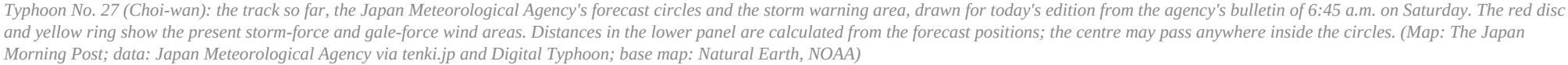


By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk, with Emi Kondo | Society & Local News, and Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization



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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FROM PAGE 1

Typhoon No. 27 Strengthens Towards 'Very Strong' and Turns for the Ogasawara Islands as Tokyo's 37 Days of Rain Give Way to Sun

Continued from Page 1

A calculation made for today's map from the agency's forecast positions puts the line joining the forecast centres about 280 kilometres east-north-east of Chichijima at its closest, in the early hours of Tuesday, and about 450 kilometres from Iwo To on Monday afternoon. Both Chichijima and Hahajima fall inside the area the agency marks as liable to storm-force winds.

Those figures need to be read with the caution printed on the map itself. The circles drawn around each forecast position are the areas in which the centre is expected to lie with a probability of 70 per cent, and by Tuesday morning the circle has a radius of 220 kilometres. The western edge of that circle runs close to the islands. The centre will not necessarily follow the line.

Weathernews describes the uncertainty in the track as large. A storm of this strength does not have to pass overhead to do damage: its storm-force winds at peak are forecast to extend well over 100 kilometres from the centre, and the swell arrives a day or more before the wind.

The village's instructions, and the shipping company's notices on sailings to and from the islands, are what residents and visitors should follow from now. Sailings are routinely rescheduled when a typhoon threatens, and visitors already on the islands may find their stay lengthened.

Honshu: waves, wind and falling pressure

On the present forecast the centre passes some 640 kilometres east-south-east of Hachijojima at about midday on Tuesday and some 730 kilometres from Tokyo on Tuesday evening, by the same calculation. That is far enough for the capital to escape the storm-force winds and close enough to feel the storm.

The Pacific coast will have high waves with swell, the forecasters say, and the Japan Weather Association has advised Kanto to be alert for strong winds as well. High-wave advisories were already in force this morning for Chiba and for Tokyo, which includes the islands, according to tenki.jp, and strong-wind advisories for Tokyo and Shizuoka among other prefectures.

Northern Japan follows. The forecast there is for cloud or rain in the first half of the week and for higher waves from Tuesday, as the storm accelerates past to the east.

A track of this kind, well offshore and moving fast by the time it reaches the latitude of Tokyo, usually spares the main islands the worst of the rain. The exception is when a front is lying over Honshu to be fed by it, and one is forecast.

Thirty-seven days, and then a Saturday

Rain was recorded in central Tokyo on Friday for the 37th consecutive day, extending by one the longest run since records began in 1886. The run that began in late August has now lasted more than five weeks.

Today it is expected to end. High pressure covers the country, tenki.jp reports, and the forecast is for mostly sunny weather. The map on the weather page gives Tokyo a clear symbol, a high of 25 and a low this morning of 18, and sun for at least the first part of the day at every city from Kagoshima to Sendai, with cloud arriving later at Hiroshima, Matsue and Nagano. Sapporo has rain giving way to sun at 17 degrees, Aomori and Akita begin under cloud, and Naha, the warmest of the map's 19 cities at 31, clouds over later.

If no rain is recorded at the official gauge in Kitanomaru Park today, the streak stops at 37.

The reprieve is short. A front extending from the west is forecast to bring rain to Kanto from Sunday to Tuesday, the same three days on which the typhoon passes to the south and east. The Japan Weather Association's forecasters expect rain in Tokyo on each of them.

The ground has not had time to recover. In Chiba and Kanagawa, where Typhoon No. 25 struck on September 19, the forecasters repeat that slopes are loose and that even light rain calls for caution. September on the Pacific side of eastern Japan had the least sunshine on record and more than twice its

normal rainfall.

The cost of the wet

The effects of five weeks without a dry day are now turning up in the shops. The morning papers report that chestnuts have failed to ripen, that vegetable prices have risen sharply and that attendance at theme parks has fallen away. Those reports are carried on the economy pages.

For households the timing is poor. Electricity and gas charges went up this month, 3,153 food and drink items became more expensive on October 1, and consumer prices in the Tokyo area rose 2.7 per cent in September from a year earlier, the fastest in eight months.

The storm adds one more exposure. The Izu Islands, further north on the same ridge, had their ferries stopped by Typhoon No. 26 only on Thursday, and the transport ministry is preparing to take three of Tokai Kisen's vessels out of service from October 9 for reasons that include drinking on duty. Island shipping is under strain before the swell from No. 27 has arrived.

What to do, and when

For residents of the Ogasawara Islands the time to prepare is this weekend, while the sea is still workable and the shops are stocked. For those with bookings to or from the islands next week, the shipping company's announcements should be checked before travelling to the pier.

For the Pacific coast of Honshu the advice is the familiar one and is ignored every year: stay off breakwaters, reef flats and beaches when swell is running, however fine the weather. The first long waves from a distant typhoon arrive under a clear sky.

For Chiba and Kanagawa the advice has not changed in two weeks. People living beneath slopes or at the mouths of small valleys should know where they will go and should go early, particularly from Sunday, when the rain returns.

For everyone else, today is for laundry. The agency updates its typhoon information every three hours, and issues a full five-day forecast four times a day. The next ones will show whether the recurvature holds.

How to read the map

The red symbol marks the centre at 6 a.m. today. The red disc around it is the area of storm-force winds, and the yellow ring the area of gales, drawn to scale; the ring is offset to the south because the gale area reaches further on that side.

Each white dashed circle is a forecast circle. The solid red line encloses the storm warning area, the region that may come within storm-force winds if the centre moves anywhere inside the circles. The coloured dots along the track behind the storm are its positions every three hours since it formed.

The coastlines are drawn from survey data and the sea floor from the United States government's global relief model, so that the Izu, Ogasawara and Mariana island chains can be seen for what they are: the top of a single ridge, along which this storm is travelling north.

FROM PAGE 1

Farm Minister Yana Admits Saying He Had Road Budgets 'Drastically Cut' for Towns Whose Mayors Did Not Back Him; Denies Pressing the Ministry and Refuses to Resign

Continued from Page 1

meeting. He repeated several times that he had inquired and confirmed, and had not asked for anything to be cut.

Asked about his position, he said the prime minister had appointed him to move agricultural policy forward and that he intended to do the job. He said he had not discussed his future with Prime Minister Takaichi.

Until Friday evening he had declined to address the substance. Sankei counted about 20 occasions on

which he told reporters he would refrain from answering about his activities as a Diet member before he became a minister.

The land minister, Tatsunori Ibayashi, said after Friday's cabinet meeting that allocations are made on the basis of local requests, the progress of projects and priorities within a limited budget, and that he had been told road budgets had not been cut in the manner reported.

The two municipalities tell it differently. Officials quoted by Asahi said they did not know why their allocations had fallen and that, although budgets vary from year to year, they had never been reduced by so much.

The mayor of Nasukarasuyama, Junko Kawamata, who watched the news conference on television, said that to hint at cutting a budget in retaliation against those who did not support him was to cause anxiety among residents.

The opposition parties intend to pursue the minister's meaning in the extraordinary session of the Diet that convenes on Monday, and to question the prime minister's responsibility for appointing him.

The session was to have been about household finances. Its first week will now also be about whether a minister boasted of something he did, or boasted of something he did not do, and which of the two is worse.

TYPHOON NO. 27

Typhoon No. 27 at a Glance

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Name: Choi-wan, contributed by Hong Kong.

6 a.m. Saturday: 18.1 degrees north, 144.9 east, over the Mariana Islands.

Class: large, strong.

Central pressure: 970 hPa. Maximum winds: 35 metres a second. Gusts: 50.

Movement: north-north-east at 15 km/h.

6 a.m. Sunday: 945 hPa, 45 m/s, very strong.

3 a.m. Monday: 925 hPa, 50 m/s, gusts 70, very strong. The forecast peak.

3 a.m. Tuesday: 935 hPa, 45 m/s, east-north-east of Chichijima.

3 a.m. Wednesday: 950 hPa, 40 m/s, east of Japan.

3 a.m. Thursday: extratropical low, 964 hPa, east of the Kuril Islands.

TYPHOON NO. 27

The Red Line on the Map: What a Storm Warning Area Is, and How It Is Drawn

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The widest shape on the typhoon map is the area enclosed by the solid red line. It is the part of the forecast most relevant to people on the ground and the part most often misread.

The Japan Meteorological Agency calls it the storm warning area. It marks everywhere that could come within storm-force winds, 25 metres a second or more, if the centre of the typhoon moves anywhere inside the forecast circle.

It is built from two radii. The forecast circle shows where the centre is likely to be. The storm radius shows how far from the centre the storm-force winds are expected to reach at that time.

Add the two and the result is the radius of the warning area. For 3 a.m. on Tuesday the agency gives a forecast circle of 220 kilometres and a warning area of 480, which implies storm-force winds extending about 260 kilometres from the centre.

The red line joins the warning areas for successive times into a single envelope, beginning from the present storm area.

It follows that being inside the red line does not mean storm-force winds will arrive. It means they cannot be ruled out. Being outside it means that, on the present forecast, they can.

Chichijima and Hahajima are inside. Iwo To, Hachijojima and the whole of Honshu are outside.

When the storm is lopsided the agency gives different distances for different sides. For Wednesday the warning area reaches 570 kilometres to the east of the forecast position and 500 to the west.

The area for the final forecast time is very large, 700 to 800 kilometres. That reflects the size of the forecast circle five days ahead more than the size of

the storm.

The yellow ring on the map is a different thing: the area that has gale-force winds now. It is an observation and not a forecast.

TYPHOON NO. 27

How Strong Is 925 Hectopascals? The Forecast for No. 27 Set Beside the Storms Japan Remembers

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The forecast for Typhoon No. 27 is that its central pressure will fall to 925 hectopascals by early Monday. The number means little without others to set beside it.

Normal air pressure at sea level is about 1,013 hectopascals. A typhoon's strength is closely related to how far below that its centre falls: the steeper the drop, the stronger the wind rushing in.

A typical typhoon at its peak reaches something between 950 and 970. Storms below 930 are uncommon, and those below 900 are rare.

The typhoon of October 2019 that flooded the Chikuma and Abukuma rivers reached 915 hectopascals over the ocean. By the time it came ashore on the Izu Peninsula it had weakened to 955.

The typhoon that struck Kansai in September 2018 and flooded the airport there also reached 915 at sea and made landfall at 950, the strongest landfall in a quarter of a century.

The Ise Bay typhoon of 1959, the deadliest in the country's modern history, came ashore at 929 hectopascals. More than 5,000 people died, most of them in the storm surge around Nagoya.

The pattern in those cases is that a storm is at its strongest far to the south and weakens as it moves over cooler water towards Honshu. What reaches the main islands is usually well short of the peak.

The Ogasawara Islands are not Honshu. They lie in the latitudes where typhoons are at or near full strength, and the present forecast has No. 27 at 925 to 935 hectopascals as it passes them.

Pressure is not the whole of a storm's danger. The 2019 typhoon did its damage with rain, the 2018 one with wind and tide, and both were far from their peak when they did it.

For this storm the forecast track keeps the centre offshore. The figure of 925 describes what the islands and the shipping lanes face, and what the Pacific coast will feel as swell.

TYPHOON NO. 27

Through the Marianas: The First Two Days of Typhoon No. 27, as the American Forecasters Saw It

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Before it became a concern for Japan, Typhoon No. 27 was a concern for the Northern Mariana Islands, an American territory, and the fullest account of its early life comes from the United States National Weather Service office on Guam.

The storm was named early on Thursday, Japan time, east of the islands. At 2 p.m. local time that day the Guam office placed its centre at 16.8 degrees north, 147.5 degrees east, moving west-north-west at 18 miles an hour and approaching the island of Alamagan.

The office warned that surf would build quickly on all reefs and that winds on Saipan and Tinian would swing round and strengthen through Friday as the storm moved into the northern islands.

It expected the storm to become a typhoon, by the American definition, on Friday afternoon as it neared the island of Agrihan.

The centre passed through the chain north of Saipan. Late on Friday, according to the tracking service Zoom Earth, it lay about 300 kilometres north-north-west of that island and was moving north at 15 kilometres an hour, with waves of 8.5 metres at their highest.

The northern islands are volcanic and almost uninhabited. Saipan, where most of the territory's people live, was on the weaker side of the storm.

The American military's Joint Typhoon Warning Center, which numbers the storm 26W, described the reason for the turn north: a ridge of high pressure to the north-east was being worn away by a trough passing to the north, opening a path towards higher latitudes.

TYPHOON NO. 27

Its forecasters gave high confidence to the track for three days and low confidence beyond, noting that one major model moves the storm much more slowly than the others.

That is the same uncertainty the Japanese forecasters describe, seen from the other side: where the storm will be on Tuesday depends on how fast it travels on Sunday and Monday.

At 6 a.m. today the Japan Meteorological Agency put the centre at 18 degrees 5 minutes north, about 90 kilometres west of the island of Pagan.

TYPHOON NO. 27

The Islands the Typhoon Crossed: The Northern Marianas, American Territory With a Japanese Past

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The chain of islands over which Typhoon No. 27 strengthened this week is American territory, and for a generation it was Japanese.

The Northern Mariana Islands run north for some 700 kilometres from Rota to a string of small volcanoes. With Guam, at the southern end, they form the Mariana arc.

Spain held them for three centuries and sold the northern islands to Germany in 1899. Japan took them in 1914 and governed them from 1920 under a mandate of the League of Nations.

Under Japanese rule Saipan and Tinian were planted with sugar cane and settled by tens of thousands of migrants, most of them from Okinawa. By the late 1930s the settlers far outnumbered the islanders.

The battle for Saipan in June and July 1944 was among the bloodiest of the Pacific war. Its fall brought the Japanese mainland within range of American bombers, and the cabinet in Tokyo resigned. The aircraft that carried the atomic bombs took off from Tinian the following year.

After the war the islands were administered by the United States as a trust territory of the United Nations. They chose to become a commonwealth in political union with the United States, an arrangement that took full effect in 1986.

About 47,000 people live there, nearly all on Saipan, Tinian and Rota in the south.

The islands to the north, which lay nearest the storm's centre this morning, are the tops of active volcanoes. The people of Pagan were evacuated when it erupted in 1981 and the island has had no permanent settlement since.

Japanese visitors still come to Saipan, to the beaches and to the cliffs at the island's northern end where civilians died in 1944. The emperor and empress of the time paid their respects there in 2005.

The same ridge of the sea floor continues north to Iwo To and the Ogasawara Islands, which is the path the typhoon is taking.

TYPHOON NO. 27

Why Typhoons Turn: The Bend in the Track of No. 27

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The forecast track of Typhoon No. 27 has the shape of most autumn typhoons: north at first, then curving to the north-east and accelerating away. Forecasters call the bend recurvature.

A typhoon has no engine for travel. It is carried by the winds around it, as a cork is carried by a stream.

In the tropics the stream flows from east to west, around the southern edge of the great area of high pressure that sits over the Pacific in summer. Storms that form east of the Philippines drift west or north-west along it.

The high pressure has a western edge. A storm that reaches it turns north, running up the side.

Further north it meets the westerlies, the belt of strong winds from the west that circles the middle latitudes. These catch the storm and sweep it away to the north-east, often at several times its earlier speed.

The forecast for No. 27 shows all three stages. It moved west through the Marianas on Thursday, turned north on Friday, and is expected to be travelling north-north-east at 45 kilometres an hour by Wednesday and at 85 by Thursday.

Where the bend comes decides which country is struck. In high summer the Pacific high extends over Japan and storms are steered into Okinawa, China or Korea. In September it withdraws and the bend

passes over Honshu. By October it has usually moved east of the main islands.

That is the climatological reason the forecasters give a high chance of this storm passing offshore.

It is also the source of the uncertainty. The position of the edge of the high and the timing of the westerly trough are both forecast quantities. A small error in either moves the bend by hundreds of kilometres.

The Ogasawara Islands lie south of the bend, where the storm is still moving slowly and is close to its peak.

TYPHOON NO. 27

The Waves Arrive First: Swell From a Typhoon a Thousand Kilometres Away

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The forecast for the Pacific coast of Honshu next week is of high waves with swell, although the typhoon producing them is expected to pass hundreds of kilometres out to sea.

Swell is what wind waves become after they leave the storm that made them. Close to a typhoon the sea is chaotic, with waves of every length and direction. As they travel, the longer waves outrun the shorter and sort themselves into regular lines.

Long waves lose very little energy over distance. They can cross a thousand kilometres of open water in a day and a half and arrive almost undiminished.

On the beach they look harmless. The interval between them is long, 12 or 15 seconds against the five or six of an ordinary wave, and the sea between sets can be nearly flat.

The danger is in the sets. When a group of large swells arrives, water rises far up a beach or over a breakwater that was dry a minute before, and draws back with a force that takes people with it.

Deaths from this cause occur in Japan almost every typhoon season, among anglers on breakwaters and rocks, among people watching the waves, and among swimmers and surfers who enter the water on a fine day.

High-wave advisories were in force this morning for Chiba and for Tokyo, which includes the Izu and Ogasawara islands, according to tenki.jp.

The agency expects phenomenal seas, its highest category, along the storm's path. That is a matter for shipping, and ferry operators to the islands will be making decisions over the weekend.

The swell from No. 27 can be expected on the coasts of Kanto and Tohoku from about Monday, well before the centre draws level.

The rule for the coast is simple. If a typhoon is anywhere to the south, stay off the rocks.

TYPHOON NO. 27

On the Coast This Week

By the Society Desk

A fine day is not a safe day when a typhoon lies to the south.

Stay off breakwaters, rocks and tetrapods.

Do not go to look at the waves.

Swell arrives in sets. A calm spell proves nothing.

Anglers: wear a life jacket and do not fish alone.

Surfers and swimmers: check the wave advisory before entering the water.

Boat owners: double the moorings today, in the calm.

Island travellers: check the shipping company's notices before leaving home.

If someone is swept away, call 118 for the coast guard.

Do not enter the water to attempt a rescue.

TYPHOON NO. 27

On the Islands, Before Monday

By the Society Desk

Follow the village's announcements.

Check the shipping company's notices.

Bring in or tie down anything outdoors.

Secure small boats today, in the calm.

Fill water containers.

Charge telephones and spare batteries.

Close storm shutters before the wind rises.

Stay away from the shore; the swell comes first.

Visitors: ask your lodging what to do.

Do not go out to look at the waves.

TYPHOON NO. 27

From Himawari to the Dashed Circle: How the Forecast for Typhoon No. 27 Is Made

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The forecast track printed on today's front page is the end of a chain that begins 36,000 kilometres above the equator.

The Himawari satellite photographs the whole face of the Earth visible from its position every ten minutes, and the area around Japan more often. A typhoon over the open ocean, where there are no weather stations, is located from those images.

Its strength is estimated from them too. Forecasters compare the pattern of the cloud, how tightly it is wound, how cold the tops are and whether there is a clear eye, against a scale developed in the 1970s by the American meteorologist Vernon Dvorak. No aircraft routinely flies into typhoons in the western Pacific, as they do into Atlantic hurricanes.

The position and strength, with observations from ships, buoys, aircraft and other satellites, are fed into a numerical model of the atmosphere, which calculates how the whole system will evolve.

One calculation is not enough, because small errors in the starting point grow. The agency runs the model many times with slightly different starting conditions. The result is a spread of possible tracks.

The forecast circle is drawn from that spread and from the record of past errors. It is the area within which the centre is expected to lie with a probability of 70 per cent.

Forecasts of track have improved steadily. The typical error a day ahead is now well under 100 kilometres; five days ahead it is several hundred.

Forecasts of strength have improved much less. Rapid intensification of the kind this storm has shown, 25 hectopascals in a day, is still hard to predict.

The agency in Tokyo performs this work not only for Japan. Under the World Meteorological Organization it is the designated centre for the north-western Pacific, and its bulletins are the basis of typhoon warnings from the Philippines to Korea.

The American military's Joint Typhoon Warning Center in Hawaii issues its own forecasts for the same storms. It calls this one 26W, and measures its winds over one minute where the Japanese agency uses ten, which is why its figures are higher.

TYPHOON NO. 27

The Satellite Behind the Typhoon Map: Himawari, and the One That Will Replace It

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Every position on the track of Typhoon No. 27 printed today began as a picture taken by Himawari-9.

The satellite sits above the equator south of Japan, at 140.7 degrees east, in an orbit that keeps it over the same point on the Earth. From there it sees the whole of East Asia, Australia and the western Pacific.

The first satellite of the name was launched in 1977. The word means sunflower.

The present generation began with Himawari-8, which entered service in 2015. Himawari-9, its twin, was launched the following year, held in reserve, and took over in December 2022.

The two were a large step forward. Earlier satellites photographed the Earth every half-hour in five bands of light. These take a full image every ten minutes in sixteen, and scan the area around Japan every two and a half.

More bands mean more can be told apart: ice cloud from water cloud, volcanic ash from dust, sea fog from low stratus. Faster images mean that the growth of a thunderstorm, or the wobble of a typhoon's eye, can be followed as it happens.

The data are given freely to the weather services of the region, many of which have no satellite of their own.

The successor is under construction. Himawari-10 is planned for launch towards the end of the decade and will carry a new kind of instrument, a sounder that measures temperature and humidity at different

heights in the atmosphere.

That information is what numerical forecasts lack most over the ocean, where typhoons form, and it is expected to improve predictions of where the heaviest rain will fall.

Until then the dashed circles on the map depend on a satellite launched ten years ago next month.

TYPHOON NO. 27

When a Distant Typhoon Fed a Front: The Tokai Deluge of September 2000

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The combination forecast for early next week, a front over Honshu and a typhoon well offshore, is a common one in autumn and usually produces ordinary rain. Once in a while it produces something else.

The standard example is the night of September 11, 2000. A typhoon lay far to the south-west, near the Daito Islands, nowhere near the main islands. A stationary front lay across central Honshu.

Warm, saturated air flowing north around the typhoon was fed into the front over the Tokai region for hour after hour.

Nagoya recorded 428 millimetres of rain in a single day, about twice its previous record, and 567 millimetres in two days.

The Shin River burst its bank and the Shonai River overflowed. Tens of thousands of homes in Nagoya and the towns to its north were flooded, underground railway lines were shut, and ten people died.

The lesson drawn at the time was that the typhoon's distance had misled people. The danger came from a front that had been raining lightly for days.

Flood forecasting for small and medium-sized rivers was reorganised afterwards, and the hazard maps now issued by every municipality date from the changes that followed.

Nothing in this week's forecasts says that the same will happen. The reports give no rainfall totals for Kanto, and the typhoon's track is to the east, a different geometry from that of 2000.

The case is recalled here for the general point. A typhoon affects the weather a thousand kilometres from its centre, and the place that suffers is not always the place it passes.

In Chiba and Kanagawa, where the ground is already loose, that is reason enough to treat the three days of rain with respect.

SOCIETY

The Day in Figures

By the Data Desk

925: the pressure, in hectopascals, forecast for Typhoon No. 27 on Monday.

37: consecutive days of rain in Tokyo to Friday.

68,309.46: the Nikkei average.

2.7: per cent rise in Tokyo-area prices.

29,000: jobs added in the United States in September.

100 million: barrels to be released by the Group of Seven.

1.6 million: licence images in the Times Car leak.

83.1: per cent interested in the Japanese language.

1: Hanshin's magic number.

4: Asian Games titles for Japan's women footballers.

SOCIETY

Today's Cautions

By the Society Desk

Ogasawara Islands: prepare this weekend for Monday and Tuesday.

