

Takaichi Raises the Possibility of Replacing Yana for the First Time, Saying She Will Not Hesitate if His Campaign Broke the Election Law

The agriculture minister admits free buses carried supporters to his rallies but denies wrongdoing; opposition lawmakers say the election board has no record of the inquiry his staff say they made; the prime minister is to meet him today

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy



Kazuo Yana, the agriculture minister, in a campaign image from Tochigi Prefecture's No. 3 district. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said on Tuesday that she would seriously consider whether he should stay in office and would not hesitate to act if his campaign was found to have broken the election law; she is to meet him today. (File photo: WPM Productions)

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi raised for the first time on Tuesday the possibility of replacing her agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, calling his remarks about road budgets inappropriate and "really lame" and saying she would not hesitate to act if his campaign was found to have broken the election law.

Speaking in the House of Representatives Budget Committee, on the first of two days of questioning of the prime minister and her whole cabinet, Ms Takaichi said she would seriously consider whether Mr Yana should keep his post, Jiji Press reported. Until now she had told him to stay and repay the public with his work.

She stopped short of dismissing him, saying his first task was to explain himself to the Diet and to the public. Mr Yana was to report to her by telephone on Tuesday night. "I want to receive his report by telephone tonight. If we can meet after tomorrow's Budget Committee, I will listen to him properly," she told reporters at her office.

The buses

The allegation that has sharpened her tone concerns the general elections of October 2024 and February 2026. The weekly magazine Shukan Bunshun reported last week that free shuttle buses had carried supporters to Mr Yana's campaign launch rallies on the days the two campaigns officially began. A supporter who rode one told the magazine that he had not paid a fare.

In committee Mr Yana acknowledged that buses had been provided but denied that he had done anything wrong. He said the transport had been indispensable for running the venue and described the decision as a humanitarian one, and he said the cost had been recorded as part of the venue's expenses.

He told the committee that his staff had checked with the election commission before hiring the buses how the cost should be treated, and that he had given no benefit or donation to anyone. Opposition lawmakers challenged that account, saying the election commission had told them it had no record of any such inquiry, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported.

The gap between the two accounts is likely to be the first subject when questioning resumes at 9 a.m. today.

The Public Offices Election Act treats the offer of money, goods or other material benefits to voters in return for support as vote-buying. Hiroyuki Uwabe, a professor at Kobe Gakuin University who studies political funds, told the magazine that free transport would count as such a benefit. Mr Yana's office did not answer the magazine's questions before its deadline.

Ms Takaichi said she did not know the facts of the bus arrangements, but that if illegality was found she would not hesitate.

The road budgets

The buses came on top of the remarks that have dogged Mr Yana since the start of the month. In a recording of a party gathering in May, made public by the Shimotsuke Shimbun, a speaker Mr Yana has acknowledged was himself said that road budgets for two municipalities whose mayors had not supported him had been cut drastically. The two are the city of Nasukarasuyama and the town of Nakagawa, both in Tochigi Prefecture.

In committee he again denied that he had ever asked for any budget to be reduced, saying there was absolutely no truth in the claim. He acknowledged that his words had suggested he had such influence, and he withdrew them and apologised.

Tatsumaru Yamaoka of the Democratic Reform Association, the party formed last month by lower-house members who came from the Constitutional Democratic Party, asked whether he had made similar inquiries about other places through senior officials. Mr Yana said he could not give a precise account because he kept no records of how such inquiries were made. Mr Yamaoka said the minister seemed to have neither memories nor records of the matters that counted.

Akira Nagatsuma, of the same party, drew from him an admission that he had talked about budgets at gatherings held by other local branches of the Liberal Democratic Party. Mr Nagatsuma said that undercut the idea of a single slip of the tongue.

From his own side

The sharpest surprise came from the government's own benches. Norihisa Tamura, a former health minister from the Liberal Democrats, pressed Mr Yana on the claims and said he found them hard to believe and doubted that the public would be satisfied. Hiromasa Nakano of Komeito, which left the governing coalition last year, urged the prime minister to replace him.

The committee also heard an apology from the education minister, Yoshihiro Seki, after it emerged that a fundraising party for him had been held in June 2024 inside a building of offices for members of the House of Representatives, contrary to the chamber's rules. Both men entered the cabinet in last month's reshuffle.

What comes next

Opposition parties, which together hold a majority in the House of Councillors, are considering a censure motion against Mr Yana there. Takeshi Shina, the Democratic Reform Association's secretary-general, said the minister could choose to step down of his own accord.

Under the Constitution only the prime minister can appoint and dismiss ministers. Removing Mr Yana

DIPLOMACY

Russia Detains a Hokkaido Shimbun Correspondent on Sakhalin on a Spying Charge, and a Moscow Court Orders Him Held

The security service says the reporter gathered information about Kuril Islands residents mobilised for the war in Ukraine; Moscow calls the case a regrettable attempt to use a journalist, as a Chinese delegation tours Etorofu

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Russia's Federal Security Service said on Tuesday that it had detained a correspondent of the Hokkaido Shimbun on Sakhalin on suspicion of espionage, and a Moscow court ordered him held in custody, deepening the chill between Tokyo and Moscow.

The service, known as the FSB, said the reporter had collected information related to Russia's defence capabilities on the instructions of Japanese intelligence, including how many residents of the Kuril Islands had been mobilised for the war in Ukraine and how many had volunteered to fight. It did not name him.

A Moscow court record cited by Russian media identifies him as Yuki Imai, aged 34. He was registered with the Russian Foreign Ministry as a correspondent and was based in Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, the regional capital.

He was detained at a hotel shortly before he was due to leave the region and was flown to Moscow, according to the FSB, which released video, with his face blurred, of masked officers detaining him and making him unlock his electronic devices. Russian state television showed him in handcuffs boarding an aircraft and appearing in court.

Up to 20 years

The Lefortovo District Court in Moscow ordered him held for two months while the case is investigated. He is accused under Article 276 of the Russian Criminal Code, which covers espionage by foreign nationals and carries a sentence of up to 20 years in prison.

Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova, called the case a regrettable attempt to use a Japanese correspondent to gather information, and said it was not an isolated case. She blamed what she called Japan's anti-Russian course for the state of relations, and said the episode would further darken the atmosphere between the two countries.

Tokyo checks

The Japanese government said it was confirming the information, Kyodo News reported, and an official at the Japanese Embassy in Moscow said the embassy was seeking to confirm the detention. The Hokkaido Shimbun said it was establishing the details and that the reporter's safety was its first priority.

Mr Imai studied at St Petersburg State University and has visited Russia regularly since 2014, according to the Russian news site Meduza. His reporting has covered elections to the State Duma, Russia's growing ties with North Korea and life in the Russian Far East. His last article, published on October 5, was about North Koreans living in the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk area.

A familiar pattern

Russia has charged a number of foreigners with espionage since its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and has later exchanged some of them for Russians held in the West. Evan Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal arrested in 2023, was sentenced to 16 years and freed in a prisoner exchange in August 2024.

The last Japanese journalist accused of spying in Russia, a Kyodo News correspondent, was detained

TODAY'S INDEX	
Diplomacy	2-5
CEATEC 2026	3-4
Politics	2-6
International	6-8
Economy	8-9
Business	9
Technology	9-12
Society	12-16
Sports	16-18
Culture	18
Editorial & Opinion	19-22
Crossword	17
Weather	13

WEATHER — TOKYO

26°C

Low 19°C · Cloudy, some rain

Sapporo

23°

Osaka

26°

Fukuoka

24°

Naha

29°

Morning rain in the north and centre; Tokyo rain from early afternoon. Nagoya, Kyoto and Osaka brighten; sunny in western Japan; 29°C in Kochi and Naha. Koguma extratropical. Full weather, Page 13.

TODAY IN BRIEF

- Diet: Takaichi raises replacing Yana for the first time; he admits free buses for supporters but denies wrongdoing.
- Russia: the FSB detains a Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent on Sakhalin on a spying charge; a court orders him held.
- Islands: a Chinese delegation from Heilongjiang tours Etorofu, eyeing sea urchin farms and a seafood plant.
- Markets: the Nikkei falls 1,253 yen on chip selling; wholesale inflation slows to 6.8 per cent.
- Kyushu: the Shinkansen runs normally from the first train after a damaged wire fitting was found.
- Sport: Brewers beat the Dodgers 7-4 for a 2-0 lead; the Climax Series final stages open at 6 p.m.

THE YANA CASE

- PM: 'not hesitate' if illegal.
- Buses to 2024 and 2026 rallies.
- Board: no record of inquiry.
- Meeting with PM today.

TODAY

- Budget Committee, 9 a.m.
- Climax Series, 6 p.m.
- US consumer prices, 9:30 p.m.
- Tokyo 26, rain at times.

MARKETS	
Dow (Tue)	51,670.10 ▼180.45
S&P 500 (Tue)	7,805.45 ▼1.79
Nasdaq (Tue)	27,204.38 ▼41.52
Nikkei 225 (Tue)	67,777.52 ▼1,253.40
WTI crude	\$94.14 ▲0.40
Yen	about 158.3 per \$
BOJ policy rate	1.25%

INSIDE

- CEATEC's practical AI, Page 3.
- Budget Committee, day one, Page 5.
- China on Etorofu, Page 5.
- Saudi vows response, Page 7.
- Nikkei falls 1,253, Page 9.
- IMF: Japan sixth, Page 8.
- Kyushu Shinkansen back, Page 15.
- Courts' night duty, Page 12.
- Brewers 7, Dodgers 4, Page 16.
- Editorial: Eighty years, Page 19.

THE WEEK

- Thu. 15: NLCS Game 3, 9 a.m.
- Thu. 15: TSMC results.
- Fri. 16: upper house session.
- Sat. 24: Japan Series.

THE TROPICS

- Koguma extratropical.
- New depression near the Marshalls.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FROM PAGE 1

Takaichi Raises the Possibility of Replacing Yana for the First Time, Saying She Will Not Hesitate if His Campaign Broke the Election Law

Continued from Page 1

less than a month after choosing him would cost Ms Takaichi political capital. Keeping him risks more days in which the session turns on her minister rather than on her own programme, beginning with the cut in the consumption tax on food.

FROM PAGE 1

Russia Detains a Hokkaido Shimbun Correspondent on Sakhalin on a Spying Charge, and a Moscow Court Orders Him Held

Continued from Page 1

in Vladivostok in December 2019, questioned and expelled. Kyodo said he had been doing ordinary reporting and rejected the accusation.

Relations at a low

The arrest comes at a low point in relations. In August President Vladimir Putin visited Etorofu, which Russia calls Iturup, his first visit to the Russian-held islands that Japan claims as its Northern Territories. Ms Takaichi called the visit absolutely unacceptable, and Japan summoned the Russian ambassador to protest.

On October 2 Japan imposed the first sanctions on Russia of Ms Takaichi's premiership, banning the operation, repair and insurance of 35 vessels that Russia uses to export oil in evasion of earlier sanctions.

On Tuesday the government of the Sakhalin region also announced that a delegation of officials and business people from China's Heilongjiang Province had visited Etorofu to look at opportunities for investment, a visit the Japanese government says it cannot accept.

Japan and Russia have never signed a peace treaty formally ending the Second World War, because of the dispute over the four islands, which Soviet forces seized in the last days of the war.

POLITICS

Why a Free Bus Ride Can Be a Legal Problem: What the Public Offices Election Act Says About Benefits for Voters

The law forbids offering voters anything of material value to win their support; whether the buses fall foul of it depends on facts still in dispute

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The Public Offices Election Act, the law that governs how Japan's elections are run, sets out in great detail what candidates may and may not do. At its heart is a simple principle: a vote must not be bought.

The provision on vote-buying makes it an offence to offer voters or campaign workers money, goods or any other material benefit, or a public or private post, with the aim of getting elected or of having someone else elected. The law speaks of a property benefit, a phrase wide enough to cover things that are not cash.

Where buses come in

That is why the free buses to Kazuo Yana's campaign launch rallies matter. A ride that would otherwise cost money is, on its face, something of value. Hiroyuki Uwabe, a professor at Kobe Gakuin University who has pursued many cases involving political money, told the weekly Shukan Bunshun that providing it free would amount to the kind of benefit the law prohibits.

Mr Yana's defence rests on purpose and paperwork. He told the House of Representatives Budget Committee on Tuesday that the buses were indispensable for running the venue, that the decision had been taken on humanitarian grounds, and that the cost was recorded as part of the venue's expenses after his staff consulted the election commission.

Opposition lawmakers say the commission told them it had no record of being consulted. Whether the transport was a benefit to voters, a cost of staging an event, or something in between is the kind of question the law leaves to investigators and, in the end, to the courts.

The House of Councillors holds its own sessions on Friday and next Monday, when Mr Yana is likely to face the same questions again.

The penalties

Vote-buying carries a penalty of up to three years in prison or a fine of up to 500,000 yen. A conviction also strips the offender of the right to vote and to stand for office for a period.

The law also has a rule of guilt by association. If a candidate's campaign manager, a senior secretary or a close relative is convicted of vote-buying, the candidate's own election can be declared void and he or she can be barred from standing in the same constituency for five years, even without being personally convicted.

Gifts to voters

Separate provisions forbid lawmakers to make donations to people in their constituencies, whether in cash or in kind, with only narrow exceptions. Condolence money handed over by a secretary, gifts of seasonal fruit and paper fans printed with a politician's name have all brought down ministers in the past.

Who decides

An election commission can explain how the law is usually applied, but it does not rule on whether a particular act was illegal. That is a matter for the police and prosecutors, who can act on a complaint from any citizen.

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said as much on Tuesday when she said she did not know the facts but would not hesitate if illegality was found. For the minister, the legal question and the political one may now run on different clocks: the first can take months, while the second could be settled as early as today.

POLITICS

Paper Fans, Melons and a Bag of Rice: The Ministers Who Left Office Over Gifts to Voters and Ill-Judged Words

Prime ministers have often stood by a minister for days before letting him go; October has been a hard month for cabinets before

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

If Kazuo Yana goes, he will join a long list of Japanese ministers who have left office over gifts to voters or over words that their prime ministers could not defend. The pattern is familiar: denials, days of questioning in the Diet, a prime minister's support, and then a resignation.

Two in one day

On October 20, 2014, two women in Shinzo Abe's cabinet resigned on the same day. Midori Matsuhashi, the justice minister, had handed out paper fans printed with her name and policies in her constituency, which opposition parties said was an illegal gift to voters. Yuko Obuchi, the economy minister, faced questions over theatre outings for her supporters recorded in her support groups' funds reports.

Melons, crabs and condolence money

Five years later, again in October, Isshu Sugawara resigned as economy minister on October 25, 2019, after a magazine reported that his secretary had handed condolence money to the family of a supporter, a donation the election law forbids. Earlier reports had described gifts of melons and crabs to people in his constituency.

Six days later the justice minister, Katsuyuki Kawai, resigned over reports that his wife's campaign for the House of Councillors had paid campaign staff more than the law allows. Both were later arrested in a far larger vote-buying case from that election, and Mr Kawai was sentenced in 2021 to three years in prison.

Three in a month

In the autumn of 2022 Fumio Kishida lost three ministers in less than a month: Daishiro Yamagiwa over his ties to the Unification Church, Yasuhiro

Hanashi over remarks about the death penalty, and Minoru Terada over the handling of political funds.

The rice remark

The closest parallel to Mr Yana's position may be his own ministry's recent history. In May 2025 Taku Eto resigned as agriculture minister days after saying that he had never had to buy rice because supporters gave it to him, at a time when rice prices were at record levels and households were struggling.

What the cases share

In most of these cases the prime minister first defended the minister, and the end came when the questions began to crowd out the government's own business in the Diet, or when the governing party's lawmakers concluded that the minister had become a liability before an election.

Mr Yana's case has both elements. The extraordinary session has a full agenda, beginning with the bill to cut the consumption tax on food, and the unified local elections are six months away.

The exception

Not every embattled minister goes. Some have survived by apologising and waiting for attention to move on, and prime ministers are wary of appearing to bow to the opposition. Ms Takaichi's remark on Tuesday that she would seriously consider his position was a sign that she no longer rules out the other path.

DIPLOMACY

Article 276: How Russia Prosecutes Foreigners for Espionage, and Why Some Have Come Home Through Prisoner Exchanges

Trials are usually closed, acquittals are extremely rare, and detention before trial can last many months

By the International Desk

Yuki Imai, the Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent detained on Sakhalin, is accused under Article 276 of the Russian Criminal Code, the provision that covers espionage by foreign nationals and stateless people. Russian citizens accused of passing information abroad are charged with treason under a different article.

Article 276 makes it a crime for a foreigner to collect, steal or store information constituting a state secret, or to collect other information on the instructions of a foreign intelligence service for use against Russia's security. It carries a sentence of 10 to 20 years.

The FSB's case

The Federal Security Service has framed Mr Imai's case under the second part of that description, saying he gathered information about the mobilisation of residents of the Kuril Islands for the war in Ukraine on the instructions of Japanese intelligence. It has not said what he collected or how.

Information about how many people a region has sent to the war, and about volunteers, is the kind of material that reporters in many countries would regard as ordinary news. Russia has since 2022 widened the range of information it treats as sensitive and tightened the penalties for discussing the armed forces.

Lefortovo

Espionage suspects are usually held in Moscow's Lefortovo detention centre, long associated with the security services, and their cases are heard by the Lefortovo District Court. Pre-trial detention, ordered for two months at a time, is routinely extended, and trials on charges involving state secrets are held behind closed doors.

Russian courts acquit fewer than one defendant in a hundred, and acquittals in espionage cases are almost unheard of.

The exchanges

Several foreigners convicted of espionage in recent years have gone home through exchanges. Evan Gershkovich, a reporter for The Wall Street Journal, was arrested in Yekaterinburg in March 2023 and sentenced to 16 years in July 2024. Paul Whelan, a former United States Marine, was arrested in Moscow in 2018 and sentenced to 16 years in 2020.

Both were freed on August 1, 2024, in an exchange involving several countries, the largest between Russia and the West since the Cold War, in return for Russians held in Europe and the United States.

Japan's position

Japan has no comparable record of prisoner exchanges with Russia. Its diplomats can be expected to press for consular access, for information about the charges and for fair and humane treatment.

For the Hokkaido Shimbun, a newspaper with long experience of covering Russia from Hokkaido and Sakhalin, the case strikes at its daily work. Its correspondents report on the islands and the Russian Far East because they matter to the readers on the other side of a narrow strait.

DIPLOMACY

Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai Islets: The Four Islands at the Centre of the Quarrel

Seized by Soviet forces in 1945 and claimed by Japan ever since, the islands have kept the two countries from signing a peace treaty

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The Northern Territories are the four islands, or groups of islands, closest to Hokkaido at the southern end of the Kuril chain: Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai islets. Together they cover about 5,000 square kilometres, close to the area of Chiba Prefecture.

Etorofu, which Russia calls Iturup, is the largest at about 3,200 square kilometres. Kunashiri, Kunashir to the Russians, lies within sight of the Shiretoko Peninsula and the town of Rausu in eastern Hokkaido.

The first border

The islands entered treaties long before the war. The Treaty of Shimoda, signed between Japan and Russia on February 7, 1855, drew the first border between the two countries between Etorofu and the next island to the north, Uruppu. In 1875 Japan gave up its claims to Sakhalin in exchange for the rest of the Kuril chain.

Japan marks February 7 each year as Northern Territories Day, and the city of Nemuro, at the eastern tip of Hokkaido, remains the centre of the movement for the islands' return.

1945

Soviet forces occupied the islands between the end of August and early September 1945, after Japan had announced its surrender. About 17,000 Japanese lived there at the time; all had left or been deported by 1949.

Japan regards the islands as its inherent territory, illegally occupied. Russia says they became Soviet territory as a result of the war.

1956 and after

In the Japan-Soviet Joint Declaration of 1956, which restored diplomatic relations, the Soviet Union agreed to hand over Shikotan and the Habomai islets after a peace treaty was signed. No treaty followed.

In 2018 Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and President Vladimir Putin agreed to speed up negotiations on the basis of the 1956 declaration. The talks made little progress, and after Japan joined sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine, Russia announced in March 2022 that it was suspending them.

Visits and protests

Dmitry Medvedev became the first Soviet or Russian leader to visit the islands when he went to Kunashiri as president in 2010, and he returned later as prime minister. Mr Putin had never gone until his visit to Etorofu in August, which Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi called absolutely unacceptable.

Russia has built up its military presence on the two larger islands and has encouraged investment there, including from abroad.

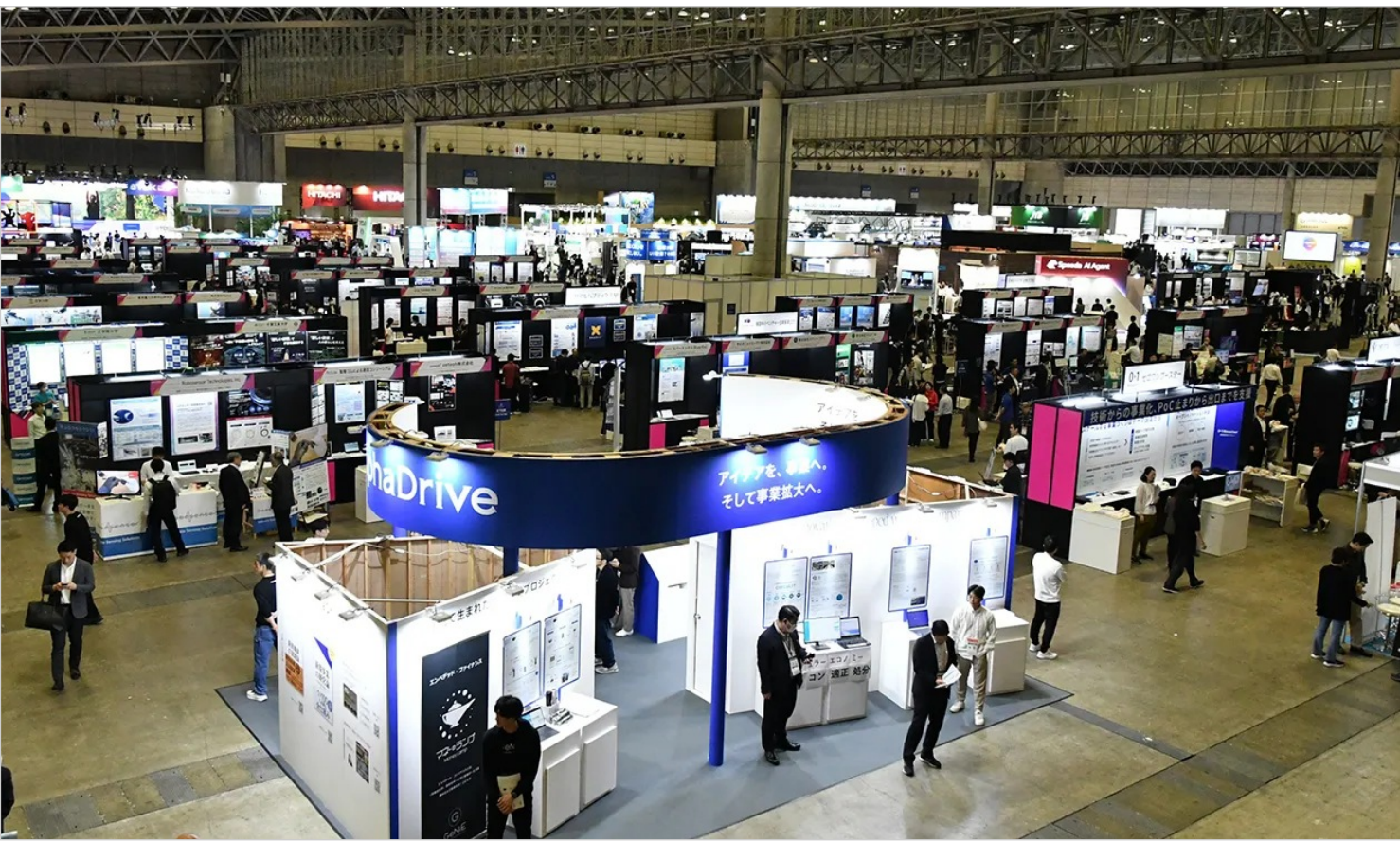
Foreigners on the islands

Japan's position is that foreign nationals and companies should not enter the islands or do business there on the basis of Russian jurisdiction, since doing so would imply acceptance of Russian rule. The visit of a delegation from China's Heilongjiang Province, announced by the Sakhalin government on Tuesday, falls squarely within that objection.

The former residents

Visa-free exchanges and visits by former residents to family graves on the islands, arrangements that had continued for decades, were suspended by Russia after 2022. Most of the former islanders are now in their late eighties or older.

CEATEC 2026



Exhibitors and visitors among the stands in a hall at Makuhari Messe, Chiba, where CEATEC 2026, Japan's largest exhibition of digital technology, runs until Friday with 821 companies and organisations taking part and AI that works in the physical world as its leading theme. (File photo: WPM Productions)

CEATEC 2026

At CEATEC, Japan Makes the Case for a Practical Physical AI: Machines That Listen, Inspect and Fill the Gaps Left by a Shrinking Workforce

The organisers want visitors to look past dancing humanoid robots to AI on factory floors and building sites; Mitsubishi Electric's sound-separating 'ear' and a 35-booth NEDO pavilion set the tone on the show's second day

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

CEATEC, Japan's largest exhibition of digital technology, enters its second day at Makuhari Messe in Chiba on Wednesday with a message its organisers have repeated since before the doors opened: the artificial intelligence that matters for Japan is the kind that does useful work in the physical world, not the kind that performs.

Asked about the humanoid robots that many people now picture, including those seen dancing or boxing in China, Kiyoshi Kano, the show's executive producer, told a news conference in Tokyo last week: "I believe that is by no means the correct form."

Mr Kano, speaking at an event held by the organiser, the Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association, called 2026 the first year of physical AI, much as 2025 was described as the first year of generative AI. What he means by a Japanese version is AI put to work in factories and on work sites to raise productivity and to ease the labour shortages facing almost every industry.

Four themes

The show, which runs until Friday with 821 companies and organisations exhibiting, groups its AI exhibits under four headings: physical AI in manufacturing and on site; prediction and simulation, including for disaster preparedness; the infrastructure of power, heat and communications that the spread of AI requires; and sensing, the eyes and ears that robots need to perceive the world.

It is the last of these, the combination of the five senses with AI, that Mr Kano singled out as the area most worth watching this year.

An ear for the building site

Mitsubishi Electric's group has the clearest example. Its task-general sound source separation technology, which won the internal affairs minister's prize among this year's CEATEC Awards, is presented as the ear of physical AI: software that can pick out the sound it is asked for, whether human voices or the abnormal noise of a failing machine, from a noisy recording.

On a construction site, where heavy machinery drowns out speech, the same system can be set to extract only the voices, or only the sounds that matter for maintaining the equipment, depending on the task.

The other ministerial prizes went to TDK, for a mirror 150 nanometres thick that can be built into a spectacle lens for smart glasses, and to Hitachi, for HMAX by Hitachi, a family of AI services that begins with predicting faults in individual machines and aims to optimise whole systems of infrastructure.

Hands on

The New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organisation, the government body that funds much of Japan's applied research, has taken 35 booths, about 315 square metres, to show work from the projects it supports under three headings: AI and robotics, mobility, and infrastructure.

Its exhibits are designed to be touched and tried, with working machines and demonstrations aimed at students and members of the public as well as engineers, according to the organisation's plans for the stand.

Elsewhere in the halls, Fujitsu is staging, with the film studio Toho, a digital rehearsal of an evacuation from Kawasaki Station as Godzilla comes ashore, and

Murata Manufacturing and the startup Melt Interface are showing an industrial virtual-reality glove that won one of the show's new excellence awards.

Why it matters

Japan's working-age population, those aged 15 to 64, peaked in the mid-1990s and has been falling since. Factories, building sites, care homes and logistics depots all report shortages of staff, and machines that can see, hear and handle varied tasks without detailed programming are one answer the electronics industry is offering.

