundredths of a second

Sports timing has since moved to electronic systems accurate to thousandths of a second, with touchpads in swimming pools and photo-finish cameras on athletics tracks. Seiko has served as official timer at many international athletics championships since.

On the school ground

Yet at school sports days across Japan, teachers still hold stopwatches at the finish line, and the dropped baton and the ticking watch remain familiar sights.

The precision that started with the Olympics now sits in every smartphone, but a stopwatch in a teacher's hand still captures the moment when a child crosses the line.

CULTURE

The Art of the Handover: Japan's Underhand Baton Pass Won Olympic Relay Medals, and a Fumbled Exchange Cost a Medal Chance in Tokyo

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Relay races are a highlight of every school sports day, and the baton, as today's cartoon reminds us, can be dropped.

The rules

In the four-by-100 metres relay, each runner must pass the baton to the next within a marked changeover zone. The zone is 30 metres long. A dropped baton can be picked up, but the time lost is usually fatal to a team's chances, and a pass outside the zone means disqualification.

Japan's method

Japan's men's sprint relay teams have long made up for a lack of individual speed with precise teamwork. They adopted the underhand pass, in which the incoming runner swings the baton upwards into the outgoing runner's hand, which allows the two to run closer to full speed through the zone.

The medals

The approach paid off. Japan's team finished third in the four-by-100 metres relay at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, and the medal was later upgraded to silver after the winning Jamaican team was disqualified for a doping offence.

At the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016 Japan won the silver medal behind Jamaica, setting an Asian record of 37.60 seconds.

Heartbreak in Tokyo

At the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, competing at home, Japan's team failed to finish the final after the first exchange went wrong and the baton was not passed successfully.

A lesson for life

The relay is a metaphor that Japanese coaches and teachers use often: four runners, each depending on the others, with success decided as much by the moments of handover as by the speed of any one runner.

At school sports days, children learn the same lesson. The fastest runner cannot win alone, and a team that

practises its handovers can beat a team of individual stars.

Today

Across the country on Sports Day, community and school events will feature relay races, and somewhere a baton will fall. The important thing, coaches say, is to pick it up and keep running.

CULTURE

Radio Calisthenics: The Three-Minute Morning Routine Broadcast Since 1928 That Millions of Japanese Still Know by Heart

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

If there is one form of exercise that unites the generations in Japan, it is rajio taiso, radio calisthenics.

The beginning

The first broadcast went out on November 1, 1928. It was organised by the postal life insurance service of the Ministry of Communications, which had been inspired by a radio exercise programme sponsored by an American insurance company, and was broadcast by NHK.

The aim was to improve the health of the nation, and with it the finances of the insurance service.

Interruption and revival

The broadcasts were suspended after the Second World War and resumed in 1951 with a new routine. The version known as Radio Calisthenics No. 1 dates from that year, and No. 2 from the year after.

A national habit

Generations of Japanese children have gathered in parks and school grounds during the summer holidays to do the exercises early in the morning, collecting a stamp on a card for each day they attend.

Many companies begin the working day with the routine, and on construction sites and in factories workers still stretch together before starting.

The elderly

The exercises are especially popular among older people, who meet in parks every morning across the country. For many, the daily gathering is as important for friendship as for fitness.

In 1999 NHK introduced Minna no Taiso, exercises for everyone, designed to be done by people of all ages and abilities, including those who use wheelchairs.

Why it lasts

The routine is short, needs no equipment and can be done almost anywhere. Each routine lasts a little over three minutes. Its familiar piano music and spoken instructions are among the most recognisable sounds in Japan.

On a day dedicated to sport and health, it is a reminder that exercise need not be complicated to do good.

CULTURE

Sports Day by the Numbers

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

1964: The Tokyo Olympics open on October 10, the date the holiday first commemorated. The government's fitness survey begins the same year.

1966: Taiiku no Hi becomes a national holiday.

2000: The holiday moves to the second Monday of October.

2020: It is renamed Sports Day, and moved to July for that year and the next because of the Olympics.

16: Japan's gold medals at the 1964 Games.

51.7 per cent: Adults who exercise at least once a week, against a target of about 70 per cent.

69 minutes: The median time adults spend exercising each week.

50.5 per cent: Adults in their 20s and 30s with school sports experience who exercise weekly, against 33.0 per cent of those without.

2031: The end of the period in which weekend junior high school club activities are to move to local communities.

80: The maximum score in the eight-event fitness test taken by primary and junior high school pupils.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Five airports in a week, Page 3.

Ishiba on Yana's remarks, Page 5.

CULTURE

October 12 in History

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

1492: Christopher Columbus's expedition makes landfall in the Bahamas.

1810: Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria marries Princess Therese in Munich; the public celebrations become the first Oktoberfest.

1960: Inejiro Asanuma, chairman of the Japan Socialist Party, is stabbed to death while speaking at Hibiya Public Hall in Tokyo.

1968: The Mexico City Olympics open, the first held in Latin America.

1979: Douglas Adams's novel The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is published.

1984: The IRA bombs the Grand Hotel in Brighton during the Conservative Party conference; Margaret Thatcher escapes unhurt.

1999: The United Nations marks the Day of Six Billion, the symbolic date on which the world's population was estimated to reach six billion.

2000: Suicide bombers attack the American destroyer USS Cole in Aden, Yemen, killing 17 sailors.

2002: Bombings in Bali, Indonesia, kill 202 people.

2019: Typhoon Hagibis makes landfall on the Izu Peninsula and brings record rainfall and widespread flooding to eastern Japan.

CULTURE

Festivals and Events This Week

By the Culture Desk

MONDAY: Izumo All-Japan University Ekiden, Shimane. Sports Day events across the country.

TUESDAY: First anniversary of the closing of Expo 2025; anniversary music event at Universal Studios Japan.

WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY: Nada no Kenka Matsuri, the fighting festival of Himeji, Hyogo Prefecture.