Island sailings: check the shipping company's notices.

Pacific coasts: swell building from the south.

Chiba and Tokyo, including the islands: high-wave advisories this morning.

Tokyo and Shizuoka: strong-wind advisories this morning.

Kanto: rain returns on Sunday.

Chiba and Kanagawa: slopes remain loose.

Times Car members: beware of messages with links.

Researchers: check the sender of any invitation from a minister's office.

Dotonbori: do not jump.

POLITICS



Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at the rostrum of the House of Representatives, in a file image. The opposition parties intend to question her responsibility for appointing the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, when the extraordinary session convenes on Monday, Kyodo News reports. (Photo: WPM Productions)

POLITICS

Opposition to Open the Diet Session on Monday With the Farm Minister's Remarks and the Prime Minister's Choice of Him

A session meant for benefits and the consumption tax begins with a question of patronage; Takaichi has not commented and the minister says he has not discussed his future with her

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The extraordinary session of the Diet that convenes on Monday was planned by the government as a session about household money. The opposition parties now intend to begin it somewhere else.

They will press Kazuo Yana, the agriculture minister, on what he meant when he told party members in May that road budgets had been drastically cut for two municipalities whose mayors had not supported him, Kyodo News reports, and they will ask Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, pictured here at the rostrum of the House of Representatives in a file image, to account for having appointed him.

Mr Yana confirmed the substance of the remark on Friday, said his wording had invited misunderstanding, denied pressing the land ministry and declined to resign. He said he had not spoken to the prime minister about his position.

That leaves the prime minister with a choice she did not have on Thursday. A minister who says he boasted of something he did not do is an embarrassment. A minister who did what he boasted of would be using the state's budget to punish local governments for their politics, and no government could keep him.

The land minister has said he was told no budget was cut in the manner reported. The two municipalities say their allocations fell by more than they have ever fallen and that they were not told why. Those statements can both be true, and the opposition's first task will be to obtain the figures.

The process at issue is the one the ministries call the allocation of sites: the decision, made each spring after the budget passes, on how much each individual road, river and harbour project receives. Members of the Diet are told the results for their districts a little before they are published, and have long treated the announcement as theirs to make.

It is one thing to announce an allocation and another to shape it. The system has been criticised for a generation precisely because, from outside, the two are hard to tell apart.

The session's intended business has not gone away. The Liberal Democratic Party's joint meeting on Friday approved the bills for the new payments to low and middle earners, to be made once a year from fiscal 2030. The party is also aiming for a decision this session on reducing the number of seats in the lower house.

The government will be asked as well about the census figures inflated in Toyama, the first days of the cyber-defence law, and the typhoon now moving towards the Ogasawara Islands.

Monday is also the 62nd birthday of Megumi Yokota. Members will wear the blue ribbon.

The prime minister's office had made no statement on Mr Yana in the reports available on Saturday morning.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

- The red line: how to read a storm warning area, Page 2.
- G7 to release 100 million barrels, Page 6.
- Nikkei falls 647; four shares in five lower, Page 9.

POLITICS

What the Minister Said in May, What He Says Now, and What 'Allocation' Means

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The facts not in dispute are few and can be set out in order.

On May 24 the Liberal Democratic Party's branch in Otawara, Tochigi Prefecture, held its general meeting, followed by a reception. Kazuo Yana, who represents the area in the House of Representatives, spoke at the reception. He was not yet a minister.

According to the account given to Kyodo News by people familiar with the event, and to the report in Shukan Shincho based on a recording, he said that this year's road budgets for Nasukarasuyama and Nakagawa had been drastically cut, and connected this to the fact that their mayors had not supported him in the general election.

On Friday he accepted that he had said something of the kind. He said he had not listened to the recording.

What he denies is the act. His account is that he asked the land ministry how the year's road funds had been distributed among projects in his district, was told, and reported what he had been told. He says he did not ask the ministry to reduce anything.

The land minister's statement supports the narrow version: he has been told that no budget was cut in the way the magazine described.

The municipalities' statements cut the other way. Their officials told Asahi that the reductions were larger than any they had seen and that no reason was given.

The word at the centre of this is kashozuke, the fixing of amounts project by project. The Diet votes a total for roads. The ministry then divides it among thousands of sections of road across the country, according to local requests, how far each project has progressed and national priorities.

The results are released each spring. By long custom the ruling party's members receive their own districts' figures shortly before publication, which lets them be the ones to bring the news home.

That custom is the reason a remark like Mr Yana's is plausible to an audience of party members and alarming to everyone else. It implies that a member's favour, or disfavour, can be read in the numbers.

Whether it can is a question of evidence. The ministry holds the requests, the scores and the amounts for every project in both municipalities, for this year and the years before. The opposition will ask for them on Monday.

POLITICS

The Yana Affair in Dates

By the Politics & Policy Desk

- May 24: reception after a party branch meeting in Otawara, Tochigi.
- The remark: road budgets for Nasukarasuyama and Nakagawa were drastically cut.
- The reason given: their mayors did not support him in

- the general election.
- This week: Shukan Shincho reports the remark from a recording.
- Until Friday: the minister declines to answer, about 20 times.
- Friday, morning: the land minister says he was told no budget was cut as reported.
- Friday, evening: the minister admits the remark, denies pressing the ministry, will not resign.
- Friday, evening: the mayor of Nasukarasuyama says the remark causes anxiety.
- Monday: the Diet convenes.
- Still to come: the ministry's allocation figures.

POLITICS

Nasukarasuyama and Nakagawa: The Two Municipalities in the Minister's Remark

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The two places the agriculture minister is reported to have named lie side by side in the east of Tochigi Prefecture, in hill country along the Naka River.

Both were created by mergers in 2005, when the national government pressed small towns and villages to combine. Nasukarasuyama is a city of a little over 20,000 people; Nakagawa, a town of about 15,000.

Both are losing population and both are a long way, by the standards of the Kanto plain, from a motorway or a main railway line.

Nasukarasuyama is the terminus of a branch line on which the railway company runs battery-powered trains, and is known for a summer festival in which outdoor kabuki is performed on stages built of bamboo and paper, hauled through the streets and rebuilt several times a day.

Nakagawa is known for the river, for its hot springs, and for a venture that raises pufferfish in the mineral water.

For municipalities of this kind, national road money is not a supplement. Their own tax revenues do not cover the maintenance of the roads they have, and any widening, bypass or bridge repair depends on a grant.

Their officials told Asahi that this year's allocation fell further than it ever had and that they were given no explanation.

Both belong to the constituency Mr Yana represents, which takes in the northern and eastern parts of the prefecture.

The mayor of Nasukarasuyama has said publicly that a remark suggesting budgets are cut in retaliation causes anxiety among residents.

The land ministry's figures for both municipalities, this year and in earlier years, are the evidence the Diet will want to see.

POLITICS

The Weeklies and the Ministers: How a Magazine Recording Becomes a Cabinet Problem

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The agriculture minister's difficulty began with a magazine. Shukan Shincho obtained a recording of what he said at a party reception in May and printed it.

That is how a large share of Japan's political scandals have begun for half a century.

The weekly magazines occupy a place in the Japanese press that has no close equivalent elsewhere. Shukan Shincho, founded in 1956, was the first to be published by a book publisher instead of a newspaper company. Shukan Bunshun followed three years later.

They are sold at railway kiosks and advertised in the carriages, and they print what the daily papers, with their reporters attached to ministries and party factions, are slow to print.

The model was established in 1974, when a monthly from the Bunshun house published an investigation of the finances of the prime minister, Kakuei Tanaka. The newspapers had known much of it. He resigned within two months.

In recent years the weeklies have ended several ministerial careers. An economy minister resigned in 2016 within days of a report, backed by recordings, of money handed over in his office.

- Recordings are the weeklies' preferred evidence, for the reason this case shows. A minister can dispute a recollection. He cannot easily dispute his own voice, and Mr Yana did not try.
- The dailies then do what they do well. Asahi asked the two municipalities about their budget figures, and Kyodo established the date and place of the remark.
- The weeklies are also wrong, sometimes badly, and pay damages for it several times a year. Politicians who are named usually begin by threatening to sue.
- Mr Yana has said that since the report says so, he supposes he said it.

POLITICS

Hokkaido, Aichi, Osaka and Fukuoka Meet the Draft Conditions for a 'Secondary Capital'

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Four prefectures, Hokkaido, Aichi, Osaka and Fukuoka, are expected to satisfy the conditions for designation as a secondary capital under the draft cabinet order the government has prepared, Yomiuri and Kyodo News report.

The order implements the law on the secondary capital concept, which is meant to provide a place that could take over the functions of the capital in a great disaster and, in ordinary times, to spread economic activity away from Tokyo.

The draft sets out four tests, according to government officials quoted by Kyodo. The prefecture must contain a city with at least 1.2 per cent of the national population. Its economy must amount to at least 2.1 per cent of gross domestic product. At least half of the 28 kinds of regional office maintained by national ministries must be located there.

And it must be unlikely to be struck at the same time as Tokyo. The draft excludes any area designated for emergency measures against an earthquake directly beneath the capital, and any area on alert for an eruption of Mount Fuji.

That last test removes the prefectures around Tokyo, including Kanagawa, whose two largest cities both exceed the population threshold.

All four prefectures that qualify have said they intend to seek designation. A prefecture applies; the prime minister designates. The internal affairs minister, Hisayuki Fujii, said on television last month that the government had more than one in mind.

The draft also asks something of the applicant's own structure. Either the large city at its centre is to be reorganised into special wards, on the model of Tokyo's, or the city and the prefecture are to conclude a formal agreement to work as one administration.

Public comment on the draft opens today, the Nishinippon Shimbun reports, and the order is to be issued later this month. A statement of the government's thinking on the basic policy follows in November, and the basic policy itself is to be settled by October next year. Applications will be received in the meantime.

Three other prefectures, Miyagi, Gunma and Hiroshima, told a Kyodo survey in the summer that they were considering applying. On the draft's terms they do not appear to qualify.

What designation brings, in money or in institutions, is the part not yet written. That is the work of the next twelve months.

POLITICS

The Four Tests for a Secondary Capital

By the Politics & Policy Desk

- One: a city with at least 1.2 per cent of the national population.
- Two: a prefectural economy of at least 2.1 per cent of gross domestic product.
- Three: at least half of the 28 kinds of national branch office.
- Four: outside the areas designated for an earthquake beneath Tokyo or an eruption of Mount Fuji.
- Also required: special wards, or a formal agreement between city and prefecture.
- Expected to qualify: Hokkaido, Aichi, Osaka, Fukuoka.
- Had considered applying: Miyagi, Gunma, Hiroshima.
- Public comment: from today.

POLITICS

Order issued: late October.

Basic policy: by October 2027.

POLITICS

Special Wards or a Partnership:
The Two Routes to Becoming a
Secondary Capital, and Who Is
Taking Which

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The draft order on the secondary capital offers an applicant two ways of showing that it can govern itself as a single unit.

The first is the one Osaka has pursued for fifteen years. The city is abolished as a municipality and replaced by several special wards, each with an elected head, while the prefecture takes over the functions that run across the whole urban area.

Osaka's voters have rejected that plan twice in referendums, in 2015 and in 2020, each time narrowly. Governor Hirofumi Yoshimura has not given it up, and said on Thursday that he would like the prefecture's name changed to match Tokyo's once it is achieved.

The second route asks for less. The city and the prefecture keep their separate existence but sign a co-operation agreement, a device already provided for in the Local Autonomy Act, committing them to act together in defined fields.

Fukuoka has chosen this one. The prefecture and the cities of Fukuoka and Kitakyushu held the first meeting of a liaison council this week and confirmed that they would seek designation by agreement, the Nishinippon Shimbun reports.

Aichi, with Nagoya, and Hokkaido, with Sapporo, have both said they want designation and have not said by which route.

The four are very different candidates. Osaka has the largest economy and the densest concentration of national offices outside Tokyo. Aichi has the country's industrial heart. Fukuoka faces the continent and is the fastest-growing of the large cities. Hokkaido is the furthest from any disaster that could strike the capital.

Distance is the point of the exercise. A backup for the capital has to be somewhere the same earthquake cannot reach.

It also has to be reachable. The ministries that would relocate in an emergency need offices, communications and housing waiting for them, which is why the draft counts the national branch offices already in place.

The government has said more than one designation is possible. Four applications for a title that was conceived, in the coalition agreement that produced it, with one city in mind is not what its sponsors expected.

POLITICS

What a Special Ward Is: The
Structure Osaka Wants and Only
Tokyo Has

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

One of the two routes to designation as a secondary capital is to reorganise a large city into special wards. Only one place in Japan has them.

Until 1943 Tokyo was arranged like any other prefecture, with a city of Tokyo inside it governed by a mayor. In that year, as a wartime measure to concentrate authority, the city was abolished and its territory placed directly under the prefecture, which was renamed a metropolis.

The city's 35 wards remained as administrative districts. After the war they were consolidated into 23 and given elected assemblies.

Their powers grew by stages. Ward mayors have been directly elected since 1975. In 2000 the wards were recognised in law as basic units of local government, on a level with cities.

They are still not quite cities. Functions that elsewhere belong to a city, among them water supply, sewerage and the fire service, are performed in the 23 wards by the metropolitan government, which also collects some of the taxes a city would collect and shares the proceeds among the wards.

The argument for the arrangement is that a single authority can plan for the whole urban area. The argument against is that residents of a ward have less control over their own affairs than residents of a

small town.

A law passed in 2012 allows other large cities to adopt the same structure, subject to a vote of their residents. Osaka is the only city to have held one, twice, and both times the proposal was narrowly defeated.

The draft order on the secondary capital does not require the ward structure. It accepts a formal agreement between city and prefecture as an alternative.

That alternative is what allows Fukuoka, Aichi and Hokkaido to apply without a referendum.

It also leaves Osaka free to apply by the easier route, should its government decide not to put the question to the voters a third time.

POLITICS

The Secondary Capital Order Is
Open for Public Comment From
Today. What That Means

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The draft cabinet order setting out the conditions for a secondary capital is being put out for public comment from today, and is to be issued later this month.

Public comment is a stage that almost every government regulation in Japan must pass through. The requirement was written into the Administrative Procedure Act in 2005 and took effect the following year.

A ministry that proposes to make or change an order, a ministerial ordinance or a set of standards must publish the draft and invite opinions from anyone who wishes to give one. The comments are submitted in writing, usually through a government website.

The law sets the period at 30 days or more as a rule. A shorter period is allowed where there is reason for it, and the ministry must say what the reason is.

Issuing this order by the end of the month implies a period shorter than the standard one.

The ministry is obliged to consider what it receives and to publish a summary of the comments together with its response to them when the final version is issued.

It is not obliged to agree. The procedure is one of consultation, and drafts are amended only occasionally.

The value of the process is in the record. A prefecture that believes the tests have been drawn to exclude it, or a resident who objects to a secondary capital on principle, can put the objection on file and require an answer.

The order itself is only the first of the documents. The basic policy that will say what a designated prefecture actually receives is to be drawn up by October next year, and will have its own round of comment.

Anyone may take part. A comment does not have to come from the area concerned.

POLITICS

LDP Clears Bills for Payments to
Offset the Consumption Tax: Once
a Year From Fiscal 2030

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

A joint meeting of the Liberal Democratic Party's policy panels has approved the bills that will create a system of payments to lighten the burden of the consumption tax on low and middle earners, the morning papers report. From fiscal 2030 the payment is to be made once a year.

The bills go to the extraordinary session of the Diet that opens on Monday.

The measure is the refundable tax credit that the governing party promised in this year's general election, in the form that emerged from months of talks in the cross-party national council on social security.

It arrives in stages. An outline adopted by the cabinet last month creates a bridging payment for working people on modest incomes, to begin in April 2027, with the full system to follow in fiscal 2029, according to a summary published by tax practitioners.

Under that outline the payment is made by the municipality in which a person lives, on the basis of residence on January 1, and is not taxable. A person who has registered a bank account for public

payments is to receive it without applying.

The outline had the payment made once a year in the first two years and twice in fiscal 2029. Friday's decision fixes the pattern after that: one payment a year from fiscal 2030.

Eligibility is to be judged for each individual and not for the household, so that single people and the self-employed are included.

The amounts are not yet known. The income floor and ceiling, the size of the payment and the rate at which it tapers are left to the budget, which is drawn up in December.

The design reflects a lesson. The one-off income tax cut of 2024, delivered through payrolls and municipal offices at the same time, was widely judged to have been more trouble to administer than it was worth, and the new system pays cash through a single channel.

The opposition parties have supported the principle. The argument in the Diet is likely to be about the numbers, and about why a measure described as relief from the consumption tax leaves the rate of the tax itself where it is.

POLITICS

A Tax Cut for People Who Pay
Little Tax: How a Refundable
Credit Works

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

An ordinary tax cut helps people in proportion to the tax they pay. Someone who pays no income tax gains nothing from a reduction in it.

That is the problem a refundable tax credit is designed to solve. A fixed amount is set against a person's tax bill. If the bill is smaller than the amount, the difference is paid to them in cash.

The effect is a benefit that is worth the same to a low earner as to a middle earner, and that can be withdrawn gradually as income rises, so that it does not go to people who do not need it.

Several countries have had such systems for decades. The best known is the American earned income tax credit, introduced in 1975, which is paid only to people who work and rises with earnings before tapering away.

Japan has discussed one for nearly twenty years. The obstacle was always information: the tax office knows the incomes of people who file returns, the municipalities know others, and neither knew enough about assets or about the incomes of other members of a household.

The spread of the individual number system and of registered bank accounts for public payments has removed part of that obstacle, which is why the scheme now before the Diet relies on both.

The version adopted here is simpler than the textbook one. It pays cash and does not adjust tax bills at all, on the argument that running a tax reduction and a payment side by side confuses everyone.

It is described as relief from the consumption tax because that tax takes a larger share of a small income than of a large one. A payment that is the same for everyone below a certain income corrects for that without changing the rate in the shops.

The cost depends entirely on where the lines are drawn. A generous payment that reaches well into the middle of the income distribution is expensive; a narrow one is cheap and helps few.

Those lines will be drawn in the budget in December, and that is where the real argument will be.

POLITICS

LDP's Nishimura Aims for a
Decision This Session on Cutting
Lower House Seats

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The Liberal Democratic Party's Nishimura has said he aims to reach a conclusion in the extraordinary session of the Diet on reducing the number of seats in the House of Representatives, the morning papers report.

The session opens on Monday.

A reduction of about one-tenth in the lower house was among the terms on which the Japan Innovation Party agreed to enter a coalition with the Liberal Democrats a year ago. The Innovation Party has treated it since as a test of its partner's good faith.

The House of Representatives has 465 members, 289

elected in single-seat constituencies and 176 by proportional representation in eleven regional blocks.

Where the cut falls decides who pays for it. Proportional seats are the lifeline of the smaller parties, which win few constituencies. Constituency seats can be removed only by merging districts, which sets sitting members of the same party against one another and reduces the representation of rural prefectures.

The smaller opposition parties have therefore opposed any plan that takes mainly from the proportional side, and members of the governing party from thinly populated areas have been unenthusiastic about one that takes from the constituencies.

There is a constitutional dimension as well. The courts review the disparity in the weight of votes between districts after every election, and the census just completed counted 18 districts in which the disparity exceeds two to one. Any redrawing has to reduce that number and not add to it.

A decision in a session already crowded with the benefit bills and now the affair of the agriculture minister, would require the two governing parties to agree a formula quickly and the opposition to let it through.

The reports do not say what formula Mr Nishimura has in mind.

The reform has been promised by one party or another at most elections of the past fifteen years. Its record so far is of small adjustments made late.

POLITICS

What an Extraordinary Session of
the Diet Is, and How Long This One
Can Last

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The session that opens on Monday is called extraordinary, which describes its place in the calendar and not its importance.

The Constitution provides for an ordinary session of the Diet once a year. It is convened in January and lasts 150 days, and its main business is the budget.

An extraordinary session is any other session convened by the cabinet. In practice one is held every autumn, to pass a supplementary budget and whatever legislation could not wait.

The cabinet decides when to call it. The Constitution also says that the cabinet must convene the Diet when a quarter of the members of either house demand it, though it sets no time limit for doing so, a gap that has been argued over in the courts.

The length is fixed by a vote of both houses at the start and can be extended twice.

On the first day the emperor attends the opening ceremony in the chamber of the House of Councillors. The prime minister then delivers a policy speech to each house, and the leaders of the parties put questions over the following days.

After that the work moves to the committees. The Budget Committee is the stage for general questioning of the cabinet and is broadcast live; it is where the agriculture minister can expect to spend much of the coming week.

Bills are examined in the committee responsible for their subject. The payments to offset the consumption tax will go to the committees that deal with finance and with welfare.

The government's coalition has a majority in the lower house. In the upper house it needs the votes of others, which gives the opposition a say over the timetable.

A session that begins with a minister in difficulty tends to run to its limit.

POLITICS

After Day One of Cyber Defence:
Communications Monitoring to
Begin Next Autumn, and a Joint
Police-SDF Base Planned at
Ichigaya

By Ethan Cole | Editor, Technology & Science

The proactive cyber defence law that took effect on Thursday is being brought into operation in stages, and the morning papers set out the timetable.

Two parts are in force now, Yomiuri reports. Public and private bodies may share information on attacks under the new framework, and the police and the

POLITICS

Self-Defense Forces may neutralise servers being used to attack Japan.

The third part, the monitoring of communications data crossing Japan's borders in order to detect attacks in preparation, is to begin in the autumn of next year.

The duty to report applies to 258 operators in the 15 sectors of core infrastructure.

Neutralisation requires the prior approval of the Cyber Communications Information Supervision Committee, the independent body created by the law. Highly organised attacks originating abroad are to be handled jointly by the police and the Self-Defense Forces.

For that joint work the government plans a shared base at Ichigaya in Tokyo, where the Ministry of Defense has its headquarters, Sankei reports. Design is to begin in fiscal 2027.

The interval matters. Until the base exists, the two organisations will operate from their own premises under their own chains of command, linked by liaison officers.

The more pressing shortage, by the same report, is of people. The law assumes a corps of operators able to enter a hostile server lawfully and disable it without damaging the machines of the innocent third parties through whom most attacks are routed. Japan has few of them in government service, and the private sector pays more.

The staged timetable was a concession made when the law passed, to give the supervisory committee time to establish itself before the most intrusive power is used.

The first test of the framework came within a day of its start, in the form of a report by an American security company that a group linked to China had imitated the defence minister's website to steal the passwords of researchers. That report is carried on the technology pages.

POLITICS

State to Widen Its Reinsurance of Oil Tankers Beyond Cargoes of Iranian Crude

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

The government is to expand the cover it provides as reinsurer of oil tankers, extending it to ships carrying crude other than Iranian oil, the morning papers report. The measure is presented as one of energy security.

The existing scheme dates from 2012. When European sanctions on Iran barred the London market from insuring or reinsuring tankers that carried Iranian crude, Japanese shipowners were left without the cover against pollution and other liabilities that a tanker needs before any port will admit it.

The Diet passed a special law under which the state itself stood behind those liabilities, up to a ceiling of several billion dollars a voyage, so that Japan's refiners could go on lifting the limited quantities of Iranian oil still permitted.

That law was written for one cargo from one country. The present difficulty is wider.

Since the war in the Gulf began in late February, tankers passing through the Strait of Hormuz have been attacked, most recently on Thursday, when the British maritime agency reported one struck by a projectile and set on fire.

Commercial insurers respond to such events by raising the premium for war risk, sometimes by many times, and for some voyages by declining to quote at all. A ship that cannot be insured does not sail, whatever the cargo is worth.

Extending the state's reinsurance to cargoes from the other producers on the Gulf, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar among them, would allow Japanese-linked tankers to keep loading there when the market will not carry the risk at a workable price.