The emphasis on work rather than spectacle also reflects a judgment about where Japanese companies can compete. China has drawn attention with humanoid robots running half-marathons and staging games. Japan's strengths lie in industrial robots, sensors, precision components and the factories that use them.

The infrastructure question

The third of the show's themes, infrastructure, has become pressing. Data centres for AI need enormous amounts of electricity, and the race to build them in Japan is now constrained by the power grid as much as by money, a point made sharply this week by reports of a 500-megawatt project in Osaka.

Visiting

CEATEC is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Friday, alongside the business week of the Japan Mobility Show, and admission requires advance registration. The organisers expect more than 110,000 visitors over the four days.

The limits

Separating sounds is only the first step. A system still has to decide what a sound means, and that requires data from the machines and places where it will be used. The value of the technology will depend on how well it performs on real sites rather than in demonstrations.

Japan's strength

Acoustic engineering is an area in which Japanese companies have long been strong, from microphones and speakers to the signal processing inside consumer electronics. Applying that expertise to industrial AI is one of the ways the electronics industry hopes to turn old skills into new business.

Visitors can hear the system at Mitsubishi Electric's stand at Makuhari Messe until Friday.

CEATEC 2026

CEATEC 2026 at a Glance

By the Data Desk

WHERE: Makuhari Messe, Chiba.

WHEN: October 13 to 16, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; advance registration required.

THEME: Transformation: companies, industries and society change.

EXHIBITORS: 821 companies and organisations, 338 of them taking part for the first time.

FROM ABROAD: 194 exhibitors from 31 countries and regions.

STARTUPS AND RESEARCH: 246 exhibitors are startups, universities or research institutions.

EXPECTED VISITORS: More than 110,000.

FOUR AI THEMES: Physical AI; prediction and simulation; infrastructure; sensing and the five senses.

MINISTERIAL PRIZES: Mitsubishi Electric group, TDK and Hitachi.

NEDO: 35 booths, about 315 square metres, on AI and robotics, mobility and infrastructure.

ALONGSIDE: The business week of the Japan Mobility Show.

ORGANISER: The Japan Electronics and Information Technology Industries Association.

CEATEC 2026

Why CEATEC's Organisers Say Dancing Robots Are Not the Point, and What They Want Visitors to See Instead

Humanoid robots have become the face of AI in the physical world; Japan's electronics industry is betting on less glamorous machines

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

Images of humanoid robots running races, boxing and dancing have spread around the world over the past two years, many of them from China, where companies and local governments have staged events to show off the machines.

In April 2025 Beijing held a half-marathon in which humanoid robots ran alongside human runners, and that August the city hosted a games for humanoid robots. Such events have made the humanoid the popular image of what AI in the physical world looks like.

A different picture

Kiyoshi Kano, CEATEC's executive producer, used last week's news conference before the show to reject that picture as the model for Japan. He said he believed it was by no means the correct form, and he urged visitors to judge each exhibit by the change it could bring to companies, industries and society.

The show's theme is Transformation, and Mr Kano asked visitors to consider what kind of transformation each stand represented.

Work, not performance

In the organisers' view, the AI Japan needs is the AI that helps a factory keep running with fewer workers, lets a building site operate safely, predicts where a disaster will strike hardest, or keeps power and communications networks working as demand grows.

That is less photogenic than a robot doing a backflip, but it plays to Japanese industry's strengths in robots for factories, precision components, sensors and systems for infrastructure.

The humanoid question

None of this means Japanese companies are ignoring humanoid robots. Several have research programmes, and the country has a long history in the field. The argument is about priorities: whether the money and engineering effort should go first to machines that can earn their keep on today's work sites.

The shortage

The pressure behind the argument is demographic. Japan's working-age population has been falling for three decades, and industries from construction to logistics are already turning down work for lack of staff. A machine that solves one of those problems is worth more to the economy than one that entertains.

The risk

The danger for Japan is that a narrow focus on practical uses leaves it behind if general-purpose humanoid robots do turn out to be the next great platform, as their backers in China and the United States believe. CEATEC's organisers are wagering that usefulness will win.

The show continues until Friday at Makuhari Messe, where visitors can make up their own minds.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Saudi vows response, Page 7.

Nikkei falls 1,253, Page 9.

IMF: Japan sixth, Page 8.

CEATEC 2026

The Cocktail-Party Problem: How Mitsubishi Electric's Prize-Winning AI Picks One Sound Out of a Din

People can follow one voice in a crowded room; machines have long struggled to, and the factories and building sites of physical AI need them to

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

In a crowded room, most people can follow the voice of the person in front of them while ignoring the chatter around them. Scientists call it the cocktail-party problem, and it has been one of the hardest tasks in audio engineering.

Sound source separation is the effort to solve it by machine: to take a recording in which many sounds are mixed and to pull out each one on its own. The technique is used in hearing aids, video conferencing and the clean-up of old music recordings.

Task-general

Mitsubishi Electric's group calls its system task-general sound source separation. The name points to its main claim: rather than building a separate model for each job, the same AI can be told what to extract, voices in one case and machine noise in another, and adjust accordingly.

That matters on a work site, where needs change from moment to moment. A supervisor may want to hear what workers are saying over the roar of machinery; a maintenance engineer may want only the sound of the machinery itself, with the voices taken out.

Listening for faults

Abnormal sounds are often the first sign that a machine is going wrong: a bearing that has begun to squeal, a motor that has begun to labour. Experienced technicians learn to hear them. Systems that can isolate those sounds from background noise could help catch faults before they cause breakdowns.

The ear of a robot

CEATEC's organisers have presented the technology as the ear of physical AI, alongside the cameras and other sensors that act as its eyes. A robot or monitoring system that can hear selectively can respond to spoken instructions in a noisy place or notice trouble that a camera would miss.

The prize

The system won the prize of the minister for internal affairs and communications, one of three ministerial awards announced by the show's organisers before it opened. The judges described it as a foundation for AI that understands the real world through sound.

CEATEC 2026

CEATEC 2026

NTT Data in Final Talks to Build a 500-Megawatt Data Centre in Osaka for Anthropic, at a Cost of Up to One Trillion Yen, Nikkei Reports

It would be the American AI developer's first dedicated data centre in Japan and one of the country's largest; power supply is the first hurdle

By the Technology Desk

NTT Data Group is in final-stage negotiations to build a data centre in Osaka Prefecture for Anthropic, the American developer of artificial intelligence, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported, in a project that would rank among the largest of its kind in Japan.

The facility would draw up to 500 megawatts of power, and construction could cost as much as one trillion yen, about \$6.3 billion, according to the report, which cited several people familiar with the plans. Filling it with large numbers of AI servers would push the total investment to several trillion yen.

The timetable

The companies aim to sign an agreement by the end of the current fiscal year in March 2027, and part of the facility could begin operating as early as 2028, the newspaper said. It would be Anthropic's first dedicated data centre in Japan.

Neither company has commented on the report.

Power first

Drawing 500 megawatts from the existing grid would take considerable time to arrange, according to the report, so the project would initially look at generating power on site, including with fuel cells.

The constraint is one that every builder of AI infrastructure in Japan now faces. Connecting a large new load to the grid can take years, and the country's power companies are weighing requests from data centres and chip factories against their ability to supply them.

The partners

NTT Data, a subsidiary of Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, is one of the world's largest operators of data centres, with facilities in Asia, Europe and the Americas. Anthropic develops the Claude family of AI models and competes with OpenAI and Google.

Why Osaka

The Kansai region offers land, a large pool of engineers and a location away from Tokyo, which spreads the risk of a disaster striking the capital. Western Japan's power supply also includes nuclear plants operated by Kansai Electric Power.

The wider race

Global technology companies have announced large investments in Japanese data centres in recent years, drawn by the country's political stability, its demand for AI services and the government's push to keep sensitive data and computing power at home.

The CEATEC show at Makuhari this week has made the same point from the other side: one of its four themes is the infrastructure of power and communications that the spread of AI requires.

If the Osaka project goes ahead on the scale reported, it will test how quickly that infrastructure can be built.

CEATEC 2026

How Much Is 500 Megawatts? Half a Large Nuclear Reactor, or the Electricity Used by About a Million Homes

AI data centres are measured by the power they draw rather than by floor space; the numbers explain why the grid has become the bottleneck

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Data centres used to be described by their floor area or the number of servers they held. In the age of AI they are increasingly described by the electrical power they can draw, because power has become the scarcest ingredient.

A megawatt is a million watts. The 500 megawatts reported for the planned NTT Data facility in Osaka is the maximum power the site would take in, to run its computers and to cool them.

Half a reactor

A large modern nuclear reactor produces roughly 1,000 megawatts of electricity. A single data centre of 500 megawatts would therefore need about half of

one reactor's output, around the clock.

A million homes

Run at full power for a year, 500 megawatts would use about 4.4 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity. A Japanese household uses on average a little over 4,000 kilowatt-hours a year, so the facility's appetite would be close to that of a million homes.

Data centres do not always run at full power, but those built for AI tend to run close to it, since the chips are expensive and their owners want them busy.

Why AI is hungry

Training and running large AI models requires specialised chips that consume far more electricity than ordinary servers and generate a great deal of heat. A rack of AI servers can draw many times the power of a rack in a conventional data centre, and cooling it takes more power still.

The grid

Japan's electricity demand had been flat or falling for years as the population shrank and industry became more efficient. Forecasts now expect it to rise again, largely because of data centres and new semiconductor factories.

Building power lines and substations to connect large new loads takes years. That is why reports on the Osaka project say it would first explore generating its own power on site.

Where to build

The government has been encouraging companies to build data centres where power is available, including in regions with surplus renewable energy, and to plan electricity and communications networks together rather than separately.

The scale of the plans now under discussion means that decisions about AI are becoming decisions about energy, and the other way round.

POLITICS

The Yana Case: Three Weeks From a Recording to the Budget Committee

By the Data Desk

MAY: At a party gathering, a speaker Kazuo Yana has acknowledged was himself says road budgets for two municipalities whose mayors had not backed him were cut drastically.

SEPTEMBER: He joins Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's reshuffled cabinet as minister of agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

EARLY OCTOBER: The Shimotsuke Shimbun makes the recording public. The two municipalities are the city of Nasukarasuyama and the town of Nakagawa.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5: Mr Yana withdraws the remarks and apologises.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7: Shukan Bunshun reports that free buses carried supporters to his campaign launch rallies in 2024 and 2026.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8: The prime minister tells him to stay and repay the public with his work.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9: He says the bus arrangements were handled properly under the law and that he will explain once the facts are checked. Six opposition parties in the upper house agree to demand his resignation.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12: The Liberal Democrats' policy chief asks him to keep explaining himself.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13: In the Budget Committee he acknowledges the buses but denies wrongdoing. Ms Takaichi raises for the first time the possibility of replacing him.

TODAY: The committee's second day of questioning, and a meeting with the prime minister.

NEXT: Upper house sessions on Friday and Monday, and a possible censure motion.

WHO DECIDES: The prime minister alone appoints and dismisses ministers, under Article 68 of the Constitution.

DIPLOMACY

The Detention in Figures

By the Data Desk

34: Yuki Imai's age, according to a Moscow court record cited by Russian media.

276: The article of the Russian Criminal Code under which he is accused, covering espionage by

foreigners.

10 TO 20 YEARS: The prison term the article provides.

TWO MONTHS: The initial period of custody ordered by the Lefortovo District Court.

2014: The year he first visited Russia, according to Meduza.

OCTOBER 5: The date of his last published article, on North Koreans in the Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk area.

35: Vessels used by Russia to export oil that Japan put under sanctions on October 2.

2019: The last time Russia accused a Japanese journalist of spying; the Kyodo correspondent was expelled.

1945: The year Soviet forces occupied the four islands Japan calls the Northern Territories.

1956: The year of the Joint Declaration that restored relations, though not peace, between the two countries.

DIPLOMACY

A Correspondent in 2019 and a Consul in 2022: The Japanese Russia Accused Before, and Why This Case Is Graver

Both earlier cases ended in expulsion within days; this time a reporter has been charged and sent to a Moscow jail

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Russia has accused Japanese citizens of spying before, but the earlier cases ended quickly. What sets the detention of Yuki Imai apart is that he has been charged and taken to Moscow rather than simply sent home.

Vladivostok, 2019

On December 25, 2019, Russian authorities detained a Kyodo News correspondent in Vladivostok and questioned him for about five hours. They accused him of trying to obtain secret information about the capabilities of Russian forces in the Far East.

He was ordered to leave the country within 72 hours and left the next day. Kyodo, which did not name him, said he had been carrying out normal reporting and denied the accusation. Russia's Foreign Ministry summoned an official from the Japanese Embassy to protest.

The case came to light only weeks later, around the time a former SoftBank employee in Japan was arrested on suspicion of passing company information to an official of the Russian trade mission.

Vladivostok again, 2022

In September 2022 the FSB detained Tatsunori Motoki, a consul at the Japanese Consulate-General in Vladivostok, and said he had been caught receiving classified information about Russia's cooperation with another country in the Asia-Pacific region and about the effect of Western sanctions on the local economy, in exchange for money.

Japan said he had been blindfolded and held down by his head and arms during questioning and called the treatment unbelievable. Russia declared him persona non grata and gave him 48 hours to leave. Japan responded by expelling a Russian consul in Sapporo.

Why this one is different

A diplomat has immunity and can only be expelled. A journalist has none. In charging Mr Imai under the espionage article and having a court order his detention, Russia has chosen a path that could lead to a closed trial and a long sentence.

Moscow's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said the case was not an isolated one, a phrase that may be meant to signal that Russia sees Japanese reporting from its Far East as part of a wider pattern.

The reporters on the frontier

Japanese newspapers have kept correspondents in Moscow through the war, and the Hokkaido Shimbun has a long tradition of reporting from Sakhalin and the islands. The detention will make every editor weigh the risks of sending staff to cover a region that matters greatly to Japan.

DIPLOMACY

Japan and Russia Since the Invasion of Ukraine

By the Data Desk

FEBRUARY 24, 2022: Russia launches its full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Japan joins Western sanctions.

MARCH 2022: Russia suspends peace treaty talks with Japan and visa-free exchanges with the Northern Territories.

SEPTEMBER 2022: A Japanese consul in Vladivostok is detained, accused of espionage and expelled.

OCTOBER 2022: Japan expels a Russian consul in Sapporo in response.

AUGUST 2024: Evan Gershkovich and others held in Russia are freed in an exchange with the West.

AUGUST 2026: President Vladimir Putin visits Etorofu, his first visit to the islands. Japan summons the Russian ambassador.

OCTOBER 2, 2026: Japan bans the operation, repair and insurance of 35 vessels Russia uses to export oil.

OCTOBER 13: The Sakhalin government announces a visit to Etorofu by a delegation from China's Heilongjiang Province.

OCTOBER 13: The FSB says it has detained a Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent on Sakhalin; a Moscow court orders him held.

PEACE TREATY: None since 1945. The 1956 Joint Declaration restored diplomatic relations.

THE ISLANDS: Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai islets, about 5,000 square kilometres in all.

DIPLOMACY

The Northern Territories in Figures

By the Data Desk

TOTAL AREA: About 5,000 square kilometres, close to the size of Chiba Prefecture.

ETOROFU (ITURUP): About 3,170 square kilometres, the largest of the four.

KUNASHIRI (KUNASHIR): About 1,500 square kilometres, visible from eastern Hokkaido.

SHIKOTAN: About 250 square kilometres.

HABOMAI ISLETS: About 100 square kilometres in all.

CLOSEST POINT: Kaigara Island in the Habomai group lies about 3.7 kilometres off Cape Nosappu in Nemuro.

JAPANESE RESIDENTS IN 1945: About 17,000.

OCCUPIED: By Soviet forces between late August and early September 1945.

1956: The Joint Declaration promises Shikotan and the Habomai islets to Japan after a peace treaty.

2010: Dmitry Medvedev becomes the first Soviet or Russian leader to visit, landing on Kunashiri.

2026: Vladimir Putin visits Etorofu in August; a Chinese delegation follows in October.

POLITICS

The Week Ahead

By the Politics Desk

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14: Budget Committee, second day, from 9 a.m.; the prime minister meets the agriculture minister; Climax Series final stages open, 6 p.m.; ASML results; United States consumer prices for September, 9:30 p.m. Japan time; Oza title match, Game 4, in Kobe.

THURSDAY, OCT. 15: Dodgers v Brewers, NLCS Game 3, 9 a.m. Japan time; TSMC results; Kannamesai at Ise, to Saturday; the main day of the Nada fighting festival in Himeji.

FRIDAY, OCT. 16: House of Councillors session; CEATEC closes at Makuhari.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, OCT. 17 AND 18: Kawagoe Festival.

MONDAY, OCT. 19: House of Councillors session.

THURSDAY, OCT. 22: Jidai Matsuri and Kurama Fire Festival in Kyoto.

SATURDAY, OCT. 24: Japan Series opens, at the home ground of the Central League's representative.

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, OCT. 20 AND 21: Reserve dates for the Central League final stage.

SUNDAY, OCT. 25: Niigata mayoral election.

TUESDAY, NOV. 3: United States midterm elections.

THURSDAY AND FRIDAY, OCT. 29 AND 30: Bank of Japan policy meeting.

JANUARY 18 TO 22: Japanese Communist Party congress.

POLITICS



Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at the rostrum of the House of Representatives, in a file image. On the first day of Budget Committee questioning on Tuesday she called the income-linked support payment that accompanies her food tax cut a groundbreaking measure; the committee resumes at 9 a.m. today. (Photo: WPM Productions)

POLITICS

Takaichi Calls Her Income-Linked Support Payment 'Groundbreaking' as the Budget Committee Opens, but Two Ministers' Troubles Take Up the Day

The prime minister presses for early passage of the food tax cut and the payment that comes with it; the committee resumes at 9 a.m. with the agriculture minister's account of the buses at the top of the opposition's list

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi used the first day of questioning in the House of Representatives Budget Committee on Tuesday to promote the support payment her government plans to introduce alongside its cut in the consumption tax on food, calling it a groundbreaking measure that would give finely tuned help according to people's incomes.

The government wants the measures enacted early, she told the committee, NHK reported. The bill to cut the tax on food from 8 per cent to 1 per cent for two years from April 2027 was sent to the Diet by the cabinet earlier this month.

But much of the day, the first of two in which the prime minister and every member of her cabinet must sit and answer questions, was taken up by the troubles of two ministers who joined her government only last month.

Yana and the buses

The agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, acknowledged that free buses had carried supporters to his campaign launch rallies in two general elections, while denying any wrongdoing, and again denied that he had influenced road budgets for municipalities whose mayors had not backed him. Ms Takaichi raised for the first time the possibility of replacing him. (Report on Page 1.)

Questioning came from all sides. Norihisa Tamura, a former health minister from the prime minister's own Liberal Democratic Party, said he found Mr Yana's claims hard to believe. Hiromasa Nakano of Komeito called for his replacement, and Tatsumaru Yamaoka and Akira Nagatsuma of the Democratic Reform Association pressed him on records and on remarks at other gatherings.

Seki apologises

The education minister, Yoshihiro Seki, apologised after it emerged that a fundraising party for him had been held in June 2024 inside one of the buildings that house the offices of members of the House of Representatives, which the chamber's rules forbid. (Report on this page.)

POLITICS

The First Day in the Committee Room: Who Asked What

By the Politics Desk

NORIHISA TAMURA (Liberal Democratic Party): A former health minister, he pressed the agriculture minister on his road-budget claims and said he found them hard to believe.

HIROMASA NAKANO (Komeito): Urged the prime minister to replace Kazuo Yana, saying a minister who claimed to cut funding for communities that did not support him was unfit for office.

TATSUMARU YAMAOKA (Democratic Reform Association): Asked whether Mr Yana had made similar inquiries about other municipalities; said the minister seemed to have neither memories nor records.

AKIRA NAGATSUMA (Democratic Reform Association): Drew an admission that Mr Yana had

The payment

The support payment is meant to complement the tax cut, which lowers prices for every shopper alike, with help that varies according to income. Ms Takaichi has said the tax cut would save households about 36,000 yen a person a year, and that the lower rate would in principle be reflected in shop prices.

How the measures will be paid for remains the opposition's central question. Ms Takaichi has said that deficit-covering bonds will not be used and that the design of the funding will be settled after deliberation. Removing the tax on food entirely would cost about five trillion yen a year by the Finance Ministry's earlier estimates, and a cut to 1 per cent would cost most of that.

The format

Basic questioning is the most closely watched stage of a Diet session. It is broadcast live by NHK, every minister must attend, and each party's time is allotted roughly according to its strength. In the lower house the time counts both the questions and the answers.

For the opposition it is the best chance of the session to put the prime minister on the spot before a national audience, and the parties made clear on Tuesday that they intend to use much of their time on the two ministers.

Today

The committee resumes at 9 a.m. for its second day. Ms Takaichi has said she will meet Mr Yana after the session to hear his account in person. The House of Councillors is due to hold sessions on Friday and next Monday, where opposition parties hold a majority and are weighing a censure motion against him.

The government hopes to move the tax bill through the Diet during the current extraordinary session, which opened on October 5. Whether it can keep attention on its programme may depend on how quickly the questions about its ministers are settled.

discussed budgets at other local party gatherings.

THE PRIME MINISTER: Called the remarks inappropriate and really lame, and said she would seriously consider whether Mr Yana should stay.

THE MINISTER: Denied requesting any budget cut; acknowledged free buses for supporters but said they were needed to run the venue.

THE PAYMENT: Ms Takaichi called the income-linked support payment groundbreaking and asked for early enactment.

THE EDUCATION MINISTER: Yoshihiro Seki apologised for a 2024 fundraising party held in a lower-house office building.

TODAY: Second day of basic questioning from 9 a.m., broadcast live by NHK.

AFTER THE SESSION: The prime minister is to meet Mr Yana.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

POLITICS

The Food Tax Cut and the Support Payment at a Glance

By the Data Desk

THE CUT: The consumption tax on food falls from 8 per cent to 1 per cent.

WHEN: For two years from April 2027.

THE SAVING: About 36,000 yen a person a year, according to the prime minister.

PRICES: The lower rate should in principle be reflected in shop prices, she has said.

THE COST: Removing the tax on food entirely would cost about five trillion yen a year, by the Finance Ministry's earlier estimates; a cut to 1 per cent would cost most of that.

FUNDING: Not by deficit-covering bonds, the prime minister says; the design is to be settled after deliberation.

THE PAYMENT: An income-linked support payment to accompany the cut, which Ms Takaichi calls groundbreaking.

THE BILL: Sent to the Diet by the cabinet this month.

THE SESSION: The extraordinary session opened on October 5.

THE OPPOSITION'S QUESTION: How it will be paid for.

POLITICS

A Chinese Delegation Tours Etorofu at Russia's Encouragement, Eyeing Sea Urchin Farms and a Seafood Plant; Tokyo Says Entry on Russian Terms Is Unacceptable

Officials and business people from Heilongjiang Province visit the largest of the Northern Territories as Sakhalin's governor promotes the islands to investors

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

A delegation of officials and business people from China's Heilongjiang Province has visited Etorofu, the largest of the four islands Japan calls the Northern Territories, as part of a drive by the Russian region of Sakhalin to attract investment, the Sakhalin government announced on Tuesday.

The visitors looked at candidate sites for tourist facilities and at fish farms, and showed particular interest in farming sea urchins and sea cucumbers, according to reports of the regional government's announcement. A representative of a Chinese company said it wanted to build a seafood-processing plant with a local firm.

Valery Limarenko, the governor of Sakhalin, said the Kuril Islands, including the four claimed by Japan, had great potential for tourism and business development, and that the regional government had to create a favourable environment for investors, Jiji Press reported.

Tokyo objects

The Japanese government's position is that foreign nationals and companies entering the islands, or doing business there, on the basis of Russian jurisdiction is incompatible with Japan's claim to them. Officials said entry to the Northern Territories following Russian procedures could not be accepted, and Kyodo News reported that the government was expected to protest.

No investment agreement or construction decision has been announced.

Investment on Russian terms

Russia's courts and agencies administer the islands as part of the Sakhalin region, and any company setting up there would register, pay taxes and obtain permits under Russian law. That is the step Japan regards as an implicit acceptance of Russian sovereignty.

Japanese companies have stayed away from projects on those terms. Plans discussed with Moscow in earlier years for joint economic activities on the islands, including aquaculture and tourism, were meant to proceed under a special arrangement that would not prejudice either side's legal position. They made little headway beyond a few trial tours for Japanese visitors in 2019.

Why it matters

Russia has encouraged development on Etorofu and Kunashiri for years, and has offered tax incentives to investors in the Kurils. Japan has objected each time it has invited companies from other countries,

arguing that foreign investment on Russian terms would imply acceptance of Russian rule.

The involvement of China adds a further dimension. Heilongjiang shares a long border with Russia along the Amur River, and its businesses have deep ties with the Russian Far East. A Chinese commercial presence on the islands would bring Japan's two largest neighbours together on territory it claims.

The timing

The visit was announced in the same week that Russia detained a Japanese correspondent on Sakhalin, and two months after President Vladimir Putin made his first visit to the islands, a trip Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi called absolutely unacceptable.

For the former residents of the islands, most of them now in their late eighties or older, and their families in Hokkaido, the news is another sign that the prospect of a settlement is moving further away.

DIPLOMACY

Heilongjiang: China's Northernmost Province, Which Shares a River Border With Russia and Has No Sea of Its Own

Its businesses have long traded across the Amur; a landlocked province's interest in sea urchins on Etorofu says something about where it sees opportunity

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Heilongjiang, the province whose officials and business people visited Etorofu, is China's northernmost. Its name is the Chinese name for the Amur River, the Black Dragon River, which forms much of its long border with Russia.

The province has about 31 million people, according to China's 2020 census, and its capital is Harbin, a city founded at the end of the 19th century as a base for the Chinese Eastern Railway, built by the Russian empire across Manchuria. Russian churches and buildings still stand in its old quarter.

Farms and oil

Heilongjiang is one of China's main farming regions, producing large quantities of soybeans, rice and maize on the fertile black soil of the north-east. It is also home to the Daqing oilfield, which was for decades China's largest.

Its heavy industries, built in the early years of the People's Republic, have struggled, and the province has lost population as young people have moved south in search of work.

Across the river

Trade with Russia is a natural outlet. Road and rail bridges across the Amur opened in 2022, linking Heihe with Blagoveshchensk and Tongjiang with the Jewish Autonomous Region, and the province's companies have invested in farming, timber and trade in the Russian Far East.

No coast

Heilongjiang has no coastline of its own. For its seafood companies, an invitation to look at sea urchin and sea cucumber farming on islands in the Pacific offers access to waters and resources the province lacks.

Sakhalin's courtship

Sakhalin's regional government has been courting investors from China and elsewhere for its islands, including the Kurils. Its governor, Valery Limarenko, said this week that the islands had great potential for tourism and business.

Why it matters to Japan

Japan does not object to trade between China and Russia as such. Its objection is to business done on the four islands it claims under Russian jurisdiction, which it regards as implying acceptance of Russian sovereignty.

A provincial delegation is not the Chinese government, and no investment has been announced. Japan's concern is that a visit of this kind could be the first step towards commercial commitments that would be harder to reverse.

Whether the visit leads to anything will become clear only if companies from Heilongjiang actually sign contracts and build on the islands.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Kyushu Shinkansen back, Page 15.

Courts' night duty, Page 12.

Brewers 7, Dodgers 4, Page 16.

POLITICS

POLITICS

Education Minister Seki Apologises for a Fundraising Party Held Inside a Lower-House Office Building, Contrary to the Chamber's Rules

The 2024 event raised 810,000 yen, according to his funds report; he is the second minister from last month's reshuffle to face questions in the Budget Committee
By the Politics Desk

The education minister, Yoshihiro Seki, apologised in the House of Representatives Budget Committee on Tuesday after it emerged that a political fundraising party for him had been held in June 2024 inside one of the buildings that house lawmakers' offices.