THURSDAY TO SATURDAY: Kannamesai, the harvest festival of Ise Jingu.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY: Kawagoe Festival, with its towering floats, Saitama Prefecture.

ALL WEEK: The National Sports Festival continues in Aomori.

NEXT THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22: Jidai Matsuri and the Kurama Fire Festival, Kyoto.

AUTUMN LEAVES: The colours are beginning in the mountains of Hokkaido and northern Tohoku.

OBARA, TOYOTA: The shikizakura bloom with the autumn leaves from late October into November; visitors to wooded areas should heed bear warnings.

DANJIRI: Festival-goers should follow organisers' and police instructions at corners.

CULTURE

Words of the Week

By the Culture Desk

SUPOTSU NO HI: Sports Day, the national holiday on the second Monday of October, renamed from Taiiku no Hi in 2020.

UNDOKAI: A school or community sports day, with relays, tug-of-war and the cheering of families.

TASUKI: The sash passed between runners in an ekiden, as in today's Izumo race.

DOAGE: The tossing of a manager or player into the air by teammates in celebration, a sight reserved for championships.

DANTAI-SEN: A team competition, such as the mixed team event Japan won in Baku.

KUMA SHUTSUBOTSU: A bear sighting, a phrase heard often in local news this autumn.

SHIKIZAKURA: Cherry trees that bloom in both autumn and spring, famous in the Obara district of Toyota.

NEBUTA: The giant illuminated floats of Aomori's summer festival, one of which the Emperor and Empress viewed on Sunday.

DOA KOKKU: The emergency door cock that lets passengers open train doors by hand.

GEKOKUJO: The overthrow of the mighty by the lowly, a word DeNA's fans will be hoping to hear again at Koshien.

EDITORIAL & OPINION



THE DAY FOR STRONG BODIES AND CLEAR HEADS.

Taro Suzuki

Editorial cartoon by Taro Suzuki for The Japan Morning Post.

EDITORIAL

The Baton on the Ground: Sports Day Should Remind Japan That a Strong Nation Is Built From Strong Bodies and Clear Heads

Children's fitness has only partly recovered from the pandemic, barely half of adults exercise once a week and school sport is moving out of the schools. The remedy lies less in Tokyo than on the school grounds, in the local clubs and at home

By Samantha Ortiz | Editorial Page Editor

Taro Suzuki's cartoon today takes us back to a place most Japanese adults remember: the school ground on sports day.

A white banner stretched between two poles reads, in Japanese and in English, Sports Day. Red maple leaves are painted at either end, and more lie scattered across the packed earth of the track. Strings of coloured pennants run to the school building behind, where a clock looks down from the roof and the national flag flies against a blue autumn sky.

Four boys in white shirts and navy shorts are running a relay, mouths open, legs pumping. The leader, a little ahead of the others, grips a red baton and grins as if the finish line were already in sight. A wooden sign marked Start stands at the edge of the track, and a tree on the right is ablaze with autumn colour.

In the foreground lies a second red baton, as if dropped. Beside it rests an old pocket stopwatch, its chain trailing in the dust. Beneath the picture runs the caption: "The day for strong bodies and clear heads."

It is a gentle picture, full of nostalgia. But the dropped baton and the abandoned watch carry a sharper message on a day that the nation set aside, six decades ago, for exactly the things the caption names.

A holiday with a purpose

Sports Day began as a memorial to a moment of national pride. On October 10, 1964, the Tokyo Olympics opened at the National Stadium, the first Games held in Asia, under the kind of clear sky that the cartoonist has drawn. Two years later the date became a national holiday.

The law that created Taiiku no Hi stated its purpose plainly: to become familiar with sport and to cultivate a sound body and mind. When the holiday moved to the second Monday of October in 2000, and when it was renamed Sports Day in 2020, the wording changed. It now speaks of enjoying sport, cultivating a spirit of respect for others and wishing for a healthy and vibrant society.

The tradition of the school sports day is older still.

The first undokai in Japan is often said to have been a meet of races and games held at the naval academy in Tokyo in 1874, and by the early twentieth century sports days had become fixtures of school life across the country, with whole neighbourhoods turning out to watch.

Both versions say something important. The old one placed the emphasis on the individual: a strong body and a sound mind, built through effort. The new one adds society: respect for others, and the vitality of the nation as a whole. Mr Suzuki's caption, with its strong bodies and clear heads, joins the two.

The question this holiday should prompt is whether Japan is still living up to either.

What the numbers say about our children

The evidence is mixed, and in places worrying.

Each year the Sports Agency tests the fitness of every fifth-grade primary pupil and every second-year junior high school student in the country. The results of last year's survey, published in December, contained some good news: the average fitness scores of boys and girls in both age groups rose from the year before.

But only one group, junior high school boys, had returned to the level recorded before the coronavirus pandemic. Primary pupils of both sexes and junior high school girls remain below it.

Behind the averages lie trends that should concern every parent. The proportion of children who exercise for seven hours or more a week, outside physical education lessons, is falling. The proportion who exercise for less than an hour a week is rising. So is the proportion who spend three hours or more on a weekday looking at screens for purposes other than study.

Grip strength is declining. Performance in endurance runs is declining. Among girls, the share who say they like sport is falling, and so is the share who enjoy physical education lessons.

The decline among girls deserves particular thought. Girls who drift away from sport in their teens often do not return, and the gap between men and women in adult exercise begins to open in the school years, according to the agency. Clubs and lessons that offer a wider range of activities, and that value enjoyment as well as competition, may keep more of them involved.

There are bright spots. More children are sleeping eight hours or more, and more are eating breakfast every day. The survey also confirms what common sense suggests: children who exercise more have higher fitness scores.

Over a longer horizon the picture is more complicated. A separate survey of fitness across all ages, published by the agency a year ago today, found that children's grip strength and ball-throwing ability are lower at every age than they were around 1998, and that in the past decade most age groups of boys have declined in several measures, including endurance.