In ordinary times Japan takes well over nine-tenths of its crude from the Middle East, and most of that passes through the strait.

The reports available do not give the ceiling of the expanded cover, the period for which it will run or whether a change in the law is needed.

The decision came on the day the Group of Seven agreed to release 100 million barrels from their stockpiles. Both measures treat the same symptom

from different ends: one adds supply, the other keeps the ships moving.

POLITICS

Today in Politics: Komeito Confirms Okamoto; Yokohama's Campaign Opens Tomorrow; the Diet on Monday

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Komeito holds its party convention today, at which Mitsunari Okamoto is to be confirmed as leader.

The party left its coalition with the Liberal Democrats a year ago after a quarter of a century and has spent the time since learning to be an opposition party. Today's convention is its first chance to set out what kind.

Tomorrow the campaign for mayor of Yokohama formally opens. The city has 3.7 million people and a budget larger than that of most prefectures.

The draft conditions for a secondary capital, reported today, exclude Yokohama and the rest of Kanagawa on the ground that a disaster striking Tokyo would strike them too. The candidates may be asked what they think of that.

On Monday the extraordinary session of the Diet convenes. The prime minister is expected to deliver a policy speech and the party leaders to question her in the days that follow.

The government's bills include the payments to offset the consumption tax, approved by the Liberal Democrats on Friday.

The opposition's list is longer. It begins with the agriculture minister's remarks about road budgets and includes the census figures inflated in Toyama, the suspension order being prepared against Prudential Life, and the cost of living after a month of price increases.

The cabinet will also be asked about Typhoon No. 27, which is forecast to pass the Ogasawara Islands on Monday and Tuesday as a very strong typhoon.

Abroad, the calendar is as full. Israel votes on October 27 and the United States on November 3.

The Asian Games close in Nagoya tomorrow evening.

POLITICS

The Week Ahead

By the Politics & Policy Desk

SATURDAY, OCT. 3: Komeito convention. Hiroshima v Hanshin, 2 p.m.; Hanshin clinch with a win or a draw. Asian Games men's football final, Japan v South Korea, 7:30 p.m. Public comment opens on the secondary capital order.

SUNDAY, OCT. 4: The Asian Games close. Yokohama mayoral campaign opens. Rain returns to Kanto. Typhoon No. 27 forecast very strong, 945 hPa at 6 a.m.

MONDAY, OCT. 5: Extraordinary Diet session convenes. Megumi Yokota's 62nd birthday. Typhoon No. 27 forecast at 925 hPa near the Ogasawara waters. Kirin Cup final, Japan v New Zealand.

TUESDAY, OCT. 6: Typhoon No. 27 closest to Chichijima in the early hours, on the forecast line. Japan Open final and the Nishikori ceremony.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7: Typhoon No. 27 forecast east of Japan.

FRIDAY, OCT. 9: Start of the period under discussion for the suspension of three Tokai Kisen vessels.

MONDAY, OCT. 12: Sports Day.

LATE OCTOBER: Secondary capital order to be issued. Nidec's deadline with the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

OCT. 27: Israel's general election. OCT. 28: Briefings begin on land for Narita's new runway.

NOV. 3: United States midterm elections.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: A Boast or a Deed? Either Way the Farm Minister Has Described How Patronage Is Supposed to Work

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Kazuo Yana has offered the public a choice between two accounts of himself, and seems to regard the first as a defence.

In the first, he told a room of party members that he

had punished two mayors by cutting their towns' road budgets, and it was not true. He had merely been told the figures and dressed them up.

In the second, it was true.

The second would end his career, and should. A member of the Diet who can have a town's roads defunded because its mayor backed someone else has turned the national budget into a private instrument. No explanation survives that.

But the first is not innocent. A politician who claims credit for a punishment he did not inflict is telling every mayor in his district that the punishment is available. The threat does its work whether or not it was ever carried out.

That is what the mayor of Nasukarasuyama meant when she said the remark caused anxiety among residents. The damage is to the belief that a road is funded because it is needed.

The remark was also made to the right audience for it. A reception after a party branch meeting is where local assembly members, contractors and supporters learn what loyalty earns. The minister's own description of the event, a gathering of insiders, concedes the point.

For the prime minister the calculation is unsentimental. She did not appoint him for his views on roads, and his value to the cabinet is small beside the cost of defending him through a session in which she needs the opposition's co-operation on the benefit bills.

The precedent is not encouraging for ministers who say they will stay. Those who have had to explain a recording have often gone within weeks, once the questions moved from what was said to what the documents show.

The opposition has a calculation of its own to make. A resignation in the first week would give it a victory and take away its best subject. A minister who stays, repeating that he merely passed on figures, can be questioned in the Budget Committee day after day, on live television, while the ministry's documents are requested one year at a time. Oppositions have generally preferred the second course, and governments have generally worked that out too late.

The documents here are specific and easily obtained: the land ministry's allocations to two municipalities over several years. If they show an unexplained fall, the minister's narrow account will not hold. If they do not, he will have been brought down, or nearly, by his own wish to seem powerful.

There is a quieter casualty either way. The custom by which governing-party members announce their districts' allocations has survived because it seemed harmless. It looks different this morning.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Four Candidates for One Idea: What a Secondary Capital Is For

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The secondary capital entered the law as the price of a coalition. The Japan Innovation Party, whose base is Osaka, wanted the country to name a second centre, and expected it to be theirs.

The draft order published this week turns a political promise into a set of numerical tests, and the tests admit four.

That outcome says something about the idea. Stated as disaster planning, it has no reason to favour one city. A government that may lose the use of Tokyo wants more than one place to go, in more than one direction.

Stated as economic policy, the logic runs the other way. The concentration of people, companies and money in the capital region has resisted forty years of decentralisation plans. Dividing the effort among four regions divides whatever force it has.

The government appears to have chosen the first reading. The internal affairs minister has spoken of several designations, and the criteria were drawn to exclude any area that would share Tokyo's fate.

The real content will be in the basic policy due next year. A title costs nothing. The question is whether ministries will be required to place functions, staff and budgets in the designated prefectures in ordinary times, and not only to hold a plan for moving there in an emergency.

The history of such efforts is one of plans without movement. The Diet resolved in 1990 to relocate the

capital's functions and legislated for it in 1992; candidate sites were chosen and nothing was built. The one agency moved out of the capital since, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, went to Kyoto in 2023 after seven years of preparation.

There is a simple test of seriousness, and it is the budget. A ministry told to keep a working office in Fukuoka or Sapporo will ask the Finance Ministry to pay for it. If next year's basic policy carries no money, the designation will amount to a plaque on a prefectural office.

What has changed since is the estimate of the risk. The government's own projections for an earthquake beneath the capital, and for a great earthquake along the Nankai Trough, are of a different order from those of the 1990s.

The Nankai projection is awkward for the present candidates. Aichi and Osaka both lie within its reach. A backup for Tokyo that is itself exposed to the other great earthquake is a partial backup.

That argues for Hokkaido and Fukuoka on grounds of safety, and for Osaka and Aichi on grounds of capacity. A serious policy would use both arguments and say which functions go where.

INTERNATIONAL

G7 Leaders Agree to Release 100 Million Barrels of Diesel and Crude Over Four Months to Check Fuel Prices

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The leaders of the Group of Seven agreed on Friday to release 100 million barrels of oil from their stockpiles over the next four months, in an attempt to bring down the price of fuel, and of diesel in particular.

The decision was taken in a call among the leaders and announced by France, which holds the group's presidency this year. The release is to be made with partner countries and through the International Energy Agency, and it begins at once.

The 100 million barrels are a combination of diesel and crude oil, Kyodo News reports. Diesel is to be released first and fast, with the bulk of it in the opening 20 days.

A further meeting within the agency's framework is to be held soon to consider releasing more diesel, the French statement said.

The agency, which is based in Paris, has 32 member countries, each required to hold stocks equal to at least 90 days of its net imports. A release is voluntary in form. Each government decides how to deliver its share: by selling oil the state owns, by lending it to refiners against later return, or by lowering the stocks that companies are obliged to hold. The 100 million barrels are roughly what the world consumes in a day.

Diesel futures, which had been climbing, paused after the announcement.

The pressure for the decision came from Washington. President Trump told reporters in Texas on Thursday that he might ask European countries to release their stocks to hold down diesel prices, and wrote on his social media account on Friday that Europe had agreed to release a large quantity.

French media reported that President Macron had spoken to Mr Trump by telephone and argued that the problem should be handled by the seven together, which is the form the decision finally took.

Fuel prices have been high since the war in the Gulf began in late February. The United States is blockading Iran's oil exports through the Strait of Hormuz, shipping in the strait has been attacked, and a tanker was set on fire there on Thursday.

Mr Trump faces midterm elections on November 3 and is under pressure to bring prices down before then, Kyodo notes.

Japan is a member of both the group and the agency, and holds one of the largest stockpiles in the world. The reports available on Saturday morning do not say how much of the 100 million barrels will come from Japan.

The seven finance ministers had agreed in March, in the second week of the war, to take measures including the release of reserves. Friday's decision is on a larger scale and puts a refined product first.

INTERNATIONAL



A luncheon for technology executives at the White House in September, in a file image. President Trump has begun campaigning for the November 3 midterm elections in states his party already holds, Bloomberg reports. (White House Official)

INTERNATIONAL

A Month Before the Midterms, Trump Takes to the Road in States He Already Holds

Texas, Oklahoma, Ohio and Nebraska are on the itinerary; in the closest contests, Bloomberg reports, his presence could hurt his own party's candidates

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

President Trump has begun a series of campaign appearances for the midterm elections on November 3, visiting states that voted for him two years ago to support Republican candidates who are in difficulty. He was in Texas on Thursday and is to go on to Oklahoma, Ohio and Nebraska in the coming days, Bloomberg reports. The photograph with this article shows a White House luncheon for technology executives last month, in a file image.

The choice of states is itself the story, by Bloomberg's account. All four are Republican strongholds. In the states where the contest is closest, the report says, an appearance by the president could do his party's candidates more harm than good, and the party's standing in the polls has been falling.

Every one of the 435 seats in the House of Representatives is being contested, along with 35 of the 100 in the Senate. The Republicans hold both chambers.

The party of a sitting president has lost seats in the House at nearly every midterm election for a century.

The campaign's themes were set at a party convention in Dallas last month, the first ever held in a midterm year. Mr Trump told it that if Republicans kept both chambers every adult citizen would receive 5,000 dollars, Nikkei reported, a promise that would cost about 1.3 trillion dollars and require an act of Congress.

The economy he is running on is the one described in Friday's employment report: an unemployment rate of 4.2 per cent, four months of rising manufacturing employment, share prices at records, and wages that have lagged prices for half a year.

Fuel is the sore point. He said in Texas that he might ask Europe to release its stocks of diesel, and by Friday the Group of Seven had agreed to release 100 million barrels.

The war with Iran is in its eighth month. The administration is sending a third aircraft carrier to the region, and imposed new sanctions on Iran's railways and car makers this week.

For America's allies the election is about the last two years of this presidency. A president who loses a chamber of Congress loses his legislative programme and keeps his foreign policy, which is conducted from the White House.

Japan's interest is in continuity: in the security treaty, in the tariff terms agreed last year, and in an American economy strong enough to buy what Japan makes.

INTERNATIONAL

Why Diesel? The Fuel That Moves Freight Is the One the War Has Squeezed Hardest

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

A stockpile release is usually counted in barrels of crude. Friday's decision by the Group of Seven is unusual in putting a refined product, diesel, at the front.

Diesel is the fuel of freight. Lorries, railway locomotives, ships' auxiliary engines, farm machinery

and construction equipment run on it, and in Europe so do a large share of private cars.

Its price therefore enters the cost of nearly everything that is moved, grown or built. A rise in petrol annoys motorists. A rise in diesel shows up weeks later in the price of food.

The world's refineries cannot simply make more of it. Each barrel of crude yields a more or less fixed proportion of diesel and its close relations, heating oil and jet fuel, and the heavier, sourer crudes that yield the most are the kind the Gulf produces.

Europe does not refine enough for its own needs and imports the difference. Since it stopped buying from Russia in 2023, much of that has come from large export refineries in the Gulf and India, by tanker through the waters the war has made dangerous.

When those cargoes are delayed or lost, Europe bids for diesel from elsewhere, and the price rises for everyone, including in America, where truckers are a constituency no president ignores a month before an election.

Governments hold diesel as well as crude in their emergency stocks for this reason. European members of the International Energy Agency in particular keep a substantial part of their reserves as finished products, ready to be put on the road without passing through a refinery.

Releasing those stocks works quickly. It is also a loan against the future: what is released must be bought back, and if the disruption outlasts the four months the stocks will be lower when they are needed again.

For Japan the exposure is different in form. Japanese refiners make the country's diesel at home, from crude that comes overwhelmingly from the Gulf. The risk is to the crude.

That is why Tokyo's own measure this week was about ships: the state's reinsurance of tankers is to be widened so that cargoes keep moving through the strait.

INTERNATIONAL

From the Gulf War to This One: When the Consuming Countries Have Opened Their Stockpiles Together

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The International Energy Agency was founded in 1974, after the Arab oil embargo, by the countries that had found themselves without a plan. Its members agreed to hold emergency stocks equal to at least 90 days of their net imports and to release them together in a crisis.

For most of its history the agreement was a deterrent. Co-ordinated releases have been rare.

The first came in January 1991, at the start of the Gulf War, when the agency's members made oil available as the bombing of Iraq began.

The second was in 2005, after Hurricane Katrina shut down production and refining on the American Gulf coast.

The third was in 2011, when the civil war in Libya removed that country's exports from the market.

In 2022, after Russia invaded Ukraine, the members acted twice within weeks. The second of those releases, of about 120 million barrels, was the largest the agency had organised. Japan contributed about 15 million barrels, second only to the United States.

This year the members have acted again. The finance ministers of the Group of Seven agreed on measures including a release in March, days after the war with Iran began, and the leaders on Friday agreed a further 100 million barrels over four months.

Japan's part in these actions rests on stocks that are among the largest anywhere. The state holds crude in tanks and in underground and floating storage at sites around the country, the refiners are obliged by law to hold more, and together they amount to well over 200 days of consumption.

The system was built after the shocks of the 1970s, when Japan depended on imported oil for most of its energy and had a few weeks' supply in hand.

A release does not create oil. It moves consumption forward in time, on the bet that the disruption will be shorter than the reserve.

INTERNATIONAL

The Strait Everything Depends On: What Passes Through Hormuz in an Ordinary Year

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The measures taken this week by the Group of Seven and by Japan's government have a single cause, which is a stretch of water between Iran and Oman.

The Strait of Hormuz is the only sea route out of the Persian Gulf. At its narrowest it is some 21 nautical miles across, and the lanes that tankers actually use, one inbound and one outbound, are each about two miles wide.

In an ordinary year roughly 20 million barrels of oil pass through it every day. That is about a fifth of what the world consumes.

The oil comes from Saudi Arabia, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Iran itself. Most of it goes east, to China, India, Japan and South Korea.

Gas goes the same way. Qatar, one of the largest exporters of liquefied natural gas, has no other route to the sea.

There are pipelines that avoid the strait, across Saudi Arabia to the Red Sea and across the Emirates to the Gulf of Oman, but they can carry only a fraction of the volume.

Japan's dependence is as high as any country's. In ordinary times well over nine-tenths of its crude oil comes from the Middle East, and most of that is loaded inside the Gulf.

The strait has never been closed outright. During the war between Iran and Iraq in the 1980s more than 400 ships were attacked in and around it, and the United States Navy escorted tankers through.

Since February it has been contested again. The United States is preventing Iranian oil from leaving, ships have been struck, and insurers have raised the price of cover for every voyage.

That is why a decision about diesel stocks in Paris, a law about tanker reinsurance in Tokyo and the position of an aircraft carrier from Yokosuka are parts of one story.

INTERNATIONAL

Tanks, Caverns and Floating Barges: Where Japan Keeps Its Emergency Oil

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

When Japan contributes to a release of oil by the consuming countries, the barrels come from two sources.

The first is the oil the refiners and importers are required by law to hold above their working needs. The rule dates from 1975, two years after the first oil shock, and a release usually begins by lowering that requirement, which frees oil already in the companies' tanks.

The second is oil owned by the state. The government began building its own stockpile in 1978 and holds it at ten national bases, as well as in tanks leased from the private sector.

The bases take several forms. Some are fields of conventional tanks, as at Tomakomai in Hokkaido, Mutsu-Ogawara in Aomori and Shibushi in Kagoshima.

Three are underground: caverns cut into rock below the water table at Kuji in Iwate, Kikuma in Ehime and Kushikino in Kagoshima, where the pressure of the groundwater holds the oil in place.

Two are afloat. At Shirashima, off Fukuoka, and Kamigoto, in the Goto Islands of Nagasaki, the crude is stored in enormous moored barges inside a breakwater.

A third arrangement involves the producers themselves. Saudi Arabia's and Abu Dhabi's national oil companies store crude of their own in tanks in Okinawa and Kagoshima, for sale in Asia, on the understanding that Japan has first call on it in an emergency.

Taken together the stocks are equivalent to well over 200 days of the country's consumption, one of the largest reserves in the world relative to need.

State oil is released by sale to the refiners at auction. It reaches the market in weeks, not days, which is one reason the first step is usually to relax the private obligation.

The reports available do not say which of these routes Japan will use for its share of the 100 million barrels.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. Adds Only 29,000 Jobs in September; Unemployment Edges Up to 4.2 Per Cent as More People Look for Work

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Employers in the United States added 29,000 jobs in September, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported on Friday, far fewer than economists had expected, and the unemployment rate rose to 4.2 per cent from 4.1.

Forecasters had looked for a gain of between 84,000 and 90,000 and for no change in the rate, according to CNBC and CNN.

The earlier months were revised down. August's gain is now put at 133,000, and July's has become a loss of 10,000. Together the revisions removed 60,000 jobs from the record.

So far this year the economy has added an average of 68,000 jobs a month, CNN calculates from the bureau's figures.

The rise in the unemployment rate was not caused by layoffs alone. CNBC notes that it came largely because more people entered the labour force and began looking for work; the participation rate rose.

Such hiring as there was came from three places. Health care added about 17,000 jobs, construction 11,000 and manufacturing 9,000. It was the fourth month in a row in which manufacturing employment grew, CNN reports. NBC attributes part of the strength in construction to the building of data centres.

Government employment fell, and so did employment in the information industries and in finance.

Wages rose 0.1 per cent in the month and 3 per cent over the year. NBC reports that this was the sixth consecutive month in which pay grew more slowly than prices.

The report is the last full reading of the labour market before the midterm elections on November 3.

Financial markets took the weak number as a reason to expect the Federal Reserve to hold off on a further increase in interest rates this month, and the Nasdaq index closed at a record.

For Japan the figures matter through the exchange rate and through demand. A slower American labour market means lower American interest rates than otherwise, a stronger yen, and a less eager buyer of Japanese cars.

The Japanese market will give its verdict on Monday. On Friday, before the report, the Nikkei average fell 647 yen.

INTERNATIONAL

Two Surveys, Two Numbers: How America Counts Its Jobs, and Why the Figures Get Revised

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The report published in Washington on Friday contained two headline figures, 29,000 new jobs and an unemployment rate of 4.2 per cent. They come from separate surveys and do not always agree.

The jobs figure is from a survey of employers. Each month the Bureau of Labor Statistics asks more than

INTERNATIONAL

100,000 businesses and government agencies how many people were on their payrolls in the week containing the 12th.

The unemployment rate is from a survey of households. Interviewers contact about 60,000 homes and ask each adult whether they worked that week and, if not, whether they looked for work.

A person counts as unemployed only if they have no job and have actively sought one in the past four weeks. Someone who has stopped looking is outside the labour force and does not appear in the rate at all.

That is how the rate can rise in a month when jobs were added, as it did in September. More people began looking, and not all of them found work at once.

The payroll figure is an estimate and is published before all the forms are in. It is revised in each of the following two months as late returns arrive, and again once a year against tax records.

Friday's report cut the previous two months by a combined 60,000 and turned July from a small gain into a small loss.

The margin of error on a single month's payroll change is on the order of 100,000 in either direction. A reading of 29,000 is not statistically distinguishable from zero, or from the 84,000 that was forecast.

Economists therefore look at averages over several months. This year's is 68,000 a month.

Japan's equivalent figures, the unemployment rate and the ratio of job offers to applicants, are published at the end of each month and attract a fraction of the attention, largely because they move so little.

INTERNATIONAL

November 3: What Americans Vote on, and Why the President's Party Usually Loses

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The United States elects its president every four years and its Congress every two. The elections that fall in the middle of a president's term are called midterms.

All 435 members of the House of Representatives face the voters each time. Senators serve six years, and a third of the 100 seats come up at each election. This year there are 35, because two seats vacated early are being filled as well.

Thirty-six of the fifty states also elect governors.

The president is not on the ballot, but the result is read as a judgement on him, and the judgement is usually unfavourable. In the midterm elections since the Second World War the president's party has lost seats in the House on all but two occasions.

The reasons are well understood. The voters who turned out to elect a president are less motivated two years later; those who opposed him are more so; and whatever has gone wrong in the meantime is laid at his door.

The Republicans hold the Senate by 53 seats to 47 and the House by a handful.

If the House changes hands, its committees pass to the opposition, with the power to summon officials and demand documents. Legislation the president wants does not pass, and budgets become a negotiation.

The Senate matters for a different reason. It confirms judges, ambassadors and cabinet officers, and it ratifies treaties.

What does not change is the president's authority over foreign policy and the armed forces, which is why allied governments watch midterms closely and adjust little.

Polling stations close on the evening of Tuesday, November 3, which is Wednesday morning in Japan.

INTERNATIONAL

Five Thousand Dollars a Head: The Arithmetic of the Campaign's Largest Promise

By Rachel Kim | Washington-Tokyo Liaison

The promise at the centre of the Republican campaign for the midterm elections is easily stated. If the party keeps both chambers of Congress, President Trump told its convention in Dallas last month, every adult citizen will receive 5,000 dollars.

He called it a dividend.

The cost, by the estimate reported in Nikkei, is about 1.3 trillion dollars.

For scale, the federal government's deficit in fiscal 2025 was about 1.8 trillion dollars. The payment would add most of another year's deficit in a single stroke.

It cannot be made by the president alone. Spending requires an act of Congress, which is why the promise is conditional on the election. Even a Republican Congress contains members who have spent careers opposing payments of this kind.

The administration has pointed to revenue from tariffs as the source. Tariff receipts have risen sharply since last year. They are a fraction of the sum required.

There is a precedent, and it is recent. The government sent payments to most households three times during the pandemic, in 2020 and 2021. Economists have since attributed part of the inflation that followed to them.

That history is the Democrats' argument against the proposal. It is also the reason the proposal is popular. People remember receiving the money.

For Japan the interest is in the bond market. The United States finances its deficit by selling Treasury securities, and Japanese institutions are the largest foreign holders of them. A further 1.3 trillion dollars of borrowing would have to be sold to someone.

The Japanese government's own offer to voters, approved by the governing party on Friday, is of an annual payment to low and middle earners, with the amounts still to be set.

INTERNATIONAL

Flydubai Captain 'Out of Danger' in Abu Dhabi as Prosecutors There Take Over the Case of the Co-Pilot

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Captain Smit Machchhar, the flydubai pilot who was attacked in his cockpit on Wednesday and unlocked the door that saved his aircraft, is recovering in Abu Dhabi and is described as out of danger.

India's embassy in the United Arab Emirates said he was in good health and recovering well. Parag Shah, who represents the Mumbai suburb of Ghatkopar East, where the captain comes from, told CNN that he was out of danger.

He was flown from Tabuk in Saudi Arabia on Thursday after surgery there. The first officer accused of attacking him travelled the same morning, in the custody of an Emirati security team, after doctors cleared him to be moved.