The rules of the House of Representatives do not permit such events in the members' office buildings, which stand beside the Diet in Nagatacho and are reserved for the work of legislators and their staff.

According to his political funds report, the party raised 810,000 yen and cost 81,957 yen to hold, leaving a surplus of about 728,000 yen.

How it came out

The matter was raised in the run-up to the committee's sessions, and Mr Seki acknowledged it and apologised when questioned. There has been no suggestion that the income itself went unreported.

A crowded day

His apology came on the same day that the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, faced hours of questions over his remarks about road budgets and free buses for his supporters. Both men joined Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's cabinet in the reshuffle in September.

Mr Seki introduced himself at his first news conference as education minister on September 18. He has served as a vice minister at the economy ministry and the environment ministry, and has spoken of his experience in business before entering politics.

Last month he also acknowledged past contacts with the Unification Church, now officially the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, and said he had cut his ties with it, Kyodo News reported.

Why the rules exist

Fundraising parties, at which supporters buy tickets to attend a reception, are a central source of income for Japanese politicians. They came under intense scrutiny after the Liberal Democratic Party's factions were found to have left income from ticket sales off their funds reports, a scandal that cost the party dearly at the polls.

Holding such events on Diet property blurs the line between public facilities paid for by taxpayers and the private business of raising political money, which is why the chamber restricts what the buildings can be used for.

What follows

The opposition is unlikely to make Mr Seki its main target while questions about Mr Yana remain open. But the case adds to the impression of a reshuffle carried out without enough attention to the records of the people appointed, a charge that opposition parties are likely to repeat when the House of Councillors holds its own sessions on Friday and Monday.

POLITICS

Who Are the Democratic Reform Association? The New Opposition Party That Grew Out of a Failed Merger

Lower-house members from the Constitutional Democratic Party formed it last month after the Centrist Reform Alliance broke up; Junya Ogawa leads it
By the Politics Desk

Two of the opposition lawmakers who questioned the agriculture minister most sharply on Tuesday, Tatsumaru Yamaoka and Akira Nagatsuma, belong to a party that did not exist two months ago: the Democratic Reform Association, or Minshu Kaikaku no Kai.

The alliance

Its origins lie in the Centrist Reform Alliance, formed in January by lower-house members of the Constitutional Democratic Party and Komeito to fight the general election in February as a single party. The two parties continued to exist separately in the House of Councillors and in local politics.

The alliance won 49 seats, far fewer than its members

had held before the election, and became the largest opposition group in the lower house. Junya Ogawa was elected its leader in February and Takeshi Shina became secretary-general.

The break-up

Plans to merge the two parties fully into the alliance foundered in the summer. At the end of August the Constitutional Democrats announced that they would not merge, and Komeito followed. The alliance was dissolved in the middle of September.

Lawmakers who had come from the Constitutional Democrats then formed a new party under Mr Ogawa, a former official of the internal affairs ministry who represents a constituency in Kagawa Prefecture, with Mr Shina continuing as secretary-general. Its name, announced in mid-September, stresses democratic reform.

Its stance

The new party has made accountability in politics a central theme, and the agriculture minister's case has given it an early opportunity. Mr Shina said on Tuesday that the minister could choose to step down of his own accord.

Komeito

Komeito, which left the governing coalition with the Liberal Democrats in October last year, now acts as a separate opposition party in the Diet. Its lawmaker Hiromasa Nakano called on Tuesday for the agriculture minister to be replaced.

The upper house

In the House of Councillors, where the governing parties lack a majority, the opposition parties together could pass a censure motion against a minister. Coordination among them, after the turbulence of the past year, will determine whether they do.

Why it matters

Japan's opposition has fragmented and regrouped repeatedly since the Democratic Party of Japan lost power in 2012. The new party's ability to hold together, and to cooperate with others, will shape how effectively the government is held to account in this session.

POLITICS

What a Censure Motion Can and Cannot Do: The Upper House's Rebuke Has No Legal Force but Has Ended Ministerial Careers

The first against a sitting prime minister passed in 2008; censured ministers have often been moved in the next reshuffle
By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Opposition parties in the House of Councillors are weighing a censure motion against the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana. If they proceed, it will be worth understanding what such a motion does.

No legal force

A censure motion in the upper house is a resolution expressing the chamber's disapproval of a minister or of the prime minister. Unlike a vote of no confidence in the House of Representatives, which under Article 69 of the Constitution obliges the cabinet to resign or dissolve the lower house within ten days, it has no legal consequences.

Political force

Its force is political. A minister censured by one of the two chambers of the Diet carries a public mark of disapproval, and opposition parties often refuse to take part in proceedings at which a censured minister answers questions, which can slow the government's legislation.

Precedents

The first censure motion to pass against a member of the cabinet, in October 1998, was aimed at Fukushima Nukaga, then head of the Defence Agency, over a procurement scandal at the agency. He resigned the following month.

The first censure motion against a sitting prime minister under the postwar Constitution passed in June 2008, against Yasuo Fukuda. Taro Aso and Yoshihiko Noda were later censured as well. All three left office within months, though for reasons that went beyond the censure.

Ministers have also been censured. In April 2012 the upper house passed motions against the defence minister, Naoki Tanaka, and the land minister, Takeshi Maeda, both of whom were replaced in a reshuffle that June.

The lower house

In the House of Representatives the opposition can also table a motion of no confidence in an individual minister. Like an upper-house censure, it has no binding force; only a vote of no confidence in the cabinet as a whole carries legal consequences, and the governing parties' majority in the lower house means such motions are normally defeated.

When the chamber is divided

Censure motions pass only when the opposition controls the upper house, as it does now. When the governing parties hold a majority there, such motions are routinely voted down.

The calculation

For the opposition, a censure motion is a weapon best used sparingly. Used too often, it loses its sting; used against a minister whom the public sees as having done wrong, it can force the government's hand.

For the government, the threat of censure raises the cost of keeping a minister in place, since a censured minister can become an obstacle to the cabinet's business for the rest of the session.

The upper house holds sessions on Friday and next Monday, at which the opposition will decide whether Mr Yana's explanations justify such a step.

POLITICS

From 39 Women in 1946 to the First Woman Prime Minister: Eight Decades of Women in Japanese Politics

The first election after suffrage sent more women to the lower house than any for decades afterwards; progress since has been slow but real
By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The cartoon on today's editorial page counts eighty years from 1945 to the courts' decision on night duty. The record of women in Japanese politics over those years is a story of a strong start, a long stall and a recent acceleration.

A strong start

In the general election of April 10, 1946, the first in which women could vote and stand, 39 women were elected to the House of Representatives, about 8 per cent of its members. It was a remarkable result for a country in which women had been barred from politics only months before.

The long stall

At the next election, in 1947, under a changed electoral system, the number fell to 15. For decades afterwards women held only a small share of seats in the lower house, often well below 5 per cent.

Firsts

Masa Nakayama became the first woman to serve in the cabinet, as minister of health and welfare, in 1960. Takako Doi became the first woman to lead a major party when she was chosen to head the Japan Socialist Party in 1986, and in 1993 she became the first woman to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Fusae Ota became the first woman elected governor of a prefecture, in Osaka, in 2000, and Yuriko Koike the first woman governor of Tokyo in 2016.

A law of encouragement

In 2018 the Diet passed a law encouraging political parties to field equal numbers of male and female candidates. It imposes no penalties and sets no quotas, and its effect has been gradual. In the general election of 2024, 73 women were elected to the House of Representatives, a record at the time, about 16 per cent of the total.

The top

In October 2025 Sanae Takaichi became the first woman to serve as prime minister, after winning the leadership of the Liberal Democratic Party.

The courts and beyond

Women's progress in the judiciary, the civil service and business has followed a similar path, from exclusion to admission to slow advancement. The decision to share night duty at the courts equally is a reminder that equality is decided not only at the ballot box but in the rules and routines of institutions.

The pioneers of 1946 would recognise both how far Japan has come and how much remains to be done.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

CEATEC's practical AI, Page 3.

Budget Committee, day one, Page 5.

POLITICS

Politics in Brief: Communist Party Plenum Ends, Upper House Sessions Ahead, and a Party Statement on the Islands

By the Politics Desk

Short reports from Nagatacho and beyond.

Communist plenum ends

The Japanese Communist Party's Central Committee ends a three-day plenary meeting at its Tokyo headquarters today. The meeting, which opened on Monday, is discussing a partial revision of the party's programme presented by its chair, Kazuo Shii, and a draft resolution presented by its leader, Tomoko Tamura, for the party's 30th congress, to be held from January 18 to 22.

The draft resolution drops the party's policy of cooperating with other opposition parties in elections, as reported on Tuesday, and calls for a nationwide effort ahead of the unified local elections in April.

The upper house

The House of Councillors is due to hold sessions on Friday and next Monday, the next occasions on which the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, will face questions. Opposition parties, which together hold a majority in the chamber, are weighing a censure motion against him. A censure motion has no legal force, but its passage would be a heavy blow.

The islands

The government is expected to protest to Russia over a visit to Etorofu by a delegation from China's Heilongjiang Province, announced by the Sakhalin government on Tuesday. The visit came as Russia's security service said it had detained a Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent on Sakhalin. (Reports on this page and Page 1.)

Reshuffle scrutiny

The two ministers questioned over their conduct on Tuesday, the agriculture minister and the education minister, both joined the cabinet in September. Opposition parties say the cases show that the vetting of appointees was inadequate.

Takaichi's day

The prime minister begins the day in the Budget Committee and has said she will meet Mr Yana after the session to hear his account of the bus arrangements in detail.

The tax bill

The ruling parties want the bill cutting the consumption tax on food to 1 per cent for two years from April 2027 to pass during the current extraordinary session. Debate on the bill itself has yet to begin in committee.

Coming up

The two days of basic questioning in the lower house Budget Committee end today. After them, the bills the government has submitted to the session are expected to move to the relevant standing committees.

INTERNATIONAL

The IMF on the Gulf: Contraction This Year, Rebound Next

By the Data Desk

SAUDI ARABIA: Minus 3.3 per cent in 2026; plus 7.9 per cent in 2027.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES: Minus 3.9 per cent; plus 7.7 per cent.

QATAR: Minus 15.6 per cent; plus 18.8 per cent.

KUWAIT: Minus 16.7 per cent; plus 17.1 per cent.

BAHRAIN: Minus 11.3 per cent; plus 13.9 per cent.

OMAN: Plus 4.1 per cent in 2026, the only Gulf economy forecast to grow this year.

IRAQ: Minus 16 per cent in 2026.

IRAN: Minus 7.6 per cent in 2026.

THE REGION: The Middle East and North Africa shrinks 2 per cent this year, the only region to contract.

THE ASSUMPTION: Hormuz reopens in March 2027.

SOURCE: The IMF's World Economic Outlook, October 2026, as reported.

INTERNATIONAL



Riyadh at dusk, in a file image supplied for this edition. Saudi Arabia's energy minister has promised a response 'equally serious' to the Houthi attacks, which have killed at least 20 people at the kingdom's airports in a week; King Khalid International Airport, about 35 kilometres north of the city centre, remains closed.

INTERNATIONAL

Saudi Arabia Vows a Response 'Equally Serious' to the Houthi Attacks as Coalition Jets Strike Yemen and the Houthis Threaten Aramco

The energy minister says fear has no place in the Saudi dictionary; at least 20 people have been killed in a week of attacks on the kingdom's airports, and Riyadh's main airport stays closed

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Saudi Arabia's energy minister has promised that the kingdom will answer the Houthi attacks on its airports with a response as serious as the attacks themselves, as the coalition it leads in Yemen widened its air strikes and the Houthis threatened the oil company Saudi Aramco.

"The events of recent weeks are serious, our response must be equally serious," Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman told the World Petroleum Congress in Riyadh on Monday, according to reports from the conference. He said the kingdom remained a capital of energy security and that "fear has no place in the Saudi dictionary".

The prince said the East-West pipeline, which carries crude across the kingdom to the Red Sea coast, had helped keep Saudi oil flowing during the war, as the Strait of Hormuz has remained effectively closed.

Strikes and threats

The Saudi-led coalition struck targets in Yemen through Monday and into Tuesday. Houthi media reported air strikes on two districts of Sanaa, the capital they control, on Sunday night, and said one man had been killed and 12 people wounded. The coalition warned civilians to leave part of the city ahead of what it called a targeted operation, and the Houthis reported further strikes on Kamaran island, in the Qanawis district and in Jawf province.

A Houthi spokesman threatened a harsh and painful response to any strike on Sanaa and named Riyadh, Aramco's headquarters in Dammam and the refinery in Riyadh as possible targets. The group told civilians living near all of Aramco's facilities to leave, calling them legitimate targets.

The toll

At least 20 people have been killed in a week of Houthi attacks on Saudi airports, according to tallies of official figures. Saturday's missile strike on King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh killed 13 people, among them an American citizen, and wounded more than 300. A further strike on Sunday killed one person and injured 11.

The Saudi authorities have extended the suspension of operations at King Khalid International without saying when it will reopen, and an investigation is under way into why air defences failed to stop the attacks. Airlines have extended their cancellations: Gulf Air until Saturday and Etihad until next Monday, and Delta Air Lines has postponed the launch of its Atlanta to Riyadh service.

Washington's position

President Donald Trump said the Houthis were behaving very badly and blamed Iran, which backs them. Asked whether the United States would join the Saudi campaign, he said: "I can't tell you that."

INTERNATIONAL

A Week of Attacks on Saudi Airports

By the Data Desk

OCTOBER 6 AND 7: Three people are killed in attacks on King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh and Abha airport.

He later said he might ask President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey to help Saudi Arabia, after Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman spoke to the Turkish leader.

A senior Houthi official has warned the United States of a swift and painful response if it joins the fighting.

Tehran's concern

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmail Baqaei, said Tehran was deeply concerned about developments on the Arabian Peninsula and ready to help facilitate dialogue. The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, spoke by telephone with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi.

Iran also said it had reached an understanding with Oman on a temporary shipping route, separate from any reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, whose closure since the end of February has cut off the main route for the Gulf's oil. Iran's Revolutionary Guards claimed to have struck three supertankers in the strait over two days.

Condemnation and caution

China and Australia condemned the attacks on Saudi Arabia, and Anwar Gargash, a senior adviser to the president of the United Arab Emirates, called for closer defence cooperation among the Gulf states. Britain advised against all but essential travel to Riyadh and several other provinces.

The oil market

Brent crude rose above \$105 a barrel on Monday, a two-week high. In New York on Tuesday, the November contract for West Texas Intermediate rose 40 cents to settle at \$94.14 a barrel, its fourth successive gain, as the conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis kept supply concerns alive.

Japan's stake

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been Japan's two largest suppliers of crude oil, and with Hormuz closed the pipeline to the Red Sea and the export terminals at Yanbu have become the kingdom's lifeline to Asia. The Houthis' threat to Aramco's facilities is a threat to one of the few large supplies that Japanese refiners can still reach without passing through the strait.

Japan's Foreign Ministry publishes safety information for Saudi Arabia and the wider region, and Japanese residents and travellers are urged to check it before moving around the kingdom.

OCTOBER 8: Three more are killed at King Khalid International.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10: A missile strikes King Khalid International, killing 13, among them an American, and wounding more than 300.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11: A second strike on the airport kills one person and injures 11; an attack on King Fahd International in Dammam is reported.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12: The airport's closure is extended. The energy minister promises an equally serious response. Coalition aircraft strike Sanaa.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13: The Houthis threaten Aramco and tell civilians near its facilities to leave. The coalition reports further interceptions of drones and missiles.

THE TOLL: At least 20 dead in a week of attacks on airports.

FLIGHTS: Gulf Air cancels until Saturday, Etihad until Monday; Delta postpones its Atlanta to Riyadh launch.

OIL: WTI settles at \$94.14 on Tuesday, up for a fourth day.

HORMUZ: Effectively closed since the end of February.

INTERNATIONAL

The East-West Pipeline: The Route Across the Desert That Keeps Saudi Oil Moving While Hormuz Is Shut

Built in the 1980s to bypass the strait in wartime, it carries crude from the Gulf coast to Yanbu on the Red Sea, within reach of the Houthis

By the International Desk

When Saudi Arabia's energy minister said this week that the East-West pipeline had helped keep the kingdom's oil flowing through the war, he was referring to the most important piece of insurance the Saudi oil industry has.

The pipeline runs about 1,200 kilometres across the Arabian Peninsula, from the oil-processing hub of Abqaiq near the Gulf coast to the port of Yanbu on the Red Sea. Oil loaded at Yanbu does not have to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Born of an earlier war

It was built in the early 1980s, during the war between Iran and Iraq, when attacks on tankers in the Gulf raised fears that the strait could be closed. The kingdom has expanded it since, and has studied further routes for its exports.

Why it matters now

With Hormuz effectively closed since the end of February, the pipeline has become the main outlet for Saudi crude. Oil that once sailed from terminals in the Gulf now has to cross the desert first and be loaded on the opposite coast.

Its capacity is large but finite, and it cannot replace everything that once left through the strait. Neighbouring producers such as Kuwait and Qatar have no such alternative at all, which is why their economies have been hit far harder.

Within range

The difficulty is that Yanbu lies on the Red Sea, within range of the Houthis in Yemen. The group claimed attacks on Aramco facilities at Yanbu in September, and on Tuesday it told civilians living near all of Aramco's facilities to leave.

An attack that halted loadings at Yanbu, or damaged the pipeline's pumping stations, would cut the last large route by which Saudi crude reaches Asia.

For Japan

Saudi Arabia has long been one of Japan's two largest suppliers of crude, with the United Arab Emirates, and Japanese refiners have come to depend on cargoes loaded on the Red Sea since the strait closed. The ships still have to pass the Bab el-Mandeb strait at the southern end of the Red Sea, off Yemen, before turning east.

Japan's oil stockpiles, among the largest in the world relative to consumption, give it a cushion against interruptions. But a cushion is not a supply, and the longer the conflict lasts, the more the pipeline across the desert matters to Japanese households and factories.

The International Monetary Fund's latest forecasts assume that Hormuz reopens in March next year, with shipping broadly back to pre-war conditions by October 2027.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Editorial: Eighty years, Page 19.

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

Crossword, Page 17.

CEATEC's practical AI, Page 3.

Budget Committee, day one, Page 5.

China on Etorofu, Page 5.

Nikkei falls 1,253, Page 9.

INTERNATIONAL

Pillay Calls the American Sanctions on the ICC 'Completely Unlawful' and Urges Governments to Defend the Court With Action, Not Just Words

The new Nobel peace laureate says she does not believe the timing of Washington's measures, announced on the day of her prize, was a coincidence

By the International Desk

Navi Pillay, the South African jurist awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize, called on governments on Tuesday to act together to defend the International Criminal Court against the sanctions imposed on it by the United States, warning that they threatened accountability for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Ms Pillay, 85, a former judge of the court, told The Associated Press that the sanctions were "completely unlawful" and called for "collective action, not just words". Speaking to Reuters in The Hague, she said the United States should return to its tradition of leadership on human rights.

The new American measures, announced on Friday, the same day her prize was announced, target the court as an institution and extend earlier sanctions against individual judges and prosecutors. Ms Pillay said she did not believe the timing was a coincidence. Washington has suspended the latest measures for six months and allowed some transactions to continue.

The visit

On Monday she visited the court's headquarters to show solidarity with its staff, who she said were working with compassion and courage under political pressure. The court's president, Tomoko Akane of Japan, congratulated her on the award and said it recognised international justice as a foundation for lasting peace.

The background

The sanctions follow the court's arrest warrants for the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and his former defence minister, Yoav Gallant, over the war in Gaza. Israel rejects the allegations and the court's jurisdiction, and the United States, which is not a member of the court, has opposed the warrants.

Ms Pillay led the United Nations commission of inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which concluded in September 2025 that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza. Israel rejected the finding and has criticised her. She said the criticism had been expected and urged people to examine the evidence rather than repeat slogans.

Reactions at home

In South Africa, the South African Zionist Federation rejected her award, calling her biased. The deputy justice minister, Andries Nel, said that criticising courts was legitimate but that pressuring judges or prosecutors was not.

Japan's part

Japan is the court's largest financial contributor, and Ms Akane, a former prosecutor, has led it since 2024. Japan and seven other countries said in a joint statement by their foreign ministers on Friday that they regretted and strongly disagreed with the American measures.

What sanctions mean for a court

Sanctions can bar a court and its staff from using American banks and payment systems and from dealing with American companies, including those that supply software and communications. For an institution that depends on secure computer systems and international transfers, the practical effect can be severe even when some transactions are exempted.

The prize

Ms Pillay, who was president of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, served as a judge of the ICC from 2003 to 2008 and as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008 to 2014. She will receive the prize in Oslo on December 10.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

CEATEC's practical AI, Page 3.

Budget Committee, day one, Page 5.

China on Etorofu, Page 5.

Nikkei falls 1,253, Page 9.

IMF: Japan sixth, Page 8.

Kyushu Shinkansen back, Page 15.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Trump Insists the Energy Truce Is Holding as Zelenskyy Reports Six More Russian Strikes on Ukrainian Power Facilities

Lavrov says Moscow will not buy promises again; Ukraine says it carried out no strikes on Russian refineries overnight and is ready to sign guarantees
By the International Desk

President Donald Trump has insisted that the ceasefire on energy infrastructure he announced on Sunday is holding, even as Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, said Russia had struck six Ukrainian energy facilities on Monday.

Asked about the reported attacks, Mr Trump said he would have to look into them, "because there's been violations on both sides". He described the war as a disaster and said that Mr Zelenskyy and President Vladimir Putin had to get together and end it.

Kyiv's account

Mr Zelenskyy said the Russians had attacked six energy facilities and that 33 people had been wounded across the country. Ukraine supported an energy ceasefire, he said, and had carried out no attacks on Russian refineries overnight. Kyiv was prepared to sign guarantees to show it could be trusted.

It was increasingly evident, he said, that Moscow did not intend to comply.

Moscow's account

Russia's foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, said Mr Zelenskyy did not deserve a respite and that Russia would not buy into assurances and promises again. Russia would continue to pursue the goals of what it calls its special military operation, he said.

The diesel decision

Two days before announcing the truce, Mr Trump temporarily eased American sanctions on Russian diesel. Mr Zelenskyy said the move undid Western efforts to isolate the Russian economy, and lawmakers from both American parties said it might breach United States law.

Critics in Washington have linked the decision to the price of diesel ahead of the midterm elections on November 3. Oil traders said on Tuesday that Russian diesel supplies flowing under the arrangement had limited the rise in crude prices.

Europe's pressure

The European Union last week approved its largest package of sanctions on Russia since 2022. Chancellor Friedrich Merz of Germany said Russia would negotiate seriously only under pressure.

Why it matters to Japan

Japan has joined Western sanctions on Russia since 2022 and on October 2 imposed new measures on 35 vessels Russia uses to export oil. Russia's detention of a Japanese correspondent on Sakhalin, announced on Tuesday, comes against the background of that policy, which Moscow's Foreign Ministry cited in blaming Tokyo for the state of relations.

The winter ahead

Ukraine's power system has been damaged by repeated Russian attacks since 2022, and the approach of winter makes energy facilities the most consequential targets in the war. A ceasefire that covered them would spare civilians the worst of the cold; one that exists only on paper would leave Ukraine's cities facing another winter of blackouts.

INTERNATIONAL

The World in Brief: An Iran-Oman Route, a NATO Statement and Warnings for Travellers

By the International Desk

Short reports from around the world.

Iran and Oman

Iran said on Tuesday that it had reached an understanding with Oman on a temporary shipping route, separate from any reopening of the Strait of Hormuz. It gave no details. The United States has blockaded Iranian ports since July 14 and says ships are entitled to free passage through the strait under international law.

Iran's proposal

Iran said it was still reviewing the American response to its seven-point proposal for reopening the strait, with messages passing through intermediaries. Mr

Trump has publicly rejected the Iranian offer.

A NATO statement

NATO and 23 other countries issued a joint statement condemning hostile activity by Iran, after Britain said an incident at RAF Fairford, a base in England used by American bombers, had highly likely been coordinated by Tehran. Iran denied involvement.

Travel warnings

Britain advised against all but essential travel to Riyadh and several other Saudi provinces, and told travellers to avoid areas near the border with Yemen.

Detained for filming

Saudi authorities detained American citizens for filming the sites of attacks, the American embassy said, and warned citizens against recording missile and drone incidents.

Cholera in Yemen

The World Health Organisation reported that suspected cholera cases in Yemen had tripled in three weeks, as fighting continued in the city of Taiz.

Russia's diesel

Russia partly lifted a ban on exports after a call between American and Russian officials, oil traders said, briefly pushing crude prices lower on Tuesday before buying resumed.

The ICC

The International Criminal Court's president, Tomoko Akane, received the Nobel peace laureate Navi Pillay at the court on Monday. (Report on this page.)

ECONOMY

Prices at a Glance: The Corporate Goods Price Index This Year

By the Data Desk

APRIL:	Up 5.5 per cent on a year earlier; up 2.8 per cent on the month.
MAY:	Up 6.8 per cent; up 1.1 per cent on the month.
JUNE:	Up 7.5 per cent; up 0.6 per cent on the month.
JULY:	Up 7.7 per cent, the peak; up 0.4 per cent on the month.
AUGUST (revised):	Up 7.6 per cent; down 0.3 per cent on the month.
SEPTEMBER (preliminary):	Up 6.8 per cent; down 0.3 per cent on the month.
INDEX LEVEL:	135.7 in September, with 2020 as 100.
IMPORT PRICES, YEN BASIS:	Up 24.5 per cent on a year earlier.
IMPORT PRICES, CONTRACT CURRENCY:	Up 17.9 per cent on a year earlier.
EXPORT PRICES, YEN BASIS:	Up 17.9 per cent on a year earlier.
BIGGEST DOWNWARD PULL IN SEPTEMBER:	Rice, pork and fuel.
SOURCE:	Bank of Japan, released October 13.

ECONOMY

Wholesale Inflation Slows to 6.8 Per Cent in September as Rice and Fuel Prices Ease, but Import Costs Remain a Quarter Higher Than a Year Ago

The corporate goods price index falls 0.3 per cent from August for a second monthly decline; the yen-based import price index is up 24.5 per cent on a year earlier
By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

The rise in prices that Japanese companies charge one another slowed in September, as rice and fuel became cheaper, the Bank of Japan said on Tuesday, though costs remained far above last year's level.

The domestic corporate goods price index, which the bank also calls the producer price index, was 6.8 per cent higher than a year earlier, down from 7.6 per cent in August. Compared with August, the index fell 0.3 per cent, its second monthly decline in a row, to 135.7, with 2020 as 100.

What fell

Agricultural, forestry and fishery products pulled the index down most, led by brown rice, polished rice and pork. Petroleum and coal products, led by heavy oil, diesel and jet fuel, also fell. Electricity, gas and water, and plastic products, rose.

The path this year

The annual rate climbed through the spring as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz drove up energy

costs, from 5.5 per cent in April to 6.8 per cent in May, 7.5 per cent in June and a peak of 7.7 per cent in July, before easing to 7.6 per cent in August and 6.8 per cent in September.

Imports

Import prices measured in yen were 24.5 per cent higher than a year earlier, and 17.9 per cent higher measured in the currencies in which contracts are written. In contract currencies, import prices rose 1.0 per cent from August, led by liquefied natural gas, naphtha and jet fuel, while the yen-based index edged down 0.2 per cent.

Export prices in yen were 17.9 per cent higher than a year earlier, lifted by memory chips and other electronic products.

What it means

The figures suggest that the surge in wholesale prices that followed the closing of Hormuz in February may have passed its peak, helped by lower prices for rice, which had risen steeply, and by some easing in fuel.