Children are not simply weaker than their parents were. In some tests, such as sit-ups and the shuttle run, today's children do better than their counterparts of a generation ago. But the direction of travel over the past ten years, and the growing gap between the active and the inactive, cannot be ignored.

The adults who stopped moving

If children are the future, adults are the present, and here the figures are blunter.

The government's goal, set in its current Sports Basic Plan, is for about 70 per cent of adults to play sport or exercise at least once a week. The latest survey, published in March, found the figure was 51.7 per cent, roughly where it has been since 2022 and about the same as in 2017.

Men exercise more than women, 55.0 per cent against 48.8 per cent, and the gap between the sexes is the largest on record. Participation is consistently lowest among people in their 20s to 50s, the generations raising children and doing most of the country's work. The typical adult exercises for about 69 minutes a week; for women in their 20s to 50s, the figure is roughly half that of men of the same age.

The fitness survey tells a similar story. Among women aged 35 to 39, the share rated in the top three of five fitness grades has fallen from the late 60s to

the low 50s in percentage terms.

None of this is mysterious. Long working hours, long commutes, the demands of raising children and caring for parents, and the lure of the screen in the few free hours that remain all leave little time for a game of tennis or an evening run. Women, who still carry more of the burden at home, feel the squeeze most.

But the consequences are serious. A nation in which half of adults rarely exercise is storing up illness, and the bills for treating it, for decades to come.

The good news from the over-75s

There is one group whose story is unambiguously encouraging, and it is the oldest.

The agency's fitness survey found that among people aged 75 to 79, the share rated in the top three fitness grades has risen from the early 70s to around 90 per cent over the years it has been measured, for men and women alike. Older Japanese are fitter than their predecessors in almost every test.

Anyone who has walked through a Japanese park early in the morning knows why. The elderly are there, doing radio calisthenics, a national ritual since the first broadcast in 1928, playing gateball, walking briskly in groups. They have taken the holiday's old message to heart.

It matters more than ever. People aged 65 or over now make up 29.6 per cent of the population, a record, and a record 9.43 million of them are in work. A country that increasingly relies on older people to keep working, volunteering and caring for one another needs them to stay healthy, and many are showing that it can be done.

The challenge is to give the young and the middle-aged the same habits.

School sport and what comes after

The agency's survey contains one finding that deserves particular attention. Among adults in their 20s and 30s, 50.5 per cent of those who played sport in a school club exercise at least once a week, against 33.0 per cent of those who did not. Those with school sports experience are also fitter, and the gap is largest among young adults.

In other words, the habits formed in the junior high and high school clubs, the early-morning practices and the weekend matches, follow people into adult

EDITORIAL & OPINION

life. That is what makes the current reform of school sport so consequential.

For decades Japanese school clubs were run by teachers, often unpaid for the extra hours and often coaching sports they had never played. The system produced remarkable results, from national high school tournaments followed by millions to Olympic champions. But it also exhausted teachers, and with the number of children falling, many schools can no longer field teams.

The government's answer is to move club activities out of the schools and into the community. After a period of preparation from 2023 to 2025, the country entered what it calls a reform implementation period this spring, running to 2031, in which all weekend club activities at public junior high schools are to be handed over to local organisations, and weekday activities are to follow as quickly as possible.

The direction is right. Teachers should not be expected to give up every weekend, and children deserve coaches who know their sport. But the handover is uneven. Some municipalities have moved quickly; others are struggling to find coaches, venues and money.

This is where the cartoon's dropped baton becomes more than a picture. A relay is won or lost at the handover. If the transfer of school sport from teachers to towns is fumbled, a generation of children, especially those in rural areas and those whose families cannot pay for private clubs, will lose the very experience that the agency's own figures link to a lifetime of activity.

A job for communities, not only ministries

It is tempting to look to Tokyo for a solution, and the government has a part to play. It has substantially increased the budget for club reform, and it should go on supporting the training of coaches, the provision of insurance and the use of public facilities.

But the reform cannot succeed as a programme run from Kasumigaseki. It depends on what Japan has always had in abundance: local people willing to give their time. Retired teachers and company employees who played sport in their youth, former athletes, parents and local businesses that can lend a ground or sponsor a team are the coaches and organisers that the new system needs.

This is an opportunity as well as a challenge. Community clubs that bring together children from several schools, and sometimes adults and the elderly as well, can strengthen the bonds of neighbourhoods that have frayed as families have shrunk and moved. Sport, organised by neighbours for neighbours, is one of the best ways to rebuild them.

The Emperor and Empress offered a glimpse of that spirit on Sunday in Aomori, where they watched children and elderly residents play a ball game together at a facility that combines a nursery with housing for older people. It is a small example of the kind of community that sport can help to sustain.

The changing climate adds another complication. Summers now stretch into September and sometimes October, as this weekend's 30-degree heat in Naha and 29 degrees in Nagoya show, and some schools have moved their sports days to the spring. Adapting the calendar is sensible; abandoning outdoor activity is not. Shade, water and sensible timing can keep children safe without keeping them indoors.

Families, too, must play their part. No school or club can make a child active if the hours at home are spent in front of a screen. Parents who set limits on devices, send their children outside and play with them are doing more for their health than any national plan.

Clear heads

The caption's second phrase deserves as much attention as the first.

Sport has always been about more than muscle. A child who learns to run a relay learns to rely on others and to be relied upon. A child who loses a race learns to accept defeat, and a child who wins learns, one hopes, to win graciously. The discipline of practice, the patience required to improve and the courage to try again after failure are lessons for life, not only for the playing field.

Those lessons matter more in an age of constant distraction. Many parents and teachers worry about the effect of long hours on smartphones on children's concentration, sleep and mood. Physical activity is one of the most reliable ways to clear the mind, and the survey's finding that children are sleeping more is

a hopeful sign that habits can change.

Older adults benefit as much as children. Regular activity helps to preserve balance, strength and memory, and the elderly residents who meet each morning for radio calisthenics are maintaining friendships as well as fitness.