The Saudi Interior Ministry's statement, the first from the kingdom, said its preliminary investigation had found that the captain was assaulted by the co-pilot and that both men were injured. It added that the rest of the crew had returned to Dubai on a separate flight.

The case now belongs to the Emirates. The attorney-general, Hamad Saif Al Shamsi, has opened an investigation into the circumstances and the motive.

No motive has been published. Israel's prime minister has said the first officer had been indoctrinated by Islamist radicals; the Emirati authorities have said only that they will establish whether there was a link to terrorism. The man has not been named by any government.

Saudi Arabia's transport safety body is examining the airframe. Part of the rudder was missing when the aircraft landed at Tabuk, as the photograph on Friday's front page showed.

Flydubai's flights to Israel remain suspended, and Emirates is not selling its codeshare seats on them. El Al and Arkia have arranged flights to bring Israelis home from Dubai.

Israel has said it will in future check the identity of every pilot flying into the country.

All 174 passengers and six crew survived. A full account of the flight, and of the passengers and off-duty pilots who brought it down safely, was published in Friday's edition.

The aircraft was a Boeing 737 MAX 8 on a scheduled service from Dubai to Tel Aviv.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Four children feared dead in Tsu fire, Page 12.

Hanshin one result from the pennant, Page 16.

Editorial: The complaint department never closes, Page 20.

INTERNATIONAL

Three Days On: What Has Been Established About Flight FZ1073, and What Has Not

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Established, by official statement: the aircraft left Dubai for Tel Aviv on Wednesday morning with 174 passengers and six crew, and landed at Tabuk in Saudi Arabia at 9:45 a.m. local time.

Established, by the airline: there was an altercation on the flight deck, and the aircraft was secured and landed by flydubai crew who were travelling on it.

Established, by Saudi Arabia: the co-pilot assaulted the captain, and both were injured.

Established, by the tracking data: the aircraft descended steeply from its cruising altitude, transmitted the code for a general emergency and then the code for unlawful interference, and landed about 84 minutes after the first descent.

Stated by passengers and by the Israeli government, and not contradicted: the captain unlocked the cockpit door after he was wounded; passengers pulled the first officer out and restrained him; one of them pulled back on the controls; two off-duty pilots took over.

Not established: why. The Emirati investigation is to determine whether there was a link to terrorism. Israeli ministers have said there was. The airline has asked that no one speculate.

Not established: the weapon, and how it came to be on the flight deck.

Not established: who selected the hijack code, and what damaged the rudder. A former Israeli security official has suggested the dive itself; the safety investigation will say.

Not published: the first officer's name, or those of the two pilots who landed the aircraft.

The flight recorders are in the hands of the investigators and the suspect is in custody. Most of these questions have answers that already exist and have not yet been released.

ECONOMY

The Bill for 37 Days of Rain: Chestnuts That Did Not Ripen, Dearer Vegetables and Empty Theme Parks

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

The long rain over eastern Japan has begun to show in the economy, the morning papers report: chestnuts have failed to ripen, vegetable prices have soared and the number of visitors to theme parks has fallen sharply.

The rain fell in central Tokyo on 37 consecutive days to Friday, the longest run on record. September brought the Pacific side of eastern Japan the least sunshine ever measured for the month and more than twice the usual rainfall.

Chestnuts are an early casualty because of their timing. The nuts fill and the burrs split in September, and they need sun to do it. Ibaraki, the country's largest producer, lies in the middle of the area that had none.

The fruit is the taste of the season, in rice, in sweets and in the cakes that pastry shops build their autumn windows around. A short crop is felt at once.

Vegetables respond to light in the same way and faster. Leaf vegetables grown in the open on the Kanto plain supply the capital's markets at this time of year, and a month of cloud slows their growth while standing water rots their roots.

Prices at wholesale rise first and at the shop a few days later. The Tokyo-area consumer price index for September, published on Friday, rose 2.7 per cent, the most in eight months.

Theme parks sell a day out of doors, and families do not book one into a forecast of rain. This September included a five-day run of holidays, from the 19th to the 23rd, on which the parks ordinarily take a large part of their autumn revenue. Typhoon No. 25 arrived on the first of those days.

The same weather that emptied the parks filled other tills. Requests for roof repairs across the region have been running at several times last year's level, by reports earlier in the week.

Today's sunshine is the first test of whether the lost spending was cancelled or postponed. The forecast

offers one dry day before a front brings rain back to Kanto from Sunday to Tuesday.

Rice, the crop that matters most, was being harvested and inspected through the wet weeks. Its quality figures are not yet in.

ECONOMY

Breadth: What It Means When Four Shares in Five Fall

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Two numbers described Friday's stock market. The Nikkei average fell 647 yen. And more than 80 per cent of the shares on the Prime market fell.

The second is a measure of breadth, and it often says more than the first.

An index is an average, and an average can be moved by a few of its members. On Thursday one company added about 700 yen to the Nikkei. A reader of the index alone would have concluded the whole market was euphoric.

Breadth counts companies and ignores their size. It asks how many shares rose and how many fell.

When an index rises on narrow breadth, the gain belongs to a handful of stocks and is as fragile as they are. When it rises on broad breadth, buying is general and the move is better founded.

A fall works the same way. A decline in which four-fifths of all shares lose ground is a decision by investors to hold less of the market, not a judgement on one industry.

Friday had a further feature. While most shares fell, Advantest reached a record. Money was leaving the market in general and still going into the chip-equipment makers.

That pattern, a narrowing rally, is one that market historians treat with caution. It does not predict a fall. It does mean that the average depends on fewer and fewer supports.

The TOPIX, which weights companies by their market value and includes all of them, fell 0.99 per cent on Friday. The Nikkei, which weights by share price, fell 0.94 per cent.

The two indices agreeing is itself information. On Thursday they would not have.

ECONOMY

The Prime Market: What the 80 Per Cent Were 80 Per Cent Of

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Friday's market reports said that more than 80 per cent of the shares on the Prime market fell. The Prime market is four and a half years old.

Until April 2022 the Tokyo Stock Exchange was divided into a First Section, a Second Section and two markets for younger companies. The First Section had grown to contain more than 2,000 firms, many of them small and thinly traded.

The exchange replaced the four with three: Prime, Standard and Growth.

Prime is intended for companies large and liquid enough to interest international investors and willing to meet higher standards of governance, among them a minimum share of independent directors and disclosure in English.

About 1,600 companies are listed on it. Their combined value is the great majority of the value of all listed Japanese companies.

The reorganisation was followed by a campaign that has had more effect than the new labels. In 2023 the exchange asked companies whose shares traded below the book value of their assets to explain what they intended to do about it.

Many responded by buying back shares, selling cross-holdings and raising dividends. The rise in Japanese share prices over the past three years owes a good deal to that pressure.

The TOPIX index, which fell 40.98 points on Friday, was for decades the index of the First Section. It is being rebuilt to include only companies that meet tests of size and liquidity, whichever market they are on.

The Nikkei average is a different kind of measure: 225 companies chosen by a newspaper and weighted by share price.

When breadth is reported, it is breadth of the Prime market: how many of its roughly 1,600 issues rose and how many fell.

ECONOMY



The Tokyo Stock Exchange at Kabutocho. The Nikkei average fell 647 yen on Friday to 68,309.46, its first decline in three sessions, with more than 80 per cent of Prime market shares lower, Yomiuri reports. (Photo: TG2 (CC))

ECONOMY

Nikkei Falls 647 Yen to 68,309, Its First Decline in Three Days; More Than 80 Per Cent of Prime Shares Lose Ground

Advantest sets another record on Micron's results while SoftBank Group drops 6 per cent; a firmer yen brings selling in Toyota, Honda and Nissan

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

The Nikkei average fell 647 yen on Friday to close at 68,309.46, Yomiuri reports, giving back part of Thursday's gain of 2,203. It was the first fall in three sessions.

The decline was broad. More than 80 per cent of the shares on the Prime market ended lower. The TOPIX index, which covers the whole of that market, fell 40.98 points to 4,091.00.

The exception was the stock that led Thursday's rally. Advantest, the maker of chip-testing equipment, rose to a new all-time high after investors responded favourably to results from Micron Technology, the American memory-chip maker.

SoftBank Group, by contrast, fell 6 per cent. It is among the most heavily weighted shares in the average.

The yen was the other influence. It strengthened into the upper 157 range against the dollar, from 158.37 on Thursday, and the car makers were sold: Toyota, Honda and Nissan all fell.

The pattern is the reverse of the previous day's. On Thursday a few semiconductor shares lifted the average while much of the market stood still. On Friday the average fell with most of the market, and one semiconductor share went up anyway.

Friday's trading took place before the American employment report, which was published in the evening Tokyo time and showed far weaker hiring than expected.

It also followed the release of September's consumer prices for the Tokyo area, which rose 2.7 per cent from a year earlier, the fastest in eight months. A higher inflation reading keeps alive the prospect of a further increase in interest rates by the Bank of Japan, which tends to support the yen and weigh on shares.

Over the week the average is still higher. It closed at 65,481 on Tuesday.

The photograph shows the Tokyo Stock Exchange at Kabutocho.

Trading resumes on Monday with Wall Street's reaction to the jobs figures to absorb, a typhoon passing south of the country and the Diet in session.

ECONOMY

The Week in Tokyo: From 65,481 to 68,309 by Way of 68,956

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The Nikkei average ended the week 2,828 yen above where it stood on Tuesday evening, after one of the most uneven runs of the year.

Tuesday was the low point. The average fell 396 yen to close at 65,481.

Wednesday brought a recovery to about 66,754.

Thursday, the first session of the new half-year, produced the largest move. The average rose 2,203 yen to 68,956.72, its highest close in about a month and a half. Advantest rose more than 9 per cent and supplied about 700 yen of the gain by itself. The Tankan, published that morning, showed large manufacturers improving for a sixth quarter.

Friday took back 647 yen, to 68,309.46. More than 80 per cent of Prime market shares fell. Advantest

rose again, to a record.

The yen moved the other way from shares on each of the last two days. It weakened to 158.37 to the dollar on Thursday and strengthened to the upper 157 range on Friday.

The week also brought the audit disclaimer and change of president at Nidec, the announcement of merger talks among three Tohoku banks, and the news that Prudential Life faces a suspension order.

The data were mixed. Tokyo-area consumer prices rose 2.7 per cent in September. After Tokyo closed on Friday the United States reported 29,000 new jobs for the month and unemployment of 4.2 per cent.

Next week opens with that report to digest, the Diet in session and a typhoon passing to the south.

The Bank of Japan's next policy meeting is later this month.

ECONOMY

Why an American Memory Maker's Results Sent a Tokyo Share to a Record

By Ethan Cole | Editor, Technology & Science

Advantest set a new all-time high on Friday on a day when most of the Tokyo market fell. The reason given was the reaction to results from Micron Technology.

Micron is the largest American maker of memory chips. It makes the two kinds every computer needs, the fast working memory called DRAM and the storage memory called NAND, and a newer kind built for artificial intelligence.

That newer kind, high-bandwidth memory, stacks many layers of DRAM on top of one another and sits beside the processors that train and run AI models. Each of those processors needs a great deal of it.

The connection to Advantest is testing. A stack of memory is only as good as its worst layer, so each layer must be tested before stacking and the stack tested again afterwards. Advantest is the leading supplier of the machines that do it.

When a memory maker reports strong demand and plans to build more capacity, the first orders it places are for equipment, and test equipment is among them.

Micron also has a direct presence in Japan. Its plant at Higashihiroshima, the former Elpida factory it acquired in 2013, makes its most advanced DRAM, and the Japanese government has subsidised its expansion.

The reports available do not give Micron's figures, and none are given here.

The market's reaction says what investors took from them: that spending on AI hardware has further to run.

SoftBank Group, another share closely tied to AI in investors' minds, fell 6 per cent the same day. The reports do not say why, and the two moves are a reminder that an AI stock is not a single thing.

Advantest rose more than 9 per cent on Thursday and again on Friday. Its weight in the Nikkei average grows with its price.

ECONOMY

Tokyo-Area Consumer Prices Rise 2.7 Per Cent in September, the Fastest in Eight Months

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

Consumer prices in the Tokyo area rose 2.7 per cent in September from a year earlier, the largest increase in eight months, the morning papers report.

The Tokyo figures are published a few weeks ahead of the national ones and are watched as a guide to them.

The acceleration will surprise nobody who has been shopping. The weak yen has raised the cost of imported food and materials, energy has been expensive since the war in the Gulf began, and a wet September damaged the vegetable crop.

October will add to it. Prices rose on 3,153 food and drink items on the first of the month, and electricity and gas charges increased at every major supplier as the summer's subsidy ended.

For the Bank of Japan the reading is above its target of 2 per cent, as inflation has been for most of the past four years. The policy rate stands at 1.25 per cent.

The question the Bank asks is whether prices are rising because wages are, which it wants, or because costs are, which it does not. The September Tankan gave a mixed answer: large manufacturers reported better conditions for a sixth quarter, while large non-manufacturers, who face the consumer, reported worse.

The yen strengthened on Friday into the upper 157 range to the dollar, a move consistent with a market that sees a rate increase as somewhat more likely.

The government's reply to rising prices is on a slower timetable. The payments to low and middle earners approved by the governing party on Friday begin in 2027.

The national consumer price index for September is published later this month.

The reports available do not give the breakdown of the Tokyo figure by item.

ECONOMY

Which Prices? Three Ways of Reading the Same Inflation Figure

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

A report that consumer prices rose 2.7 per cent leaves out a good deal, beginning with which prices.

The consumer price index is built from the prices of several hundred goods and services, each weighted by its share of the average household's spending. Rent, electricity, a haircut, a kilogram of rice.

The index is published in three versions. The first includes everything.

The second leaves out fresh food, whose prices jump with the weather. This is the figure the Bank of Japan's 2 per cent target refers to, and the one most often quoted.

The third leaves out energy as well, on the argument that fuel prices are set abroad and say little about conditions at home. Economists use it to judge whether inflation has taken root in wages and services.

The three can differ widely. In a month like September, when rain damaged the vegetable crop, the first rises faster than the second. When oil is expensive, as now, the second rises faster than the third.

The Tokyo figures are published first because they are collected first. They cover the wards of the capital and appear a few weeks before the national index.

Tokyo is not the country. Rents and services weigh more heavily there and cars and petrol less. But the direction is usually the same.

The comparison is with the same month a year earlier. A figure of 2.7 per cent does not mean prices rose that much in September; it means they are that much higher than in September of last year.

The reports this morning give the Tokyo increase as 2.7 per cent, the largest in eight months, without the breakdown.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Hanshin one result from the pennant, Page 16.

Editorial: The complaint department never closes, Page 20.

ECONOMY

Yen Firms to the Upper 157 Range and the Car Makers Are Sold

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

The yen strengthened against the dollar on Friday, moving into the upper 157 range from 158.37 on Thursday.

Shares in Toyota, Honda and Nissan came under selling pressure as it did.

The link is mechanical. A car built in Japan and sold in America earns dollars. Each yen by which the dollar falls reduces what those dollars are worth at home, and for the largest makers a single yen moves annual operating profit by tens of billions.

The same arithmetic lifted the same shares on Thursday, when the yen weakened by nearly a yen and a half.

What moved the currency on Friday is less clear from the reports. The rise in Tokyo-area consumer prices to 2.7 per cent is one candidate, since it makes a further increase in Japanese interest rates more plausible.

The American employment report, published after Tokyo had closed, pushes in the same direction. Weak hiring makes it less likely that the Federal Reserve will raise its own rates this month, and narrows the gap that has kept the yen weak.

The yen began September at 160 to the dollar, reached 153.50 on the 9th and has spent the weeks since drifting back.

A stronger yen is not bad news for everyone. It lowers the cost of the fuel and food Japan imports, and it is the weak yen that food makers blamed for this month's price increases.

For the car makers there is a second concern in the American data. Their largest market is one in which hiring has slowed to 29,000 jobs a month.

The finance ministry has made no comment on the exchange rate in the reports available.

ECONOMY

From Field to Auction in a Day: Why Vegetable Prices Jump When the Sun Does Not Shine

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

Vegetable prices are the fastest-moving of all the prices a household pays, and the reports this morning say they have soared after a month of rain.

The reason lies in how vegetables are sold. Most of what is grown in Japan passes through wholesale markets, of which Ota Market in Tokyo is the largest. Produce picked in the morning is auctioned the next.

There is no stock. A lettuce cannot be stored for a month while prices recover, so each day's price reflects each day's arrivals.

When arrivals fall by a tenth, the price can rise by much more. Shops and restaurants need their usual quantities and bid against one another for what there is.

Leaf vegetables respond most to weather. Lettuce, spinach and cabbage grow quickly, in the open, and a week of cloud is enough to slow them. Heavy rain adds disease and makes fields too soft for the machines that harvest.

At this time of year the capital's leaf vegetables come from the highlands of Nagano and Gunma and from Ibaraki, all of them under the same cloud in September.

Root vegetables are steadier. Potatoes and onions come largely from Hokkaido, are harvested once and stored, and their prices move with the size of the year's crop.

The agriculture ministry publishes a forecast each month of whether the main vegetables will be dear or cheap, and supermarkets plan promotions around it.

Prices fall as quickly as they rise. Two weeks of sun brings a flush of growth, arrivals recover, and the auction price drops.

The forecast offers one day of sun and then three of rain.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Crossword, Page 16.

The red line: how to read a storm warning area, Page 2.

Opposition to press Takaichi on the farm minister, Page 4.

ECONOMY

ECONOMY

The Price of Sunshine: A Morning at the Wholesale Market After a Month of Rain

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

The report that vegetable prices have soared describes something that happens, each morning, in a particular room.

Tokyo's vegetables are sold at Ota Market, on reclaimed land beside Haneda Airport. It is the largest fruit and vegetable market in the country and has been on the site since 1989, when the old markets at Kanda and elsewhere were combined.

Lorries arrive through the night from the growing districts. By dawn the floor is stacked with cartons, each stamped with the name of the agricultural co-operative that packed it, and the origin tells an experienced buyer most of what he needs to know.

The auction begins before seven. An auctioneer stands on a platform, the buyers below him signal with their fingers, and a lot is sold in a few seconds.

A growing share never goes to auction and is sold by negotiation, to supermarket chains that want a fixed quantity at a known price.

In a normal week the market is a study in abundance. After a month without sun it is a study in substitution. A buyer who cannot get lettuce from Nagano at a sensible price looks for it from somewhere else, and failing that for something else.

Restaurants adjust their menus within days. Salads shrink, and the garnish on a set lunch changes from leaf to root.

Households notice later, at the supermarket, where prices are changed weekly and where a cabbage cut in half is the first sign of a shortage.

Fruit is sold in the same building, and it is there that the chestnut crop will be judged over the coming fortnight.

The market is closed on Sundays. Monday's prices will be the first set after a day of sun.

ECONOMY

Aomori Michinoku, Iwate and Akita Banks Formally Announce the Start of Merger Talks

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

Aomori Michinoku Bank, the Bank of Iwate and Akita Bank have announced that they are opening talks on a merger, confirming what was reported on Thursday.

A combination of the three would be the largest banking group in the Tohoku region.

The announcement turns a report into a process. The banks will now set up a committee to examine the form the integration should take, exchange information that competitors do not ordinarily share, and set a timetable.

The usual first step in Japan is a joint holding company, under which each bank keeps its name, its branches and its licence while management, systems and capital are brought together above them.

That is the route Aomori Michinoku itself took. Aomori Bank and Michinoku Bank were placed under a holding company in 2022 and merged into a single bank in January 2025.

The three prefectures at the northern end of Honshu are losing population faster than almost anywhere in the country, and the banks' customers are ageing with them.

The talks begin in a week that showed the conditions regional banks face. The Tankan found concern about the cash flow of small companies, and Tokyo-area inflation at 2.7 per cent keeps the prospect of higher interest rates alive.

Higher rates raise what a bank earns on loans and what it must pay on deposits, and they reduce the value of the bonds it bought when rates were lower. Size helps with all three.

The banks' shareholders and the Financial Services Agency will both have to approve whatever emerges.

The reports available do not give a target date for the integration.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Four children feared dead in Tsu fire, Page 12.

Hanshin one result from the pennant, Page 16.

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

ECONOMY

Markets at a Glance

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Nikkei 225, Friday's close: 68,309.46, down 647 (Yomiuri). First fall in three sessions.

TOPIX: 4,091.00, down 40.98.

Prime market: more than 80 per cent of issues lower.

Advantest: new all-time high. SoftBank Group: down 6 per cent.

Toyota, Honda, Nissan: lower on the yen.

Yen, Tokyo: upper 157 range to the dollar, from 158.37 on Thursday.

Tokyo-area consumer prices, September: up 2.7 per cent on the year, the most in eight months.

United States, September: payrolls up 29,000; unemployment 4.2 per cent.

Group of Seven: 100 million barrels of diesel and crude to be released over four months.

Bank of Japan policy rate: 1.25 per cent.

ECONOMY

The Household Ledger This Week

By the Economics & Finance Desk

Up: Tokyo-area prices, 2.7 per cent on the year.

Up: vegetables, after a month without sun.

Up: electricity and gas, from this month.

Up: 3,153 food and drink items, from October 1.

Scarce: chestnuts.

Coming: a payment for low and middle earners, from April 2027.

Coming: one payment a year from fiscal 2030.

Steadier: diesel, after the Group of Seven's decision.

Stronger: the yen, upper 157 to the dollar.

Free today: sunshine.

BUSINESS

Financial Services Agency Moves to Suspend Prudential Life's New Business After Staff Took 3.1 Billion Yen From Customers

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

The Financial Services Agency is preparing to order Prudential Life Insurance to suspend part of its business, after employees and former employees of the company defrauded customers of about 3.1 billion yen, Jiji Press, Nikkei and television networks report.

The order, under the Insurance Business Act, would stop the company from soliciting and concluding new policies. A period of three months or more is under consideration, Jiji reports.

The agency has concluded that the company must be made to stop selling and concentrate on rebuilding its internal controls.

It is also preparing a business improvement order against the parent company, Prudential Holdings of Japan, requiring stronger governance and a clear statement of where responsibility lay.

A suspension of business is the most serious penalty the agency can impose short of revoking a licence. Nikkei notes that it would be the first against a life insurer since Japan Post Insurance in 2019.

Prudential Life disclosed in January that employees and former employees had taken a total of about 3.1 billion yen from a number of customers by deception and other means. Its president at the time, Hiroshi Mabara, resigned.

The agency then inspected the company on site. The inspection lasted more than half a year and ended last month, the television reports say, and the agency has put its findings on the company's internal systems to the management for a response.

The company has not been selling freely in the meantime. It imposed a restraint on its own sales activity and later extended it by 180 days.

A report from a committee of outside lawyers and other experts, commissioned by the company, is due shortly, Nikkei reports.

Existing policies are not affected by a suspension of new business. Premiums continue to be collected and claims paid.

The company is the Japanese arm of the American insurer of the same name and has sold life insurance here since the 1980s, largely through a sales force paid by commission.

The order will be announced when the company's response has been considered.

BUSINESS

How Prudential Life Came to This: A Sales Force Built on Trust, and What the Inspectors Were Looking For

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Prudential Life's reputation in Japan was built on its salespeople. The company recruited experienced people from other industries, called them life planners, and paid them largely by results.

Customers dealt with one person for years. That person knew their income, their family and their plans, and was trusted with all three.

The misconduct the company disclosed in January grew out of that relationship. Employees and former employees obtained money from customers, about 3.1 billion yen in all, by deception and other improper means.

The president resigned. The company restricted its own selling, and the Financial Services Agency sent in inspectors.

What an inspection of this kind examines is less the fraud than the system around it. How were salespeople supervised? Who checked their dealings with customers outside the company's own products? What happened when a complaint was made?