But a rise of 6.8 per cent is still more than three times the Bank of Japan's 2 per cent target for consumer prices, and the import figures show that the cost of energy brought in from abroad remains far higher than before the war. Companies are likely to keep passing those costs on to consumers for some time.

The Bank of Japan

The central bank raised its policy rate to 1 per cent in June and to 1.25 per cent in September. Its board next meets on October 29 and 30, when it will also publish new forecasts for growth and prices.

The International Monetary Fund, in forecasts published on Tuesday, said it did not expect underlying inflation in Japan to return to 2 per cent until the end of 2027.

ECONOMY

IMF Nudges Up Its Forecast for Japan to 0.7 Per Cent but Projects the Economy Will Slip to Sixth in the World Next Year, Behind India and Britain

The Fund lifts global growth to 3.1 per cent this year, assumes Hormuz reopens in March and warns that the world economy is 'standing on one leg, the AI leg'
By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

The International Monetary Fund raised its forecast for Japan's growth this year to 0.7 per cent but projected that the economy would fall to sixth place in the world by size next year, overtaken by India and Britain, in its latest World Economic Outlook, published in Bangkok on Tuesday.

The Fund expects the Japanese economy to grow 0.7 per cent in 2026, 0.1 point more than it forecast in July, and 0.7 per cent again in 2027. Government spending has partly offset the blow from higher energy prices, it said, and growth should hold steady next year as the energy shock fades and monetary policy returns to normal.

Sixth place

Measured in dollars, Japan's nominal gross domestic product is projected at about \$4.34 trillion this year, keeping it fourth behind the United States, China and Germany. Next year it is projected at about \$4.47 trillion, slightly less than Britain's \$4.49 trillion and India's \$4.52 trillion, which would push Japan to sixth.

The margins are narrow: about \$21 billion separates Japan from Britain in the projection. Much of the change reflects the weak yen, since figures in yen must be converted into dollars, and faster growth in the other two economies.

The world

The Fund raised its forecast for global growth this year to 3.1 per cent, from 3 per cent in July, and kept next year's at 3.4 per cent. It expects the United States to grow 2.3 per cent in both years and the euro area 1.1 per cent this year and 1.2 per cent next.

Global inflation is forecast at 4.7 per cent this year and 4.1 per cent next. The Fund does not expect underlying inflation to return to 2 per cent until the end of 2027 in Japan and Britain, and until the middle of 2028 in the euro area and the United States.

The Hormuz assumption

The forecasts rest on an assumption that the Strait of Hormuz reopens in March next year, with shipping broadly back to pre-war conditions by October 2027. Oil is assumed to average \$95.74 a barrel this year,

about 41 per cent more than last year, and \$87.39 next year.

In a worse case, with oil at \$130 a barrel until the end of March, global growth would be 0.2 point lower this year and 0.5 point lower next, and inflation next year would be 1.1 points higher at 5.2 per cent.

The Middle East and North Africa is the only region expected to shrink this year, by 2 per cent. The Fund forecasts contractions of 3.3 per cent in Saudi Arabia, 15.6 per cent in Qatar and 16.7 per cent in Kuwait, followed by sharp rebounds next year if the strait reopens.

The AI leg

The Fund also warned of the risk of a correction in investment in artificial intelligence. A steep fall could reduce world output by 1.1 per cent by 2028, and American output by 1.8 per cent, though even that scenario would probably not cause a global recession.

"We now have an economy that is standing on one leg, the AI leg," the Fund's managing director, Kristalina Georgieva, said during the meetings.

For Tokyo

For Japan the figures carry two messages. Growth of 0.7 per cent is modest but steadier than many feared when the war began. The fall in the ranking, though driven largely by the exchange rate, is a reminder of how far the yen's weakness has shrunk the economy's weight in the world, and of the low potential growth that economists say lies beneath it.

ECONOMY

How the World's Economies Are Ranked, and Why the Yen Matters as Much as Growth

Japan was second in the world until 2010; exchange rates, not just output, explain much of its slide since
By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

League tables of the world's largest economies usually compare nominal gross domestic product, the value of everything a country produces in a year at current prices, converted into American dollars at market exchange rates.

The method is simple and widely used, but it means that a country's place can change because of its currency as much as its output. When the yen weakens, Japan's GDP shrinks in dollar terms even if the economy has grown in yen.

The slide

Japan was the world's second-largest economy from the late 1960s until 2010, when China overtook it. Germany passed it in 2023, a change confirmed by Japan's own figures early the following year, and India and Britain are now projected to do so next year.

In each case the other country's faster growth played a part, but the yen's fall from about 80 to the dollar in the early 2010s to more than 150 today has done much of the work.

Another yardstick

Economists often prefer to compare economies at purchasing power parity, which adjusts for differences in what money buys in each country. On that basis Japan has for some years ranked below China, the United States, India and Russia, a reminder that the size of a population counts for a great deal.

Per head

For the living standards of ordinary people, output per person matters more than the total. On that measure Japan remains a rich country, though it has fallen well behind the United States and several European economies in dollar terms.

Why rankings still matter

A country's share of the world economy shapes its voting power in institutions such as the IMF, its weight in trade negotiations and the attention it receives from investors. A shrinking dollar figure can also make imports, especially of energy, more painful.

What would change it

A stronger yen would lift Japan's dollar figures quickly. Faster growth in productivity, which economists say is held back by an ageing workforce and slow adoption of new technology, would do so more durably.

The IMF's figures are projections, and exchange rates can move sharply in a year. But the direction of travel has been clear for more than a decade.

ECONOMY



The Tokyo Stock Exchange at Kabutocho. The Nikkei average fell 1,253.40 yen to 67,777.52 on Tuesday as chip stocks were sold after the holiday, while the broader TOPIX rose 5.86 points; in New York the Dow lost 180.45 points. (Photo: TG2 (CC))

ECONOMY

Nikkei Falls 1,253 Yen as Chip Stocks Are Sold After the Holiday, While the Broader TOPIX Edges Higher

Tokyo Electron alone takes about 450 yen off the average, which closes at 67,777.52 for a fourth straight loss; in New York the Dow slips 180 points as Johnson & Johnson drops and traders wait for consumer prices

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

The Nikkei Stock Average fell sharply on Tuesday as the Tokyo market reopened after the Sports Day holiday, dragged down by heavy selling of semiconductor shares that followed a slide in American technology stocks.

The 225-issue average closed at 67,777.52, down 1,253.40 yen, or 1.82 per cent, its fourth losing session in a row. It opened 466 yen lower, slipped below 68,000 before the end of the morning and was down by as much as about 1,540 yen during the afternoon.

The broader TOPIX index, which weights companies by their market value rather than their share price, rose 5.86 points to 4,110.67, as gains in trading houses, shipping companies and other large stocks offset the fall in chipmakers.

The chip sell-off

Selling began with the most expensive semiconductor stocks at the opening bell and spread through the session. Tokyo Electron, the chipmaking equipment maker, accounted on its own for roughly 450 yen of the Nikkei's fall. SoftBank Group, Advantest, Kioxia Holdings, Ibiden, Fujikura, TDK and Lasertec were also among the biggest drags.

Overnight in New York, the Nasdaq Composite had fallen after a well-known short seller cut its view of high-technology stocks, market reports said. Uncertainty about the Middle East and higher crude prices added to the caution.

On the other side of the ledger, Fast Retailing, Konami Group, Recruit Holdings, Fanuc, Toyota Tsusho, Kyocera and Toyota Motor rose, as did the trading houses Itochu and Mitsubishi Corp. Shipping, mining and wholesale were the best-performing sectors; non-ferrous metals, electrical machinery and information and communications the worst.

Breadth

On the Prime market, about 73 per cent of issues fell and 24 per cent rose. Turnover on the Prime market was 7.96 trillion yen, on 2.36 billion shares.

ECONOMY

Markets at a Glance

By the Markets Desk

NIKKEI 225 (Tuesday): 67,777.52, down 1,253.40 (1.82 per cent); fourth straight fall.

TOPIX (Tuesday): 4,110.67, up 5.86.

PRIME MARKET TURNOVER: 7.96 trillion yen; about 73 per cent of issues fell.

BIGGEST DRAG: Tokyo Electron, roughly 450 yen off the Nikkei.

DOW JONES (Tuesday): 51,670.10, down 180.45.

S&P 500 (Tuesday): 7,805.45, down 1.79.

NASDAQ (Tuesday): 27,204.38, down 41.52.

WTI CRUDE, NOVEMBER: \$94.14 a barrel, up 40 cents.

BRENT: Above \$105 on Monday, a two-week high.

GOLD, DECEMBER: \$4,177.30 an ounce, down \$13.30.

DOLLAR: About 158.3 yen.

company's overall size.

A handful of companies with very high share prices, among them Tokyo Electron, Advantest, SoftBank Group and Fast Retailing, therefore carry great weight. When they move together, they can swing the average by hundreds of yen on their own. On Tuesday Tokyo Electron alone accounted for about 450 yen of the fall.

The TOPIX

The TOPIX covers a much broader range of companies listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange and weights each by the value of its shares that are available for trading. A large bank or trading house with a modest share price counts for far more in the TOPIX than in the Nikkei.

On Tuesday, gains in trading houses, shipping lines, Toyota and other large companies were enough to lift the TOPIX slightly, even though most individual stocks fell.

Which to watch

Professional investors generally treat the TOPIX as the better measure of the market as a whole, and many funds track it. The Nikkei, with a history going back to 1950, remains the figure most often quoted in news reports and on television.

The difference has grown more important as a few semiconductor-related companies have come to dominate the Nikkei's movements. On days when chip stocks rise or fall sharply, the Nikkei can give a misleading impression of how most shares are doing.

The lesson from Tuesday

The sell-off was concentrated in chip stocks after a fall in American technology shares, while much of the rest of the market held steady or rose. That is a different picture from a general flight from Japanese equities.

Investors will look to ASML's results on Wednesday and TSMC's on Thursday for a guide to whether the chip stocks' slide has further to run.

ECONOMY

The IMF's October Forecasts at a Glance

By the Data Desk

WORLD: 3.1 per cent in 2026 (up 0.1 point); 3.4 per cent in 2027.

JAPAN: 0.7 per cent in 2026 (up 0.1 point); 0.7 per cent in 2027.

UNITED STATES: 2.3 per cent in both years.

EURO AREA: 1.1 per cent in 2026; 1.2 per cent in 2027.

SAUDI ARABIA: Minus 3.3 per cent in 2026; plus 7.9 per cent in 2027.

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA: Minus 2 per cent in 2026, the only shrinking region.

GLOBAL INFLATION: 4.7 per cent in 2026; 4.1 per cent in 2027.

OIL ASSUMPTION: \$95.74 a barrel in 2026; \$87.39 in 2027.

HORMUZ ASSUMPTION: Reopens in March 2027.

JAPAN'S NOMINAL GDP: About \$4.34 trillion in 2026 (fourth); about \$4.47 trillion in 2027 (sixth).

NEXT YEAR'S ORDER: United States, China, Germany, India, Britain, Japan.

BUSINESS

Business in Brief: Johnson & Johnson Slides, Delta Delays Riyadh, and Memory Makers Fall on a Report From China

By the Business Desk

Short reports from the world of business.

Johnson & Johnson

Shares in Johnson & Johnson fell about 6 per cent in New York on Tuesday after its medical technology division reported sales below analysts' forecasts, and the fall weighed on the Dow Jones Industrial Average.

Memory chips

Micron Technology fell 3.6 per cent and Sandisk slipped after reports of a breakthrough in the design of DRAM memory chips in China, adding to a week of pressure on memory makers. In Tokyo, Kioxia Holdings was among the stocks that weighed most heavily on the Nikkei.

Banks report

The results season for the large American banks began on Tuesday, with mixed reactions from investors. Blackstone, the alternative asset manager, fell more than 4 per cent.

Delta and Riyadh

Delta Air Lines postponed the launch of its planned service between Atlanta and Riyadh to March 2027 after the Houthi attacks on Saudi airports. The flights had been due to begin on October 23.

Gin no Sara

Ride On Express Holdings, which runs the Gin no Sara sushi delivery chain, said personal data on up to 6.5 million customers may have been exposed in a ransomware attack on the company that hosts its servers. Online ordering has been suspended since October 7. (Report on the Technology page.)

Glico's runner

Ezaki Glico said its giant illuminated sign in Dotonbori, Osaka, would go dark at the end of November and be replaced by a seventh-generation sign in the spring of 2027. (Report on the Society page.)

Data centres

NTT Data Group is in final talks to build a data centre of up to 500 megawatts in Osaka for Anthropic, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported. (Report on the CEATEC pages.)

Bid-rigging

The Fair Trade Commission plans to order five companies to pay surcharges totalling about 500 million yen over bid-rigging on maintenance work for the Toei subway. (Report on the Society page.)

TECHNOLOGY

Ransomware at a Hosting Company Leaves Gin no Sara Unable to Take Online Orders, With Data on Up to 6.5 Million Customers Possibly Exposed

Ride On Express says names, addresses, phone numbers and order histories may have leaked but holds no card details; customers are told to beware of calls and e-mails asking for passwords

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Ride On Express Holdings, the operator of the Gin no Sara sushi delivery chain, said on Tuesday that personal information on up to about 6.5 million customers may have been leaked after a ransomware attack on the company that runs the servers holding its customer data.

The figure covers customers who registered on the official websites and apps of Gin no Sara and two sister brands, Kamatora, which delivers Japanese rice dishes, and Sushi Joto. The company stressed that it was the total number of records that could have been affected, not a confirmed count of leaked data, and that it had not found clear traces of a leak or established its scope.

What may be exposed

The data that may have been exposed includes customers' names, addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, sex and dates of birth, together with order histories and loyalty-point membership numbers. Where customers had entered them, the names and birthdays of family members and the details of people to whom deliveries were sent are also included.

Passwords were stored in a converted form, known as a hash, from which the original cannot be read directly, the company said. It does not hold credit card information, so card details are not affected.

The timeline

The company detected suspicious access to its servers on October 5 and began investigating. Early on October 7 some servers failed, and the company that hosts them reported that it had suffered a ransomware attack. Ride On Express shut down its systems and set up an emergency response team that day.

The hosting company, which has not been named, also told it that the data entrusted to it would be difficult to retrieve or restore, according to the company's reports.

Ordering through the official websites and apps has been suspended since then, with no date set for a restart. Customers can still order by telephone, collect from shops or order through the Demaecon and Uber Eats delivery platforms. Those who ordered only through those platforms or by telephone are not

TECHNOLOGY

affected.

Reports and warnings

The company has reported the incident to the Personal Information Protection Commission and to the police, and has begun notifying customers who may be affected. It said no misuse of the data had been confirmed so far.

It warned customers to be wary of suspicious telephone calls and e-mails, particularly any asking for passwords, and has set up a free consultation line, 0120-782-272, open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily until November 15 and on weekdays thereafter.

A wider weakness

The case illustrates a risk that companies face when they entrust their systems to outside providers: an attack on one hosting company can disrupt the business of all its customers at once. Ransomware groups have increasingly targeted such providers for that reason.

For a delivery business that depends on online orders, the disruption is costly in itself. For its customers, the concern is that the kind of information that may have been taken, names, addresses and family birthdays, is exactly what fraudsters use to make their approaches convincing.

TECHNOLOGY

How Ransomware Works, and Why Japanese Companies Keep Falling Victim

Criminal groups lock up a victim's systems and threaten to publish stolen data unless they are paid; a brewer, an office-supplies seller and a publisher have all been hit

By the Technology Desk

Ransomware is malicious software that scrambles a victim's files so that they cannot be used, after which the attackers demand payment, usually in cryptocurrency, for the key to unscramble them.

Over the past decade the business has become more organised and more ruthless. Most groups now steal data before encrypting it, so that they can threaten to publish it even if the victim restores its systems from backups. Security specialists call this double extortion.

How they get in

Attackers commonly enter through weaknesses in equipment that connects a company to the internet, such as virtual private network devices that have not been updated, or by using passwords stolen from employees. Once inside, they move through the network for days or weeks before striking.

Hosting and cloud providers are attractive targets because a single breach can give access to the systems of many client companies at once.

Japanese victims

Japan has suffered a series of damaging attacks. In June 2024 the publisher Kadokawa and its video service Niconico were crippled for weeks. In the autumn of 2025 Asahi Group Holdings had to suspend production and shipments of beer after an attack, and the office-supplies seller Askul halted orders after another.

Hospitals, ports and local governments have also been hit, and in several cases the disruption lasted for weeks.

Pay or not

The Japanese government and police advise companies not to pay ransoms, arguing that payment funds further crime and offers no guarantee that data will be returned or deleted. Many victims do not disclose whether they have paid.

What customers can do

When a company reports that personal data may have leaked, security specialists advise customers to change any password they used on the affected service and anywhere else they used the same one, and to treat unexpected calls, messages and e-mails with suspicion, even when they contain correct personal details.

Legitimate companies do not ask customers to give their passwords over the telephone or by e-mail.

The law

Under Japan's personal information protection law, companies must report leaks that could harm individuals to the Personal Information Protection Commission and notify the people affected. The rules were tightened in 2022 to make such reports mandatory.

The result is that the public now hears about more incidents than before, which is uncomfortable but useful: it shows the scale of a problem that was long kept quiet.

TECHNOLOGY

Apple Unveils HomeView, a \$299 Smart-Home Display Built Around Its New Siri, Its Biggest Push Yet Into the Living Room

The seven-inch device recognises up to six members of a household and will ship on November 13; it will not be sold in the European Union, where Siri's AI features are not offered

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

Apple on Tuesday unveiled HomeView, a smart-home hub with a screen that is designed to show off the artificial-intelligence version of its Siri assistant, as the company presses into a market long led by Amazon and Google.

The device, which has a seven-inch square display, costs \$299 and was available to order from Tuesday, with shipments beginning on November 13, according to Apple's announcement as reported by the technology site 9to5Mac.

Two versions

HomeView comes in two forms. One sits on a table, with the screen mounted on a domed speaker base by a hinge that lets it tilt. The other is mounted on a wall using fittings made by Schneider Electric's home division.

The display adjusts what it shows to the viewer's distance, offering simple information from across the room and more detail close up. A camera with Apple's Center Stage feature, which keeps a moving speaker in frame, allows video calls on FaceTime.

Six faces

The device can recognise up to six people, each of whom gets a personalised home screen with their own apps and widgets, and keeps each person's private information from the others. It can show up to nine feeds from home security cameras at once, and one of its screens gives quick access to the connected accessories in a household's Apple Home system.

Owners of an iPhone or iPad that supports Apple Intelligence will get answers from Siri that draw on their personal information. Others can use the assistant for general questions and for finding music.

Not in Europe

HomeView will not be sold in the European Union, because Apple does not offer the AI features of Siri there. Apple has cited the bloc's digital competition rules in delaying some features in Europe.

The rest of the range

Apple also announced a new Apple TV 4K with its A19 chip and an upgraded remote, a second-generation HomePod mini with the new Siri, and a collection of home accessories developed with LG and Schneider.

Why it matters

Smart displays and speakers have been a disappointing business for many of the companies that make them, which have struggled to earn money from devices often used only for timers, weather and music. Apple is betting that a more capable assistant will change that.

For Japanese suppliers of components such as displays, sensors and electronic parts, a successful new Apple product line can mean significant orders, although Apple does not disclose its suppliers for individual devices.

Analysts will watch whether HomeView persuades customers that Siri, long seen as lagging its rivals, has caught up.

TECHNOLOGY

The Week in Technology

By the Technology Desk

CEATEC: Makuhari Messe, Chiba, until Friday, with the Japan Mobility Show's business week alongside.

DATA CENTRES: NTT Data in final talks to build a 500-megawatt facility in Osaka for Anthropic, the Nikkei reports.

RANSOMWARE: Gin no Sara's operator says data on up to 6.5 million customers may have leaked.

APPLE: HomeView, a \$299 smart-home display, ships on November 13.

CHIP RESULTS: ASML on Wednesday; TSMC on Thursday.

MEMORY: Micron falls 3.6 per cent in New York after reports of a DRAM design breakthrough in China.

TOKYO: Tokyo Electron alone takes about 450 yen off the Nikkei on Tuesday.

THE IMF: Warns that a sharp correction in AI investment could cut world output by 1.1 per cent by 2028.

PHYSICAL AI: CEATEC's organisers say Japan's version should work on factory floors, not dance.

ON THIS DAY: Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier on October 14, 1947.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1872: The Emperor Rides the First Train From Shimbashi to Yokohama, and Japan's Railway Age Begins

Twenty-nine kilometres in 53 minutes, on British locomotives and a narrow gauge that still shapes the network; the date is marked today as Railway Day

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

On October 14, 1872, the Emperor Meiji travelled by train from Shimbashi in Tokyo to Yokohama and back for the formal opening of Japan's first railway. The date, the 12th day of the ninth month in the old calendar then still in use, is commemorated every year as Railway Day.

The line ran for about 29 kilometres, and the journey took 53 minutes. Regular passenger service began the next day.

Built with British help

The railway was built with the help of British engineers, led by Edmund Morel, who died in 1871, aged about 30, before he could see it completed. It was financed in part by a loan raised in London, and its locomotives and carriages were imported from Britain.

Morel and the Japanese officials chose a narrow gauge of 1,067 millimetres, cheaper to build through mountainous country. Most of Japan's conventional railway network still uses it, which is one reason the Shinkansen was built on separate standard-gauge tracks.

Across the sea

Part of the line was laid on an embankment built out into the sea at Takanawa, because the army would not give up land it held along the shore. Remains of the embankment were uncovered in 2019 during redevelopment near Takanawa Gateway Station, and part was designated a national historic site in 2021.

The first locomotive

Locomotive No. 1, built in Britain in 1871, survives and is designated an Important Cultural Property. It is displayed at the Railway Museum in Saitama.

Trial runs

Trains had begun carrying passengers between Shinagawa and Yokohama in June 1872, months before the formal opening. Fares were high: a lower-class ticket for the full journey cost 37.5 sen, at a time when that sum would buy a substantial quantity of rice.

The day remembered

The anniversary was designated Railway Memorial Day in 1922, on the line's 50th anniversary, and renamed Railway Day in 1994, so that all of the country's railway operators, not only the former national railways, would mark it.

From Shimbashi to the Shinkansen

In the 154 years since, Japan has built one of the densest and most punctual rail networks in the world, and in 1964 opened the first high-speed line. On this year's Railway Day, the Kyushu Shinkansen is due to resume normal service from the first train after a day's suspension for checks on its overhead wires.

The site of the original Shimbashi terminus, near today's Shiodome, has a reconstruction of the old station building with an exhibition on the line's history.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Brewers 7, Dodgers 4, Page 16.

Editorial: Eighty years, Page 19.

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

Crossword, Page 17.

CEATEC's practical AI, Page 3.

Budget Committee, day one, Page 5.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1884: George Eastman Patents Photographic Film on a Roll, and Photography Begins to Leave the Studio

His paper-backed film replaced heavy glass plates; four years later came the Kodak camera and the promise 'You press the button, we do the rest'

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

On October 14, 1884, George Eastman, a former bank clerk from Rochester, New York, received a United States patent for photographic film: a light-sensitive emulsion coated on a long strip of paper that could be wound on a roll.

Until then photographers had to use glass plates, which were heavy, fragile and had to be loaded one at a time. Eastman's film made it possible to take many pictures in succession without reloading.

The roll holder

With William Walker, Eastman developed a roll holder that could be fitted to existing plate cameras, so that photographers could use the new film without buying new equipment. The image had to be stripped from the paper backing for printing, a delicate process.

The Kodak

In 1888 Eastman introduced the Kodak, a simple box camera sold already loaded with film for 100 pictures. When the roll was finished, the owner sent the whole camera back to the company, which developed the pictures and returned the camera reloaded. The advertising slogan was: You press the button, we do the rest.

A year later he introduced transparent film on a base of celluloid, which did away with the paper backing and made motion pictures practical. Thomas Edison's early film cameras used it.

The company

Eastman's business, founded as the Eastman Dry Plate Company in 1881, became Eastman Kodak and dominated photography for most of the 20th century. Its failure to adapt to digital cameras led to its bankruptcy filing in 2012.

Japan's film makers

In Japan, Fuji Photo Film was founded in 1934 to make photographic film at home rather than import it. It became one of Kodak's great rivals and, unlike Kodak, transformed itself as film faded, moving into medical systems, materials and cosmetics as Fujifilm.

The snapshot

Eastman's real invention was perhaps less a material than an idea: that photography need not be the preserve of professionals with heavy equipment. The snapshot, the family album and, eventually, the billions of pictures taken on telephones every day all descend from it.

The man

Eastman, who never married, gave away much of his fortune to universities, music schools and dental clinics. He died in 1932.

The patent of October 1884 was a small step in a long process, but it marked the moment when photography began to move from the studio into everyday life.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1947: Chuck Yeager Flies the Bell X-1 Faster Than Sound Over the Mojave Desert, With Two Broken Ribs

The rocket plane, dropped from a bomber, reached Mach 1.06; the flight was kept secret for months

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

On October 14, 1947, Captain Charles Yeager of the United States Air Force became the first pilot to fly faster than the speed of sound in level flight, in the rocket-powered Bell X-1 over the Mojave Desert in California.

The orange aircraft, which Yeager named Glamorous Glennis after his wife, was carried aloft under a modified B-29 bomber and released at high altitude. Its rocket engine took it to about Mach 1.06, a little over 1,100 kilometres an hour at the height at which it flew, roughly 13,000 metres.

The barrier

Pilots in the Second World War had reported violent buffeting and loss of control as their aircraft approached the speed of sound in dives, and some had died. Many engineers feared that the shock

TECHNOLOGY

waves that form near that speed would make supersonic flight impossible or deadly.

The X-1 was designed to find out. Its shape was based on that of a .50-calibre bullet, which was known to be stable at supersonic speeds.

Broken ribs

Two days before the flight, Yeager broke two ribs in a fall from a horse. Afraid of being grounded, he told only a few colleagues. Unable to close the aircraft's door with his injured side, he used a short length of broom handle supplied by the flight engineer, Jack Ridley, as a lever.

The secret

The achievement was kept secret for months for reasons of national security and was announced officially only in 1948. It made Yeager famous, and his story was later told in Tom Wolfe's book The Right Stuff and the film based on it.

The aircraft

Glamorous Glennis is displayed at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, hanging among the most famous aircraft ever built.

What followed

Within a few years supersonic flight had become routine for military jets, and in 1976 the Anglo-French Concorde began carrying passengers at twice the speed of sound. Engineers are still working on the problem that kept Concorde off most routes over land: the sonic boom.

Japan's aerospace agency, JAXA, has carried out research on reducing sonic booms, with an eye to quieter supersonic airliners in the future.

Yeager died in 2020 at the age of 97.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1957: The British Computer Society Is Founded, as Computing Begins to Become a Profession

Its first president built one of the earliest stored-program computers; Japan's own society for information processing followed three years later

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

On October 14, 1957, ten days after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik, the British Computer Society was founded to bring together the small but growing number of people who designed, built and used electronic computers.

At the time there were only a handful of computers in Britain, most of them in universities, government laboratories and a few large companies. The people who worked with them came from mathematics, engineering and physics, and there was no recognised profession of computing.

Its first president

The society's first president was Maurice Wilkes of the University of Cambridge, whose EDSAC, which ran its first program in 1949, was one of the earliest computers to store its programs in memory, the principle on which almost all computers since have worked.

A charter

The society received a Royal Charter in 1984, which commits it to promoting the study and practice of computing and advancing knowledge in the field for the benefit of the public. It now calls itself BCS, the Chartered Institute for IT, and sets professional standards and qualifications for people working in the industry.

Japan in 1957

Japan's own computing was also taking its first steps. FUJIC, generally regarded as the country's first electronic computer, was completed in 1956 by an engineer at Fuji Photo Film to calculate the design of camera lenses. The same year the government's Electrotechnical Laboratory completed an early transistor computer.

The Information Processing Society of Japan, the country's equivalent of the British society, was founded in 1960.