Clear heads matter in adult life too. Exercise relieves stress, and a population that is physically active is better able to cope with the pressures of work and family.

Respect for others

The words added to the holiday's purpose in 2020, a spirit of respect for others, are worth dwelling on.

Sport at its best teaches respect: for rules, for opponents, for referees and for teammates. Japan's martial arts begin and end with a bow. The high school baseball players who line up to thank the crowd after a defeat, and the judoka who bow to an opponent who has just thrown them, are expressions of a culture in which respect is part of the contest.

That culture is a national asset, and it is worth protecting. It is also a reason to be vigilant against the abuses that have sometimes marred Japanese sport, from harsh physical punishment by coaches to excessive training that harms young bodies. Respect must run in both directions, from the coach to the athlete as well as the other way round.

The Sports Basic Act of 2011 opens with the declaration that sport is a culture shared by all humanity, and that living a happy and fulfilling life through sport is the right of every person. Those words commit the state to making sport accessible. They do not make it the state's job to do the exercising for us.

A matter of national strength

It may seem grand to link a school sports day to the strength of the nation. But the connection is real.

Japan faces a shrinking and ageing population. Every citizen's health, productivity and capacity to contribute matter more as the number of working-age people falls. A healthy population works longer, cares for its elders and children more effectively and places less strain on a medical system whose costs are already a heavy burden on public finances.

The country also depends, in emergencies, on people who are physically capable: the members of the Self-Defence Forces and the coast guard, the firefighters, the police and the volunteers who turn out after earthquakes and floods. The Self-Defence Forces have struggled for years to recruit enough young people. A nation that neglects the fitness of its youth weakens its ability to protect itself.

None of this calls for regimentation or a return to the drills of the past. It calls for a society in which being active is normal, easy and enjoyable, from childhood to old age.

The athletes who carry the flag

This weekend offered reminders of what Japanese sport can achieve.

In Baku on Sunday, Japan's judoka beat Russia to regain the world mixed team title, their eighth since the event began, after a week in which they won seven individual gold medals. In Saga, Tomoyuki Matsushita broke a world record in the 400 metres individual medley. In Chicago, Satoru Akasaki ran the marathon in under 2 hours 6 minutes. At Tokyo Dome, DeNA's hitters swept the Giants.

These achievements rest on a broad base. Japan's judo strength grows from thousands of local dojos where children learn to fall before they learn to throw. Its swimmers come from neighbourhood swimming schools, and its distance runners from a culture of ekiden that reaches from junior high schools to the Hakone race at New Year. Today's Izumo Ekiden is part of that tradition.

Champions emerge from participation, not the other way round. If fewer children play sport, there will in time be fewer champions, and fewer people of every kind who have known the satisfaction of effort rewarded.

Allies on the field

Sport also connects Japan to the world, and to its closest ally in particular.

As readers wake on Sports Day, many will be watching the Los Angeles Dodgers, with Shohei Ohtani, Yoshinobu Yamamoto and Roki Sasaki on their roster, begin the National League Championship Series in Milwaukee. Few things have done more in

recent years to warm ordinary Americans and Japanese towards one another than the sight of Japanese players starring in America's national game.

In two years the Olympics go to Los Angeles. Japanese athletes will compete there in the country with which Japan shares an alliance and, increasingly, a passion for the same sports. The friendships formed on the field are part of the fabric that holds the two nations together.

Pick up the baton

Return, finally, to Mr Suzuki's drawing. The boy in front has the baton and is running for all he is worth. Behind him, the other baton lies where it fell, and the stopwatch ticks on beside it.

A dropped baton is not the end of a race. A runner who stops, bends down, picks it up and runs on has lost a few seconds, not the contest. Japan has dropped a baton or two in recent years: children who exercise less, adults who have stopped moving, a school sports system in the middle of a difficult handover.

The task now is to pick it up. That means families who turn off the screens and go outside together; communities that step forward to coach and organise; companies that give their employees time to exercise; and a government that supports local efforts without trying to run them from the centre.

It also means remembering what the holiday is for. Sports Day is not only a day off. It is a reminder, renewed each year since 1966, that a nation is only as strong as the bodies and minds of its people.

The stopwatch is running. The children on the school ground today, and their parents in the crowd, should make the most of the day for strong bodies and clear heads.

ANALYSIS

The War in the Gulf Is Japan's Business: Saudi Security Is Japanese Energy Security, and Tokyo Should Act Like It

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

It is easy, from Tokyo, to see the weekend's missile strikes on Riyadh's airport as a distant tragedy in another people's war. That would be a mistake.

Japan buys more than 90 per cent of its crude oil from the Middle East, and Saudi Arabia is one of its two largest suppliers. The security of the kingdom is, in a very direct sense, the security of Japan's energy supply.

The Houthis have now struck or threatened five Saudi airports in a week, claimed an attack on a refinery and declared a maritime embargo on the kingdom. Each step moves the conflict closer to the oil installations and sea lanes on which Japan depends.

Tokyo's instinct in Middle Eastern conflicts has often been to keep its head down, offer humanitarian aid and avoid taking sides. There is wisdom in caution. But neutrality is not a policy when one side is firing missiles at civilian airports.

Japan should say clearly that attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure are unacceptable, as the United States and the United Nations have done. It should offer Saudi Arabia practical support, including co-operation on protecting critical infrastructure, where Japanese companies and the Self-Defence Forces have relevant expertise.

It should also work closely with Washington. President Trump has said the United States may join the fight. Japan's interest is in a response that deters further attacks without igniting a wider regional war, and it should make that case quietly and consistently to its ally.

At home, the weekend should prompt a hard look at preparedness. Japan's oil stockpiles are substantial, but the government should review how quickly they could be released, and how the country would cope with a prolonged rise in prices.

Diversification has proved difficult for crude oil, but it is not impossible for energy as a whole. Restarting safe nuclear reactors, expanding renewable power and securing long-term contracts with stable suppliers all reduce Japan's exposure to the Gulf.