A commission system rewards the salesperson who sells most and gives the company a reason not to look closely at how. The agency's standard question is whether management built controls strong enough to resist that pull.

The reports say the agency has also found failures in the duty to give customers proper information.

There was a further disclosure during the period: the personal details of about 1,570 customers were lost after a former employee removed them without authority, Jiji reported.

The agency's decision to stop new sales, and not merely to order improvements, indicates what it concluded. An improvement order tells a company to do better. A suspension tells it that it cannot be trusted to sell until it has.

The order against the parent company points in the same direction. The agency holds that the problem was one of governance, and governance is the business of those at the top.

BUSINESS

What a Business Suspension Order Does, and the Last Time a Life Insurer Received One

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The Insurance Business Act gives the Financial Services Agency a graded set of powers over the companies it licenses.

The mildest is a request for a report. Next is a business improvement order, which requires a company to submit a plan for putting right what the agency has found and to report on its progress.

Above that is an order suspending all or part of the company's business for a fixed period. At the top is the revocation of the licence.

A partial suspension usually stops the solicitation and sale of new policies and leaves the servicing of existing ones untouched. Policyholders continue to be covered.

The cost to the company is the business it cannot write and, more lastingly, the salespeople and agents who leave while it cannot write it.

The last such order against a life insurer was issued in December 2019, to Japan Post Insurance and to Japan Post, which sold its policies through post offices. Both were barred from selling new insurance for three months.

That case concerned policies sold to elderly customers in ways that left them paying double premiums or without cover, on a very large scale. The heads of the three companies in the Japan Post group resigned.

Sales did not recover quickly. The group kept its own restraint in place long after the order expired, and the post offices' insurance business has not returned to its former size.

Earlier, in the 2000s, several life and non-life insurers were suspended over the non-payment of claims that

should have been paid.

The pattern in each case was that the order marked the middle of the affair and not its end.

BUSINESS

Times Car Leak: About 1.6 Million Driving Licence Images Among the 6.6 Million Records; Fears of Accounts Opened in Members' Names

By Ethan Cole | Editor, Technology & Science

The scale of the leak at Times Car has become clearer. Of up to about 6.6 million member records obtained by a third party, about 1.6 million include an image of the member's driving licence, Asahi Shimbun reports. The paper carries three articles on the case today.

No leak of credit card information has been confirmed. The intrusion was detected on September 25.

The licence images are what distinguish this from the leaks of names and addresses that have become routine.

A photograph of a licence is accepted by many online services as proof of identity. Payment applications and some bank and brokerage accounts can still be opened by uploading one, sometimes with a photograph of the applicant's face and sometimes without.

The concern Asahi reports is of impersonation: accounts opened in the names of members who know nothing about them, and then used to receive the proceeds of fraud.

Financial institutions have been moving away from uploaded images for this reason, towards reading the chip in the licence or in the individual number card, which a photograph cannot reproduce. The change is not complete.

For the 1.6 million, the practical advice is unchanged from Thursday. Read the company's own notice. Treat any message about the leak that contains a link as hostile. Watch for post and statements relating to accounts you did not open, and report them at once.

Car-sharing members are, as a group, younger than the customers of most companies that hold identity documents, and include students who registered a student card as well.

The company is part of the Park24 group. It has not said in the reports available how the intruder gained access.

The Personal Information Protection Commission has the power to investigate and to order corrective measures.

BUSINESS

The End of the Uploaded Licence: Why Identity Checks by Photograph Are Being Phased Out

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The Times Car leak has exposed about 1.6 million images of driving licences. The reason that matters is a method of proving identity that the authorities had already decided to retire.

For most of the past decade a person could open an account without visiting a branch by photographing an identity document with a telephone, and usually their own face as well, and sending the images.

The method was convenient and it was weak. An image can be copied, altered or simply reused, and forged licences good enough to pass a photograph check have been found in the hands of fraud groups repeatedly.

The replacement is to read the chip. Driving licences and individual number cards both contain an integrated circuit holding the same details in a form that is signed electronically. A telephone held against the card can read it, and a copy of a photograph cannot reproduce it.

Under revised rules the photograph method is being withdrawn in stages: for mobile telephone contracts first, and for bank and other financial accounts from next April.

Until then, and in the many services that are not covered by those rules, an image still opens doors.

That is the window in which a leaked licence image is most useful to a criminal, and the reason Asahi's reporting stresses accounts opened by impersonation.

BUSINESS

The change will not help the people whose images are already loose. Nor does it cover the informal uses of a licence image, such as renting equipment or joining a service that merely wants to see a document.

Companies that collect such images can limit the damage by not keeping them. Once a check has been made there is seldom a reason to store the picture.

The broader lesson of the case is that a document meant to be shown should not have become a document that is sent.

BUSINESS

Tesla's Global Sales Fall 2 Per Cent to About 480,000 in the Third Quarter

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

Tesla sold about 480,000 vehicles worldwide in the three months from July to September, 2 per cent fewer than in the same period last year.

The company reports deliveries a few days after the end of each quarter, ahead of its financial results.

A fall of 2 per cent is small. It matters because of what the company's valuation assumes, which is growth, and because the market for electric cars as a whole has continued to expand.

Tesla's difficulty for the past two years has been competition. Chinese makers led by BYD sell more electric vehicles than it does and sell them for less, and every established car maker now offers models in the segments Tesla created.

Its own range has changed little. The two models that account for almost all its sales were introduced in 2017 and 2020.

The company's answer has been to describe itself as something other than a car maker. Its chief executive, Elon Musk, has directed attention to autonomous taxis and humanoid robots, and the share price has followed the story more than the sales.

For Japan's car makers the figures are of interest for what they say about demand. The Japanese companies were slow to commit to battery cars and have argued that hybrids would carry the market for longer than Tesla's rise implied. Sales of hybrids have borne them out.

Their shares fell on Friday for a different reason, the stronger yen.

Japan is also a supplier. Panasonic makes battery cells for Tesla in Nevada, and a slower Tesla means slower orders.

The reports available do not give the breakdown of deliveries by model or region.

BUSINESS

Business Digest

By the Economics & Finance Desk

PRUDENTIAL: The Financial Services Agency is preparing a partial business suspension order against Prudential Life, halting new sales for three months or more, and an improvement order against its parent.

TIMES CAR: About 1.6 million driving licence images are among the member records taken. No card data is confirmed leaked.

BANKS: Aomori Michinoku Bank, the Bank of Iwate and Akita Bank have announced the start of merger talks.

TESLA: Global sales of about 480,000 in July to September, down 2 per cent.

ADVANTEST: A new all-time high after Micron's results. SOFTBANK GROUP: down 6 per cent.

CAR MAKERS: Toyota, Honda and Nissan lower as the yen firms to the upper 157 range.

MCDONALD'S: The suspension of hamburger sales at its restaurants in Hokkaido, over beef patties that might not meet quality standards, was due to run until Friday, Jiji Press reports.

TANKERS: The state's reinsurance of oil tankers is to be widened beyond cargoes of Iranian crude.

FLOOD SENSORS: SDS Holdings has launched a service that detects flooding building by building and notifies the owner. Details on the technology pages.

NARITA: The airport company is expected to apply in December for approval of its new runway project; briefings on land begin on the 28th.

NIDEC: The new management aims to obtain an audit opinion this month, ahead of the Tokyo Stock Exchange's deadline.

TECHNOLOGY

China-Linked Hackers Imitated the Defense Minister's Website to Steal Researchers' Passwords, U.S. Security Firm Says

The group Proofpoint calls TA419 has targeted think tanks, universities, defence contractors and law firms in Japan and the United States since at least April 2025

By Ethan Cole | Editor, Technology & Science

A hacking group linked to China has been sending fraudulent email to people at think tanks and universities in Japan and the United States in order to steal their passwords, the American security company Proofpoint said on Thursday. One of its methods was to pose as the official website of the defense minister, Shinjiro Koizumi.

The company calls the group TA419. It judged the activity to be connected with China from the techniques used and the choice of targets, which match the pattern of Chinese intelligence collection, Kyodo News and Yomiuri report.

The campaign has run since at least April 2025. Its targets have included people at think tanks, defence-related companies, universities and law firms in both countries.

This year the group registered internet domains made to resemble those of Mr Koizumi's website and of the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association, the body that conducts Japan's unofficial relations with Taipei, and sent messages that appeared to come from them.

In the United States the targets were specialists in artificial intelligence policy. The attackers posed as former White House officials, as economists and as employees of the AI company Anthropic, and invited the recipient to take part in a new project.

The first message contained nothing harmful. Only when the target replied was a link sent, leading to a counterfeit login page.

The page did more than record a password. According to an account of the report by the trade publication Business+IT, it relayed the victim's sign-in to the real Microsoft 365 service as it happened, so that the code from the victim's telephone was passed along too, and the attackers captured the session that resulted.

With that they could read the victim's mail. People who study policy for a living correspond with officials, and their inboxes show what a government is thinking before it says so.

The disclosure came on the day Japan's proactive cyber defence law took effect. The law's powers concern attacks on infrastructure, and a campaign of this kind, aimed at individuals and conducted through ordinary web services, is not what it was written for.

The defence ministry had made no public comment in the reports available on Saturday morning.

Anyone who has received an unexpected invitation in the minister's name, or the association's, should check the address it came from before answering.

TECHNOLOGY

How a Fake Login Page Gets Past the Code on Your Phone, and What Actually Stops It

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Two-step verification was meant to make a stolen password useless. The thief has the password but not the telephone that receives the code.

The method described in this week's report on the group called TA419 gets round that, and it is not new or exotic. Security researchers call it an adversary-in-the-middle attack.

The victim is sent to a page that looks exactly like the real sign-in page, because it is the real page, passed through a server the attacker controls. Everything the victim types goes to the genuine service, and everything the service replies comes back through the same relay.

The victim enters the password. The real service asks for the code. The victim reads it from the telephone and types it in. The service accepts it and issues a session token, the small file that tells a browser its user has already proved who they are.

The token passes through the attacker's server on its way back, and the attacker keeps a copy.

From then on the attacker needs neither password nor code. The token is the key, and it works until it expires or is cancelled.

What defeats this is a second step that is bound to the address of the genuine site. Hardware security keys and the passkeys now built into telephones and computers work this way: they check which site is asking and will not answer an impostor, however convincing it looks to the eye.

Codes sent by text message, codes from an application and approval prompts that ask only yes or no do not make that check, and can all be relayed.

For individuals the practical rules are short. Do not sign in from a link in a message; go to the site yourself. Look at the address bar before typing a password. Where a passkey is offered, use it.

For organisations the lesson of the report is that the first email proved nothing. The attackers were patient, held an ordinary conversation, and sent the link only once they had been answered.

TECHNOLOGY

Why Would a Spy Agency Want a Think-Tank Researcher's Inbox?

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The people named as targets in Proofpoint's report hold no secrets in the formal sense. They work at research institutes, universities and law firms, and most of what they write is published.

What they have is correspondence.

A specialist in AI policy in Washington is consulted by congressional staff drafting legislation, by officials designing export controls, and by the companies those controls will bind. Drafts, comments and invitations to closed meetings pass through the same mailbox.

For a government that wants to know which chips will be restricted next, or how far a rule on the export of AI models is likely to go, that mailbox is the cheapest source available.

The Japanese targets fit the same logic. The Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association is the channel through which Tokyo deals with Taipei in the absence of diplomatic relations. A scholar who receives its invitations is someone who attends its meetings.

Imitating the defence minister's website serves a related purpose. A message that appears to come from a minister's office is one a researcher on security policy will open and answer.

The report says the attackers also posed as employees of Anthropic, an American developer of AI models, and in one case in February used a subject line about military use of its model.

That detail connects the campaign to the commercial contest reported earlier in the week, in which OpenAI said it had blocked an attempt, traced to a Chinese company, to extract its models' capabilities by mass querying.

The two episodes are different in method and probably in sponsor. They have the same object, which is to learn at low cost what the American AI industry and its regulators know.

Japan's place in this is as an ally with its own access. Its researchers sit in the same meetings, and its ministers' names open the same doors.

TECHNOLOGY

TA419, APT, 'Typhoon': How Hacking Groups Get Their Names

By Ethan Cole | Editor, Technology & Science

The group accused this week of imitating the defence minister's website is called TA419. It did not choose the name, and other companies may know it by a different one.

State-backed hacking groups do not announce themselves. Security firms identify them by their habits: the tools they use, the servers they rent, the hours they keep and the targets they choose. A cluster of activity that keeps showing the same habits is given a label.

Each firm labels in its own way. Proofpoint, which published this week's report, numbers its groups with the prefix TA, for threat actor.

The oldest convention is APT, for advanced persistent threat, followed by a number. It was popularised by an American firm whose 2013 report on a unit of the Chinese army, which it called APT1, was the first to name a state's hackers in public.

Another American firm names groups after animals according to their presumed sponsor: pandas for

China, bears for Russia, kittens for Iran.

Microsoft uses the weather. Groups it attributes to China are typhoons, those of Russia blizzards, those of Iran sandstorms and those of North Korea sleet.

Readers following two stories in today's edition should not confuse them. A hacking group with Typhoon in its name has nothing to do with the one approaching the Ogasawara Islands.

The result is that one group can have four or five names, and that two names may or may not refer to the same people. Firms see different parts of an operation and draw the boundaries differently.

Governments are more cautious than companies and name a sponsor only when they are prepared to defend the claim. Japan's police have attributed several campaigns to groups linked to China and North Korea in recent years.

Proofpoint describes TA419 as acting in line with China's interests. The Chinese government routinely denies involvement in hacking.

TECHNOLOGY

'The Dark Side of the Moon': The Chinese AI Company in OpenAI's Complaint, and Its Name

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Further reports on the distillation attack that OpenAI says it blocked refer to the party behind it by a phrase that will puzzle readers: people connected to China's Dark Side of the Moon.

That is a literal translation of a company name. Moonshot AI, the Beijing company OpenAI has identified, is called Yue Zhi An Mian in Chinese, the dark side of the moon.

The company was founded in 2023 and is known in China for its chatbot, Kimi. Its founders have said the name was taken from the Pink Floyd album, on whose fiftieth anniversary the company was set up.

Dempa Shimbun reports that the attack dates from July and that at its peak the number of cases exceeded 15,000.

Distillation, as explained in these pages on Friday, means training one model on the answers of another. It requires no break-in, only a very large number of questions asked through accounts that conceal who is asking.

OpenAI's terms forbid using its output to build a competing model. Whether doing so breaks any law is unsettled.

Moonshot has not responded to the allegation in the reports available.

The company is one of a group of Chinese developers that have released capable models at low prices over the past two years, which is one reason American firms have become more aggressive about protecting what theirs can do.

The Japanese government's AI action plan, promised by the end of the year, will be written against that background. Most Japanese companies using AI are using American models under licence.

OpenAI has not said whether it will take legal action.

TECHNOLOGY

A Flood Alarm for One Building: SDS Holdings Launches a Detection and Notification Service

By Ethan Cole | Editor, Technology & Science

SDS Holdings has launched a service that detects flooding at the level of the individual building and notifies those responsible for it. The company describes the aim as moving from support after a disaster to prevention.

Flood warnings in Japan are issued for rivers and for municipalities. They say that an area is at risk. They do not say that water has reached a particular basement.

That gap matters most in cities. Urban flooding is increasingly of the kind that comes from within, when rain falls faster than drains can carry it away, and it collects at low points that no river gauge measures: underpasses, underground car parks, the machine rooms beneath blocks of flats.

A sensor at the point of entry gives the owner minutes that the official warning cannot. In those minutes a barrier can be raised, a lift sent to an upper floor, a car park closed and the electrical switchgear protected.

TECHNOLOGY

The damage a few centimetres of water does to such equipment is out of proportion to its depth. When the electrical room of a tower block floods, the building loses lifts, water pumps and lighting for days, as residents of several riverside towers discovered during the typhoon of October 2019.

The reports available do not describe the technology the company uses or the price.

The timing is apt. Central Tokyo has had 37 consecutive days of rain, the ground across Kanto is saturated, and a front is forecast to bring more from Sunday while a very strong typhoon passes to the south.

Insurers have an interest in services of this kind. A claim for a flooded basement is large, and a warning that prevents it is cheap.

So do local governments, which cannot instrument every building and would be glad for owners to do it themselves.

The broader shift is from knowing where floods are likely, which hazard maps show, to knowing where one is happening, which only measurement can.

TECHNOLOGY

Today in Technology History: On October 3, 1942, a Rocket From Peenemunde Reached the Edge of Space

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Eighty-four years ago today a rocket launched from the German army's research station at Peenemunde, on the Baltic coast, climbed to an altitude of between 85 and 90 kilometres and came down in the sea about 190 kilometres away.

It was the fourth of the test missiles its builders called the A4. The earlier attempts had failed.

Nothing made by human hands had been so high. The flight is commonly described as the first to reach space, though it fell a little short of the 100-kilometre line that is now the usual definition.

The rocket was 14 metres tall and burned alcohol and liquid oxygen. It carried a system of gyroscopes to hold its course and was the first large rocket to be steered through its flight in that way.

The head of the station, Walter Dornberger, is recorded as telling his staff that evening that they had used space as a bridge between two points on Earth and opened a new era of transport.

The use it was put to was different. Renamed the V-2, the missile was fired at London, Antwerp and other cities from September 1944. Thousands of people were killed where it fell.

More died building it. The missiles were assembled in tunnels in the Harz mountains by prisoners from the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, of whom some 20,000 perished.

After the war the engineers and the hardware were divided among the victors. Wernher von Braun, the technical director, went to the United States with more than a hundred colleagues; the Soviet Union took others, and the factory.

The rockets that launched the first satellites and the first men into space, on both sides, descended directly from the A4. So did the ballistic missile.

Both lines are in today's news. Japan depends on satellites for the typhoon forecast on the front page, and on its alliance for defence against the missiles.

TECHNOLOGY

October 3, 1962: Wally Schirra Flies Six Orbits in Sigma 7, the 'Textbook' Mercury Flight

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Twenty years to the day after the A4 flew from Peenemunde, an Atlas rocket lifted the American astronaut Walter Schirra into orbit from Cape Canaveral.

The flight was Mercury-Atlas 8. Schirra had named his capsule Sigma 7, after the mathematical symbol for a sum, to stand for engineering precision, and seven for the first group of American astronauts.

It was the fifth American manned space flight and the third to reach orbit, after those of John Glenn and Scott Carpenter earlier in the year.

The two earlier orbital flights had each lasted three circuits and each had problems. Carpenter had used too much fuel and landed more than 400 kilometres off target.

Schirra's task was to show that a man could manage a spacecraft's resources over a longer flight. He flew six orbits in a little over nine hours, used very little of his manoeuvring fuel, and came down in the Pacific within a few kilometres of the recovery ship.

He called it a textbook flight, and the phrase stuck.

The Soviet Union was by then well ahead in duration. Two months earlier two Vostok cosmonauts had been in orbit at the same time, one of them for nearly four days.

Schirra went on to command Gemini 6, which made the first rendezvous in space, and Apollo 7, the first manned flight of the Apollo spacecraft. He was the only astronaut to fly in all three programmes.

Japanese involvement in manned space flight lay thirty years in the future. The first Japanese astronaut to fly for the national space agency, Mamoru Mohri, went up in the shuttle in 1992.

The rocket that carried Schirra was a converted intercontinental missile, in direct line of descent from the one tested in 1942.

TECHNOLOGY

October 3, 1985: The Shuttle Atlantis Makes Its First Flight, on a Mission That Was Not Described

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The space shuttle Atlantis, the fourth of the American orbiters to fly, was launched for the first time on October 3, 1985.

The mission, numbered STS-51-J, was flown for the Department of Defense. Its launch time was not announced in advance and its cargo was not described. It lasted four days.

It has since been disclosed that the payload was a pair of military communications satellites.

The shuttle had been sold to Congress as a vehicle for every purpose, civil, commercial and military, and in the mid-1980s the armed forces were among its principal customers.

That ended with the loss of Challenger less than four months later. The military returned to expendable rockets for most of its satellites, and the shuttle's flight rate never approached what had been promised.

Atlantis flew 33 missions over 26 years. It launched the Magellan probe to Venus and the Galileo probe to Jupiter, docked seven times with the Russian station Mir, and carried the European laboratory Columbus to the International Space Station.

It also flew the last shuttle mission of all, landing in July 2011.

The Japanese laboratory Kibo, the largest single module of the station, was delivered in three flights by its sister ships Endeavour and Discovery in 2008 and 2009.

The orbiter is displayed at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida, mounted at an angle with its cargo doors open, as it would have looked in orbit.

With the shuttle retired, Japanese astronauts reach the station today in capsules, a design the shuttle was meant to make obsolete.

TECHNOLOGY

From a Pencil to the H3: Japan's Own Line of Descent From the Rocket of 1942

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The anniversary of the A4's flight is usually told as an American and Soviet story. Japan's rockets have a history of their own, and it started smaller.

In April 1955 Hideo Itokawa of the University of Tokyo fired a rocket 23 centimetres long horizontally across a disused firing range in the western suburbs of Tokyo. It was called the Pencil.

Japan had been forbidden to work on aircraft or rockets during the occupation, and Itokawa's group began again from nothing, with solid fuel because it was what they could obtain.

Fifteen years later, in February 1970, a descendant of the Pencil put a satellite into orbit. Japan was the fourth country to do so, after the Soviet Union, the United States and France.

A second line of development ran alongside. To launch larger satellites the government licensed liquid-fuel technology from the United States in the 1970s and built a series of rockets on it.

The H-II, first flown in 1994, was the first large

rocket designed and built entirely in Japan. Its successor, the H-IIA, flew 50 times before it was retired last year, with a single failure.

The present rocket is the H3, which first reached orbit in 2024. It was designed to be cheaper to build, with a main engine that has fewer parts and components taken from the car industry.

These are the rockets that launch the country's weather, navigation and reconnaissance satellites from the island of Tanegashima.

The site, in the south of Kagoshima Prefecture, was chosen in the 1960s for its latitude: the nearer a launch pad lies to the equator, the more of the Earth's rotation a rocket borrows. A smaller range at Uchinoura, on the mainland of the same prefecture, launches the solid-fuel rockets descended from the Pencil.

The asteroid that a Japanese probe visited and returned samples from in 2010 was named Itokawa.

The Pencil is in a museum. It weighed about 200 grams.

TECHNOLOGY

The First Week of October in the History of Machines: From ENIAC to the Open Weather Satellite

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Today's anniversaries stand at the end of a crowded week, and the dates around them describe how the tools in this morning's news came to exist.

On October 2, 1955, ENIAC was switched off. The age of the electronic computer as a practical tool is usually dated from its ten years of work.

On October 2, 1925, John Logie Baird transmitted a recognisable face by television.

On October 1, 1958, NASA began operations, giving the United States a civilian space agency separate from its armed forces. Wally Schirra's flight four years later was among the results.

On October 1, 1982, Sony put the first compact disc player on sale, and digital sound entered the home.

Three developments without a single date belong to the same account. The first is the decision to make weather satellite data public. Himawari's full images of the Earth are available to every forecaster and researcher, and have become the standard evidence in assessing a disaster.

The second is satellite positioning. The signals were opened to civilian use, and a receiver is now assumed in every telephone; the newest handsets can exchange messages with satellites directly.

The third is the Linux kernel, released in September 1991 and now the operating system of most of the world's servers.

The pattern in each is the same: a capability built by a state for its own purposes became a common utility.

The question on a morning when a minister's website has been counterfeited and a new law lets the police disable hostile servers is the one asked in 1942 of the rocket: who measures the new territory, and who is allowed to use it.

TECHNOLOGY

On This Day in Technology: October 3

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

1942: The fourth A4 rocket is launched from Peenemunde and reaches 85 to 90 kilometres.

About 190 kilometres: how far it travelled.

1962: Walter Schirra orbits the Earth six times in Sigma 7.