Why professional bodies matter

As computers moved into every part of life, the question of who could be trusted to build and run them became pressing. Professional societies set standards of competence and ethics, accredit university courses and give their members a voice in public debates about technology.

Today's questions

Those debates now concern artificial intelligence, data protection and cybersecurity, subjects that the founders of 1957 could hardly have imagined. The ransomware attack that has disrupted the Gin no Sara delivery chain this week is the kind of problem on which such bodies are expected to advise.

From a few machines

The society's growth into a body of tens of thousands of members mirrors the growth of computing itself, from a few rooms of valves and wires to the devices in almost every pocket.

Wilkes, who lived until 2010, remained active in computing research into his nineties.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1968: Apollo 7 Sends the First Live Television Pictures From an American Spacecraft, With a Hand-Lettered Sign

The first crewed Apollo flight, after the fire that killed three astronauts, tested the spacecraft that would carry men to the Moon

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

On October 14, 1968, the three astronauts of Apollo 7 broadcast live television pictures from orbit, the first live television transmission from an American crewed spacecraft.

The crew, Walter Schirra, Donn Eisele and Walter Cunningham, held up hand-lettered cards for the camera, one of which read: Keep those cards and letters coming in, folks! The broadcasts, repeated during the flight, later won a special Emmy award.

After the fire

Apollo 7 was the first flight of the Apollo programme to carry astronauts. Its predecessor with a crew, Apollo 1, never flew: on January 27, 1967, a fire swept through the spacecraft during a rehearsal on the launch pad and killed Virgil Grissom, Edward White and Roger Chaffee.

The command module was redesigned after the fire, and Apollo 7's task was to prove that the new spacecraft was safe.

Eleven days

Launched on October 11, 1968, from Cape Kennedy on a Saturn IB rocket, Apollo 7 spent nearly 11 days in orbit around the Earth, testing the spacecraft's engine, navigation and life-support systems, before splashing down in the Atlantic on October 22.

The mission was a technical success, although Schirra developed a heavy cold and the crew's irritable exchanges with mission control became well known.

On to the Moon

Apollo 7's success allowed NASA to send Apollo 8 around the Moon in December 1968. Seven months later, Apollo 11's landing was watched live on television by hundreds of millions of people around the world.

Television and space

Japan had seen the power of satellite television five years earlier, when the first trans-Pacific television relay by satellite, on November 23, 1963, brought news of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy to Japanese viewers.

The pictures today

Live video from orbit is now routine. Astronauts aboard the International Space Station, among them Japanese astronauts, speak live to schoolchildren on Earth, and companies stream rocket launches as they happen.

In 1968 the grainy pictures from Apollo 7 were a novelty that let the public see, for the first time, how people lived and worked in space as it happened.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1983: Japan's First Baby Conceived by In-Vitro Fertilisation Is Born at Tohoku University Hospital

Five years after the world's first, a Sendai team brought the technique to Japan; today about one baby in ten is born with assisted reproduction

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

On October 14, 1983, a baby girl was born at Tohoku University Hospital in Sendai, the first child in Japan to be conceived by in-vitro fertilisation, in which an egg is fertilised outside the body and the embryo is then transferred to the mother's womb.

The team was led by Masakuni Suzuki, a professor of obstetrics and gynaecology at Tohoku University.

The world's first

The world's first baby conceived by the technique, Louise Brown, had been born in Oldham, England, in July 1978, after years of work by the physiologist Robert Edwards and the gynaecologist Patrick Steptoe. Edwards was awarded the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 2010.

Controversy

The technique was controversial in its early years. Critics raised ethical questions about creating human embryos in the laboratory and about the risks to mothers and children. In Japan, the Japan Society of Obstetrics and Gynecology issued guidelines on its use in 1983.

A routine treatment

Over the following four decades in-vitro fertilisation became a routine part of fertility treatment. Japan now carries out more cycles of assisted reproduction than almost any other country, and in recent years about one baby in ten born in Japan has been conceived with its help.

Insurance

In April 2022 the government extended public health insurance to cover standard fertility treatments, including in-vitro fertilisation, which had previously been paid for largely by patients themselves with the help of subsidies. The change was part of efforts to ease the financial burden on couples as the birth rate fell.

The questions now

The success rate of treatment falls sharply with the age of the woman, and many patients in Japan begin treatment in their late thirties or forties. Doctors and policymakers continue to debate how to support younger couples, what to do with frozen embryos and what rights children born from donated eggs or sperm should have to know their origins.

A Sendai first

Tohoku University, one of the country's oldest national universities, has a long record in medical research. The birth of 1983 is remembered as one of its landmarks.

The girl born that day would now be in her forties, part of a generation for whom assisted reproduction has gone from headline to ordinary medicine.

Japan's births fell to a record low last year, and the number of babies conceived with medical help has become a significant share of the total.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 1985: 'The C++ Programming Language' Is Published, and One of the World's Most Widely Used Languages Goes Public

Bjarne Stroustrup's book was the language's first reference; the code inside browsers, games and car systems still owes much to it

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

On October 14, 1985, The C++ Programming Language by Bjarne Stroustrup was published, the first book to describe the language and, for years, its definitive reference. The first commercial version of the C++ compiler was released the same month.

Stroustrup, a Danish computer scientist working at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey, had begun work on the language in 1979. He wanted to combine the efficiency of C, the language in which the Unix operating system was written, with ways of organising large programs that he had found in an older language, Simula.

C with Classes

His first version was called C with Classes. Classes let a programmer bundle data with the operations that act on it, an approach known as object-oriented programming, which makes large programs easier to structure and maintain.

The name C++ was adopted in 1983. In the C language, ++ is the operator that adds one to a variable, so the name suggested an increment on C.

Everywhere

C++ spread rapidly because it was fast, could work closely with hardware and could use the vast body of existing C code. It became a standard tool for operating systems, web browsers, databases, financial trading systems, video games and the software embedded in cars and machinery.

Standards

The language was standardised internationally in 1998, and new versions of the standard have appeared every three years since 2011, adding features while keeping compatibility with older code.

Criticism

C++ is also famously complex. Its critics argue that it makes it too easy to write programs with errors in the handling of memory, a common source of security weaknesses, and some governments and companies now encourage the use of languages designed to prevent such errors.

Its defenders reply that the language has added safer tools and that the billions of lines of existing C++ code will be with us for decades.

Japan

Japanese companies in games, electronics and the car industry have long relied on C++, and many of the systems inside a modern car, including those that will run the physical AI on show at CEATEC this week, are written in it.

Stroustrup, now a professor at Columbia University, has received many honours for the work that began with a book published 41 years ago today.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14, 2011: The iPhone 4S Goes on Sale With Siri, and a Voice Assistant Comes to the Pocket

Launched days after Steve Jobs died, the phone sold 4 million in three days; in Japan it was also the first iPhone sold by au

By the Technology Desk

On October 14, 2011, the iPhone 4S went on sale in the United States, Japan and five other countries, bringing to millions of people Siri, a voice assistant that could answer questions, set reminders and send messages in response to spoken commands.

Apple had announced the phone on October 4. The next day its co-founder, Steve Jobs, died at the age of 56, and the launch became in part a tribute to him.

A startup's idea

Siri began as a product of a startup spun out of SRI International, a research institute in California, and Apple bought the company in 2010. On the iPhone 4S it was labelled a beta, a test version, and at first understood English, French and German. Japanese followed in March 2012.

The phone

Outwardly the 4S looked like its predecessor, the iPhone 4. Inside it had a faster A5 processor and an eight-megapixel camera. Apple sold more than 4 million in the first three days.

Japan's carriers

In Japan, the 4S was the first iPhone sold by KDDI's au, ending the exclusive position that SoftBank had held since the iPhone arrived in Japan in 2008. NTT Docomo began selling the iPhone two years later.

The assistant era

Siri was followed by Google's assistant, Amazon's Alexa and others, and voice assistants spread into speakers, cars and televisions. For years, however, they were limited to fairly simple tasks, and Siri was often criticised for lagging its rivals.

Fifteen years on

The rise of large language models has given voice assistants a second life. On Tuesday, 15 years after the 4S, Apple unveiled HomeView, a smart-home display built around a new version of Siri powered by artificial intelligence.

What changed

The 4S showed that people would talk to their phones, at least sometimes. The question Apple faces now is whether a more capable assistant can become something people rely on every day, rather than a novelty they try and forget.

The original iPhone 4S, with its glass back and steel band, is now a collector's item, but the idea it introduced is everywhere.

Siri itself is now used in many languages on hundreds of millions of devices, from watches to cars.

TECHNOLOGY

October 14 in Technology History

By the Data Desk

1872: Japan's first railway formally opens between Shimbashi and Yokohama; the date is now Railway Day.

1884: George Eastman is granted a United States patent for photographic film on a roll.

1888: Louis Le Prince films the Roundhay Garden Scene in Leeds, the oldest surviving motion picture.

1947: Chuck Yeager flies the Bell X-1 faster than sound.

1957: The British Computer Society is founded.

1968: Apollo 7 makes the first live television broadcast from an American crewed spacecraft.

1983: Japan's first baby conceived by in-vitro fertilisation is born in Sendai.

1985: The C++ Programming Language is published.

2011: The iPhone 4S goes on sale with the Siri voice assistant.

2012: Felix Baumgartner jumps from a balloon about 39 kilometres up and becomes the first person to break the sound barrier in free fall.

WEATHER

Morning Rain in the North and Centre Gives Way to Sunshine From the West; Tokyo Turns Wet in the Early Afternoon

Highs of 29 degrees in Kochi and Naha, while a cooler night follows the front; Koguma becomes an extratropical low far out in the Pacific

By the Weather Desk

A band of rain moving across northern and central Japan brought wet weather to much of the country on Wednesday morning, with sunshine following behind it from the west, according to today's map for 19 cities.

Rain fell this morning in Kyoto, Nagoya, Nagano, Kanazawa, Niigata, Akita and Sapporo. It returns to Sapporo and Nagano this afternoon, reaches Tokyo in the early afternoon and lasts until evening in Kushiro, at the eastern end of Hokkaido.

Tokyo

Tokyo is forecast to be cloudy, with rain at times from the early afternoon, and a high of 26 degrees after a morning low of 19. An umbrella will be useful for the journey home.

Brightening in the west

Nagoya and Kyoto, wet this morning, turn sunny this afternoon, and Osaka brightens from cloud. Fukuoka, Hiroshima, Kochi and Kagoshima are sunny all day, and Takamatsu has sunshine with some cloud. Matsue turns cloudy after a sunny start.

The warmest and the coolest

Kochi and Naha reach 29, the highest on the map, and Kagoshima 28. Naha also had the warmest morning, at 25. Kushiro, with a high of 19 after rain, is the coolest city, and Aomori had the coldest morning, at 15.

Sapporo and Aomori had already reached 23 by late morning, above the forecast highs, as warm air ran ahead of the front.

A cooler night

Temperatures fall tonight behind the front, and by midnight most cities are forecast to be colder than this morning's lows. The change marks the arrival of drier autumn air after a warm and humid start to the week.

Wind in the north

Forecasters warn of strong winds in Hokkaido, with gales possible on the Sea of Japan side in the north from this morning into Thursday, and of thunder with the rain in Hokuriku and northern Tohoku.

The storms

Typhoon No. 29, Koguma, became an extratropical low far east of Japan, about 1,570 kilometres east of Sendai, and is moving away to the north-east. A new tropical depression near the Marshall Islands is forecast to become a typhoon by Monday near the Mariana Islands.

The days ahead

High pressure is expected to bring clearer autumn weather in the second half of the week, and conditions for outings at the weekend look generally favourable, according to the Japan Weather Association's tenki.jp service. A front moving south early next week raises the chance of rain again.

Full forecasts for each region, with the sunrise and sunset, appear in the panels beside the map.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

IMF: Japan sixth, Page 8.

WEATHER

Koguma Becomes an Extratropical Low Far Out in the Pacific as a New Tropical Depression Forms Near the Marshall Islands

The newcomer is forecast to strengthen into a tropical storm by Thursday morning and a typhoon by Monday near the Marianas, about 1,370 km south of Chichijima

By the Weather Desk

Typhoon No. 29, Koguma, has lost its tropical character and become an extratropical low far east of Japan, the Japan Meteorological Agency said, ending a week in which the storm stayed well away from the country.

At 9 a.m. on Wednesday the low was about 1,570 kilometres east of Sendai, with a central pressure of 986 hectopascals, moving north-east at 35 kilometres an hour.

A new depression

At the same time a tropical depression lay near the Marshall Islands, about 1,710 kilometres east-south-east of Guam, with a central pressure of 1004 hectopascals.

The agency forecasts that it will strengthen into a tropical storm by Thursday morning and into a typhoon by Monday morning, when it is expected to be near the Mariana Islands, about 1,370 kilometres south of Chichijima in the Ogasawara Islands.

When it becomes a tropical storm, it will be numbered this year's Typhoon No. 30.

Too early to say

It is far too early to say whether the new storm will approach Japan. Typhoons that form in the far east of the Pacific in October often curve north-east before reaching the country, steered by the westerly winds that strengthen in autumn, but some track west towards Okinawa or the main islands.

The agency issues forecasts of a typhoon's track for five days ahead, with a cone of probability that widens with time, and residents of Ogasawara, Okinawa and the Pacific coast should follow its bulletins in the coming days.

Koguma's path

Koguma reached the strength of a strong typhoon early in the week, with winds of 35 metres a second near its centre, but moved north-east over the open ocean, its only effect on Japan being a swell along Pacific coasts.

A busy year

This year's count of 29 named storms by mid-October is well above the average for a full year in the north-west Pacific, which is about 25. Several have affected Japan, and the season is not over: typhoons can form into November and even December.

Swell from the departing storm may still raise waves on exposed coasts on Wednesday. Anglers and walkers should keep off breakwaters and rocks facing the open sea.

SOCIETY

Courts End the Practice of Giving Night Duty Only to Men, as Warrant Work After Dark Is Gathered Into Tokyo and Osaka

Night work by clerks and other staff will be assigned regardless of sex, the Asahi Shimbun reports; until now it has in practice fallen to male employees

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Night-time work at Japan's courts, which has in practice been assigned only to male staff, is to be shared by employees regardless of sex, the Asahi Shimbun has reported, in a change linked to the consolidation of such work in Tokyo and Osaka.

The change concerns the duties that court clerks and other employees perform outside office hours, chiefly in handling requests from the police and prosecutors for arrest and search warrants, which can arrive at any hour and must be dealt with promptly.

The consolidation

The Supreme Court has been preparing to gather the review of warrant requests at night and on holidays into courts in Tokyo and Osaka, using online systems, Jiji Press reported in February. Under the present arrangements, courts across the country keep staff on duty to receive requests and to support the judges who decide them.

Concentrating the work in two cities is expected to change how night duty is organised, and the courts

have used the change to drop the practice of assigning it only to men, according to the Asahi.

A long-standing question

The practice had been questioned before. In a disclosure request decided in January 2022, a member of the public asked the Supreme Court for the document setting out why female court employees were never assigned overnight duty. The court replied that no such document existed, explaining that each court decided for itself which staff should take night duty and did not report its rules to the Supreme Court. The court's information disclosure review committee upheld that response in June 2022.

The answer meant, in effect, that the practice rested on custom rather than on any written rule that could be examined and defended.

The law elsewhere

In private employment, the provisions of the Labour Standards Act that restricted night work by women were abolished in 1999, when the revised Equal Employment Opportunity Act came into force, on the principle that women and men should be treated equally at work, with protection kept for pregnancy and childbirth.

What it means

For the courts, the change brings an old practice into line with the principle the judiciary applies to others. For employees, it means that a burden carried by one group will now be shared, and that the conditions of night work, from safety to rest facilities, will have to suit everyone who does it.

The warrant system

Japan's Constitution requires that, except when a person is caught in the act, an arrest be made only on a warrant issued by a judge. Warrant requests therefore come to the courts around the clock, and judges reject only a very small share of them, a point that critics of the system have long raised.

The way that work is organised after dark is rarely noticed by the public. The decision to share it equally is the subject of today's editorial cartoon.

SOCIETY

Fair Trade Commission to Order Five Companies to Pay About 500 Million Yen Over Bid-Rigging on Toei Subway Track Maintenance

Six firms are said to have shared out the work line by line since at least 2020, with some bids at 99.9 per cent of the ceiling price; a sixth escapes penalty by confessing first

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The Japan Fair Trade Commission plans to find that six construction companies broke the Antimonopoly Act by rigging bids for track maintenance on the Toei subway and other lines run by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, and to order five of them to pay surcharges totalling about 500 million yen, NHK and Jiji Press reported.

The work, ordered by the Tokyo Metropolitan Bureau of Transportation, included replacing rails, sleepers and points and grinding the surface of rails on the Asakusa, Mita, Shinjuku and Oedo subway lines, the Toden Arakawa tram line, now known as the Tokyo Sakura Tram, and the Nippori-Toneri Liner.

The companies

The six companies are Totetsu Kogyo, an affiliate of JR East; Sanki Kensetsu, part of the JR Kyushu group; Tokyu Kido Kogyo of the Tokyu group; and Tsuboi Kogyo, Nisshin Kogyo and Hayakawa Kensetsu, according to the reports. Tokyu Kido Kogyo is expected to escape penalties under the leniency programme, having reported the conduct before the investigation.

The commission will issue its orders after hearing the companies' views.

How it worked

From March 2020 at the latest, the companies' staff decided before each tender which of them would win, the reports said. The work was divided by line, with each company keeping to its own and the others staying away. In some tenders only one company bid, and some winning bids reached 99.9 per cent of the ceiling price set by the bureau.

The commission raided the six companies and the bureau in November 2025.

The bureau's role

Investigators are also examining whether bureau staff were involved in arranging the bids. The metropolitan government set up a special team to investigate the day after the raids. If officials are found to have leaked information, the commission could demand improvements under the law against bid-rigging involving public officials.

In 2018 a similar case at the Tokyo Metropolitan Waterworks Bureau found that an official had leaked estimated prices.

The scale

The bureau ordered an average of about 34 such contracts a year between fiscal 2020 and 2024, worth about 2.8 billion yen a year in total.

The Hokkaido connection

Two of the six, Totetsu Kogyo and Sanki Kensetsu, were among companies inspected by the commission in May over suspected bid-rigging on track work for the extension of the Hokkaido Shinkansen to Sapporo. That case is separate and remains under investigation.

Track maintenance is specialised work carried out at night when trains are not running, and only a few companies have the equipment and skilled workers to do it, conditions that competition authorities say make collusion easier to sustain and harder to detect.

SOCIETY

Nobuo Inaba, the Former Central Banker Who Led NHK Through a Fee Cut and Its Move Online, Dies at 75

A Bank of Japan executive and Ricoh chairman before he became the broadcaster's president in 2023

By the Society Desk

Nobuo Inaba, a former executive of the Bank of Japan who served as president of the public broadcaster NHK from 2023 until January this year, has died. He was 75.

He died of aspiration pneumonia at a hospital in Tokyo on October 6, Jiji Press reported on Tuesday.

The central banker

Born in Shizuoka Prefecture, Mr Inaba graduated from the faculty of economics at the University of Tokyo and joined the Bank of Japan in 1974. He rose to become one of its executive directors in 2004, a period in which the bank was working its way out of the zero interest rate policy and quantitative easing of the early 2000s.

The company chairman

In 2008 he moved to the office equipment maker Ricoh as an executive adviser, and he became chairman of its board in 2017.

NHK

He became president of NHK in January 2023, succeeding Terunobu Maeda, another figure from the business world. He took over at a time of pressure on the broadcaster to cut costs and to adapt to an audience moving from television to the internet.

Under his leadership NHK cut its licence fee by about a tenth in October 2023 and pursued structural reforms to reduce spending. He oversaw the expansion of internet distribution of NHK's programmes, including the launch of the NHK One service, after a change in the law made online distribution part of the broadcaster's core work.

His term also covered the revision of the Broadcasting Act, passed in 2024, which made internet distribution one of NHK's core services and set out how people who use its online service without a television would pay for it.

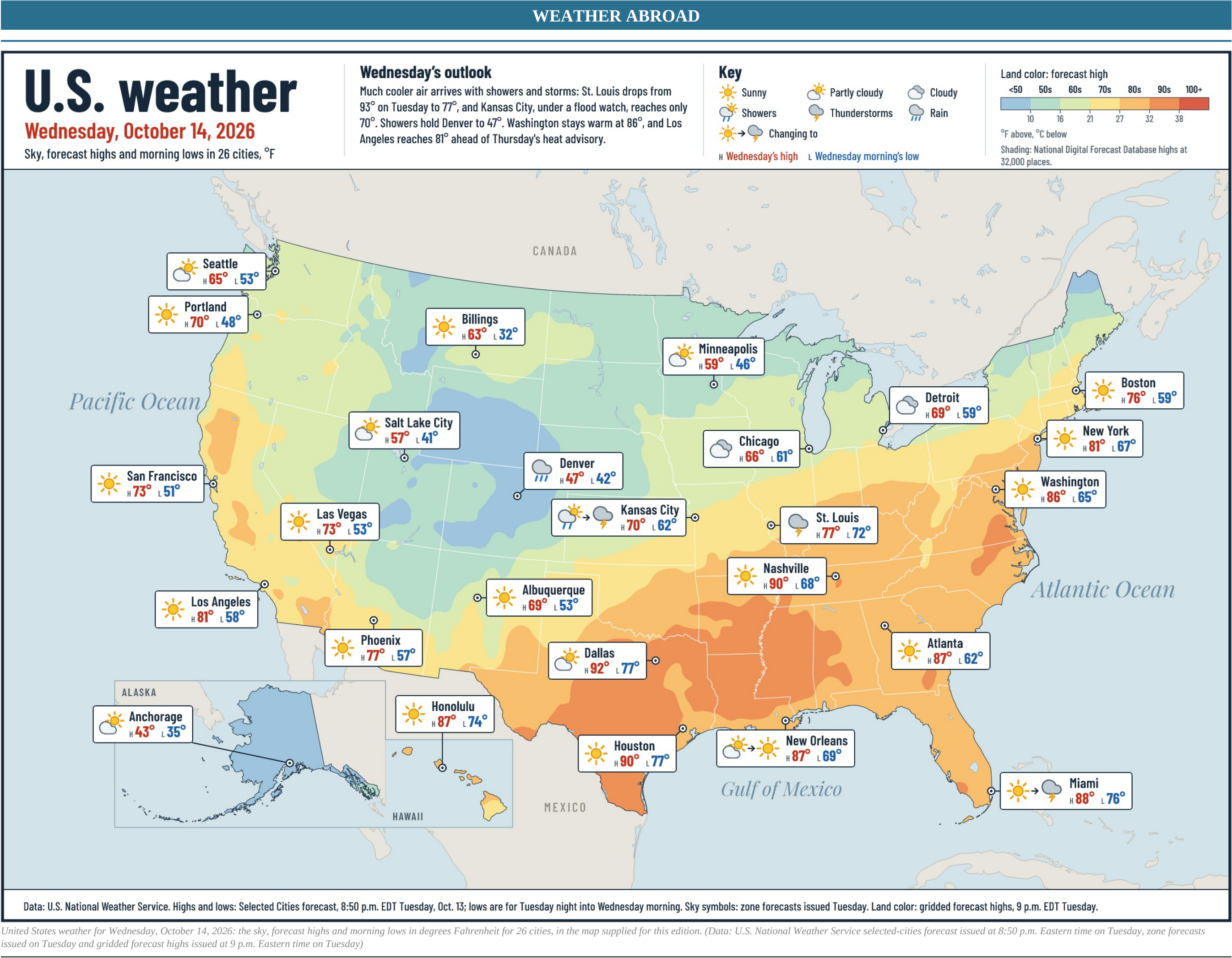
The successor

He was succeeded in January by Tatsuhiko Inoue, a former vice president, the first person from inside NHK to lead it in 18 years.

The licence fee

The fee he cut is paid by every household with a television, and its future has become one of the central questions about public broadcasting in Japan as more people watch programmes on phones and computers. The decisions taken during his term set the terms of that debate for years to come.

His career spanned three of the country's most closely watched institutions: the central bank, a global manufacturer and the national broadcaster.



SOCIETY



A Kyushu Shinkansen 800 series train in Tsubame service at a station platform. JR Kyushu said the line would run normally from the first train today after inspections found a damaged fitting on the overhead wire between Kumamoto and Shin-Yatsushiro; 97 trains were cancelled on Tuesday. (Photo: Japan Rail)

SOCIETY

Kyushu Shinkansen to Run Normally From the First Train Today After Checks Found a Damaged Fitting on the Overhead Wire; 97 Trains Were Cancelled

A contact strip was missing from a train's pantograph and a hanger linking two wires had come loose near Shin-Yatsushiro; the section to Kagoshima stayed closed all Tuesday, and JR Kyushu says the fault is unrelated to the July earthquake

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The Kyushu Shinkansen is due to run normally along its whole length from the first train on Wednesday, JR Kyushu said, after inspections prompted by a fault on a train's pantograph kept part of the line closed throughout Tuesday.

The company said it had completed safety checks on pantographs and overhead wires and that repairs were on track, allowing normal services between Hakata and Kagoshima-Chuo.

What was found

The trouble began on Monday night, when a train that had arrived at the Kumamoto General Rolling Stock Depot in Minami Ward, Kumamoto, was found to be missing a contact strip from its pantograph, the part that presses against the overhead wire to collect power.

Because the wires could not be fully inspected overnight, the whole line was suspended from the first train on Tuesday. Inspections that day found that a hanger, a fitting that links the two wires of the overhead line, had come loose and been damaged between Kumamoto and Shin-Yatsushiro.

A long day

Services had been expected to resume around midday, but the checks took longer. Trains between Hakata and Kumamoto began running again at about 4:15 p.m., with some still cancelled, and the section between Kumamoto and Kagoshima-Chuo stayed closed for the rest of the day.

In all, 97 trains were cancelled and about 23,200 people were affected, the Fukuoka broadcaster TNC reported. JR Kyushu ran extra limited express trains on the conventional line between Hakata and

Kumamoto, and Japan Airlines added flights between Fukuoka and Kagoshima.

Not the earthquake

JR Kyushu said the fault was not connected with the earthquake of July 28, which closed the section between Kumamoto and Shin-Minamata until full services resumed on September 18.

The company has not said what caused the strip to come off or the hanger to fail, or which happened first. A damaged fitting on the wire can strike and break a pantograph strip, and a damaged strip can in turn harm the wire.

Railway Day

The resumption falls on Railway Day, the anniversary of the opening of Japan's first line in 1872. For the passengers of southern Kyushu, who spent most of the summer without a direct high-speed link to Fukuoka, it ends a second interruption in less than a month of full service.

Lessons

The decision to stop the whole line until the wires were checked caused a day of disruption, but it reflected the practice that has given the Shinkansen its safety record: a suspected fault is investigated before passengers are carried, not after.

Passengers are advised to check JR Kyushu's service information before travelling on Wednesday, as trains may be crowded with people whose journeys were postponed.

where a pantograph travelling at up to 260 kilometres an hour needs a smooth path. It can also strike a pantograph, or be struck by one.

Tension

The wires are kept under high tension by weights or springs at the ends of each section, so that they do not slacken in summer heat or snap in winter cold. Expansion and contraction with the seasons are among the stresses the fittings must withstand, along with vibration from passing trains.

The strip

On the train side, the pantograph's contact strip, usually made of carbon or a metal-based material, wears gradually as it rubs against the wire and is replaced at regular intervals. A missing strip, as found on Monday night, means the frame itself may have touched the wire, which can damage both.

Why everything stops

When an abnormality is found, the railway has to establish whether the wire damaged the train or the train damaged the wire, and whether other trains might suffer the same damage. Until the wire has been inspected along the whole route the train has travelled, running services carries the risk of a far worse failure.

Inspecting kilometres of overhead line requires staff

to work at height with the power switched off, which is why the job could not be finished overnight.