None of this will make the Middle East less volatile. But it will make Japan less vulnerable to the next attack, wherever it falls.

Twelve people died at Riyadh's airport on Saturday. Japan cannot prevent the next strike, but it can make sure it is not caught unprepared by its consequences.

ANALYSIS

A Ceasefire Needs More Than a Post: Japan Should Back Washington's Diplomacy While Pressing for Terms That Hold

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Any step that stops the bombing of power stations before winter is welcome. President Trump's announcement of an energy ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine deserves to be judged by that standard.

So far it falls short. President Zelenskyy said the agreement was news to him. The Kremlin said nothing. Within hours a power plant in Kharkiv was attacked, and a Yandex data centre in Russia was shut down by Ukrainian drones.

This is not the first such announcement. In September Mr Trump made a similar claim, and nothing followed. In March last year a 30-day pause in strikes on energy targets dissolved amid mutual accusations.

A ceasefire that works needs agreed terms, a clear start and some means of checking that both sides are keeping it. Mr Zelenskyy's request to be told when the ceasefire begins was not a quibble; it was the essential question.

Japan has every reason to support American efforts to end the war. Tokyo has backed Ukraine since 2022 with aid and sanctions, and it knows that the outcome will be watched closely in Beijing and Pyongyang.

But support for Washington's diplomacy does not mean silence about its methods. The deal to buy Russian diesel, struck on Friday, has dismayed Ukrainian and European officials and drawn criticism from American senators of both parties. Allies that have paid a price to sanction Russia are entitled to ask why it should now be rewarded.

Mr Trump's remark that Ukraine needs a new president was also unhelpful. Ukraine cannot hold elections under martial law, and Mr Zelenskyy's offer to organise a vote after a 60-day ceasefire has put the onus where it belongs, on Moscow.

Japan's influence in Washington is greatest when it is exercised privately and consistently. Tokyo should tell its ally that a durable settlement must not leave Russia with the lesson that aggression pays.

That lesson would not stay in Europe. It would travel to every capital that is considering whether force can change borders, including those closest to Japan.

An energy ceasefire that holds would be a real achievement. Japan should help to make it one, by insisting on the details that turn an announcement into an agreement.

ANALYSIS

The Lesson From Tochigi: When a Minister's Own Prefecture Calls His Position Severe, the Prime Minister Should Listen

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi has twice said that her agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, should stay in his post. The weekend suggested that her party is less sure.

At the Liberal Democratic Party's first fundraising party in Tochigi in four years, from which Mr Yana stayed away, lawmakers from his own prefecture called the situation severe, and the chapter's secretary-general said it bore responsibility for having endorsed him.

Former Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba called his remarks highly questionable for a politician, and reports quoted party insiders as saying his resignation was unavoidable.

The prime minister's reasoning is understandable. Dismissing a minister under opposition pressure invites the opposition to look for its next target, and she does not want to appear to be abandoning a colleague.

But the issue in this case is not a gaffe. Mr Yana's recorded remarks described cutting road budgets for municipalities whose mayors did not support him. He denies that any budget was affected. Even so, the suggestion that public money might follow political loyalty strikes at the trust on which conservative government depends.

Conservatives believe in the integrity of institutions and in the idea that public office is a trust, not a possession. A minister who boasts of punishing towns, even falsely, has damaged both.

ANALYSIS

There is also a practical consideration. The unified local elections are six months away. The party's candidates in Tochigi, and elsewhere, do not want to campaign under the shadow of this affair.

The prime minister has the authority to decide. Her decision should rest on what serves public trust and the government's ability to pursue its programme, not on a reluctance to be seen to bend.

If Mr Yana can give a full and convincing explanation in the budget committees, he may yet survive. If he cannot, it would be better for the government to act before the pressure from its own ranks grows louder.

The views of Tochigi's Liberal Democrats are not those of the opposition. They are those of the people who know the minister best.

ANALYSIS

Data Centres Are the New Refineries: The Strikes on Yandex Should Prompt Japan to Harden Its Own Digital Infrastructure

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

For most of modern history, an enemy who wanted to cripple a country's economy aimed at its power stations, refineries and railways. This week Ukraine added a new category of target: the data centre.

Three Yandex facilities in Russia were struck by drones in four days. The first housed two of the three supercomputers the company uses to train its AI models. Outages spread across Russia and into neighbouring countries.

Whatever one thinks of the war, the lesson for other countries is plain. The servers that run banking, government services, communications and artificial intelligence are physical assets, concentrated in large buildings, dependent on electricity and cooling, and vulnerable to attack.

Japan should take note. The country is in the middle of a boom in data centre construction, driven by AI, and many facilities are clustered around Tokyo and Osaka.

The government has already encouraged companies to build in other regions, partly to reduce the risk from earthquakes. That policy should be pursued with greater urgency, and with national security explicitly in mind.

Operators should be encouraged, and where necessary required, to strengthen physical security, secure backup power and spread critical data across sites far enough apart that a single attack or disaster cannot disable them all.

Cyber defence is part of the picture, as the ransomware attacks on Japanese companies this year have shown. But the Yandex strikes are a reminder that the threat is not only digital.

Japan should also work with the United States and other partners on standards for protecting critical digital infrastructure, as allies have long done for energy and transport.

None of this is cheap. But the cost of an unprotected digital economy, in a region where tensions are high, could be far greater.

Refineries were the strategic targets of the last century. Data centres are becoming the strategic targets of this one, and Japan should plan accordingly.

ANALYSIS

Bears at the Front Door: The Toyota Attack Shows That the Countryside's Retreat Has Become a Question of Public Safety

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

A man stepping out of his front door early on a Sunday morning should not have to fear for his life. In the Obara district of Toyota, he was attacked by a bear.

The incident was not an isolated misfortune. Toyota has recorded 48 bear sightings this fiscal year. Across Japan, the last fiscal year brought more than 50,000 sightings of black bears, 238 people injured and 13 killed, all records.