9 hours 13 minutes: the length of his flight.

1985: The shuttle Atlantis flies for the first time, on a military mission.

33: the number of missions Atlantis flew.

The day before, 1955: ENIAC is switched off.

The day before, 1925: Baird's first television picture of a face.

Two days before, 1958: NASA begins work.

Two days before, 1982: the first compact disc player goes on sale.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

The red line: how to read a storm warning area, Page 2.

G7 to release 100 million barrels, Page 6.

SOCIETY

Thirty-Seven and Out? The Capital Wakes to a Forecast Without Rain

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The longest run of rainy days in the capital's recorded history reached 37 on Friday, and the forecast for today is the first in more than five weeks to contain no rain at all.

High pressure covers the country. Tenki.jp gives mostly sunny weather nationwide, and the map on the weather page marks Tokyo with a plain sun, a high of 25 degrees and a low of 18.

The count is kept at the Japan Meteorological Agency's station in Kitanomaru Park, beside the Imperial Palace. A day is added to it when rain is recorded there, and the run ends on the first day when none is.

The series of records in which it is the longest goes back to 1886.

The run began in the last days of August, when the autumn rain front settled along the Pacific coast, and was kept going by two typhoons: No. 25, which struck Chiba on September 19, and No. 26, which passed offshore on Thursday.

Some of the 37 days brought no more than a shower. The total over the period is what did the damage: rainfall on the Pacific side of eastern Japan in September was 214 per cent of normal, and sunshine the lowest on record.

The morning opened dry. At 6 a.m. the agency's Tokyo gauge had recorded nothing since midnight, according to tenki.jp's table of observations.

A single clear day will not dry the ground. The forecasters' warning for Chiba and Kanagawa, that slopes are loose and light rain is enough to move them, stands.

Nor will it last. A front approaching from the west is expected to bring rain to Kanto on Sunday, Monday and Tuesday, while Typhoon No. 27 passes to the south and east.

If today stays dry the record will stand at 37 days. A new count would begin tomorrow.

SOCIETY

Four Bodies Found After House Fire in Tsu; Four Children Aged 4 to 13 Are Unaccounted For

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

Four bodies were found on Friday in the ruins of a house destroyed by fire in Tsu, Mie Prefecture. The police believe they are those of four children, aged between 4 and 13, who were in the house and have not been seen since.

A neighbour telephoned the fire service at about 2 p.m. to say that the house next door, in the Karasu district of the city, was burning. It was a single-storey wooden house.

Eight fire engines and other vehicles attended. The fire was out about two hours later, by which time it had spread to three neighbouring buildings.

Those unaccounted for are the 4-year-old daughter of the man who lives in the house, a Brazilian national aged 38, and three children of a family friend, a woman of 43: her sons aged 13 and 12 and her daughter aged 10, Kyodo News reports. The three older children had come to visit.

Three of the bodies were found together in one room and the fourth in another. The police said they appeared to be children but that their ages and sex could not yet be determined.

There was information that the four children were the only people in the house when the fire began, the fire service said.

Neighbours spoke of explosions. A man living nearby told Tokai Television that the mother had noticed the fire while working in a field and that there had been repeated bangs, which he took to be gas cylinders. A fragment that appeared to be the top of a propane cylinder was found in a field some 20 metres from the house.

The cause is not known. The police and the fire service will examine the site.

The city of Tsu and the towns around it are home to many families from Brazil, many of whom came to work in the factories of the Ise Bay industrial belt.

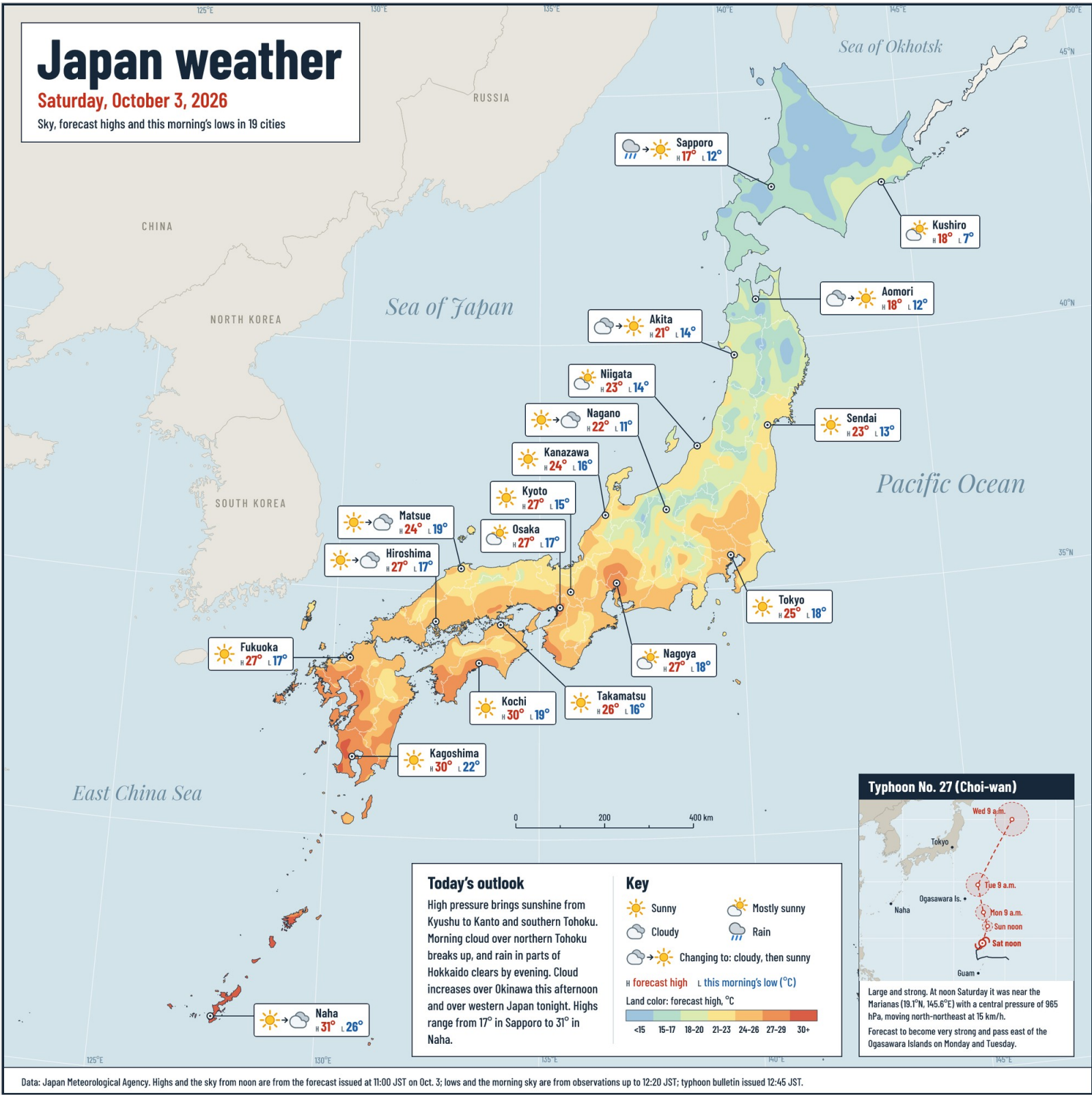
The identities of the dead will be confirmed by examination.

WEATHER & SOCIETY

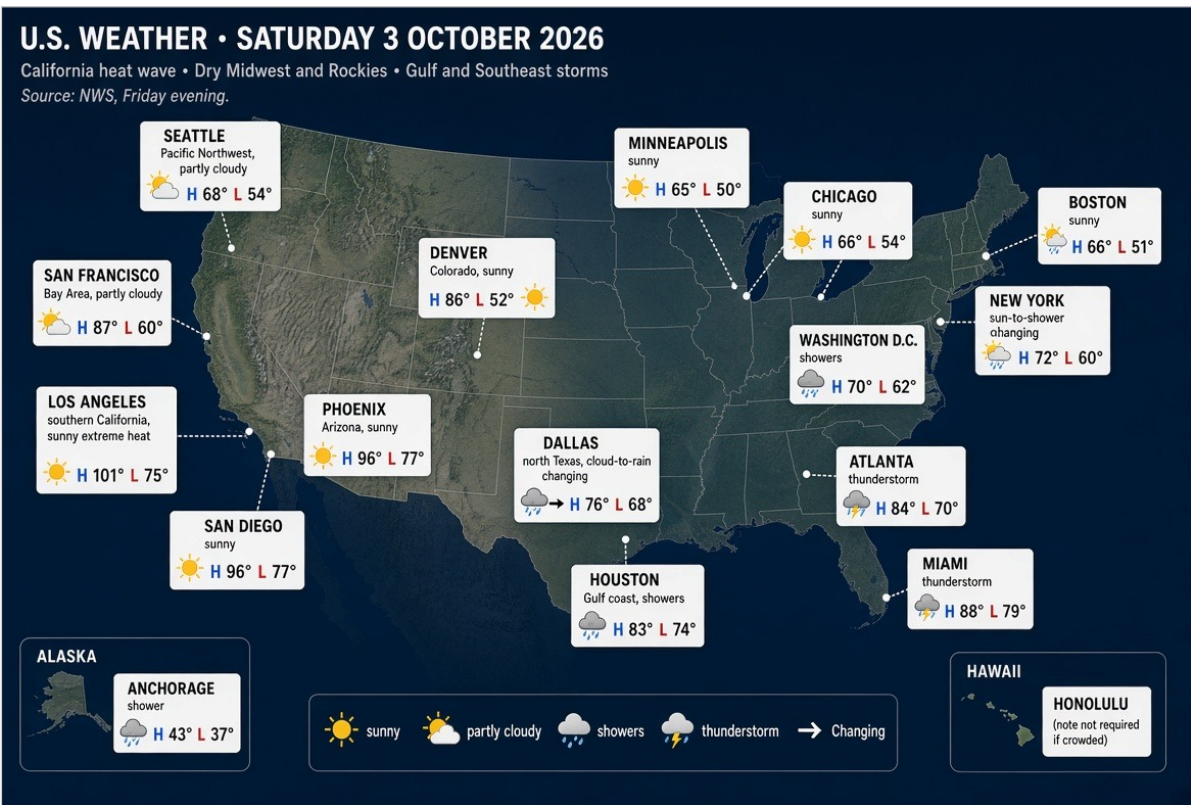


25°C

Low 18°C this morning · Sunny under high pressure · 37 days of rain in central Tokyo expected to end · Typhoon No. 27 strong, 965 hPa at noon



WEATHER ABROAD



United States weather forecast map supplied for this edition, for Saturday, October 3, 2026; highs and lows in degrees Fahrenheit. The Honolulu box carries a drafting note and no forecast. Reproduced as supplied.

SOCIETY

Weather Abroad: 101 Degrees in Los Angeles, Storms on the Gulf and in the Southeast, a Dry and Sunny Midwest

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The United States map supplied for this edition is for Saturday, October 3, gives highs and lows in degrees Fahrenheit, and cites the National Weather Service on Friday evening.

Its heading names three patterns: a heat wave in California, dry weather in the Midwest and the Rockies, and storms along the Gulf and in the Southeast.

The heat is in the south-west. Los Angeles is marked sunny with extreme heat at 101 and 75. San Diego and Phoenix are each sunny at 96 and 77. San Francisco is partly cloudy at 87 and 60, which is hot for that city.

Seattle is partly cloudy at 68 and 54.

A reading of 101 in Los Angeles in October is about 38 degrees Celsius, and the 96 given for both San Diego and Phoenix is close to 36. The map's heading calls it a heat wave, and the label on the Los Angeles box reads extreme heat.

The interior is fine. Denver is sunny at 86 and 52, Minneapolis sunny at 65 and 50 and Chicago sunny at 66 and 54.

Texas is wet. Dallas is given cloud turning to rain at 76 and 68, and Houston showers at 83 and 74.

The Southeast has thunderstorms: Atlanta at 84 and 70 and Miami at 88 and 79.

On the east coast Washington has showers at 70 and 62, New York sun turning to showers at 72 and 60, and Boston is labelled sunny at 66 and 51, though the symbol beside it shows a shower.

Anchorage has showers at 43 and 37.

In Celsius the highs run from about 6 degrees at Anchorage to about 38 at Los Angeles. For travellers: Seattle is about 20 and 12, San Francisco 31 and 16, Denver 30 and 11, Chicago 19 and 12, Dallas 24 and 20, Atlanta 29 and 21, Miami 31 and 26, Washington 21 and 17 and New York 22 and 16.

The map is reproduced as supplied. The box for Honolulu contains no forecast, only a drafting note that was left in the artwork.

President Trump's campaign appearances in the coming days are in Oklahoma, Ohio and Nebraska, by Bloomberg's account of his schedule, none of them among the cities shown.

SOCIETY

The Gauge in the Park: Where 'Tokyo's Weather' Is Actually Measured

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The record of 37 consecutive days of rain in central Tokyo was set by one rain gauge, and whether the run ends today will be decided by the same instrument.

It stands in Kitanomaru Park, in a fenced enclosure of mown grass among trees, a few hundred metres from the Budokan hall and the moat of the Imperial Palace.

The site has been the capital's official observation point since December 2014. Before that the instruments stood for decades beside the agency's former headquarters in the Otemachi office district.

The move mattered to the figures. A park is cooler at night than a street of office buildings, and the average

minimum temperature recorded for Tokyo fell by more than a degree. The agency published adjustments so that old and new records could be compared.

Weather observation in Tokyo began in 1875. The series in which the present run of rain is the longest goes back to 1886.

A rain gauge is a simple device, a funnel of standard width leading to a mechanism that tips each time half a millimetre has collected and counts the tips.

Rain that wets the ground without tipping the bucket is still noted. Observers record a trace.

One point represents a city of fourteen million people only roughly. On a day of showers it can rain in Setagaya and not in Kitanomaru, and the reverse. The official record is of what fell on the gauge.

The enclosure also holds the thermometer whose reading of 30.0 degrees on Thursday was reported as Tokyo's temperature, and the cherry tree by which the start of the blossom season is declared stands not far away, at Yasukuni Shrine.

At 6 a.m. today the gauge had recorded nothing since midnight.

SOCIETY

One Dry Day: A Front Brings Rain Back to Kanto From Sunday to Tuesday

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The sunshine forecast for the capital today is expected to last a day. From Sunday to Tuesday a front extending from the west will bring rain to the Kanto region, tenki.jp reports.

The Japan Weather Association's forecasters expect rain in Tokyo on each of the three days.

The timing coincides with the passage of Typhoon No. 27 to the south. The storm itself is forecast to stay far offshore, but a typhoon feeds warm, wet air northward ahead of it, and a front lying over Honshu is where that air is forced to rise.

This is the arrangement that has produced the heaviest autumn rains in the past. The forecasters have not said that it will do so this time, and the amounts expected are not given in the reports available.

What is certain is the state of the ground. In Chiba and Kanagawa the slopes were loosened by Typhoon No. 25 two weeks ago and have been rained on almost every day since.

The forecasters' advice for those two prefectures is unchanged: caution even in light rain.

The Japan Weather Association has also drawn attention to falling pressure. As the typhoon passes, the barometer in Kanto will drop, and people who suffer headaches or joint pain with changes in the weather are advised to expect them.

The association has told Kanto to be alert for strong winds as well.

Northern Japan has cloud or rain in the first half of the week, and higher waves from Tuesday.

Those planning to air bedding, dry laundry or clear gutters have today.

SOCIETY

Before the Rain Returns

By the Society Desk

Today is dry. Sunday, Monday and Tuesday are not expected to be.

Clear gutters and drains this afternoon.

Look at the slope behind the house for new cracks or seepage.

Check the hazard map for your address.

Charge telephones and a spare battery.

Move the car from low ground if your street floods.

Chiba and Kanagawa: light rain is enough to move loosened slopes.

Decide now where you would go, and by which road.

Leave before an order, not after one.

Check on elderly neighbours.

SOCIETY

Before Sunday's Rain: How to Read the Hazard Map for Your Own Address

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The advice repeated in every forecast this week, to check the hazard map, assumes that people know what they are looking at. Many do not.

Every municipality publishes at least three maps: one for river flooding, one for landslides, and, on the coast, one for storm surge or tsunami. They are delivered to households on paper and are on the municipal website. The land ministry's portal overlays all of them on a single map for any address.

On a flood map the colours show depth. The palest means water below the knee. The darker bands mean water that reaches the ground-floor ceiling, then the first floor, then above it.

The depth shown is for the largest flood considered possible, which is far rarer than the floods of recent years. A house in a coloured area will not flood in every storm. A house outside the coloured area is not guaranteed dry.

Landslide maps mark two zones. Yellow is a caution zone, where a slope failure could reach. Red is a special caution zone, where it could destroy a building and where new construction is restricted.

The useful question is not whether one's house is coloured but what it implies. In deep flood zones, and in any landslide zone, the plan must be to leave, and early. In shallow flood zones with an upper floor, staying and moving upstairs may be safer than travelling.

The maps also show shelters. Not every shelter is suitable for every hazard; a school on a flood plain is marked as unusable in a flood.

The route matters as much as the destination. Underpasses and roads beside small rivers flood first.

Since 2020 estate agents have been required to show buyers and tenants where a property stands on the flood map before a contract is signed.

Chiba and Kanagawa residents below slopes should look at theirs today, in the dry.

SOCIETY

Wooden Houses, Gas Cylinders and Children at Home: What Fire Services Ask Families to Check

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The cause of Friday's fire in Tsu has not been established, and nothing here is a comment on it. The fire is, however, a reminder of advice that fire services repeat every autumn as the heating season approaches.

Most deaths in house fires in Japan are of people who did not get out in time. Fire spreads through an old wooden house in minutes, and smoke overcomes people before flames reach them.

A smoke alarm is required by law in every bedroom, and on the stairs where bedrooms are upstairs. Alarms installed when the rule came in are now past the ten years after which the makers recommend replacing them.

Children should be told, in plain terms and more than once, to leave the house at the first sign of fire and not to hide. Young children's instinct is to go to a cupboard or under a bed.

They should know two ways out of the room they

sleep in, and where the family will meet outside.

Matches and lighters should be kept where small children cannot reach them.

Many houses outside the cities cook and heat water with propane from cylinders kept against an outside wall. In a fire the safety valves on those cylinders can vent, and the gas burns fiercely. Nothing combustible should be stored around them.

Neighbours who see a fire should call 119 at once and should not assume someone else has. They should say whether anyone may be inside.

For families whose first language is not Japanese, many fire departments publish this advice in Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and other languages, and 119 operators can bring an interpreter onto the line.

The national fire prevention campaign for the autumn begins next month.

SOCIETY

Gas in Cylinders: How Much of Japan Cooks and Heats Its Water

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

Witnesses to Friday's fire in Tsu spoke of repeated bangs that they took to be gas cylinders. Whatever the investigation finds, the cylinders are a feature of Japanese houses that city dwellers tend to forget.

Piped gas reaches only the built-up areas of the country. Outside them, and in many older districts within them, houses use liquefied petroleum gas, sold as propane and delivered in steel cylinders.

Roughly four households in ten depend on it, for cooking and for hot water.

The cylinders stand in pairs against an outside wall, chained upright, with a regulator and a meter between them and the house. A delivery man exchanges them when they are empty.

The system has a good safety record in ordinary use. The meters contain a small computer that shuts off the supply if gas flows for an abnormally long time, if the flow suddenly increases, or in an earthquake.

Fire is the exception. A cylinder heated from outside builds pressure, and a safety valve releases the gas to prevent the vessel from bursting. The released gas burns. Firefighters approach a house with cylinders differently from one without.

Propane is heavier than air and collects at floor level and in hollows if it leaks, where piped gas, which is lighter, rises and disperses.

After disasters the cylinders are an advantage. A house on propane has its own supply and can cook when the mains are broken. Emergency kitchens after earthquakes run on it.

Suppliers are required to inspect each installation periodically, and occupants are asked to keep the space around the cylinders clear.

The cause of the Tsu fire has not been determined.

SOCIETY

Brazilians in Japan: A Community Three Decades Old, Concentrated in the Factory Towns of Tokai

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The family at the centre of Friday's fire in Tsu belongs to one of the largest foreign communities in Japan and one of the most settled.

About 210,000 Brazilian nationals live in the country. Most are the descendants of Japanese who emigrated to Brazil in the first half of the twentieth century, and their families.

They came after 1990, when the immigration law was changed to give people of Japanese descent, to the third generation, a status that allowed them to live and work here without restriction. Factories short of labour recruited them in their tens of thousands.

The community reached more than 300,000 before the financial crisis of 2008. Many lost their jobs in the months that followed and went back, some with their fares paid by the Japanese government.

Those who stayed have been here for a generation. Their children were born in Japan and attend Japanese schools, or Portuguese-language schools that the community runs itself.

They live where the factories are. Aichi has the largest number, followed by Shizuoka, Mie and Gunma, in towns built around car parts, electronics and food processing.

SOCIETY

Mie's Brazilian residents are concentrated in the cities along Ise Bay, among them Tsu, Suzuka and Yokkaichi.

Local governments in these areas provide information in Portuguese, employ interpreters in city offices and hospitals, and have for years run programmes to keep the children of foreign families in school.

The work that brought the first generation was hard and irregular, arranged through labour brokers, on contracts that ended when orders fell. Much of it still is.

The police have not yet released the names of the children.

SOCIETY

Interest in the Japanese Language at a Record 83.1 Per Cent, Survey Finds; Three in Ten Say They No Longer Write by Hand

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

More people than ever say they are interested in the Japanese language, according to the Agency for Cultural Affairs' annual survey: 83.1 per cent, the highest figure since the question was first asked.

Among those aged 16 to 19 the figure was 75.9 per cent.

The same survey found that about three people in ten have no habit of writing by hand, Yomiuri reports on its front page.

The two findings sit oddly together and are probably connected. People are writing more than any previous generation, in messages, posts and comments, and are doing almost none of it with a pen.

Writing on a screen makes certain features of the language more visible. The telephone proposes the characters; the writer chooses among them. Whether a word should be in kanji or kana, which of several characters with the same reading is meant, how polite a phrase is: each is a small decision the device puts in front of the user many times a day.

That may be why interest has risen. It may also be why the ability to produce characters from memory has declined, as earlier rounds of the survey found.

The survey has been conducted annually since the mid-1990s and is best known for its questions on usage: which of two versions of an idiom people believe correct, and whether expressions the dictionaries mark as wrong have become the majority's choice.

Those results regularly show that the language is changing faster than the reference books, and that the young are not always the ones changing it.

The lower figure among the youngest respondents is in line with past years. Interest in language tends to rise with age and with the experience of being misunderstood.

The agency uses the results in its guidance on official language and on the teaching of Japanese, including to the growing number of foreign residents.

The full tables are published on the agency's website.

SOCIETY

Narita to Seek Formal Approval for Its New Runway in December; Briefings on Land Acquisition Begin on the 28th

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The company that operates Narita Airport is expected to apply in December for approval of its new runway as a public project, and will begin holding briefings on the compulsory acquisition of land on the 28th, the morning papers report.

Project approval is the first step under the Land Expropriation Act. It is the government's finding that a project serves the public interest, and it is what permits land to be taken, with compensation, from owners who will not sell.

The airport's expansion plan has three parts: a third runway of 3,500 metres to the south-east of the present airfield, the lengthening of the second runway from 2,500 to 3,500 metres, and longer operating hours. Together they are meant to raise the number of flights the airport can handle from 300,000 a year to 500,000.

The target for completion has been the end of March 2029.

The airport company has bought most of the land it

needs by agreement. The step now reported indicates that it does not expect to obtain the remainder that way in time.

At any other airport that would be a matter of procedure. At Narita it is a matter of history.