Monitoring

Railways increasingly use cameras and sensors, on inspection trains and at stations and depots, to monitor the condition of wires and pantographs and to spot problems before they cause damage. The inspection that found the missing strip on Monday night is an example of such checks at work.

The equipment that carries 25,000 volts to a bullet train depends, in the end, on thousands of small parts being exactly where they should be.

SOCIETY

Two Days on the Kyushu Shinkansen

By the Data Desk

MONDAY NIGHT: A train at the Kumamoto General Rolling Stock Depot is found to be missing a contact strip from its pantograph.

TUESDAY, FIRST TRAIN: The whole line, Hakata to Kagoshima-Chuo, is suspended so that the overhead wires can be inspected.

TUESDAY: A loose, damaged hanger is found on the overhead line between Kumamoto and Shin-Yatsushiro.

ABOUT 4:15 P.M.: Trains resume between Hakata and Kumamoto, with some cancellations.

KUMAMOTO TO KAGOSHIMA-CHUO: Closed all day.

CANCELLED: 97 trains, according to TNC.

AFFECTED: About 23,200 passengers.

ALTERNATIVES: Extra limited express trains between Hakata and Kumamoto; extra Japan Airlines flights between Fukuoka and Kagoshima.

WEDNESDAY: Normal service planned from the first train.

THE EARTHQUAKE: Not connected, JR Kyushu says; full service had resumed on September 18.

WEATHER

What It Means When a Typhoon Becomes 'Extratropical', and Why That Does Not Always Mean It Is Harmless

The storm changes the source of its energy from warm seas to the clash of air masses; some grow larger and windier in the process

By the Weather Desk

When the Meteorological Agency announces that a typhoon has become an extratropical low, as it did with Koguma on Wednesday, it is describing a change in the kind of storm, not necessarily a weakening.

A typhoon is a tropical cyclone. It draws its energy from warm ocean water, which evaporates and releases heat as it condenses into cloud and rain. It has a warm core and is roughly symmetrical, with its strongest winds close to the centre.

The change

As a typhoon moves north into cooler seas and meets the westerly winds and colder air of the middle latitudes, it begins to draw its energy instead from the contrast between warm and cold air masses, like the lows that bring rain to Japan in winter and spring.

Fronts form, the storm becomes lopsided, and its area of strong winds spreads out. When that transition is complete, forecasters call it extratropical.

Not always weaker

Many storms do weaken as they make the change. But some grow larger, and their winds can spread over a wider area than when they were typhoons. Several of the storms that have caused severe damage in northern Japan were in transition or had completed it when they struck.

That is why the agency continues to issue warnings for extratropical lows that threaten land, and why a change of label should not be taken as an all-clear.

Koguma

In Koguma's case the question is academic. The low is far out in the Pacific, about 1,570 kilometres east of Sendai, and moving away to the north-east.

The words

The Japanese term, onetai teikiatsu, means a low of the temperate zone. In weather reports in English it is often shortened to post-tropical or extratropical.

Watching the next one

Attention now turns to the tropical depression near the Marshall Islands, which forecasters expect to become a typhoon by Monday. It will start life as a classic tropical cyclone, warm-cored and fed by seas that are still warm in October far to the south.

Whether it, too, ends its life as an extratropical low will depend on the path it takes.

SOCIETY

How an Arrest Warrant Is Issued in Japan, and Why the Courts Must Answer at Any Hour

Police apply, a judge decides, and the clock on detention starts; the night shift whose rota has changed is part of that chain

By the Society Desk

Article 33 of the Constitution provides that no one may be arrested except on a warrant issued by a judge, unless the person is caught in the act of committing a crime. The rule is the foundation of the work that the courts' night shift performs.

The application

When police want to arrest a suspect, senior officers apply to a court for a warrant, setting out the grounds for suspecting the person of a crime and the reasons why an arrest is necessary, for example because the suspect might flee or destroy evidence.

A judge examines the application and decides whether to issue the warrant. Search warrants, which allow police to enter premises and seize evidence, are dealt with in the same way.

Around the clock

Crimes happen at night and at weekends, and investigations do not stop for office hours. Courts therefore keep judges and staff available outside working hours to receive applications and deal with them quickly. Clerks check that the papers are in order, record the decisions and handle the paperwork.

After the arrest

Once a suspect is arrested, the police may hold the person for up to 48 hours before sending the case to prosecutors, who then have 24 hours to decide whether to ask a judge to order detention. A judge can order detention for ten days, which can be extended by up to ten more.

Those time limits, too, mean that the courts must be ready to act at any hour.

Criticism

Critics of the system, including bar associations and international human rights bodies, have long argued that judges approve applications for warrants and detention too readily, and that suspects can be held for long periods before charge. Only a very small share of warrant applications are refused.

The consolidation

The plan to gather night-time warrant work into courts in Tokyo and Osaka, handling applications online, is intended to make the system more efficient. Supporters say concentrating the work could also improve its quality; critics will want to be sure that the scrutiny of each application does not suffer.

The rota

The decision to assign night duty to court staff regardless of sex, reported by the Asahi Shimbun, concerns the people who make this machinery work after dark. It is the subject of today's editorial.

SOCIETY

The Toei Bid-Rigging Case at a Glance

By the Data Desk

THE WORK: Track maintenance ordered by the Tokyo Metropolitan Bureau of Transportation, including replacing rails, sleepers and points.

THE LINES: The Asakusa, Mita, Shinjuku and Oedo subway lines, the Toden Arakawa tram line and the Nippori-Toneri Liner.

THE COMPANIES: Totetsu Kogyo, Sanki Kensetsu, Tokyu Kido Kogyo, Tsuboi Kogyo, Nisshin Kogyo and Hayakawa Kensetsu.

ORDERS: Cease-and-desist and surcharge orders planned for five companies.

SURCHARGES: About 500 million yen in total.

LENIENCY: Tokyu Kido Kogyo expected to escape penalty after reporting first.

SINCE: March 2020 at the latest.

THE METHOD: Winners decided in advance, line by

SOCIETY

line; some winning bids at 99.9 per cent of the ceiling price.

THE RAIDS: November 2025.

THE SCALE: About 34 contracts a year, worth about 2.8 billion yen, in fiscal 2020 to 2024.

NEXT: Orders to be issued after the companies' views are heard.

SOCIETY

Why One Company Escapes: How Japan's Leniency Programme Rewards the First to Confess to a Cartel

Introduced in 2006, it has become the Fair Trade Commission's most powerful tool for uncovering bid-rigging

By the Society Desk

Of the six companies the Fair Trade Commission says rigged bids for maintenance of the Toei subway's tracks, one, Tokyu Kido Kogyo, is expected to escape any penalty. The reason is the leniency programme.

How it works

Introduced in January 2006, the programme offers immunity or reduced penalties to companies that report their own involvement in a cartel or bid-rigging scheme to the commission. The first company to come forward before an investigation begins receives full immunity from the surcharge, the administrative fine the commission imposes.

Later applicants can receive reductions, and amendments to the Antimonopoly Act that took effect in December 2020 added further reductions for companies that cooperate fully with investigators.

Why it works

Cartels depend on secrecy and mutual trust. The leniency programme turns that trust into a race: each member knows that if another confesses first, it will bear the full penalty while the confessor goes free. Many of the commission's largest cases since 2006 have begun with a leniency application.

The surcharges

Surcharges for cartels and bid-rigging are calculated as a percentage of the sales affected, 10 per cent for large companies and 4 per cent for small and medium-sized ones, with increases for repeat offenders and ringleaders. Since the 2020 changes the calculation can reach back up to ten years.

In the Toei case, the commission plans surcharges totalling about 500 million yen for five companies.

Criminal cases

The most serious cases can be referred to prosecutors for criminal charges. Companies that are first to apply for leniency before an investigation are generally not referred.

Public contracts

Bid-rigging on public works is among the oldest problems the commission deals with, and it costs taxpayers money by inflating the prices that governments pay. In the Toei case, some winning bids reached 99.9 per cent of the ceiling price.

Where public officials are found to have helped arrange bids, a separate law allows the commission to demand that the authority concerned take measures to prevent a recurrence.

SOCIETY

Nobuo Inaba: A Career

By the Data Desk

BORN: Shizuoka Prefecture.

EDUCATION: Faculty of Economics, University of Tokyo.

1974: Joins the Bank of Japan.

2004: Becomes an executive director of the Bank of Japan.

2008: Joins Ricoh as an executive adviser.

2017: Becomes chairman of Ricoh's board.

JANUARY 2023: Becomes president of NHK.

OCTOBER 2023: NHK cuts its licence fee by about a tenth.

OCTOBER 2025: NHK One launches as online distribution becomes part of NHK's core work.

JANUARY 2026: Succeeded by Tatsuhiko Inoue.

OCTOBER 6, 2026: Dies of aspiration pneumonia in Tokyo, aged 75.

SPORTS

Brewers Chase Yamamoto in the Third and Beat the Dodgers 7-4 for a 2-0 Lead in the NLCS; Ohtani Goes Hitless

William Contreras drives in three, including a tying home run, and Milwaukee's bullpen retires all 15 batters it faces; the Dodgers' four runs come without a single hit with runners in scoring position

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Yoshinobu Yamamoto failed to get through the third inning and the Milwaukee Brewers beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 7-4 on Monday night in Milwaukee to take a 2-0 lead in the National League Championship Series.

Yamamoto, the Dodgers' Game 2 starter, was pulled after 75 pitches and two and two-thirds innings, having allowed three runs on four hits with two walks and one strikeout. Shohei Ohtani, batting fourth, went 0 for 4 with two strikeouts.

"Obviously wasn't sharp. Just wasn't sharp today," the Dodgers' manager, Dave Roberts, said of his starter.

How it went

The Dodgers scored first, in the opening inning, on a walk, a groundout, a wild pitch and a sacrifice fly. Milwaukee answered at once with a double by Brice Turang and a run-scoring single by William Contreras.

In the third the Dodgers went ahead 2-1 when a pickoff throw by the Brewers' starter, Logan Henderson, got away. In the bottom half Jake Bauers drew a 12-pitch walk to load the bases, and Christian Yelich lined a two-run single that gave Milwaukee a 3-2 lead and ended Yamamoto's night.

Henderson's throwing error helped the Dodgers tie the score in the fifth, and Freddie Freeman's sacrifice fly put them ahead 4-3. Contreras tied it again with a solo home run in the bottom of the inning.

In the sixth the Dodgers walked Turang intentionally to pitch to Contreras, who punished them with a go-ahead single. Singles by Turang and Bauers and an error by Andy Pages brought in two more runs in the eighth.

The bullpen

After Henderson left, Milwaukee's relievers retired all 15 batters they faced, something no bullpen had done before in a postseason game, according to CBS Sports. Aaron Ashby pitched a clean ninth to finish the game.

Contreras finished 3 for 4 with a walk and three runs batted in. "He's that good," said the Brewers' manager, Pat Murphy.

Silent bats

The Dodgers had three hits. None of their four runs came on a hit: two scored on sacrifice flies, by Teoscar Hernández and Freeman, and two on Henderson's errant throws. They have gone without a hit with runners in scoring position in four of their six postseason games.

"I don't have an answer why," Roberts said. Hernández insisted the series was not over. "Just because we lose two games doesn't mean it's over," he said.

The odds

Teams that have led a best-of-seven postseason series 2-0 have gone on to win it about 83 per cent of the time. Only 16 teams have come back from 0-2, among them the Arizona Diamondbacks in 2023 and the Toronto Blue Jays in 2025.

The Brewers are unbeaten in four home games this postseason. The Dodgers are 0-2 in a series for the first time since the division series of 2023.

Game 3

The series moves to Dodger Stadium for Game 3 on Wednesday night, 9 a.m. on Thursday in Japan. The Brewers are scheduled to start Robert Gasser and the Dodgers Blake Snell, both left-handers.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Kyushu Shinkansen back, Page 15.

Courts' night duty, Page 12.

Editorial: Eighty years, Page 19.

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

Crossword, Page 17.

CEATEC's practical AI, Page 3.

Budget Committee, day one, Page 5.

China on Etorofu, Page 5.

SPORTS

The Climax Series Final Stages Open Tonight: Hanshin Host DeNA at Koshien, and SoftBank Begin Two Wins Up on Nippon-Ham

Murakami faces Taira in the Central League and Moinelo meets Yamasaki in the Pacific; the winners go to the Japan Series from October 24

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

The final stages of the Climax Series, the play-offs that decide which teams go to the Japan Series, open at 6 p.m. on Wednesday in both leagues.

In the Central League, the Hanshin Tigers, champions for the second year running, play the Yokohama DeNA BayStars at Koshien Stadium. In the Pacific League, the Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks, champions for the third successive year, play the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters at Mizuho PayPay Dome.

The Central League

Hanshin start with the usual one-win advantage for the league champions, and the first team to four wins, counting it, goes through. The series can run to six games.

Shoki Murakami is scheduled to start for Hanshin and Kentaro Taira for DeNA. Games 1 to 3 begin at 6 p.m. from Wednesday to Friday, Games 4 and 5 at 2 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, and a sixth game, if needed, at 6 p.m. next Monday.

DeNA, third in the regular season, reached the final stage by beating the Yomiuri Giants two games to none.

The Pacific League

SoftBank begin with a two-win advantage, under a new rule for a champion that finishes at least ten games ahead of the second-placed team. The series can run to seven games, and Nippon-Ham, third in the league, will generally need five wins to go through.

Livan Moinelo is scheduled to start for SoftBank and Sachiya Yamasaki for Nippon-Ham. The Fighters reached the final stage by beating the Saitama Seibu Lions in the first stage.

The Japan Series

The two winners meet in the Japan Series, which opens on October 24 at the home ground of the Central League's representative.

The storylines

For Hanshin, the question is whether a team that dominated the summer can avoid the stumbles that have often befallen strong champions in short series. For SoftBank, the new rule makes them heavy favourites, but the Fighters have already shown in the first stage that they can win away from home.

Watching

Both games are broadcast nationally. With the Dodgers playing on Thursday morning, Japanese baseball fans face a crowded few days.

A season's reward

The play-offs have been criticised over the years for allowing teams that finished well behind the champions to reach the Japan Series. The larger head start for a dominant champion in the Pacific League is the latest attempt to balance that concern with the excitement the play-offs bring.

SPORTS

Nadeshiko Japan Lose 2-1 to Germany in Bremen After Tanikawa's Early Goal

Linda Dallmann equalises before half-time and Klara Buhl wins it after a Japanese goal kick goes astray; the European tour ends with a win and a defeat

By the Sports Desk

Japan's women's team, Nadeshiko Japan, lost 2-1 to Germany in a friendly at the Weserstadion in Bremen, after Momoko Tanikawa had given them an early lead.

The match kicked off at 5:45 p.m. on Tuesday in Germany, 12:45 a.m. on Wednesday in Japan, before a crowd of 26,574.

The goals

Tanikawa, who plays for Bayern Munich, scored in the 15th minute. Germany equalised through Linda Dallmann in the 28th minute.

The winner came in the 73rd minute, when Japan lost the ball after a goal kick and Klara Buhl scored for

Germany, according to the German football federation.

The line-up

Japan, ranked fifth in the world, included two players from the English Women's Super League in their starting line-up: Yui Hasegawa of Manchester City and Kiko Seike of Brighton.

Germany are ranked third.

The tour

The match ended a short European tour. Four days earlier, on October 9 in France, Japan had beaten Haiti 5-1.

A difficult opponent

Germany have long been one of Japan's hardest opponents. Japan's most famous victory over them came in the quarter-finals of the 2011 World Cup in Germany, a 1-0 win after extra time on the way to the title.

What it showed

The defeat, against one of the strongest teams in Europe and in front of a large crowd, was a demanding test. Japan's ability to take the lead, and the manner in which they conceded the winner, will both give the coaching staff material to work on.

The next international window falls at the end of November.

SPORTS

Kyoto Sanga Win for the First Time in Asia With an 88th-Minute Goal; Kashima and Gamba Osaka Make It Two Wins From Two

Tenma Matsuda comes off the bench to beat Ratchaburi; an own goal settles Kashima's trip to Hanoi and Gamba come from behind in Newcastle

By the Sports Desk

Kyoto Sanga earned the first victory of their history in Asian competition on Tuesday, beating Ratchaburi of Thailand 1-0 at home in the AFC Champions League Elite with a goal two minutes from the end of normal time.

Tenma Matsuda, who had come on as a substitute, scored from the far post after a cross from the left in the 88th minute.

Kyoto, taking part in an Asian competition for the first time after finishing third in the J1 League last season, had lost their opening match 1-0 away to Daejeon Hana Citizen of South Korea in September.

Kashima

Kashima Antlers, last season's J1 champions, beat Cong An Ha Noi 1-0 away in Vietnam, the only goal an own goal by the home side in the 61st minute. Kashima opened their campaign with a 7-1 win over the Newcastle Jets in September.

Gamba Osaka

Gamba Osaka came from behind to beat the Newcastle Jets 3-1 in Australia. The Jets scored in the 32nd minute before Gamba equalised in the 40th, went ahead through Dennis Hümmet in the 73rd and sealed the win with a goal by Welton in the 86th. Gamba beat Cong An Ha Noi 4-1 in their first match.

The format

The Champions League Elite has a league stage in which each club plays eight matches against different opponents from its half of Asia. The top eight in the eastern and western sections advance to the knockout rounds.

Five Japanese clubs are taking part this season: Kashima, Gamba, Kyoto, Kashiwa Reysol and Vissel Kobe.

Kyoto's league form

The win offers relief to Kyoto, who have struggled in the league. After nine matches of the J1 season, which now runs from autumn to spring, they had two wins, two draws and five defeats and were 16th.

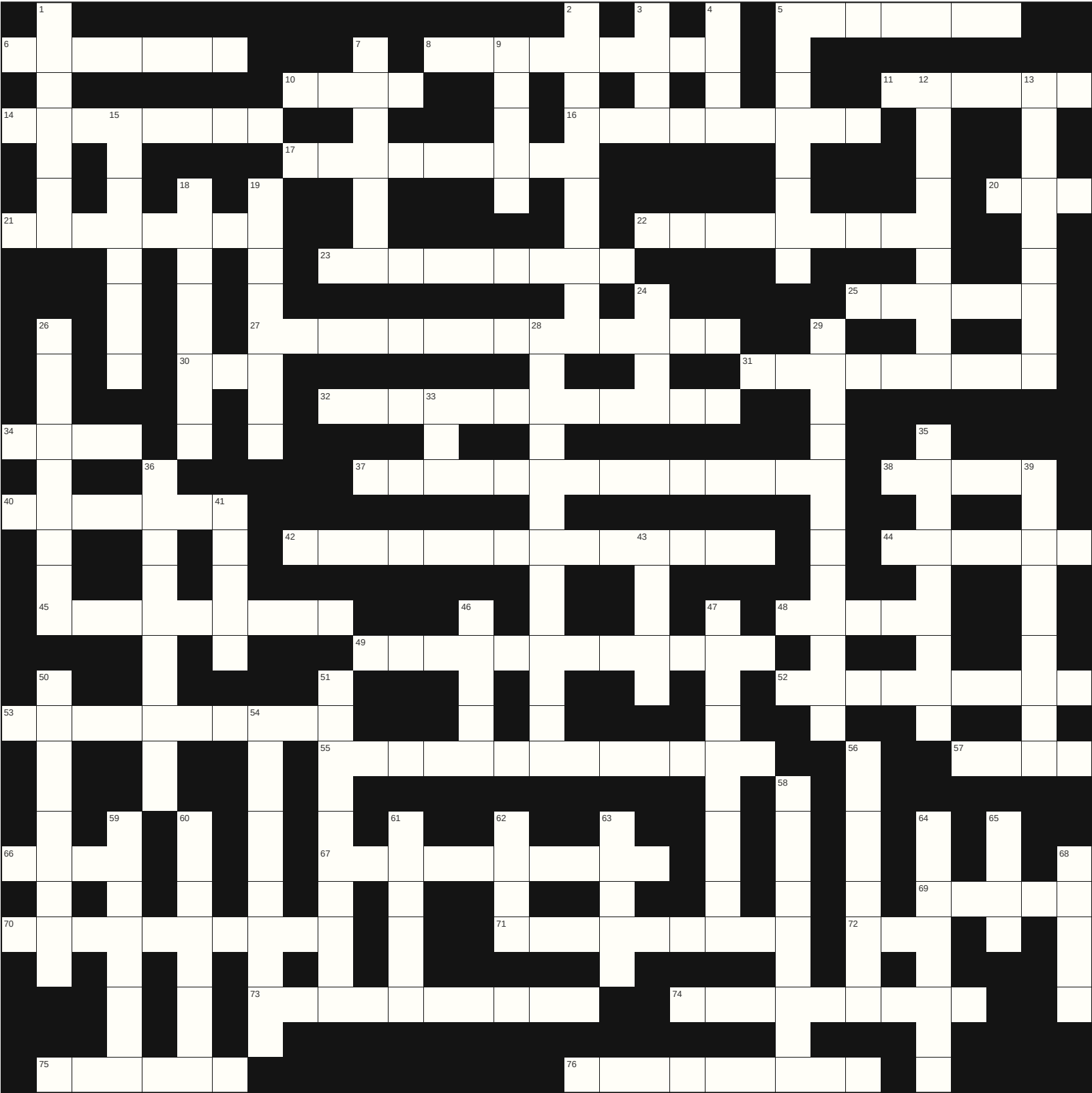
They play Sanfrecce Hiroshima in the league on Saturday and return to Asian competition on October 27 against the Newcastle Jets.

Why it matters

Japanese clubs have won Asia's top club competition several times, most recently the Urawa Reds in 2023. Strong performances also earn ranking points that determine how many places Japan receives in future seasons.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 77 Words



Solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Puzzle difficulty: Professional.

ACROSS

5. Club that won 1-0 in Hanoi (7)
6. A judge's order for an arrest (7)
8. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman (9)
10. Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent detained on Sakhalin (4)
11. His bases-loaded single chased the Dodgers' starter (6)
14. Montana city with a morning low of 32 (8)
16. Maker of the display's wall mounts (9)
17. Israeli prime minister named in an ICC warrant (9)
20. Fusae ____, the first woman elected governor (3)
21. Manchester City midfielder in Japan's line-up (8)
22. Moscow court that ordered him held (9)
23. Aspiration ____, the cause of his death (9)
25. Pilot who broke the sound barrier on October 14, 1947 (6)
27. The prime minister's word for her support payment (14)
30. Shogi title Takumi Ito can retain in Kobe (3)
31. On-site power the project might use (4,5) (9)
32. What must rise for a stronger yen, the analysis argues (12)
34. Converted form in which passwords were stored (4)
37. Station south of the damaged fitting (4-10) (14)
38. Japan's first electronic computer (5)
40. Kyoto substitute who scored in the 88th minute (7)
42. CEATEC's theme this year (14)
44. City of Aramco's headquarters (6)
45. Noise that kept Concorde off most overland routes (5,4) (9)
48. Japan's projected place among economies next year (5)
49. Kind of decision the minister called the bus arrangement (12)
52. AI developer in talks over an Osaka data centre (9)
53. Ogasawara island 1,370 km from the forecast point (10)
55. Chipmaker that took 450 yen off the Nikkei (5,8) (13)
57. Subway network in the bid-rigging case (4)
66. CEATEC's executive producer (4)
67. ____ pneumonia (10)
69. British engineer of Japan's first railway (5)
70. Overnight duty, in Japanese (10)
71. Chip tester among Tuesday's biggest drags (9)
72. Prime minister who agreed in 2018 to speed up island talks (3)
73. Tochigi newspaper that made the recording public (10)
74. Saudi energy minister, Prince ____ bin Salman (9)
75. First president of the British Computer Society (6)
76. Coldest city on the American map (9)

DOWN

1. ____ Islands, where a typhoon is forecast by Monday (7)
2. Justice minister who resigned over paper fans in 2014 (10)
3. Winnie-the-____, published on October 14, 1926 (4)
4. Really ____, the prime minister's verdict on the remarks (4)
5. ____ Taro, Dotonbori's drum-playing doll (8)
7. Patentee of roll film in 1884 (7)
9. Justice minister later jailed in a vote-buying case (5)
12. The charge against the correspondent (9)
13. Brewer who drove in three (9)
15. Chip inspection firm that fell (8)
18. Sister brand that delivers rice dishes (8)
19. Tochigi town named in the road-budget remarks (8)
24. Voice assistant that came with the iPhone 4S (4)
26. Five hundred ____, the Osaka centre's planned draw (9)
28. What Koguma became far out in the Pacific (13)
29. Chinese province whose delegation toured Etorofu (12)
33. Takako ____, the first woman Speaker (3)
35. Island visible from Rausu (9)
36. Apollo 7 crewman Walter ____ (10)
39. Truce on energy infrastructure announced by Trump (9)
41. Reliever who pitched a clean ninth (5)
43. DeNA's starter tonight (5)
46. Ehime city whose shrine festivals bring out 150 floats (5)
47. Malware behind the Gin no Sara outage (10)
50. Tokyo terminus of the 1872 line (9)
51. Thai club beaten by Kyoto (10)
54. Country where anime songs drew a huge crowd (5,5) (10)
56. Winds behind California's autumn heat (5,3) (8)
58. Raicho ____, co-founder of the New Women's Association (9)
59. ____-party problem, following one voice in a din (8)
60. Supersonic airliner of 1976 (8)
61. Programme whose seventh mission broadcast live TV from orbit (6)
62. Agriculture minister whose future the prime minister is weighing (4)
63. Box camera of 1888 (5)
64. Apple's new smart-home display (8)
65. German chancellor who urged pressure on Russia (4)
68. Confectioner whose runner lights up Dotonbori (5)

SPORTS

The NLCS So Far

By the Sports Desk

GAME 1 (Sunday, Milwaukee): Brewers 2, Dodgers 1. Brice Turang homered and Luis Lara drove in the winning run.

GAME 2 (Monday, Milwaukee): Brewers 7, Dodgers 4. William Contreras drove in three.

SERIES: Brewers lead 2-0.

GAME 3: Wednesday at Dodger Stadium; 9 a.m. Thursday in Japan. Robert Gasser v Blake Snell.

GAMES 4 AND 5: In Los Angeles, the fifth if needed.

GAMES 6 AND 7: In Milwaukee, if needed.

OHTANI: 3 for 20 in the postseason, with no home runs.

YAMAMOTO: Two and two-thirds innings in Game 2.

BREWERS AT HOME: Unbeaten in four postseason games.

HISTORY: Teams leading a best-of-seven series 2-0 have won about 83 per cent of the time.

SPORTS

Ohtani Is 3 for 20 This Postseason With No Home Runs, and the Dodgers' Hopes of a Comeback Rest on Waking Him Up

The two-way star has not homered since August 18; Snell takes the mound in Los Angeles with the defending champions' season on the line

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Shohei Ohtani went hitless in Game 2 of the National League Championship Series, and his slump has become the question hanging over the Dodgers as they return home two games down.

Through six postseason games Ohtani is batting .150, with three hits in 20 at-bats, seven strikeouts, three walks, a stolen base and no home runs or runs batted in. He has not hit a home run since August 18, in Colorado.

Down the order

Roberts has dropped him to fourth in the batting order, a sign of how far his production has fallen, and the Dodgers' offence has struggled around him. A report this week said the team had discussed giving him time off.

Not the first slump

Ohtani has gone through cold spells before and emerged from them in spectacular fashion. His power, when it returns, can change a series in a single swing, which is why opponents still pitch to him with great care.

The pitching matchup

Game 3 at Dodger Stadium on Wednesday night, 9 a.m. on Thursday in Japan, pits two left-handers against each other. Blake Snell, a two-time Cy Young Award winner, has a 2.19 earned-run average in five starts at Dodger Stadium this year, including the postseason.

Robert Gasser has been in form for the Brewers, with two wins and a 1.73 earned-run average in his past seven games, six of them starts, including Game 4 of the division series.