Poor crops of acorns and beech nuts explain part of the rise. But the deeper cause is the retreat of people from the countryside. As villages age and empty, fields, orchards and woodland edges go untended, and bears move closer to the houses that remain.

The number of hunters, who once kept bear populations in check and kept the animals wary of people, has fallen as the hunters themselves have aged.

The government has begun to respond. Since September last year, municipalities have been able to authorise the emergency use of guns against bears in residential areas. Many prefectures have strengthened their measures this year, training staff and surveying bear populations.

These steps are welcome, but they need resources. Small municipalities often lack the trained personnel to respond quickly when a bear appears. National funding for specialist staff, for training new hunters and for fencing and clearing the undergrowth around settlements would make a real difference.

Respect for wildlife is a long Japanese tradition, and the black bear is part of the country's natural heritage. Protecting people does not mean eradicating bears. It means managing their numbers and keeping them away from homes.

Residents also have a part to play: removing fruit from trees, keeping rubbish secure and paying attention to local warnings.

The attack in Toyota happened far from the snowy north-east that has borne the brunt of the problem. It is a sign that the issue has become national.

Public safety is the first duty of government. In the hills where people and bears now live side by side, it requires a more determined response than Japan has yet mounted.

ANALYSIS

Depth Wins Team Titles: Japan's Judo Gold in Baku Shows the Strength of Its System, and the Gap It Must Close Before Los Angeles

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Team events reward depth, and depth is what Japanese judo has in abundance.

In Baku on Sunday, Japan beat Russia 4-1 to regain the world mixed team title, with wins from Shiho Tanaka, Sanshiro Murao, Mao Arai and Akari Omori. It capped a week in which Japan won seven individual world titles.

That depth is the product of a system that reaches from neighbourhood dojos and school clubs to university and company teams. Children learn to fall safely before they learn to throw, and the best progress through a competitive structure that few countries can match.

Last year's defeat by Georgia in the team event was a reminder that no dynasty is permanent. This year's victory shows that the response was effective.

But the weekend also exposed the familiar weakness. Japan took no individual medal in either heavyweight category, and Russia's only point in the final came in the heavyweight bout.

The Olympic mixed team title has also eluded Japan. France won it in Tokyo in 2021 and again in Paris in 2024, beating Japan in both finals.

With the Los Angeles Games two years away, the national federation's priority should be to develop heavyweights who can win against the strongest opponents from Europe and Central Asia.

There is a wider lesson. The reform of school sport, which is moving club activities from schools to community organisations, must not weaken the grassroots that produce Japan's champions. Judo, with its emphasis on safety and skilled instruction, needs qualified coaches in every community.

Judo is also a sport of respect, in which every contest begins and ends with a bow. That culture is part of what Japan offers to the world.

Sunday's gold was a fine way to end a strong week. The task now is to turn world titles into Olympic ones.

ANALYSIS

The Pope's Candour: By Announcing His Own Surgery, Leo XIV Has Set an Example of Openness for Leaders Everywhere

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Popes have not always been forthcoming about their health. In the past, illnesses were concealed or minimised, and the faithful learned of them late, if at all.

On Sunday Pope Leo XIV did something different. Standing at the window above St Peter's Square, he told the crowd himself that doctors had found a nodule in his lung, that it had been detected at a very early stage and that he would have surgery to remove it in the coming days.

He asked for prayers, and the Vatican filled in the details: an operation early this week and about a week in hospital.

The manner of the announcement was as significant as its content. By speaking in person, before the operation, the pope avoided the rumours that tend to fill a silence, and gave the faithful a reason for calm rather than alarm.

His approach builds on the more open practice that developed under his predecessor, whose long hospital stay last year was accompanied by regular medical bulletins.

There is a lesson here for leaders of every kind, in politics and business as well as religion. People can cope with difficult news. What corrodes trust is the suspicion that they are not being told the truth.

Openness has limits, of course. A leader is entitled to privacy about the details of his medical care, and the Vatican has rightly not speculated about the nature of the nodule.

But the principle that those who hold great responsibility should be honest about matters that affect their ability to carry it out is a sound one.

Japan's Catholics are few, but the pope's influence reaches far beyond the Church, and his planned journey to South America next month will be watched closely.

For now, the best that can be said is that the nodule was found early, and that the pope has handled the news with grace. People of all faiths, and of none, will wish him a swift recovery.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

Today's Numbers

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

12: People killed in the missile strike on Riyadh's airport on Saturday, with 309 injured.

291: Flights cancelled, at least, after the strike.

3: Yandex data centres hit by Ukrainian drones in four days.

4-1: Japan's winning score against Russia in the world judo mixed team final.

3:54.33: Tomoyuki Matsushita's short-course world record in the 400 metres individual medley.

2:05:47: Satoru Akasaki's time for ninth place in the Chicago Marathon.

48: Bear sightings recorded in Toyota this fiscal year as of October 9.

15 centimetres: How far the doors of a Tsukuba Express carriage opened before the train stopped.

3,153: Food and drink items whose prices rise this month, according to Teikoku Databank.

51.7 per cent: The share of adults who exercise at least once a week, against a government target of about 70 per cent.

29.6 per cent: The share of Japan's population aged 65 or over, a record.

955 hectopascals: The central pressure of Typhoon No. 29, Koguma, at 9 a.m. today.

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CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The Japan Morning Post corrects errors of fact as soon as they are identified. Correction requests may be sent to corrections@japanmorningpost.com, giving the date, page and headline of the article concerned.

Sunday's report on the first game of the Central League Climax Series first stage reversed the two DeNA home runs. Ryuki Watarai hit a solo home run to lead off the first inning; it was Shugo Maki who hit the solo home run in the ninth, off the Giants' closer, Raidel Martinez, that won the game 2-1. Sunday's corrections, which said that Watarai's home run had come in the ninth inning, repeated the error. We apologise.