The decision in 1966 to build the airport at Sanrizuka was taken without consulting the farmers who lived there, and the forced acquisitions that followed led to years of violent confrontation. Three police officers were killed in a single day in September 1971. The airport opened in 1978, seven years late, with one runway.

In the 1990s the government and the opponents held a series of public meetings, the state acknowledged that its methods had been wrong, and the application to expropriate the remaining land was withdrawn. The airport's later growth was achieved by negotiation, plot by plot, and its second runway was built short because of a house that stood in its path.

A return to the expropriation law is therefore a reversal of a promise that has held for thirty years. The airport company will be expected to explain why the present case is different.

Its argument is likely to rest on demand. Visitor numbers have reached records, Haneda is full, and the capital's airports are the constraint on the government's target for tourism.

The briefings beginning on the 28th are for the owners and residents concerned.

SOCIETY

Outside Fukushima, Four in Five Municipalities Holding Decontamination Soil Have Not Decided Where It Will Go

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

Eighty per cent of the 53 municipalities outside Fukushima Prefecture that hold soil removed in the clean-up after the nuclear accident of 2011 have still not chosen a place to dispose of it, a survey by Asahi Shimbun has found.

The soil in question is less well known than Fukushima's. After the accident, radioactive material was carried by wind and rain beyond the prefecture's borders, and municipalities in several neighbouring prefectures scraped the surface from school grounds, parks and gardens to bring radiation levels down.

What they removed was meant to be stored for a short time. Much of it is still where it was put: buried in a corner of the same schoolyard or park, or kept in bags on public land.

The quantity is small beside Fukushima's, where some 14 million cubic metres are held at an interim storage site around the damaged plant and are required by law to be taken out of the prefecture for final disposal by March 2045.

The soil outside Fukushima has no such law and no such site. Responsibility rests with each municipality.

The Environment Ministry issued rules last year setting out how the soil may be buried in a landfill, with a covering layer and monitoring. The rules tell a town how. They do not tell it where.

The obstacle is consent. The radioactivity of most of this soil has fallen to a fraction of what it was in 2011, and the ministry holds that burial under the rules is safe. Residents near any proposed site remain to be persuaded, and few mayors have wished to be the first to try.

The survey's result suggests that, fifteen years on, most have decided to leave the soil where it lies.

That is itself a form of disposal, and not the one the rules envisage. Records of where the soil was buried become harder to keep as schools close and land changes hands.

The ministry has said it will support municipalities that proceed. The survey shows how few have.

SOCIETY

Fukushima's Own Soil: Fourteen Million Cubic Metres and a Legal Deadline of 2045

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News

The soil that 53 municipalities outside Fukushima have not decided what to do with is the smaller part of a larger problem.

Inside the prefecture the clean-up after the accident of 2011 stripped the surface from gardens, fields, school grounds and roadsides across dozens of

municipalities. The material filled millions of black bags that stood for years in temporary yards.

Since 2015 it has been moved to an interim storage facility built on about 1,600 hectares of land around the damaged plant, in the towns of Okuma and Futaba. Some 14 million cubic metres are held there.

The towns accepted the facility on a condition that was then written into law: the material will be taken out of Fukushima Prefecture for final disposal within 30 years of the start of storage. The date is March 2045.

No site outside the prefecture has been found, or sought in earnest.

The government's plan is to reduce the amount needing disposal by reusing most of it. About three-quarters of the soil has radioactivity low enough, by the Environment Ministry's standard, to be used as fill in public works, beneath a covering layer of clean earth.

The International Atomic Energy Agency reviewed the approach and reported in 2024 that it was consistent with international safety standards.

Public acceptance has not followed. Trial projects proposed in Tokyo and Saitama were withdrawn after local opposition. Last year the government used a small quantity in the grounds of the prime minister's office and of ministries in Kasumigaseki, to show by example.

Nineteen years remain, and the route from a flower bed at the prime minister's office to the disposal of millions of cubic metres has not been set out.

The municipalities outside Fukushima are watching. If the state cannot place its own soil, they see little prospect of placing theirs.

SOCIETY

Mac, the Asian Elephant of Kobe's Oji Zoo, Dies at 34

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Mac, a male Asian elephant at Oji Zoo in Kobe, died on September 29. He was 34.

His death is reported in Saturday's papers.

Asian elephants can live into their sixties in the wild. In zoos their lives are often shorter, and 34 is not old.

Male elephants are the hardest of all zoo animals to keep. They are larger than females, are separated from the herd as they would be in nature, and pass through periods each year in which they are aggressive and cannot be approached.

Oji Zoo opened in 1951 on the slopes above the city and is one of the best loved in western Japan. Its giant panda, Tan Tan, who had lived there since 2000, died in 2024.

The number of elephants in Japanese zoos has been falling for years. The animals breed slowly in captivity, imports are restricted by the treaty on trade in endangered species, and modern standards call for groups and space that few city zoos can provide.

Several zoos have decided not to replace their elephants when they die. Others have combined their animals at larger sites.

The zoo has not said in the reports available what it intends for its elephant house.

Children in Kobe have grown up visiting Mac for a generation.

The reports available do not give the cause of death.

SPORTS

Three Ways Hanshin Win the Pennant Today, and the One Way They Do Not

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

The arithmetic of a magic number of one is short enough to set out in full.

First: Hanshin beat Hiroshima this afternoon. The pennant is decided at the final out, whatever happens in Tokyo tonight.

Second: Hanshin and Hiroshima draw. In Japan a game level after 12 innings ends as a draw. The Giants could then finish with the same winning percentage as Hanshin at best, and the league separates teams that are level by their record against each other. Hanshin have the better of that series.

Third: Hanshin lose, and the Giants lose to DeNA in the evening game at Tokyo Dome.

The one way it is not settled today: Hanshin lose and the Giants win. The magic number would stay at one

and the race would go to Sunday.

The Hiroshima game starts at 2 p.m. and the Tokyo game at 6 p.m. If the first two cases apply, Hanshin will be champions before the Giants take the field.

If the third applies, the Tigers will learn of it in their hotel.

A clinching by another team's defeat is common enough. Friday's reduction of the number from two to one happened the same way: Hanshin had no game, and the Giants lost.

A magic number counts the leader's wins and the pursuer's losses together, which is why it can fall on a day off.

Whichever route applies, it would be the first time in the club's history that it has won the league two years running.

SPORTS

Seven Pennants, Never Two in a Row: What Hanshin Are Trying to Do for the First Time

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The Hanshin Tigers are one of the two oldest professional baseball clubs in Japan and the best supported in the west of the country. Their record of success is thinner than either fact suggests.

Since the two-league system began in 1950 they have won the Central League in 1962, 1964, 1985, 2003, 2005, 2023 and 2025.

The gaps tell the story. After 1964 there were 21 years without a pennant, and after 1985 another 18.

The 1985 team, which also won the Japan Series, is the one around which the club's legend formed. Its three best hitters struck home runs in consecutive at-bats against the Giants that April, and supporters celebrating the pennant in Osaka that October threw a statue of Colonel Sanders into the Dotonbori canal.

The second Japan Series title did not come until 2023.

No Hanshin team has followed one pennant with another. The 2003 champions finished fourth the next year; the 2005 champions finished second; the 2023 champions finished second.

Repeating is difficult for every club in a league of six with a draft that favours the weak, and Hanshin's home park makes it harder. Koshien is given over to the national high school tournament every August, and the Tigers spend three weeks of the hottest part of the season on the road.

Last year's team won by a wide margin and clinched in early September. This year's has had to hold off the Giants to the final days.

The Central League's record for consecutive pennants is nine, by the Giants from 1965 to 1973.

If Hanshin win or draw this afternoon, the entry for 2026 will be the first in the club's list to stand next to another.

SPORTS

SoftBank Win a Seventh Straight on Yamamoto's Three-Run Homer in the Ninth

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks beat Lotte 4-3 on Friday, taking the lead in the ninth inning on a three-run home run by Yamamoto, Nikkei reports.

It was their seventh consecutive victory.

Sugiyama closed the game for his 35th save of the season.

A three-run home run in the ninth is among the least likely ways to take a lead, since it requires two runners to reach against a team's best relievers and the next batter to finish it.

Seven wins in a row at the end of a season is the form a team wants to carry into the play-offs. The Climax Series in the Pacific League begins after the regular season ends.

The two teams meet again today at ZOZO Marine Stadium.

Elsewhere in the Pacific League today, Rakuten play Orix.

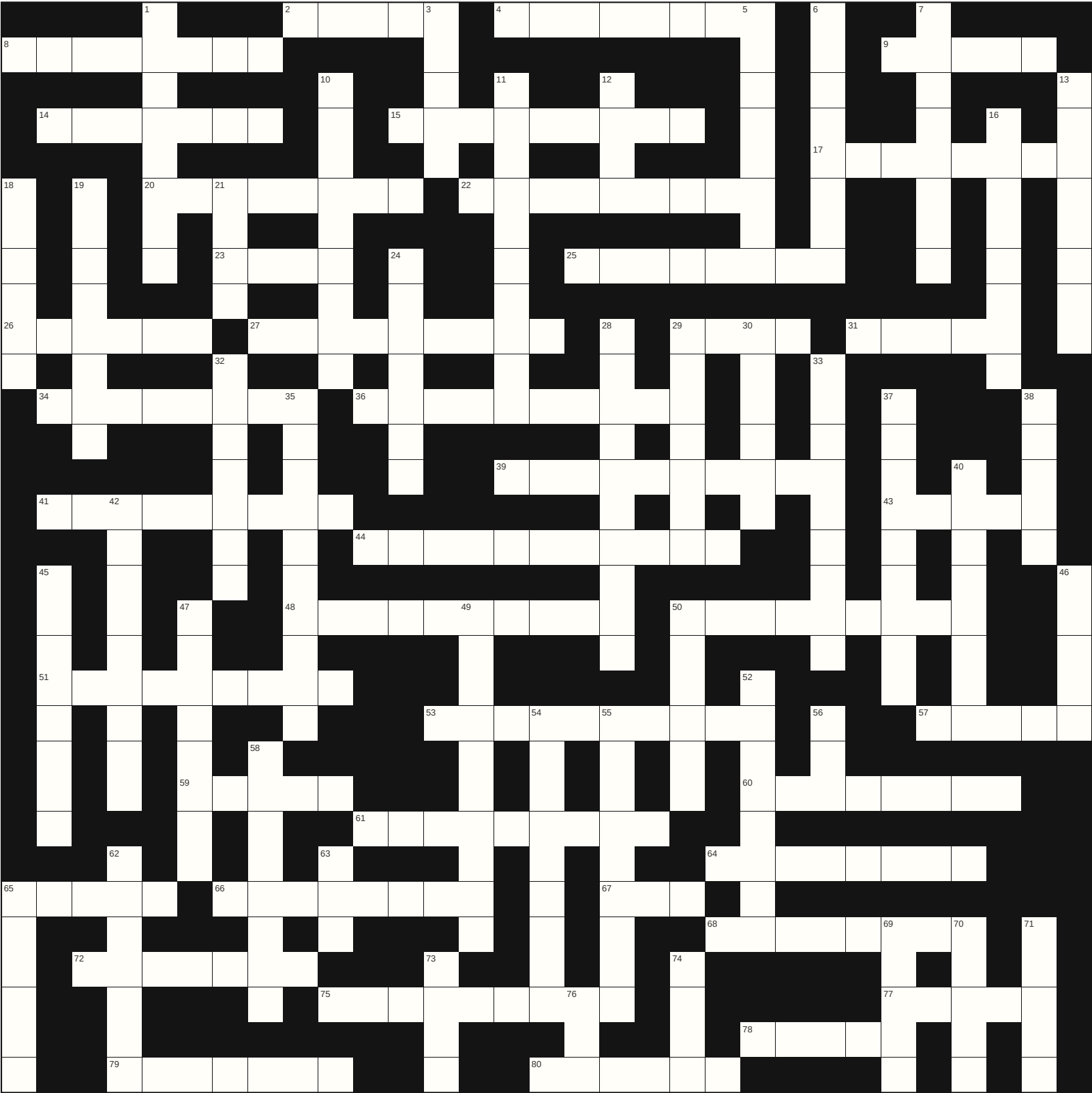
In the Central League, besides the two games that bear on the pennant, Yakult play Chunichi.

SoftBank beat Rakuten 8-2 on Thursday.

The reports available do not give the pitchers of record for Friday's game other than the save.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 83 Words



Solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Puzzle difficulty: Professional.

ACROSS

2. Bank of ____ (5)
4. Vote on November 3 (8)
8. Where the captain is recovering (3,5) (8)
9. A deed or a ____? (5)
14. It stops a relayed login (7)
15. Where Narita was built (9)
17. Satellite behind the map (8)
20. And another (8)
22. Osaka's governor (9)
23. Stored in 53 municipalities (4)
25. Site of the planned joint base (8)
26. What the minister declines to do (6)
27. Battery supplier in Nevada (9)
29. Footballer who married (4)
31. ____ warning area, outlined in red (5)
34. Group down 6 per cent (8)
36. Dearer after the rain (10)
39. Island 280 km from the forecast line (10)
41. Flydubai captain, out of danger (9)
43. Smoke ____, required in bedrooms (5)
44. Three in ten have given it up (11)
48. Wartime tunnels in Nagano (10)
50. Women's football team (9)
51. Islands in the typhoon's path (9)
53. Insurer facing suspension (10)
57. Candidate that voted twice on wards (5)
59. 465 in the lower house (5)
60. 925 hectopascals of it (8)
61. She scored the last penalty (9)
64. Town in the minister's remark (8)
65. Kawamata of Nasukarasuyama, e.g. (5)
66. Car-share firm with the leak (5,3) (8)
67. Elephant of Oji Zoo (3)
68. Shuttle first flown in 1985 (8)
72. Weekly with the recording (7)
75. Hiroshima's starter (9)
77. Island 90 km east of the centre at 6 a.m. (5)
78. Hanshin's starter today (5)
79. Largest chestnut prefecture (7)
80. 3,500 metres of it (6)

DOWN

1. Nut that failed to ripen (8)
3. Switched off on October 2, 1955 (5)
5. 35 saves (8)
6. Actress he married (8)
7. Northern secondary-capital candidate (8)
10. Susaki's sport (9)
11. Firm that named TA419 (10)
12. Underground oil base in Iwate (4)
13. Fraudulent email (8)
16. Second inhabited Ogasawara island (8)
18. President who resigned in January (6)
19. AI firm called Dark Side of the Moon (8)
21. 1985 first baseman (4)
24. What the FSA will order (7)
28. Kashozuke, in English (10)
29. Hanshin's home (7)
30. It won 338 to 320 (6)
32. Team with a magic number of one (7)
33. Share at an all-time high (9)
35. Park with Tokyo's rain gauge (10)
37. 5-3 on them (9)
38. Town with interim storage (5)
40. Up 29,000 in September (8)
42. The department that never closes (9)
45. City whose mayoral race opens Sunday (8)
46. ____ Stadium (5)
47. Land minister (8)
49. What to read, every line (10)
50. Airport seeking a third runway (6)
52. Mac was one (8)
54. Canal the Colonel went into (9)
55. LDP figure aiming to cut seats (9)
56. Its prefecture (3)
58. Prime minister (8)
62. The minister's prefecture (7)
63. Upper 157 to the dollar (3)
65. She turns 62 on Monday (6)
69. Down 40.98 points (5)
70. ____ 7 (5)
71. Region with rain Sunday to Tuesday (5)
73. It convenes on Monday (4)
74. Farm minister who will not resign (4)
76. City of Friday's fire (3)

SPORTS

Hanshin One Result From the Pennant: A Win or a Draw at Hiroshima This Afternoon Brings the Club's First Back-to-Back Titles

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

The Hanshin Tigers did not play on Friday and moved to the brink of the Central League pennant all the same. The Giants' 5-1 defeat by Yakult at Jingu reduced Hanshin's magic number to one.

They can settle it this afternoon. Hanshin play Hiroshima at Mazda Stadium at 2 p.m., with Hiroto Saiki starting against Hiroshima's Morishita.

A win gives them the title. So does a draw: in that case Hanshin and the Giants could finish with identical records, Nikkan Sports explains, but Hanshin have won the season's series between the two and would take the pennant on that basis.

Even a defeat need not delay it. If Hanshin lose in the afternoon, they are champions anyway should the Giants lose to DeNA at Tokyo Dome in the game that starts at 6 p.m.

The team practised at Koshien on Friday and travelled to Hiroshima in the afternoon, Sports Hochi reports.

What is at stake is something the club has never done. Hanshin have won the Central League seven times, most recently last year, and never in consecutive seasons.

Last year's title was settled in the first week of September, earlier than any in the league's history. This one has been harder. The Giants closed to within two games in the final week and held the leaders to a 12-inning draw on Thursday.

The gap is now two and a half games.

For a club whose supporters are accustomed to long droughts, three pennants in four years would be a different kind of era. Between 1964 and 2003 they won one.

The pennant does not end the season. The Climax Series follows, in which the league champions start the final stage with a one-win advantage and every game at home.

In Osaka the police can be expected at the Ebisu Bridge over the Dotonbori canal this evening, as they are whenever the Tigers are close.

SPORTS

Saiki Against Morishita: The Pitchers in This Afternoon's Game at Hiroshima

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Hanshin have given the ball for the game that could win the pennant to Hiroto Saiki.

Saiki is 27, a right-hander from Kobe who joined the Tigers out of high school. He lost two seasons to surgery on his elbow early in his career and has been the best pitcher on the staff since his return.

He led the Central League in earned-run average last year, when Hanshin won the pennant by a wide margin.

Hiroshima start Masato Morishita, also a right-hander and a year older. Morishita was the league's rookie of the year in 2020 and pitched for Japan in the final of the Tokyo Olympics the following summer, when the national team won the gold medal.

The two are similar in kind: fastball pitchers with a sharp breaking ball who work quickly and rarely walk a batter.

The game means more to Hanshin than to Hiroshima. But Mazda Stadium is not an easy place to visit, and no team enjoys watching another celebrate on its field.

It is a day game, starting at 2 p.m., under a forecast of sun turning to cloud and a high of 27 degrees.

If Hanshin win or draw, the customary tossing of the manager into the air will follow on the field.

If they do not, attention moves to Tokyo Dome at 6 p.m.

The reports available do not give this season's records for either pitcher.

SPORTS

Mazda Stadium: The Ballpark Where the Pennant May Be Decided

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

If Hanshin win the Central League this afternoon they will do it in someone else's park, and one of the most admired in the country.

Mazda Stadium opened in 2009, a short walk from Hiroshima Station, on the site of a former railway freight yard. It replaced the old municipal stadium that stood beside the Peace Memorial Park.

It was built on the American model that Japanese

parks had until then ignored. The field is natural grass. The outfield is asymmetrical. The seats are close to the foul lines and a concourse runs all the way round, open to the field.

The bullet train passes behind left field, and passengers can see the scoreboard.

It holds about 33,000 and is full for most games. The Carp are owned in part by the family that founded the Mazda car company and in part by the citizens' tradition that saved the club from bankruptcy in its first years, when supporters dropped coins into barrels outside the ground.

The team's following has grown beyond the city in the past decade, and red is seen in the visitors' sections of every park in the league.

Today a large section will be in yellow and black. Hanshin's supporters travel in numbers, and Hiroshima is an hour and a half from Osaka by bullet train.

The home team has no obligation to co-operate. Morishita starts for the Carp.

The game begins at 2 p.m. under a forecast of sun turning to cloud and a high of 27 degrees.

Hanshin's four most recent pennants were all sealed at Koshien. The last one won on the road was in 1985, at Jingu.

SPORTS

Two Hits and a Lost Lead: The Giants Fall 5-1 to Yakult and Leave the Race to Hanshin

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The Yomiuri Giants went to Jingu Stadium on Friday needing to win, took the lead in the second inning and managed one more hit all night. Yakult beat them 5-1.

The lead came from Richard, batting fifth and playing third base, who hit a solo home run into the left-field seats with one out in the second. It was his third of the season.

Iori Yamasaki, starting for the first time in 45 days, gave the run back in the third on a single. From there the game was level until the eighth.

The Giants had their chance in the top of that inning. They loaded the bases with two out, and Matsumoto flied out to the shortstop.

In the bottom half Shunya Morita, the fifth Giants pitcher, put two men on with one out. Tetsuto Yamada drove a double over the centre fielder's head

and both scored. Ryuta Heinai came on and gave up four consecutive hits.

The Giants' only other hit was a single to left by Yoshikawa in the eighth, Sports Nippon reports. The win went to Yakult's Tomoya Hoshi, his second of the season.

The defeat leaves the Giants two and a half games behind Hanshin and unable to win the pennant unless everything goes their way: they must win tonight against DeNA at Tokyo Dome, and Hanshin must lose this afternoon in Hiroshima.

After Thursday's 12-inning draw with Hanshin the acting manager, Hashigami, had called that result as good as a defeat and said it was a game the team had to win.

Yamasaki's return was the consolation, Sports Hochi notes. He is one of the starters the Giants will need in the Climax Series, which they will enter from second place if the standings hold.

Tonight's game at Tokyo Dome begins at 6 p.m. By then the Giants may already know the result that matters.

SPORTS

Nadeshiko Win Asian Games Gold on Penalties After a Late Equaliser Against North Korea: A Third Straight Title and a Record Fourth

Ueno scores first, North Korea go ahead, Nishio levels in the 86th minute; goalkeeper Oba saves the third kick and all five Japanese takers score

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women won the Asian Games football tournament on Friday night, beating North Korea 5-3 on penalties after a 2-2 draw at Ecopa Stadium in Shizuoka Prefecture.

It is their third consecutive gold medal at the Games and their fourth in all, more than any other country has won.

They came within four minutes of losing it. Japan led at half-time through Mami Ueno, who struck the rebound first time after a shot by Yuzuho Shiokoshi was blocked in the 32nd minute.

North Korea were level two minutes after the restart. A cross from the left was touched by the goalkeeper, Akane Oba, and ran on over the line. Play continued, and the goal was awarded after a video review. It was the first Japan had conceded in the tournament.

North Korea had the better of the half that followed and went ahead in the 69th minute, when a long ball

SPORTS

was held up in the penalty area and finished from a difficult angle.

Japan sent on Hanon Nishio, a 23-year-old forward, in the 75th minute to give the attack a target. In the 86th she ran onto a pass in the middle of the area and placed it low to the goalkeeper's left with her right foot.

Extra time produced no goals. In its last minute North Korea replaced their goalkeeper with a taller one for the shoot-out.

It did not help. Japan's five takers all scored. Oba, who plays her club football in Scotland, saved North Korea's third kick, Nishio converted Japan's fourth, and Shiokoshi the fifth to end it.

Japan had reached the final without conceding, beating Thailand and Vietnam 8-0, Chinese Taipei 4-0 and South Korea 2-0 in the semi-final. The squad included ten players called up for the first time.

North Korea, who last won the tournament in 2014, are the champions of the world at under-17 and under-20 level and were always going to be the hardest opponent.

The men's final, against South Korea, is tonight.

SPORTS

Why North Korea Are So Hard to Beat at Women's Football

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The team Japan beat on Friday night represents a country that is absent from most international sport and is among the strongest in the world at this one.

North Korea won the Women's World Cup at both under-17 and under-20 level in 2024. The under-20 final was against Japan.

The senior team won the Asian Games in 2002, 2006 and 2014 and the Asian Cup three times in the same period.

The explanation usually given is concentration. Promising girls are selected young and trained full-time in a small number of institutions, and the national teams at each age are in effect the same group of players growing up together.

The style follows from that. North Korean teams are extremely fit, press without pause for 90 minutes, and are drilled in set movements that they repeat until an opponent tires.

Japan's approach is close to the opposite. Its players are scattered among clubs at home and in Europe and the United States, meet rarely, and rely on technique and passing to keep the ball away from pressure.