Yamamoto's night

The loss in Milwaukee also raised questions about Yoshinobu Yamamoto, who lasted only two and two-thirds innings. His earned-run average for the postseason rose to 3.72. If the series goes long, the Dodgers will need him to recover quickly.

A view from Japan

Japanese fans, who follow every at-bat of the two stars on breakfast television, have watched the first two games with growing frustration. Game 3 falls on a Thursday morning, when millions will be watching before work.

What the Dodgers need

The defending champions need at least four wins in the next five games. History says the odds are against them, but they have the talent to change that, and the series now moves to a stadium where they are comfortable.

For that to happen, the hitters who carried them through the regular season, Ohtani above all, will have to start hitting again.

SPORTS

The Climax Series Final Stages: The Schedule

By the Sports Desk

CENTRAL LEAGUE, AT KOSHUEN: Hanshin Tigers v Yokohama DeNA BayStars; Hanshin start one win up; first to four wins.

GAME 1: Wednesday, October 14, 6 p.m. Murakami v Taira.

GAME 2: Thursday, October 15, 6 p.m.

GAME 3: Friday, October 16, 6 p.m.

GAME 4: Saturday, October 17, 2 p.m., if needed.

GAME 5: Sunday, October 18, 2 p.m., if needed.

GAME 6: Monday, October 19, 6 p.m., if needed. Reserve dates: October 20 and 21.

PACIFIC LEAGUE, AT MIZUHO PAYPAY DOME: Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks v Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters; SoftBank start two wins up; up to seven games.

GAME 1: Wednesday, October 14, 6 p.m. Moinelo v Yamasaki.

THE JAPAN SERIES: From Saturday, October 24, at the home ground of the Central League's representative.

SPORTS

Two Wins Before a Pitch Is Thrown: How the Climax Series Rewards a Dominant Champion

A Pacific League champion ten games clear starts with a two-win lead and up to seven games are played; in the Central League the advantage stays at one

By the Sports Desk

Japanese professional baseball has used play-offs, now called the Climax Series, since 2007 in both leagues. The top three teams in each league take part: the second- and third-placed teams meet in a short first stage, and the winner plays the league champion in the final stage.

The usual advantage

To reward the champion's regular season, the final stage has given it a one-win advantage and home games throughout. In a series of up to six games, the first team to four wins, counting the advantage, advances.

That is the format the Central League is using this year for Hanshin and DeNA.

The new rule

In the Pacific League this year, a champion that finishes at least ten games ahead of the second-placed team receives a two-win advantage, and the series can last up to seven games. SoftBank qualify.

In practice that means Nippon-Ham will generally need five wins in a series of up to seven games, while SoftBank need three more.

Why it matters

The argument for the change is that a team that runs away with the pennant has proved itself over 143 games and should not be put at serious risk by a few days of bad luck. The argument against is that it makes the result more predictable, which could reduce interest.

Upsets in the past

Champions have often been beaten in the final stage, and some teams that finished third have gone on to win the Japan Series. Such upsets have given the play-offs their drama and their critics their case.

Ties

Games in the Climax Series can end in a tie after the regulation number of innings, which is one reason the rules speak of a team generally needing a given number of wins: ties can affect which team advances if a series ends level.

Watching the effect

This year's Pacific League final stage will be the first test of the larger head start. If the Fighters overcome it, the rule's critics will have a story to tell. If SoftBank win easily, its supporters will say it worked as intended.

The Central League has kept the one-win advantage.

SPORTS

Scoreboard

By the Sports Desk

NLCS GAME 2 (Monday, Milwaukee): Brewers 7, Dodgers 4. Brewers lead the series 2-0.

YAMAMOTO: 2 2/3 innings, 4 hits, 3 runs, 2 walks, 1 strikeout, 75 pitches.

OHTANI: 0 for 4, 2 strikeouts. Postseason: 3 for 20.

CONTRERAS (Brewers): 3 for 4, home run, 3 runs batted in.

NLCS GAME 3: Brewers at Dodgers, Thursday 9 a.m. Japan time. Gasser v Snell.

WOMEN'S FRIENDLY (Bremen): Germany 2 (Dallmann 28, Bühl 73), Japan 1 (Tanikawa 15). Attendance 26,574.

ACL ELITE: Kyoto 1 (Matsuda 88), Ratchaburi 0.

ACL ELITE: Cong An Ha Noi 0, Kashima 1 (own goal 61).

ACL ELITE: Newcastle Jets 1, Gamba Osaka 3 (Hümmet 73, Welton 86).

CLIMAX SERIES, CENTRAL: Hanshin v DeNA at

SPORTS

Koshien, 6 p.m. Murakami v Taira. Hanshin start one win up.

CLIMAX SERIES, PACIFIC: SoftBank v Nippon-Ham at Mizuho PayPay Dome, 6 p.m. Moinelo v Yamasaki. SoftBank start two wins up.

SHOGI, OZA, GAME 4 (Kobe): Ito leads Hirose 2-1.

SPORTS

Sports in Brief: A Shogi Title Could Be Decided in Kobe, and a Go Title Game Ends in Chiba

By the Sports Desk

Short reports from the world of sport and games.

Shogi

Takumi Ito, the holder of the Oza title, can retain it with a win over the challenger, Akihito Hirose, in the fourth game of their best-of-five match in Kobe on Wednesday. Ito leads 2-1 after winning the third game, in Niseko, Hokkaido, on October 2.

Go

The sixth game of the Meijin title match between Ryo Ichiriki, the holder, and the challenger, Toramaru Shibano, concludes on Wednesday in Chiba Prefecture.

Baseball

The Climax Series final stages begin at 6 p.m. at Koshien and Mizuho PayPay Dome. In the major leagues, the Dodgers and the Brewers play Game 3 of the National League Championship Series at Dodger Stadium at 9 a.m. on Thursday, Japan time.

Football

Kyoto Sanga play Sanfrecce Hiroshima in J1 on Saturday. In the AFC Champions League Elite, Kashima Antlers and Gamba Osaka have won both their matches.

Women's football

Nadeshiko Japan's European tour ended with a 5-1 win over Haiti and a 2-1 defeat by Germany.

The national sports festival

The national sports festival in Aomori, which opened on October 10 in the presence of the Emperor and Empress, continues this week.

Golf

The domestic men's and women's tours continue this week as the season enters its final two months.

CULTURE

From Dragon Ball Songs in Ivory Coast to Manga-Character Language Apps: Japan's Diplomats Take Pop Culture to the Global South

The Foreign Ministry seeks 1.83 billion yen to build audiences in Africa and Latin America, fight piracy and train translators

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Japan's Foreign Ministry is planning to take its long-running promotion of anime, manga and other popular culture into new territory, seeking money to build audiences in Africa and Latin America, where Japanese content has fans but little commercial presence.

The ministry has included 1.83 billion yen in its budget request for the fiscal year beginning in April 2027 for the effort, which it calls soft-power diplomacy, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun's English edition, The Japan News.

Beyond the old markets

Japanese anime and manga are already big business in Asia, North America and Europe. The ministry wants to extend their reach to the emerging and developing countries of the so-called Global South, where governments and populations are growing in influence.

"We would like to promote the appeal of Japanese pop culture in Africa and Latin America as well," the ministry said.

What the money buys

The plans include bringing together people from the content industries in Japan and in the target regions, supporting the legal distribution of Japanese works and countering pirated copies, which are widespread where licensed versions are hard to find.

Songs and translators

Live events that pair anime with their theme songs will be expanded. The Japan Foundation, which carries out the programme, held a concert in Ivory

Coast in January featuring songs from Dragon Ball Z and other series, and the audience far exceeded the capacity of the venue.

The ministry also wants to cultivate translators by giving local translators opportunities to learn about Japanese culture, in the hope of increasing the number of Japanese works available in local languages.

Learning Japanese

A Japanese-language learning app featuring manga characters is also planned, aimed at younger people. The characters have not yet been chosen.

The wider push

The plan is part of a broader government effort to support the content industries, which have become one of Japan's most successful exports. The government has been considering doubling its support for anime and games, with spending of more than 500 billion yen over five years under discussion, Kyodo News reported in the summer.

Soft power and its limits

Soft power, the ability to attract rather than coerce, has long been one of Japan's strengths. Characters from Japanese stories are known to children in countries where few people could name a Japanese politician.

Turning that familiarity into influence, trade and friendship is harder. The ministry's bet is that legal access to Japanese stories, in local languages and at local prices, is the place to start.

CULTURE

The Runner's Company: How a Caramel Made With Oyster Extract Became Pocky, and a Sign Became Osaka's Emblem

Ezaki Glico has grown from a single sweet sold in 1922 to a household name across Asia; its runner has outlasted wars, recessions and a notorious crime

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The running man who will vanish from Dotonbori at the end of November, to return next spring in a new sign, has been the emblem of Ezaki Glico for more than a century, since before most of the company's products existed.

Oysters and caramel

The company's founder, Riichi Ezaki, a pharmacist's son from Saga Prefecture in Kyushu, was struck by the nourishing qualities of glycogen, which he extracted from the water in which oysters had been boiled. He put it into a caramel, named it Glico after the substance, and began selling it in Osaka in 1922.

The packet carried the running man and a slogan that has entered the language: one piece, 300 metres, a claim that a single caramel gave enough energy to run that far.

The sign

The first giant runner went up above the Ebisu Bridge in Dotonbori in 1935. The district, already Osaka's liveliest, has kept it ever since through six versions, the latest of which replaced neon with light-emitting diodes in 2014.

Pocky and Pretz

After the war the company became one of Japan's great confectioners. Pretz, a savoury biscuit stick, appeared in 1963, and Pocky, a biscuit stick dipped in chocolate, in 1966. Pocky has since become one of the best-known Japanese snacks in the world, sold across Asia and beyond.

The case of the 21 faces

The company's most frightening chapter came in 1984, when its president, Katsuhisa Ezaki, was kidnapped from his home and escaped after three days. A group calling itself the monster with 21 faces went on to threaten Glico and other food companies, claiming to have poisoned confectionery in shops. No one was ever charged, and the statute of limitations expired in 2000. The affair remains one of the most famous unsolved crimes in postwar Japan.

A centenary

Glico marked its 100th anniversary in 2022. It now sells ice cream, dairy products and foods as well as sweets, and its runner appears on its products and in its advertising around the world.

Why the sign matters

Few corporate symbols have become as identified with a city as the runner has with Osaka. Visitors copy his pose on the bridge, and the sign has been

used for public campaigns on health and on juvenile delinquency.

The company has promised that the runner will stay when the seventh sign goes up next spring. In Osaka, that is the news that matters most.

CULTURE

Quotes of the Day

By the Culture Desk

"I want to receive his report by telephone tonight. If we can meet after tomorrow's Budget Committee, I will listen to him properly." Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, on the agriculture minister.

"I believe that is by no means the correct form." Kiyoshi Kano, CEATEC's executive producer, on the humanoid robots seen dancing and boxing.

"The events of recent weeks are serious, our response must be equally serious." Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's energy minister.

"Collective action, not just words." Navi Pillay, the Nobel peace laureate, on defending the International Criminal Court.

"We now have an economy that is standing on one leg, the AI leg." Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the IMF.

"I can't tell you that." President Donald Trump, asked whether the United States would join the Saudi campaign against the Houthis.

"Obviously wasn't sharp. Just wasn't sharp today." Dave Roberts, the Dodgers' manager, on Yoshinobu Yamamoto.

"He's that good." Pat Murphy, the Brewers' manager, on William Contreras.

"Just because we lose two games doesn't mean it's over." Teoscar Hernández of the Dodgers.

"We would like to promote the appeal of Japanese pop culture in Africa and Latin America as well." Japan's Foreign Ministry.

CULTURE

October 14 in History

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

1066: William of Normandy defeats King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, beginning the Norman conquest of England.

1872: Japan's first railway formally opens between Shimbashi and Yokohama.

1912: Theodore Roosevelt is shot in Milwaukee while campaigning for the presidency and gives his speech before going to hospital.

1926: A. A. Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh is published in London.

1933: Germany announces its withdrawal from the League of Nations, seven months after Japan announced its own.

1947: Chuck Yeager flies faster than sound in the Bell X-1.

1962: An American U-2 aircraft photographs Soviet missile sites in Cuba, setting off the Cuban missile crisis.

1964: Nikita Khrushchev is removed as leader of the Soviet Union, and Martin Luther King Jr. is named winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, during the Tokyo Olympics.

1983: Japan's first baby conceived by in-vitro fertilisation is born in Sendai.

1994: The Nobel Peace Prize is announced for Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin.

2012: Felix Baumgartner jumps from about 39 kilometres above New Mexico and breaks the sound barrier in free fall.

CULTURE

Festivals and Events This Week

By the Culture Desk

NADA NO KENKA MATSURI (Himeji, Hyogo): The fighting festival at Matsubara Hachiman Shrine, eve tonight and main day on Thursday.

SAIJO FESTIVALS (Saijo, Ehime): Festivals of the city's shrines, with more than 150 floats, from Wednesday to Saturday.

KANNAMESAI (Ise Jingu, Mie): The shrine's most important annual rite, offering the year's first rice, Thursday to Saturday.

NIIHAMA TAIKO FESTIVAL (Niihama, Ehime): Giant drum floats carried through the city, Friday to

Sunday.

KAWAGOE FESTIVAL (Kawagoe, Saitama): Floats through the old warehouse district, Saturday and Sunday.

CEATEC (Makuhari Messe, Chiba): Japan's largest digital technology show, until Friday.

RAILWAY DAY (Wednesday): Events at stations and railway museums mark the opening of the first line in 1872.

JIDAI MATSURI (Kyoto): The Festival of the Ages procession, October 22.

KURAMA FIRE FESTIVAL (Kyoto): Torches carried through the mountain village of Kurama, the night of October 22.

GLICO SIGN (Osaka): The sixth-generation runner in Dotonbori shines until the end of November.

NATIONAL SPORTS FESTIVAL (Aomori): Under way since October 10.

CLIMAX SERIES: Final stages at Koshien and Mizuho PayPay Dome from Wednesday, with the Japan Series from October 24.

CULTURE

Words of the Week

By the Culture Desk

DANGO: Collusion among bidders to decide in advance who will win a public contract. Six companies are accused of it on the Toei subway.

ONETAI TEIKIATSU: An extratropical low, literally a low of the temperate zone; what Typhoon Koguma became on Wednesday.

TETSUDO NO HI: Railway Day, October 14, the anniversary of the first line in 1872.

KOSHOKU SENKYO HO: The Public Offices Election Act, which governs campaigns and forbids buying votes.

SHUKUCHOKU: Overnight duty, the night shift of an office or institution; at the courts, it will no longer fall only to men.

REIJO: A warrant, issued by a judge, for an arrest or a search.

HOPPO RYODO: The Northern Territories, the four islands off Hokkaido held by Russia and claimed by Japan.

SURIITA: The contact strip on top of a pantograph, which presses against the overhead wire.

KANBAN: A signboard; Dotonbori's most famous is Glico's runner.

GYAKUTEN-MAKE: A defeat after leading, as Nadeshiko Japan suffered in Bremen.

SHIENKIN: A support payment; the government's income-linked payment is to accompany the cut in the consumption tax on food.

HITOTSUBU SANBYAKU METORU: One piece, 300 metres; Glico's old slogan for its caramel.

EDITORIAL

Today's Numbers

By the Data Desk

80: Years since Japanese women first voted in a national election, on April 10, 1946.

39: Women elected to the House of Representatives in that election.

1985: The year the Equal Employment Opportunity Act was passed.

6.5 MILLION: Customer records that may have been exposed in the attack affecting Gin no Sara.

500 MEGAWATTS: The power the planned Osaka data centre would draw, according to the Nikkei.

1,253.40: The fall in the Nikkei average on Tuesday, in yen.

6.8 PER CENT: The rise in corporate goods prices in September from a year earlier.

SIXTH: Japan's projected place among the world's economies next year, according to the IMF.

97: Kyushu Shinkansen trains cancelled on Tuesday.

20 YEARS: The maximum sentence under the article of Russia's Criminal Code cited against the Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent.

500 MILLION YEN: The total surcharges the Fair Trade Commission plans to order over Toei subway bid-rigging.

2: The wins SoftBank start with in the Climax Series final stage.



Editorial cartoon by Taro Suzuki for The Japan Morning Post.

EDITORIAL

Eighty Years, and the Sign Finally Moves: Equality Is Measured in Night Shifts as Well as in Votes

The courts' decision to share night duty between men and women is a small step at the top of a long staircase. Japan climbed most of it by its own efforts, and the last steps are the ones that test whether it meant what it said

By Samantha Ortiz | Editorial Page Editor

Taro Suzuki's cartoon today shows two men in dark suits at the top of a stone staircase, straining to shift a wooden signpost. One face of the sign reads MEN ONLY; the other reads GENDER NEUTRAL. Each step below them carries a date: 1945, women vote; 1985, equal employment; 2025, the first woman prime minister. The top step, on which the men stand, reads simply: 2026, clerks' night duty.

Behind them hang the national flag and a clock whose hands stand a minute or so before midnight. The caption reads: Eighty years. The sign finally moves.

The details repay a second look. The staircase is drawn in heavy stone, worn and solid, as if each step had been laid to last. The sign, by contrast, is a plain wooden board on a post, the kind of thing that could have been turned round in a minute at any time in the past eighty years. The two grey-haired men bend to the task with the expressions of people doing a job that has been put off for too long. The setting, with its tall columns and arched windows, suggests an institution of weight and dignity, which is exactly what the courts are.

The joke lies in the scale. The lower steps record events that changed the nation. The top step records a change in the rota of the night shift at the courts. Yet the two men lift the sign as if it weighed a great deal, and in a sense it does. Rights written into law are one thing. The habits of an institution, the assumptions about who does what after the lights go down, are another, and they are often the last to move.

What has changed

The Asahi Shimbun has reported that night-time work by court clerks and other staff, which in practice has been given only to men, will in future be assigned regardless of sex. The change is tied to a plan to gather the review of warrant requests at night and on holidays into courts in Tokyo and Osaka, using online systems.

It is easy to treat this as a matter of personnel

administration and to move on. That would be a mistake, for two reasons. The first is what the night shift does. The second is what the old practice said.

The work after dark

The courts do not close when the offices do. The Constitution provides that, except when a person is caught in the act, no one may be arrested without a warrant issued by a judge. Police and prosecutors may need a warrant at three in the morning as urgently as at three in the afternoon, and so judges and the staff who support them must be available at all hours.

The work is serious. Every warrant is a decision about a citizen's liberty, taken quickly and often with incomplete information. The clerks who receive the requests, check the papers and assist the judges are part of the machinery that stands between the state's power to detain and the individual's right to be left alone.

To say that this work could be done only by men was to say something about who could be trusted with that responsibility, or who could be asked to bear its burden. Neither proposition survives examination.

A rule nobody wrote down

What makes the old practice remarkable is that no one, it seems, ever set it out in writing. When a member of the public asked the Supreme Court in a disclosure request, decided in January 2022, for the document explaining why women in the courts were never given overnight duty, the court replied that no such document existed. Each court decided for itself which staff took night duty, it said, and did not report its rules to the Supreme Court. Its own review committee upheld that answer.

In other words, the practice rested on custom. Custom has its place in Japanese life, and much of it is worth keeping. But a custom that sorts public servants by sex for a public duty is the kind that ought to be able to give an account of itself. This one could not, because there was no account to give.

An institution whose daily business is the application of written law should hold itself to the standard it applies to others. That the courts have now moved the sign is welcome. That it took so long is the point of the cartoon's clock.

The first step: 1945

The staircase is worth climbing from the bottom, because the story it tells is often told wrongly.

It is commonly said that the occupation gave Japanese women the vote. That is not the whole truth. Japanese women had campaigned for it for a quarter of a century before the war ended. Raicho Hiratsuka, Fusae Ichikawa and Mumeo Oku founded the New Women's Association in 1920 to press for women's political rights. A league for women's suffrage followed a few years later. In 1931 a bill giving women limited rights in local government passed the House of Representatives, only to be rejected by the House of Peers.

When the war ended, the campaigners moved within weeks. And on October 10, 1945, the cabinet of Kijuro Shidehara decided at its first meeting to give women the vote, a day before General Douglas MacArthur issued his directive calling for the emancipation of women among his first reforms.

The revised election law was promulgated on December 17, 1945. On April 10, 1946, Japanese women voted in a national election for the first time. About two-thirds of eligible women cast a ballot, and 39 women were elected to the House of Representatives.

Eighty years have passed since that spring. The anniversary deserves to be remembered as a Japanese achievement, won by Japanese women and enacted by a Japanese government, even if it came in the shadow of defeat and occupation.

Among the 39 was Shizue Kato, who had campaigned for birth control before the war and would serve in the Diet for decades. Fusae Ichikawa herself entered the House of Councillors in 1953 and remained a force in politics until her death in 1981, a reminder that the women who won the vote went on to use it, and to stand for office themselves.

Those pioneers did not ask for special treatment. They asked to be treated as citizens, with the same rights and the same responsibilities as men. That is the standard by which the courts' night shift should be

judged.

The second step: 1985

The second step on the staircase is the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, passed in May 1985 under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone and in force from April 1986. The same year Japan ratified the United Nations convention on the elimination of discrimination against women.

The law was modest at first. It asked employers to make efforts to treat women equally in recruitment and promotion rather than requiring them to do so, and many companies responded by creating separate career tracks that kept most women in clerical roles. Ryoko Akamatsu, the labour ministry official who steered it through, accepted the compromise as the price of getting a law at all.

It was strengthened over time. Revisions that took effect in 1999 turned the efforts into prohibitions, and a further revision in 2006 extended the ban on discrimination to both sexes and to indirect forms of discrimination.

The 1999 changes contain the most telling detail for today's story. In that year the provisions of the Labour Standards Act that had restricted women's overtime, holiday work and night work in most occupations were abolished. The reasoning was that protection which keeps women out of certain work is a form of exclusion, and that the proper protection is for pregnancy and childbirth, not for being a woman.

Private companies have lived under that principle for more than a quarter of a century. The night shift at the courts, it turns out, did not catch up until now.

The third step: 2025

The third step is the one most readers will remember. In October last year Sanae Takaichi became the first woman to serve as prime minister of Japan.

How she got there matters. She was not appointed to fill a quota. She won elections in her constituency, rose through her party and won its leadership in a contest against men who were favoured by many to beat her. Whatever one thinks of her policies, and this page has disagreed with some and supported others, her path to the top is an argument for open competition rather than for reserved places.

That point matters for the debate that will follow today's news. There are those who will say that the

EDITORIAL & OPINION

change at the courts shows the need for targets and quotas across public life. We do not agree. What it shows is the need to remove barriers that have no justification, and to let ability and willingness decide who does what.

The fourth step: the night shift

Which brings us back to the top of the staircase. Mr Suzuki has placed the clerks' night duty above the first woman prime minister, and the order is not an accident. Grand firsts are visible and celebrated. The test of whether a society means what it says about equal treatment is whether the ordinary rosters, rules and routines of its institutions reflect it.

A country can elect a woman to its highest office and still keep, in a courthouse in a provincial city, a list of night duty on which no woman's name ever appears. Japan, until now, has done exactly that.

The men in the cartoon

There is another side to this story, and the cartoon hints at it. The figures lifting the sign are men, and it is men who have carried the night shift.

For years, male clerks have taken the night and holiday duty that their female colleagues did not, with the disruption to sleep and family life that comes with it. Equal treatment cuts both ways. If women gain access to work that was closed to them, men gain relief from burdens that fell on them alone. A rule that was presented, perhaps, as protecting women also placed an extra load on men, and nobody seems to have asked whether that was fair either.

Equality, properly understood, is not a contest in which one group gains at another's expense. It is the principle that public duties should be shared according to ability and need, not according to sex. That principle protects everyone.

Why now, and why it is workable

It would be unfair to the courts to suggest that nothing has driven the change except embarrassment. The plan to gather night-time warrant work into Tokyo and Osaka, reported by Jiji Press in February, makes it possible to organise the duty differently. Fewer courts staffed overnight means fewer people on duty on any given night, and the chance to provide proper rest facilities, safe arrangements for getting to and from work at night and predictable schedules.

That is how sensible reform happens in Japan: not by slogans but by practical modernisation that removes the excuses for an old practice along with the practice itself. The courts deserve credit for using the change to do the right thing.

They will deserve more credit if they make night work tolerable for everyone who does it. Sharing a burden is not the same as lightening it, and staff with young children or elderly parents, men as well as women, will need rosters that take account of their circumstances.

Rights and duties together

The Constitution pairs rights with duties more often than is remembered. Article 27 states that all people have the right and the obligation to work; others speak of the duty to see that children are educated and the duty to pay taxes. The idea behind that pairing is a sound one, and a conservative one: citizenship is a share in the common burden as well as in the common benefit.

Seen in that light, the change at the courts is not only about opening a door to women. It is about recognising that women are full participants in the duties of public service, including the unglamorous and inconvenient ones. A society that grants equal rights but distributes duties by sex has not finished the job.

The other direction

The same principle has been working in the opposite direction in Japanese homes and workplaces. For years fathers were expected to leave childcare almost entirely to mothers. The law on childcare leave has been revised to encourage fathers to take time off after a birth, and the share of eligible men taking leave, long in single figures, passed 30 per cent in fiscal 2023.

That change, like the one at the courts, came through practical reform rather than exhortation, and it rests on the same idea: that burdens and opportunities should follow the person, not the sex. A father on childcare leave and a woman on the night shift at a courthouse are two halves of the same picture.

The arguments of the past

It is worth recalling the reasons usually given for keeping women off night duty, because they will be heard again in other places. Night work was said to be unsafe for women. Buildings lacked separate rest rooms. Women would leave if asked to work at night. Each of these is a problem to be solved, not a reason to exclude. Safe transport can be arranged, rest rooms can be built, and staff of either sex who cannot work at night for family reasons can be accommodated individually.

The consolidation of the work in Tokyo and Osaka removes most of the practical obstacles at a stroke. What remains is the habit of mind, and habits of mind, as the cartoon suggests, are heavy to lift.

The guardian of equality

There is a larger reason why the courts in particular should lead on this rather than follow. Article 14 of the Constitution states that all of the people are equal under the law and that there shall be no discrimination in political, economic or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin. It is the courts that interpret and apply that article when citizens bring complaints of unequal treatment.

An institution that rules on discrimination in other people's workplaces cannot comfortably keep an unexplained distinction in its own. Its authority depends partly on its example.

Japanese citizens already serve the courts without distinction of sex. Since 2009 lay judges have been drawn by lot from the electoral roll to sit with professional judges in serious criminal trials, and the lot does not ask whether the citizen is a man or a woman. The night shift has now been brought into line with the jury room.

A word of caution about the consolidation

The plan to gather night-time warrant work into two cities and handle it online deserves support, but also scrutiny. A warrant is a judge's personal decision about a citizen's liberty, and it must remain one. Reviewing requests by screen from hundreds of kilometres away should not become a production line in which papers are approved because they arrive in good order.

Concentrating the work could improve its quality, by putting it in the hands of experienced teams rather than whoever happens to be on duty in a small court. It could also do the opposite, if volume overwhelms care. The Supreme Court should publish how the new arrangements work and how many requests are examined, questioned and refused, so that the public can judge for itself.

The clerks who will now share the night shift, women and men alike, are the first safeguard of that process. They check that the papers are complete, that the right judge sees them and that the record is kept. Their work deserves respect, proper staffing and the tools to do it well.

The flag on the wall

Mr Suzuki has hung the national flag behind his two figures, and it is a fitting touch. The courts belong to the nation, and the principle they are now applying in their own corridors, that public duties are shared among all citizens, is a national principle, written into the Constitution and accepted across the political spectrum.

What remains

The sign has moved; the staircase does not end. Women remain a minority among judges, prosecutors and the senior officials of the courts, and in the leadership of many other public institutions. The answer is not to lower standards or to reserve places, but to look honestly at the practices, written and unwritten, that keep capable people out, and to remove those that cannot be justified.