Sunday's edition described the offensive launched against the Houthis on October 4 as Saudi-led. It is an offensive by the forces of Yemen's internationally recognised government, which Saudi Arabia backs, under the name Dawn of Yemen. Articles earlier this week described the two municipalities whose road budgets the agriculture minister mentioned in his recorded remarks as towns; the Shimotsuke Shimbun, which published the recording, says they were a city and a town.

The notes supplied for today's edition again give the agriculture minister's name as Yanagi; he is Kazuo Yana. They give DeNA's leadoff hitter as Doai; he is Ryuki Watarai. They say Typhoon No. 28 has become extratropical; the Japan Meteorological Agency said it weakened to a tropical depression on Sunday afternoon and issued its last bulletin. They describe the man attacked by a bear in Toyota as seriously injured; reports say he was conscious and his life was not in danger. The survey in which 26.8 per cent named the United States as a threat to world peace, which the notes attribute to the Japan Times, was conducted by the Japan Press Research Institute and reported on Sunday, as was the call by the bureau of the International Criminal Court's assembly. The sale of Japanese books to Anthropic was reported on October 7, and Rapidus's design partners and the Bank of Japan's regional report on Sunday; they are not repeated as news.

Items in the notes that could not be confirmed from primary reports are not used, among them subsidies for the production of ECMO machines, the meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, an estimate of the Expo's economic effect, a toddler's injury in a station lift, a body found on the Kagoshima coast, a nurse's dismissal, salmon poaching, flooded underpasses, the hiring of foreign lorry drivers, several investment plans for data centres and memory chips, and a number of results in volleyball, figure skating, golf, basketball and football. Kei Nishikori played his last professional match at the Japan Open earlier this month.

THE WEEK AHEAD

MONDAY, OCT. 12: Sports Day; Tokyo markets closed; American bond markets closed for Columbus Day. Pacific League Climax Series first stage, Game 3, Seibu v Nippon-Ham at Belluna Dome, 2 p.m.; Seibu advance with a win or a tie. Izumo All-Japan University Ekiden. Nobel prize in economic sciences, about 6:45 p.m. Japan time. Typhoon No. 29 passes about 950 km east-south-east of Tokyo tonight. NLCS Game 1, Dodgers at Brewers, Monday morning Japan time.

TUESDAY, OCT. 13: Tokyo markets reopen. Prudential Life's suspension of new sales begins and runs to January 31. The Bank of Japan's corporate goods price index for September. One year since Expo 2025 closed. WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14: Climax Series final stages begin at Koshien and in Fukuoka; ASML results; American consumer prices; Nada no Kenka Matsuri, Himeji, to Thursday. Typhoon No. 29 expected to be extratropical by the morning. THURSDAY, OCT. 15: TSMC results; Kannamesai at Ise Jingu, to Saturday. OCT. 17 AND 18: Kawagoe Festival. OCT. 22: Jidai Matsuri and Kurama Fire Festival, Kyoto. OCT. 24: Japan Series begins. OCT. 25: Niigata mayoral election. OCT. 29 AND 30: Bank of Japan policy meeting. NOV. 4: Mihama 3 due to resume commercial operation.

TYPHOON AND MARINE ADVISORIES

9 a.m. Monday. No. 29 (Koguma): very strong typhoon; about 520 km east-north-east of Chichijima; moving north at 25 km/h; 955 hPa; winds near the centre 45 m/s; storm-force winds 110 km from the centre. Forecast: weakening to a strong typhoon as it turns north-north-east; passing about 950 km

EDITORIAL & OPINION

THE JAPAN MORNING POST

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OWNER: Paul Carter | PUBLISHER: WPM Productions
MANAGING EDITOR: Dixon Yan

SENIOR EDITOR, INTERNATIONAL DESK: Jonathan Mercer

POLITICS & POLICY: Michael Hayes, Deputy Editor | William, Senior Political Analyst

JAPAN BUREAU: Aiko Tanaka, Senior Japan Correspondent | Emi Kondo, Society & Local News

ECONOMICS & FINANCE: Yuki Saito | DATA & VISUALIZATION: Kenta Sakamoto

JAPAN-U.S. COVERAGE: Rachel Kim, Washington-Tokyo Liaison

INVESTIGATIONS & LONGFORM: Daisuke Ito

TECHNOLOGY & SCIENCE: Ethan Cole, Editor | Maya Suzuki, Science & Innovation

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EDITORIAL PAGE: Samantha Ortiz, Editor

PHOTO EDITOR: Hiroshi Nakamura, Tokyo | GRAPHICS DIRECTOR: Claire Reynolds

STAFF CARTOONIST: Taro Suzuki | CROSSWORD: James O'Neill, Editor & Constructor

COPY DESK: Benjamin Lee, Chief | Olivia Martinez, Features

MULTIMEDIA & VIDEO: Akira Watanabe | RESEARCH & ARCHIVE: Hana Ito

PAGE DESIGN & PRODUCTION: Daniel Foster

1-2-3 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004 | www.japanmorningpost.com | newsdesk@japanmorningpost.com

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east-south-east of Tokyo tonight; an extratropical low by Wednesday morning. No. 28 (Nolo): weakened to a tropical depression on Sunday afternoon about 710 km east-south-east of Tokyo; last typhoon bulletin issued. Neither storm is forecast to reach the main islands.

Pacific coasts: swell can make waves higher than usual even in fine weather. Ogasawara Islands: ferry sailings may change at short notice. Keep off breakwaters and rocky shores exposed to the open sea. Okinawa: showers at times. Emergencies at sea: 118.

MARKET REFERENCE

Tokyo, Friday's close: Nikkei 225 at 69,030.92, down 11.19, a third day of losses, after falling nearly 900 yen in the morning. TOPIX 4,104.81, up 13.35; more than 70 per cent of Prime Market shares rose. New York, Friday: S&P 500 7,811.54, up 0.6 per cent; Dow Jones Industrial Average 51,654.95, up 0.8 per cent; Nasdaq Composite 27,366.17, up 0.6 per cent; all three higher on the week. Yen about 158 to the dollar; Japanese ten-year government bond yield above 3 per cent. Bank of Japan policy rate: 1.25 per cent. Tokyo is closed on Monday for Sports Day and reopens on Tuesday.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS IN THIS EDITION

Front page: smoke and flames beside an airport terminal, image supplied for this edition. Middle East: Riyadh at dusk, file image supplied for this edition. Politics: Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in the House of Representatives (WPM Productions). International: Pope Leo XIV at the window above St Peter's Square, image supplied for this edition. Economy: the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TG2, CC). Society: a sign warning of bears, image supplied for this edition. Sports: DeNA players celebrating, file image supplied for this edition. Weather: the Japan and United States maps supplied for this edition. Editorial page: cartoon by Taro Suzuki.

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THE RECORD BOOK

Riyadh airport strike, Saturday: 12 dead, 309 injured; at least 291 flights cancelled. Dead by nationality: four Saudis, two Bangladeshis and one each from the United States, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, the Palestinian territories and Sudan. Government claim, unverified: 1,150 Houthi fighters killed. Yandex data centres hit: three in four days. Zaporizhzhia, Saturday: 23 dead. Gaza, since the ceasefire: more than 1,400 killed. Prudential: about 4,000 cases of failing to confirm customers' wishes; suspension from October 13 to

January 31. Food price rises: 3,153 items in October; 20,187 this year. Bear sightings, last fiscal year: 50,776; 238 people injured, 13 killed. Over-65s: 29.6 per cent of the population. Adults exercising weekly: 51.7 per cent.

PLAY-OFF CALENDAR

CENTRAL LEAGUE: DeNA beat the Giants 2-0 in the first stage and play Hanshin in the final stage at Koshien from Wednesday; Hanshin start one win up. PACIFIC LEAGUE: Seibu and Nippon-Ham are level 1-1; Game 3 at Belluna Dome on Monday at 2 p.m., Seibu advancing with a win or a tie. The winner plays SoftBank in Fukuoka from Wednesday; SoftBank start two wins up. Japan Series from October 24. MAJOR LEAGUES: NLCS, Dodgers v Brewers, Games 1 and 2 in Milwaukee, Games 3 to 5 in Los Angeles.

FESTIVALS AND SKIES THIS WEEK

Izumo All-Japan University Ekiden: Monday. Expo anniversary event at Universal Studios Japan: to Tuesday. Nada no Kenka Matsuri, Himeji: October 14 and 15. Kannamesai, Ise Jingu: October 15 to 17. Kawagoe Festival: October 17 and 18. Jidai Matsuri and Kurama Fire Festival, Kyoto: October 22. National Sports Festival: under way in Aomori. Moon: a thin crescent low in the west after sunset early in the week, waxing towards first quarter.

THE SYMBOLS ON THE WEATHER MAP

A sun: sunny. A cloud: cloudy. A cloud with strokes beneath it: rain. Two symbols joined by an arrow: the first sky gives way to the second during the day. Two symbols separated by a slanting stroke: the first sky, with the second at times. The figure in red is the forecast high and the figure in blue the low observed this morning, in degrees Celsius. On the United States map the figures are in degrees Fahrenheit; a sun partly hidden by cloud means partly cloudy, a cloud with a small sun and strokes means showers, and a cloud with a flash means thunderstorms.

UNITS AND CONVENTIONS

Wind speeds are given in metres a second; one metre a second is 3.6 kilometres an hour, or about 1.9 knots. Pressure is in hectopascals. Temperatures are in degrees Celsius except on the United States map. Times are Japan Standard Time unless another place is named; Japan is at present nine hours ahead of Greenwich Mean Time, seven ahead of Rome and the Vatican, six ahead of Riyadh, Moscow and Kyiv, five ahead of Baku, 13 ahead of New York, 14 ahead of Chicago and Milwaukee and 16 ahead of Los Angeles. Japanese names are given with the family name last. A person arrested or charged is presumed innocent until convicted.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Police: 110. Fire and ambulance: 119. Coast guard, for emergencies at sea: 118. Disaster message dial: 171. Police consultation, not an emergency: #9110. Consumer hotline: 188. Bear sightings should be reported to the police or the local municipality. Anyone who receives a message about a refund, a data leak or an account problem should not follow its links, and should contact the company through its official site or a number found independently. Travellers to the Middle East should check the Foreign Ministry's safety information before leaving.

ABOUT THE OPINION PAGES

The editorial states the view of the editorial page and is written by its editor; it takes its subject from the day's cartoon. Articles headed Analysis are the judgment of the writer whose name they carry. The news pages report; the opinion pages argue, and say that they are doing so. Letters in reply are welcome at letters@japanmorningpost.com.

SOURCES FOR THIS EDITION

Reports in this edition draw on the Monday morning papers and Sunday's wires and broadcasts: Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun, Mainichi Shimbun, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Sankei News, Kyodo News, Jiji Press, NHK, TV Asahi, the Shimotsuke Shimbun, the Akita Sakigake Shimpō, EE Times Japan, Al Jazeera, CBS News, Axios, ABC, the Associated Press, Reuters, Vatican News and MLB.com; on the statements of the Saudi civil aviation authority, the coalition in Yemen, the United States State Department, the Financial Services Agency, Renesas Electronics and the International Judo Federation; on Teikoku Databank's survey of food prices and the surveys of the Sports Agency and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications; on the Japan Meteorological Agency for weather and typhoons; and on the United States National Weather Service for the map of American cities. Where accounts differ the difference is stated.

READER SERVICES

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TOMORROW'S EDITION

Tuesday's edition carries the deciding game of the Pacific League first stage and the Izumo Ekiden; the first game of the NLCS; the Nobel prize in economic sciences; the reopening of the Tokyo market; the start of Prudential's suspension; the latest from Riyadh and on the energy ceasefire in Ukraine; and news of the pope's operation.

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