The courts' experience suggests where to start. Every ministry, prefecture and public body could usefully ask itself a simple question: are there duties here that, in practice, are given only to men or only to women, and is there a written reason that would survive scrutiny? Where there is none, the practice should go.

What we recommend

First, the courts should publish the new rules for night duty, so that staff and the public can see how the work is assigned. A rule that nobody could find is how the old practice survived.

Second, the consolidation in Tokyo and Osaka should be used to improve the conditions of night work for

everyone, with rest facilities, safe transport and fair rotation.

Third, the government should ask its own agencies the question the courts have just answered, and report what it finds.

Fourth, those who seek to turn this change into an argument for quotas should be resisted. The lesson of the staircase is that barriers should be removed and competition opened, not that outcomes should be fixed in advance.

Fifth, the eightieth anniversary of women's suffrage, which falls this year, should be marked as the national achievement it was, with due honour to the Japanese women who campaigned for it long before 1945.

The clock

Mr Suzuki's clock stands just short of midnight, the hour when the night shift begins. Perhaps the artist means that the change came at the last possible moment. Perhaps he means that it came just in time.

Either way, the sign has moved. It is a small step at the top of a long staircase, and the men who lifted it should not be the last to climb. Equality was never only about the right to vote. It is also about who answers the telephone when a warrant is needed at three in the morning, and the answer, from now on, is whoever is on duty.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: The Prime Minister Should Decide About Yana Before the Questions Decide for Her

Waiting to see whether the law was broken sets the bar too low for a minister; the test is candour, and the evidence is in his own office

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Sanae Takaichi moved on Tuesday from defending her agriculture minister to weighing his future. It was the right move, but the standard she set for the decision is the wrong one.

She said she would not hesitate to act if illegality was found. Legality is a question for prosecutors and courts, and it can take months to answer. The question for a prime minister is narrower and more urgent: can the public believe what her minister tells the Diet?

The test of candour

On that test Kazuo Yana is in difficulty. He told the Budget Committee that his staff had checked with the election commission before hiring buses for his supporters. Opposition lawmakers say the commission told them it had no record of being asked. Both accounts cannot be complete.

This is not a matter on which the facts are hidden. The bus contracts, the invoices, the funds report in which the cost was recorded and any note of the call to the commission all sit in Mr Yana's own office. If his account is accurate, he can show it within a day.

The road budgets

The bus question comes on top of the road budgets. Mr Yana has withdrawn his recorded boast that two municipalities whose mayors did not back him had their budgets cut, and denies ever having asked for such a cut. But he told the committee he kept no records of how his inquiries to officials were made, and conceded that he had spoken about budgets at other party gatherings. A minister who cannot reconstruct his own dealings with the bureaucracy invites the suspicion that he would rather not.

The cost of waiting

The prime minister's reluctance is understandable. Dismissing a minister a month after appointing him is an admission of poor judgment, and no leader likes to hand the opposition a victory. But the cost of waiting is rising. The extraordinary session was meant to be about her food tax cut and her support payment; on Tuesday it was about buses.

The history of recent cabinets offers a clear lesson. Ministers in trouble over gifts to voters or ill-chosen words have usually gone in the end, and the damage to the governments that kept them longest was the greatest.

What she should do

Ms Takaichi has said she will hear Mr Yana out in person today. She should ask him for the documents, all of them, and set a short deadline for making them public. If they bear out his account, he can stay and the opposition will have to move on. If they do not, or if he cannot produce them, he should go, and she

should say so herself rather than waiting for a censure motion.

The larger point

The episode also raises questions about how ministers were vetted before last month's reshuffle, given that the education minister, too, has had to apologise. A prime minister who takes ethics seriously should tighten that process now, before the next appointment rather than after the next apology.

Ms Takaichi has built her reputation on decisiveness. This is an occasion to show it.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: A Reporter on Sakhalin Is Not a Spy, and Tokyo Should Say So Plainly and Keep Saying It

Counting a region's soldiers and volunteers is the stuff of ordinary journalism; Japan must press for access, fair treatment and release without bending its policy

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Russia's security service says Yuki Imai, the Hokkaido Shimbun's correspondent on Sakhalin, gathered information on the instructions of Japanese intelligence about how many residents of the Kuril Islands had been mobilised for the war in Ukraine and how many had volunteered. If that is the charge, it describes journalism.

How many men a region has sent to war, how many have come back and how many have not are questions that reporters ask everywhere. In Russia they have become dangerous to ask, because the government treats almost any information about the armed forces as sensitive. That is a statement about Russia, not about Mr Imai.

The pattern

Moscow has a record. Evan Gershkovich of The Wall Street Journal was arrested on an espionage charge in 2023, convicted in a closed trial and freed only in a prisoner exchange. Russia's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said on Tuesday that Mr Imai's case was not an isolated one and blamed Japan's policies for the state of relations. The message could hardly be clearer: the arrest is about Japan, not about one reporter.

What Tokyo should do

Japan's first duty is to its citizen. It should press immediately for consular access, for a clear statement of the evidence, and for humane treatment and a fair process. It should do so publicly as well as privately, because a case that is kept quiet is easier for the detaining power to drag out.

It should coordinate with its partners in the Group of Seven, several of which have had citizens detained in Russia in similar circumstances and know how such cases unfold.

What Tokyo should not do

It should not allow the case to bend its policy. Japan has supported Ukraine and joined sanctions on Russia because aggression must not be rewarded. If the detention of a reporter could change that policy, Moscow would have every incentive to detain more Japanese.

Nor should Japan respond by restricting Russian journalists at home. Answering one abuse with another would concede the point Moscow wants to make, that the press is simply an arm of the state.

The newspapers

Japanese newspapers will now have to weigh the safety of correspondents in Russia against the value of their reporting. It is a hard judgment. But the Russian Far East matters greatly to Japan, and readers in Hokkaido above all deserve first-hand reporting on the islands and the region across the strait.

The best answer to the detention of a journalist is more journalism, done carefully, and a government that stands behind the people who do it.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: China on Etorofu Means the Northern Territories Are No Longer a Quarrel Between Two

By inviting a third country to invest, Moscow is trying to make its hold permanent; Japan must answer in Moscow and in Beijing, and in Nemuro

By William | Senior Political Analyst

For eight decades the dispute over the islands off Hokkaido has been a matter between Japan and the Soviet Union and then Russia. The visit to Etorofu by a delegation of officials and business people from China's Heilongjiang Province, announced by the

ANALYSIS

Sakhalin government on Tuesday, is an attempt to change that.

Russia has long sought foreign investment for the islands, and Japan has long objected that business done there under Russian law implies acceptance of Russian rule. What is new is the identity of the visitor and the moment.

The moment

The visit comes two months after Vladimir Putin made his first visit to the islands, a gesture that Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi rightly called absolutely unacceptable, and in the same week that Russia detained a Japanese journalist on Sakhalin. Taken together, the three events look like a message: Moscow regards the matter of the islands as closed and intends to make the facts on the ground speak for themselves.

Bringing in Chinese capital serves that purpose. A seafood plant or a hotel with Chinese investors would give a second great power an interest in the status quo.

The danger

Japan's position rests on law and history, and on the patience of a nation that has never accepted the seizure of 1945. That position does not weaken because a delegation inspects sea urchin farms. But a slow accumulation of foreign interests on the islands would make a negotiated return harder still, and it would bring Japan's two largest neighbours together on territory that Japan claims.

What Japan should do

First, protest clearly to Russia, as the government is expected to do, and make clear that Japan will not recognise any rights acquired under Russian jurisdiction on the islands.

Second, raise the matter directly with Beijing. China says it respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. It should be asked whether it regards the Northern Territories as Russian territory, and told plainly that Chinese companies investing there would be investing in a disputed land that Japan claims.

Third, look after the Japanese side of the strait. The city of Nemuro and the towns of eastern Hokkaido, from which the former residents came and on which the movement for the islands' return has always depended, deserve sustained support. A dispute is not kept alive by statements alone.

Firmness and patience

Japan's claim will not be won quickly, and perhaps not in this generation. But it can be lost by default. The Chinese visit is a test of whether Tokyo still treats the islands as a national cause or as a historical grievance. The answer should be the former.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: Sixth Place Is Mostly a Verdict on the Yen, but the Yen Is a Verdict on Japan

The IMF's ranking turns on exchange rates; the weak currency, in turn, reflects low interest rates and low productivity that policy can change

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Correspondent

The International Monetary Fund's projection that Japan will fall to sixth place among the world's economies next year, behind India and Britain, will be read in some quarters as proof of decline and in others as a statistical illusion. Both readings miss something.

The illusion argument is partly right. The ranking compares economies in dollars, so a weaker yen shrinks Japan's figure even when its economy is growing. The margin between Japan and Britain in the Fund's projection is about \$21 billion, a gap that a modest move in the exchange rate could close or widen.

Why the yen is weak

But the weakness of the yen is not an accident. It reflects the long gap between Japanese interest rates and those abroad, and the market's judgment about the economy's capacity to grow. Japan's potential growth rate, the pace it can sustain without inflation, is low, held back by a shrinking workforce and slow gains in productivity.

In that sense the ranking is a verdict on Japan after all: not on its wealth, which remains great, but on its dynamism.

What would help

The Bank of Japan's gradual normalisation of interest rates, now at 1.25 per cent, narrows the gap with other countries and supports the yen. It should continue, at a pace the economy can bear.

Fiscal credibility matters too. Markets are watching how the government will pay for its cut in the consumption tax on food. A plan that relied on borrowing, which the prime minister has ruled out, would weaken the currency further. The government should set out its funding plan clearly and soon.

Above all, productivity must rise. That means making it easier for workers to move to growing companies, for new firms to start and failing ones to close, and for businesses of every size to adopt the technology, from AI to automation, on show at Makuhari this week.

Perspective

Sixth place in a dollar table is not a calamity. Japan remains a rich, stable and technologically advanced country with deep savings and strong institutions. But it is a useful warning, and it should be heeded rather than explained away.

A stronger economy would bring a stronger yen, and the ranking would take care of itself.

The Fund also expects Japan's growth to hold at 0.7 per cent next year. The task for policy is to make that figure, not the ranking, the one that improves.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: Osaka's 500 Megawatts Show That Japan's AI Future Will Be Decided at the Substation

Money and chips can be bought; grid connections take years. Planning power and data together is now an economic priority

By Ethan Cole | Technology & Science Editor

The reported talks between NTT Data and Anthropic over a data centre of up to 500 megawatts in Osaka are good news for Japan. They are also a warning.

The good news is obvious. A leading developer of artificial intelligence wants to build its first dedicated Japanese facility here, in a project that could cost a trillion yen to build and several trillion to equip. That is a vote of confidence in Japan's stability and its market.

The warning

The warning lies in a single detail of the report: because connecting 500 megawatts to the grid would take a long time, the project would first look at generating power on site, including with fuel cells. The constraint on AI in Japan is no longer money or ambition. It is electricity.

Five hundred megawatts is about half the output of a large nuclear reactor, or roughly the consumption of a million homes. Japan's power demand, flat for years, is now forecast to rise because of data centres and chip factories, and the network of lines and substations that carries it was not built for loads of that kind arriving in a few places at once.

What should be done

First, the government and the power companies should plan electricity and data infrastructure together, steering large data centres to places where power is available or can be added quickly, rather than leaving each project to queue for a connection.

Second, the restart of nuclear reactors that have passed safety reviews should proceed. No other source can supply large amounts of steady, low-carbon electricity as quickly in Japan's circumstances.

Third, investment in transmission, including links between regions, should be accelerated. Japan's grid remains divided, and power cannot always move from where it is generated to where it is needed.

Fourth, households must not be left to pay for the expansion through their bills. Data centres that need new capacity should bear a fair share of its cost.

The strategic case

There is also a matter of national interest. A country that hosts the computing power on which its businesses and government depend has more control over its data and its future than one that rents capacity abroad. That is reason enough to treat the power question as a priority rather than a technicality. CEATEC's organisers have made infrastructure one of the four themes of this year's show. They are right to. The machines that see, hear and work on show at Makuhari will need power to think.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: Gin no Sara's Week Offline Shows the Weakest Link Is Often Someone Else's Server

Companies can be careful and still be crippled by an attack on a supplier; customers' data should be kept to what is needed, and backups kept out of reach

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

For a week, one of Japan's best-known delivery chains has been unable to take orders online, and up to 6.5 million customers have been told their personal details may have been exposed. The attack that caused it did not strike Ride On Express itself. It struck the company that hosted its servers.

That is the lesson of the Gin no Sara case, and it applies far beyond sushi. Many Japanese businesses, especially medium-sized ones, run their systems on servers managed by outside providers. They are only as secure as those providers.

Third-party risk

Ransomware groups know this. An attack on a hosting company can lock up the systems of dozens of client firms at once, multiplying the pressure to pay. The provider in this case reportedly told Ride On Express that the data it held would be difficult to retrieve or restore.

Companies cannot outsource responsibility along with their servers. They need to know how their providers protect data, how quickly they can recover and what happens if they cannot, and they need copies of essential data kept separately, beyond the reach of an attacker.

Collect less

The list of what may have leaked is also instructive: not only names and addresses, but family members' names and birthdays. A delivery company has some use for such details, for birthday offers and the like. But every piece of personal information a company keeps is a liability if it is stolen, and fraudsters use exactly such details to make their calls and e-mails convincing.

Businesses should ask of every item they store whether they truly need it. Data that is never collected cannot leak.

What regulators can do

Japan's personal information law already requires companies to report leaks. Regulators should consider whether hosting providers whose failures affect many clients should also have clear duties to report attacks promptly and to their customers' customers, so that the public learns quickly which services are affected.

Smaller companies would also benefit from simple, practical security standards and from help to meet them, since few can afford large security teams.

For customers

In the meantime, customers of the affected brands should change any password they reused elsewhere and treat unexpected contacts with suspicion. The company has said no misuse has been confirmed. Vigilance will help keep it that way.

ANALYSIS

Analysis: SoftBank's Two-Win Head Start Is a Fair Reward for a Season of Dominance

A pennant won over 143 games should count for more than a week in October; the Central League should watch how the new rule works

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

When the Pacific League's final stage begins tonight at Mizuho PayPay Dome, the Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks will already be two wins up on the Hokkaido Nippon-Ham Fighters. Some will call that unfair. It is nothing of the kind.

The rule is simple: a champion that finishes at least ten games ahead of the second-placed team starts with a two-win advantage instead of one, and the series can last seven games instead of six. SoftBank, champions for a third successive year, earned it over 143 games.

The problem it solves

The Climax Series has always had a weakness. It lets a team that finished well behind the champion over six months knock it out in a few days and go to the Japan Series in its place. That has produced memorable upsets, but it has also made the regular season count for less than it should.

A one-win head start was meant to balance the two.

For a champion that dominated its league, it was arguably too little. Two wins restores some proportion between what a team achieved over a season and what it must do in a short series.

The counter-argument

The objection is that a bigger head start makes the outcome predictable and the play-offs less exciting. There is something in that. But the Fighters will still have their chance, and if they win five games in seven against a team of SoftBank's quality, they will have earned it more convincingly than any underdog under the old rules.

The Central League

The Central League has kept the single-win advantage, and Hanshin, champions for a second year, will begin their final stage against DeNA with it at Koshien tonight. The league should watch the Pacific's experiment closely and consider following if it works.

What fans want

Baseball fans in Japan love the play-offs, and the drama they bring will not disappear. But they also respect a champion that wins over the long haul. A format that honours both, giving the best team its due while leaving the door open for an upset, is the right one.

Tonight we will begin to find out whether the new rule gets the balance right.

Whatever the outcome, the champions of both leagues have reminded us that consistency over a long season remains the hardest thing in the sport, and the most deserving of reward.

MORE INSIDE TODAY

Takaichi Raises the Possibility of Replacing Yana for the First Time, Saying She Will Not Hesitate if His Campaign Broke the Election Law — Page 1

Russia Detains a Hokkaido Shimibun Correspondent on Sakhalin on a Spying Charge, and a Moscow Court Orders Him Held — Page 1

Why a Free Bus Ride Can Be a Legal Problem: What the Public Offices Election Act Says About Benefits for Voters — Page 2

Paper Fans, Melons and a Bag of Rice: The Ministers Who Left Office Over Gifts to Voters and Ill-Judged Words — Page 2

Article 276: How Russia Prosecutes Foreigners for Espionage, and Why Some Have Come Home Through Prisoner Exchanges — Page 2

Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan and the Habomai Islets: The Four Islands at the Centre of the Quarrel — Page 2

At CEATEC, Japan Makes the Case for a Practical Physical AI: Machines That Listen, Inspect and Fill the Gaps Left by a Shrinking Workforce — Page 3

The Cocktail-Party Problem: How Mitsubishi Electric's Prize-Winning AI Picks One Sound Out of a Din — Page 3

CEATEC 2026 at a Glance — Page 3

Why CEATEC's Organisers Say Dancing Robots Are Not the Point, and What They Want Visitors to See Instead — Page 3

NTT Data in Final Talks to Build a 500-Megawatt Data Centre in Osaka for Anthropic, at a Cost of Up to One Trillion Yen, Nikkei Reports — Page 4

How Much Is 500 Megawatts? Half a Large Nuclear Reactor, or the Electricity Used by About a Million Homes — Page 4

The Yana Case: Three Weeks From a Recording to the Budget Committee — Page 4

The Detention in Figures — Page 4

A Correspondent in 2019 and a Consul in 2022: The Japanese Russia Accused Before, and Why This Case Is Graver — Page 4

Japan and Russia Since the Invasion of Ukraine — Page 4

The Northern Territories in Figures — Page 4

The Week Ahead — Page 4

Takaichi Calls Her Income-Linked Support Payment 'Groundbreaking' as the Budget Committee Opens, but Two Ministers' Troubles Take Up the Day — Page 5

The First Day in the Committee Room: Who Asked What — Page 5

The Food Tax Cut and the Support Payment at a Glance — Page 5

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.

Tuesday's front-page report on the Gulf described Saudi Arabia as Japan's largest supplier of crude oil. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have been Japan's two largest suppliers, and in some recent months the Emirates supplied the larger share. Tuesday's report that Kyushu Shinkansen services were expected to resume around midday reflected JR Kyushu's estimate at the time; trains between Hakata and Kumamoto resumed at about 4:15 p.m., and the section to Kagoshima-Chuo stayed closed all day.

The notes supplied for today's edition again give the agriculture minister's name as Yanagi; he is Kazuo Yana. They say the IMF projects Japan to fall to sixth, overtaken by Britain; the Fund's projections have both India and Britain passing Japan in 2027. They give Tokyo's high as 28 degrees; today's map gives 26. Items in the notes that concern events after this edition's deadline, among them the second day of questioning in the Budget Committee and the government's comments on Wednesday, are held for tomorrow's edition. The notes quote Navi Pillay as calling the American sanctions shortsighted; that word could not be confirmed, and her remarks are quoted as reported by the Associated Press and Reuters.

Items in the notes that could not be confirmed from primary reports are not used, among them a new leadership body for the Unification Church, limits on the number of pages in school textbooks, a joint advertising company of three broadcasters, a summit with Vietnam's president, a factory fire in Nakagawa, a house fire in Yokohama, arrests over the laundering of fraud proceeds, flooding in Shisui, an opinion survey on personal information, half-year results at Aeon and Aeon Kyushu, a SoftBank bond sale, a data leak at Japan Post, several business openings, individual exhibits at CEATEC other than those described, a computing trial by J-Power, a data-centre plan in Satsumasendai, a Fujitsu processor, expectations for the Bank of Japan's October meeting, the size of a government bond auction and the score in the Meijin go match.

THE WEEK AHEAD

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14: Budget Committee, second day, from 9 a.m.; the prime minister meets the agriculture minister; Climax Series final stages, 6 p.m.; ASML results; United States consumer prices, 9:30 p.m.; Oza title match, Game 4, Kobe; Nada fighting festival eve, Himeji. THURSDAY, OCT. 15: NLCS Game 3, 9 a.m.; TSMC results; Kannamesai at Ise, to Saturday. FRIDAY, OCT. 16: House of Councillors session; CEATEC closes. OCT. 17 AND 18: Kawagoe Festival. MONDAY, OCT. 19: House of Councillors session. OCT. 22: Jidai Matsuri and Kurama Fire Festival. OCT. 24: Japan Series. OCT. 25: Niigata mayoral election. OCT. 29 AND 30: Bank of Japan policy meeting.

TYPHOON AND MARINE ADVISORIES

9 a.m. Wednesday. No. 29 (Koguma): an extratropical low about 1,570 km east of Sendai; 986 hPa; moving north-east at 35 km/h; no longer affecting Japan. Tropical depression: near the Marshall Islands, about 1,710 km east-south-east of Guam; 1004 hPa; forecast to become a tropical storm by Thursday morning and a typhoon by Monday morning near the Mariana Islands, about 1,370 km south of Chichijima.

Pacific coasts: swell from the departing storm can still raise waves on exposed shores; keep off breakwaters and rocks facing the open sea. Hokkaido: strong winds, with gales possible on the Sea of Japan side in the north into Thursday. Hokuriku and northern Tohoku: thunder possible with the morning rain. Emergencies at sea: 118.

MARKET REFERENCE

New York, Tuesday: Dow Jones Industrial Average 51,670.10, down 180.45; S&P 500 7,805.45, down 1.79; Nasdaq Composite 27,204.38, down 41.52. Johnson & Johnson down about 6 per cent; Micron down 3.6 per cent. Ten-year Treasury yield about 5.2 per cent. West Texas Intermediate crude, November, \$94.14 a barrel, up 40 cents; gold, December, \$4,177.30 an ounce. Dollar about 158.3 yen. Tokyo, Tuesday: Nikkei 225 at 67,777.52, down 1,253.40; TOPIX 4,110.67, up 5.86; Prime market turnover

EDITORIAL & OPINION

THE JAPAN MORNING POST

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7.96 trillion yen. Bank of Japan policy rate: 1.25 per cent. Corporate goods prices in September: up 6.8 per cent on a year earlier; import prices in yen up 24.5 per cent.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS IN THIS EDITION

Front page: Kazuo Yana, the agriculture minister, in a campaign image (file photo, WPM Productions). CEATEC 2026: a hall at Makuhari Messe (file photo, WPM Productions). Politics: Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in the House of Representatives (WPM Productions). International: Riyadh at dusk, a file image supplied for this edition. Economy: the Tokyo Stock Exchange (TG2, CC). Society: a Kyushu Shinkansen 800 series train in Tsubame service (Japan Rail). Weather: the Japan and United States maps supplied for this edition. Editorial page: cartoon by Taro Suzuki.

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THE RECORD BOOK

Russia: Article 276, espionage by foreign nationals, carries 10 to 20 years; custody ordered for two months. The Northern Territories: about 5,000 square kilometres; about 17,000 Japanese residents in 1945. Kyushu Shinkansen, Tuesday: 97 trains cancelled; about 23,200 passengers affected. Gin no Sara: up to 6.5 million customer records possibly exposed. Osaka data centre: up to 500 megawatts and up to one trillion yen, the Nikkei reports. Toei subway bid-rigging: about 500 million yen in planned surcharges for five companies. Women's suffrage: 39 women elected on April 10, 1946. IMF: world growth 3.1 per cent in 2026; Japan 0.7 per cent. Glico's Dotonbori runner: about 140,000 LEDs; 20 metres high.

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, as in Nagoya and Kyoto, which turn from rain to sunshine. Two symbols separated by a slanting stroke: the first sky, with the second at times, as in Tokyo, cloudy with some rain. 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. 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 Bremen and The Hague, six ahead of Moscow, Riyadh and Kyiv, five and a half ahead of Tehran, two ahead of Bangkok, 13 ahead of New York and Washington, 14 ahead of Milwaukee and 16 ahead of Los Angeles; Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk is two hours ahead of Japan. 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. Ride On Express consultation line for Gin no Sara, Kamatora and Sushi Joto customers: 0120-782-272, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Rail travellers in Kyushu should check JR Kyushu's service information before setting out. Anyone who receives a call or message asking for a password should not give it, and should contact the company through its official site. Travellers to the Middle East and Russia 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 Wednesday morning papers and Tuesday's wires and broadcasts: Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Sankei News, Kyodo News, Jiji Press, NHK, FNN, TNC, the Hokkaido Shimbun, the Shimotsuke Shimbun, the Kumamoto Nichinichi Shimbun, Shukan Bunshun, Nikkan Sports, Daily Sports, Meduza, The Associated Press, Reuters, Al Jazeera, CBS News, Gulf News, Xinhua, CBS Sports, MLB.com, 9to5Mac and The Japan News; on the statements of the Bank of Japan, the IMF, JR Kyushu, Ride On Express, Ezaki Glico, JEITA, NEDO, the J.League and the German football federation; 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

Thursday's edition carries the second day of questioning in the Budget Committee and the outcome of the prime minister's meeting with the agriculture minister; the government's response to the detention of the Hokkaido Shimbun correspondent; the openings of the Climax Series final stages; the Oza title match in Kobe; American consumer prices and ASML's results; a preview of Game 3 of the NLCS, which begins at 9 a.m. on Thursday; and the latest from the Gulf and Ukraine. The weather page will follow the new tropical depression near the Marshall Islands, which forecasters expect to become a typhoon near the Mariana Islands by Monday.

MORE INSIDE TODAY (CONTINUED)

A Chinese Delegation Tours Etorofu at Russia's Encouragement, Eyeing Sea Urchin Farms and a Seafood Plant; Tokyo Says Entry on Russian Terms Is Unacceptable — Page 5

Heilongjiang: China's Northernmost Province, Which Shares a River Border With Russia and Has No Sea of Its Own — Page 5

Education Minister Seki Apologises for a Fundraising Party Held Inside a Lower-House Office Building, Contrary to the Chamber's Rules — Page 6

Who Are the Democratic Reform Association? The New Opposition Party That Grew Out of a Failed Merger — Page 6

Saudi Arabia Vows a Response 'Equally Serious' to the Houthi Attacks as Coalition Jets Strike Yemen and the Houthis Threaten Aramco — Page 7

A Week of Attacks on Saudi Airports — Page 7

Trump Insists the Energy Truce Is Holding as Zelenskyy Reports Six More Russian Strikes on Ukrainian Power Facilities — Page 8

The World in Brief: An Iran-Oman Route, a NATO Statement and Warnings for Travellers — Page 8

Nikkei Falls 1,253 Yen as Chip Stocks Are Sold After the Holiday, While the Broader TOPIX Edges Higher — Page 9

Markets at a Glance — Page 9

How Ransomware Works, and Why Japanese Companies Keep Falling Victim — Page 10

October 14, 1957: The British Computer Society Is Founded, as Computing Begins to Become a Profession — Page 11

Morning Rain in the North and Centre Gives Way to Sunshine From the West; Tokyo Turns Wet in the Early Afternoon — Page 12

Today's Weather Extremes — Page 13

United States: Cooler Air Brings Showers and Storms to the Plains and Midwest; St. Louis Drops 16 Degrees and Kansas City Is Under a Flood Watch — Page 14

Kyushu Shinkansen to Run Normally From the First Train Today After Checks Found a Damaged Fitting on the Overhead Wire; 97 Trains Were Cancelled — Page 15

Why One Company Escapes: How Japan's Leniency Programme Rewards the First to Confess to a Cartel — Page 16

The NLCS So Far — Page 17

Sports in Brief: A Shogi Title Could Be Decided in Kobe, and a Go Title Game Ends in Chiba — Page 18

Eighty Years, and the Sign Finally Moves: Equality Is Measured in Night Shifts as Well as in Votes — Page 19

Analysis: The Prime Minister Should Decide About Yana Before the Questions Decide for Her — Page 20

Analysis: Sixth Place Is Mostly a Verdict on the Yen, but the Yen Is a Verdict on Japan — Page 21