Friday's match showed both. Japan controlled the first half with the ball; North Korea took over the second with their running, and scored twice.

The senior North Korean team spent some years out of competition, first under a suspension for doping after the 2011 World Cup and then during the closure of the country's borders in the pandemic. It returned for the Paris Olympic qualifiers, in which Japan beat it over two legs.

The players who won the youth World Cups in 2024 are now reaching the senior side.

The two countries have now met in the final or the semi-final of most Asian tournaments of the past two decades.

SPORTS

Three Days, Three Shoot-Outs, Three Wins: Japanese Football's Unlikely Week From the Spot

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japanese national teams have won penalty shoot-outs on three consecutive days, Nikkan Sports points out, and there may be a fourth tonight.

On Wednesday the men's under-23 side beat Uzbekistan 9-8 on penalties in the semi-final of the Asian Games.

On Thursday the senior men's team beat Ecuador on penalties in the Kirin Cup.

On Friday the women beat North Korea 5-3 on penalties in the Asian Games final, scoring with all five kicks.

The run is notable because of what came before it. Japan's men went out of the World Cup on penalties in 2010, against Paraguay, and in 2022, against Croatia, when three of their four kicks were saved.

Those defeats prompted a long argument in Japanese football about whether the shoot-out is a lottery or a

skill that can be coached.

Whether that explains this week is impossible to say from three results. Shoot-outs are decided by small numbers, and a team can win three running by chance.

What can be said is that the women's five kicks on Friday all went in, which is as much as any preparation can ask.

The goalkeepers have had as much to do with it. Akane Oba's save on Friday came on North Korea's third kick, at the moment when a miss does the most damage.

The men's final against South Korea kicks off at 7:30 this evening at Toyota Stadium. If it is level after 120 minutes, the sequence will be put to a fourth test.

SPORTS

Eleven Metres: A Short History of the Penalty Shoot-Out, and Japan's Part in It

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The method by which Japan's women won their gold medal on Friday is 56 years old. Before 1970 a drawn knockout match was replayed, or settled by the toss of a coin.

Italy reached the final of the 1968 European Championship on a coin toss. The dissatisfaction that followed led football's law-making body to adopt kicks from the penalty mark two years later.

The first shoot-out at a World Cup was in 1982, when West Germany beat France in a semi-final.

Statisticians have studied the shoot-out more closely than any other part of the game. The team that kicks first wins somewhat more often than the team that kicks second, apparently because the second team more often kicks under the pressure of being behind.

The authorities tried an alternating order to correct this in 2017 and abandoned it.

About three kicks in four are scored. The proportion falls when the kick would win or lose the match outright.

Japan's history with the method is divided neatly by sex. The men lost shoot-outs at the World Cups of 2010 and 2022 and went out both times.

The women won the most important match in the history of Japanese football by one. In the final of the 2011 World Cup, four months after the earthquake and tsunami, they twice came from behind against the United States and won on penalties, with their goalkeeper saving two.

Friday's final followed the same course: behind late in the match, level before the end, and a goalkeeper's save in the shoot-out.

The men's team has the chance tonight to see whether the pattern holds across the family.

SPORTS

Tonight at Toyota: Japan and South Korea Play for Gold, Sixteen Years After Japan's Last

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

The men's football final of the Asian Games is at Toyota Stadium this evening. Japan play South Korea, with kick-off at 7:30.

Japan have not won the gold medal since 2010. South Korea have won the last three, and beat Japan in the finals of the last two.

The women's victory on Friday gives the hosts the chance of a double they have managed only once before, in 2010.

The men's tournament is for players under 23, with three older players allowed in each squad.

Japan reached the final through a shoot-out. Their semi-final against Uzbekistan finished level after extra time and went to nine rounds of penalties before it was settled 9-8.

South Korea have historically sent their strongest available squad to the Games, because a gold medal earns its players exemption from military service. For a young Korean professional with a career in Europe, no other match carries the same consequence.

That incentive is the reason neutral observers usually make them favourites. It also makes them tense. In both recent finals against Japan they fell behind or were held before winning late.

Japan's advantage is the ground. Toyota Stadium holds more than 40,000 and its stands rise steeply

from the touchline.

The Japanese squad has played 120 minutes more recently than its opponents would like to have done themselves, and the manager's selection will show how much it cost.

The Games close tomorrow. Football is the last of the team sports to be decided.

SPORTS

Toyota Stadium: Steep Stands and a Final Against Korea

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Tonight's men's football final is at Toyota Stadium, in the city that takes its name from the car maker, about an hour from Nagoya.

The stadium was opened in 2001 and designed by the architect Kisho Kurokawa. It was built for football, without a running track, and its stands rise at an angle that puts the upper rows almost over the pitch.

It holds about 44,000.

It was intended as a venue for the 2002 World Cup and was not chosen. It has since staged internationals, club finals and four matches of the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

For the Asian Games the organisers used existing grounds across the region. The women's final on Friday was at Ecopa in Shizuoka Prefecture, about 100 kilometres to the east.

The crowd will be overwhelmingly Japanese. A final between the two countries, for a gold medal, is the fixture supporters on both sides want.

Japan have played Korea in the last two finals and lost both, in Indonesia in 2018 after extra time and in China in 2023 after scoring in the second minute.

Neither of those was played in front of a home crowd.

Kick-off is at 7:30 p.m. Today's map gives Nagoya a mostly sunny day.

If the match is level after 90 minutes there will be extra time, and then penalties.

SPORTS

What a Gold Medal Is Worth to a Korean Footballer: A Year and a Half

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's opponents in tonight's final are playing for more than a medal.

South Korea requires its men to perform military service, in most cases for about a year and a half, before they turn 28. For a footballer the obligation falls in the best years of his career.

The law makes an exception for those who win a medal of any colour at the Olympic Games or a gold medal at the Asian Games. They complete a few weeks of basic training and a period of community service, and are otherwise free to continue their profession.

The Asian Games football tournament is therefore, for a young Korean player, the most consequential competition he will ever enter. Clubs in Europe release players for it who would not be released for anything else.

The best-known case is Son Heung-min. He was 26 and playing in England when he joined the squad for the 2018 Games as one of its three over-age players. South Korea beat Japan in the final in extra time and his career continued uninterrupted.

South Korea won again in 2023, again against Japan in the final.

The system is criticised at home. It rewards one tournament out of proportion to its sporting importance, and it is of no help to athletes in sports where an Asian Games gold is out of reach.

It also produces teams of unusual commitment. Korean squads at the Asian Games are stronger, relative to the country's resources, than at any other youth tournament.

Japan has no equivalent pressure. Its squad at these Games is built around players the association wants to develop for the next Olympics.

That difference in motive has decided the last two finals. The question tonight is whether a home crowd is worth as much.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Four children feared dead in Tsu fire, Page 12.

SPORTS

From Frankfurt to Fukuroi: Fifteen Years of Japanese Women's Football

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

The team that won the Asian Games on Friday night plays under a name that was earned in a single month in 2011.

Japan's women had been to every World Cup since the first in 1991 and had never gone beyond the quarter-finals. In Germany that summer they beat the hosts, then Sweden, and then the United States in the final in Frankfurt, on penalties, having twice come from behind.

It was four months after the earthquake and tsunami, and the team was received at home as something more than a sports story.

The players of that side won an Olympic silver medal in London the following year and reached the World Cup final again in 2015.

What followed was a slower period. The generation retired, and other countries, investing heavily, overtook Japan in athleticism while its technical lead narrowed.

The domestic league, amateur in all but a few clubs since its foundation in 1989, was replaced at the top level in 2021 by a professional competition.

More important has been the movement of players abroad. The leading Japanese women now play in England, Germany, the United States and elsewhere, as Friday's goalkeeper does in Scotland.

The results at youth level have been consistently strong, with world titles at under-17 and under-20, and the senior side has been rebuilt from those teams.

The Asian Games have marked the stages. Japan won the tournament for the first time in 2010, the year before the World Cup, and has now won three in a row.

Friday's squad, with ten players new to the national team, was a reserve of the future. It won a final against North Korea all the same.

SPORTS

Susaki Wins Asian Games Gold Without Conceding a Point in Four Bouts; Kagami Also Takes Gold

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Yui Susaki won the women's 50-kilogram wrestling title at the Asian Games on Friday, beating North Korea's Kim Son Hyang 10-0 in the final, and did not give up a single point in the tournament.

She won her first bout 11-0 against an Indian opponent, her quarter-final 10-0 against a Cambodian, and her semi-final against a Kazakh by a fall, each of the last two in under a minute.

In the final she scored after 16 seconds, pushing her opponent out of the ring, and led 7-0 at the break. The referee stopped the bout in the second period when the margin reached ten.

It was her first appearance at the Asian Games and, at 27, one of the few titles she did not already hold.

Susaki won the Olympic gold medal in Tokyo in 2021 without conceding a point there either. In Paris in 2024 she lost her opening bout, to an Indian wrestler, in one of the upsets of those Games, and came back through the repechage to take bronze.

The first-round draw on Friday gave her another Indian opponent. She won it by technical superiority.

She said afterwards that she had been able to carry through her own style, attacking even when ahead, Chunichi Sports reports. Sankei quotes her as saying that the title at the Los Angeles Olympics had come into view.

She won the Asian championship in April in the same manner, with no points against. Jiji Press notes that she is the first wrestler to have won world titles at every age level and the Olympics.

Japan won a second wrestling gold on the day. Yuka Kagami, the Olympic champion from Paris, took the women's 76-kilogram title, also at her first Asian Games, NHK reports.

The world championships follow later this month.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

Crossword, Page 16.

G7 to release 100 million barrels, Page 6.

SPORTS

SPORTS

The Wrestler Who Had Lost Three Times in Her Life: Susaki's Record, and Why Paris Mattered

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Yui Susaki's defeat in the first round of the Paris Olympics was reported around the world, and the reason was her record. She had gone years without losing to a foreign opponent.

She took up wrestling as a child in Chiba Prefecture and was a world champion at cadet level, then junior, then under-23, and then at senior level while still a teenager.

Her path to the Tokyo Olympics was nearly blocked at home. Japan's lightest weight class had another world champion in it, and Susaki lost the domestic selection before regaining the place.

In Tokyo she won every bout by the maximum margin or by fall, and carried the national flag at the opening ceremony.

The Paris defeat came in the last seconds of a bout she had controlled, on a single move. Her opponent was later disqualified from the final over her weight, and Susaki won the bronze medal she had fought back for.

She said on Friday that she had kept attacking even when she was ahead, which she called her own style.

The results since suggest a correction. She won the Asian championship in April and the Asian Games on Friday without a point scored against her at either.

The grand slam Jiji Press refers to is the set of world titles at each age level together with the Olympic gold. She is the first wrestler of either sex to have completed it.

The Asian Games title has no bearing on Olympic qualification, which for Los Angeles begins next year. Its value is as evidence.

The 50-kilogram class is the lightest in women's wrestling and one in which Japan has been strong for two decades.

SPORTS

Ten Points and It Is Over: How a Wrestling Bout Is Scored

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization

Yui Susaki won her final on Friday 10-0, and the bout was stopped before time. For readers who see the sport once every few years, the score needs explaining.

A bout in freestyle wrestling, which is the style women contest, lasts two periods of three minutes.

Points are awarded for gaining control. Taking an opponent from standing to the mat and getting behind her is a takedown, worth two points.

Forcing an opponent to step outside the circle is worth one. Susaki's first point on Friday came that way, after 16 seconds.

Turning an opponent on the mat so that her back is exposed to it earns two points each time. A throw from standing that puts her in danger of being pinned earns four.

A wrestler who is judged to be avoiding contact is warned and then put on a 30-second clock. If she fails to score in that time, her opponent receives a point.

If one wrestler leads by ten points the bout ends at once. This is called a win by technical superiority, and it is how the final finished.

The other way to end a bout early is the fall: holding both of the opponent's shoulders to the mat. Susaki's semi-final ended that way in under a minute.

A bout that goes the distance is decided on points. If the points are level, the wrestler who scored the higher-value move wins, and if that is level too, the one who scored last.

To go through a tournament of four bouts without a point against is rare at any level. Susaki has now done it at an Olympics, an Asian championship and an Asian Games.

ELSEWHERE IN TODAY'S PAPER

Hackers imitated the defense minister's site, Page 11.

Four children feared dead in Tsu fire, Page 12.

Hanshin one result from the pennant, Page 16.

Editorial: The complaint department never closes, Page 20.

Weather: the map and the forecast, Page 13.

SPORTS

Why Japan Wins at Women's Wrestling, and Why It Mattered That These Games Were in Aichi

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Yui Susaki's gold medal on Friday, and Yuka Kagami's on the same day, were won in the prefecture that built the sport.

Women's wrestling entered the Olympic programme in 2004. Japan had been preparing for more than a decade, having sent teams to the women's world championships since they began in the late 1980s.

The centre of the effort was a women's university in Obu, just south of Nagoya, whose wrestling club trained most of the champions of the next twenty years.

Two of them became the most successful wrestlers the sport has seen. Saori Yoshida won three Olympic gold medals and thirteen world titles. Kaori Icho won four consecutive Olympic golds, from 2004 to 2016, the first woman in any sport to win an individual event at four Games running.

The system that produced them depends on depth. Girls begin in local clubs in primary school, the best are gathered in a few high schools and universities, and the national championships are harder to win than most international tournaments.

Susaki's own path shows it. The most difficult opponent of her career was a compatriot in her own weight class.

At the Tokyo Olympics Japan won four of the six women's weight classes. In Paris it won four again.

The Paris champions included Kagami, the first Japanese woman to win the heaviest class.

Other countries have closed the gap in some weights, India and the United States among them, and Susaki's defeat in Paris was by an Indian.

For the Asian Games to come to Aichi was, for this sport, a homecoming.

SPORTS

The Kirin Cup: Half a Century of Invited Guests, and a Final on Monday

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The competition in which Japan's senior men beat Ecuador on penalties on Thursday is one of the oldest fixtures in the national team's calendar.

It began in 1978 as the Japan Cup, an invitational tournament in which the national team played visiting clubs and countries. European and South American club sides came on their summer tours, and for years they usually won.

The brewer whose name it carries has sponsored the national team since that first tournament, one of the longest associations of its kind in world football.

From 1992 it became a competition for national teams only, generally three or four, played over a week in early summer.

It was the stage on which Japan first measured itself against serious opposition at home in the years before it had qualified for a World Cup.

As the international calendar filled, the tournament became irregular. It was not held for several years, returned in 2016 and again in 2022, when Tunisia won it.

This year's edition is being played in the international window that now spans late September and early October.

Japan's opponents in Monday's final are New Zealand.

The match comes two days after the under-23 side plays for Asian Games gold.

For the head coach it is a chance to look at combinations before the next round of competitive matches.

SPORTS

Asian Games Notebook: The Closing Weekend, a Baseball Silver and the Medals Still to Be Won

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

FOOTBALL: The women are champions for a third time running after Friday's shoot-out. The men's final, against South Korea, is at 7:30 tonight at Toyota Stadium.

WRESTLING: Yui Susaki won the women's 50 kilograms without conceding a point. Yuka Kagami won the women's 76 kilograms.

BASEBALL: Japan finished with the silver medal after losing the final 3-1 to South Korea. Japan's only gold in the sport at the Games was at Hiroshima in 1994.

The Japanese team at the Asian Games is drawn from the industrial leagues and not from the professional clubs, which are in the last week of their own season. South Korea sends young professionals.

GOLD COUNT: The reports available on Saturday morning do not give an updated total. Japan had 217 medals on Thursday night.

CLOSING: The Games end tomorrow, Sunday, after 16 days.

VENUES: The football finals have been played away from Nagoya, the women's in Shizuoka Prefecture and the men's in Toyota. The Games have used existing stadiums across the region.

WEATHER: Today's map gives Nagoya mostly sunny skies and a high of 27 degrees.

NEXT: The Asian Para Games follow later this month. The next Asian Games are in Doha in 2030.

AFTER THE GAMES: Several of this fortnight's champions go directly to world championships, among them the wrestlers.

SPORTS

After Today: A Kirin Cup Final, Nishikori's Farewell and the Road to the Climax Series

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

Whatever happens at Hiroshima and Toyota today, the sporting calendar does not pause.

The Asian Games close in Nagoya tomorrow, 16 days after they opened.

On Monday the senior men's football team plays New Zealand in the final of the Kirin Cup. Japan reached it by beating Ecuador on penalties on Thursday.

On Tuesday the Japan Open ends at Ariake. The final will be followed by a farewell ceremony for Kei Nishikori, whose career ended there on Thursday with a 6-4, 6-4 defeat by the American Frances Tiafoe.

The professional baseball season has a few days left to run. Once the pennants are settled the two leagues move to the Climax Series, in which the second and third-placed teams play off for the right to meet the champions.

In the Central League the Giants hold second place. In the Pacific League SoftBank have won seven in a row.

In the United States the Chicago White Sox, with Munetaka Murakami, have reached the Division Series.

The world wrestling championships follow later this month, and Yui Susaki, who won at the Asian Games on Friday without conceding a point, goes to them as favourite at her weight.

The Asian Para Games open in Aichi and Nagoya on October 18.

Sports Day, the public holiday, is on Monday the 12th.

SPORTS

Scoreboard and Fixtures

By the Sports Desk

CENTRAL LEAGUE, Friday: Yakult 5, Yomiuri 1 (W: Hoshi). Hanshin did not play.

Hanshin's magic number: 1. Lead over Yomiuri: 2.5 games.

PACIFIC LEAGUE, Friday: SoftBank 4, Lotte 3 (S: Sugiyama, 35). SoftBank's seventh straight win.

TODAY, CENTRAL: Hiroshima v Hanshin, Mazda Stadium, 2 p.m. (Morishita v Saiki). Yomiuri v DeNA, Tokyo Dome, 6 p.m. Yakult v Chunichi.

TODAY, PACIFIC: Rakuten v Orix. Lotte v SoftBank.

ASIAN GAMES FOOTBALL, women's final, Friday: Japan 2, North Korea 2; Japan won 5-3 on penalties. Scorers for Japan: Ueno 32, Nishio 86.

ASIAN GAMES FOOTBALL, men's final, tonight: Japan v South Korea, Toyota Stadium, 7:30 p.m.

ASIAN GAMES WRESTLING, Friday: women's 50 kg final, Y. Susaki bt Kim Son Hyang (North Korea)

10-0. Women's 76 kg: gold, Y. Kagami.

ASIAN GAMES BASEBALL, final: South Korea 3, Japan 1.

KIRIN CUP, final, Monday: Japan v New Zealand.

CULTURE

The Colonel, the Canal and the Bridge: What Osaka Does When the Tigers Win

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

If the Hanshin Tigers win the pennant this afternoon, the celebration will take place 300 kilometres from where the game is played, on a footbridge in the south of Osaka.

The Ebisu Bridge crosses the Dotonbori canal beneath the neon signs that are the city's emblem. It is where Hanshin supporters go.

What they sing there is older than the league they play in. The club song known as Rokko Oroshi, after the wind that blows down from the mountains behind Kobe, was written in 1936, the year after the team was founded, and is the oldest in Japanese professional baseball. Supporters who could not name the present line-up know all three verses.

The custom dates from 1985. On the night the Tigers won the pennant that year, supporters on the bridge called out the names of the players one by one, and a fan who resembled each jumped into the canal.

Nobody resembled the American first baseman, Randy Bass. The crowd took a statue of Colonel Sanders from outside a fried-chicken shop nearby and threw that in.

The Tigers then went 18 years without another pennant, and the story grew that the Colonel had cursed them. The statue was found by workmen dredging the canal in 2009, missing its glasses and one hand, and was returned to the company with some ceremony.

When the pennant did come, in 2003, several thousand people jumped from the bridge. One of them died.

The city has tried since to stop it. The bridge was rebuilt with higher railings, and for the titles of 2023 and 2025 the police put more than a thousand officers around it and kept the crowd moving in one direction.

A few dozen people jumped anyway in 2023.

The commercial celebration is better organised. Department stores and supermarkets across Kansai hold a victory sale from the morning after a pennant, and the store in Umeda that shares the club's name and its parent company opens to queues that form the night before. Retailers prepare the banners weeks ahead and, in the years when the title slips away, store them for the next attempt.

The water is not clean, the canal is shallow in places and the drop is several metres. The police ask every year that people do not do it, and will ask again today.

The statue was kept by the restaurant company for some years afterwards. In 2024 the company announced that it had been retired, after a ceremony at a shrine.

CULTURE

Takefusa Kubo Marries the Actress Haruka Fukuhara

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Takefusa Kubo, the Japan international footballer, has married the actress Haruka Fukuhara, the morning papers report.

Kubo is 25. He left Japan at the age of ten to join the youth academy of Barcelona, returned as a teenager when the Spanish club was penalised over its recruitment of foreign minors, and made his professional debut in Tokyo at 15.

He went back to Spain at 18, signed by Real Madrid, and has played there since. He has been a regular member of the national team for most of that time.

Fukuhara is 28 and has been in front of the camera since childhood. She became known to a generation of children as the lead in a cooking programme on the public broadcaster's educational channel, which she presented in character from the age of ten.

She went on to work as a voice actress in animation and as a singer, and in 2022 was chosen as the heroine of the public broadcaster's morning serial, the role that more than any other makes an actress a household name.

CULTURE

The reports do not say when the marriage was registered.

Marriages between footballers and actresses are a staple of the Japanese sports pages, and are usually announced in a short written statement.

Kubo has been one of the national team's most important players through two World Cup campaigns.

The reports available give no further details of the announcement.

Their agencies have made no further comment in the reports available.

CULTURE

Fifteen Minutes Before Work: The Morning Serial and the Actresses It Makes

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The actress Haruka Fukuhara, whose marriage to the footballer Takefusa Kubo is reported today, is known to much of the country from a single role: the heroine of a morning serial.

The serial is an institution with no real counterpart abroad. Since 1961 the public broadcaster has shown a drama in episodes of fifteen minutes, six mornings a week and latterly five, each story running for half a year.

It goes out at eight o'clock, as households are leaving for work and school, and again at lunchtime.

The formula is fixed. The central character is a woman, usually followed from girlhood. She has an ambition, meets obstacles, and comes through the upheavals of her time. Many of the stories are set across the war.

The most famous, Oshin, was broadcast in 1983 and 1984 and at its peak was watched in more than six homes in ten. It was later shown in dozens of countries.

The lead is usually chosen by audition, sometimes from thousands of applicants, and is often little known. Six months of daily exposure changes that completely.

The list of former heroines includes many of the leading actresses of the past forty years.

Fukuhara was an exception to the pattern of the unknown. She had been on television since she was a child, in a cooking programme for children, and had a second career as a voice in animation.

Her serial, broadcast from the autumn of 2022, was about a girl from Osaka who discovers flying in the Goto Islands and trains to become a pilot.

The serial now on air began on Monday, as the autumn ones do, at the turn of the half-year.

CULTURE

The Taste the Rain Took: Chestnuts, and What an Autumn Without Them Means

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

Of all the casualties of the wet September, the one reported this morning that will be felt most at the table is the chestnut.

The Japanese chestnut is larger than the European and has been eaten here for longer than rice. Excavations at the Sannai-Maruyama settlement in Aomori, occupied more than four thousand years ago, found that its people had tended chestnut groves around their houses.

The season is short and exactly now. The nuts fall in September and October, and for those weeks they are everywhere: steamed with rice, simmered in syrup, mashed and sweetened and wrapped in cloth to make the confection of the Gifu mountains.

Regions are proud of theirs. Tamba, in the hills north of Kobe and Kyoto, has supplied the court and the tea ceremony for centuries. Obuse, in Nagano, built a town around its chestnut sweets. Kasama, in Ibaraki, grows more than anywhere else.

In recent years the chestnut has also become a fashion. The cake of puréed chestnut piped in strands over cream, borrowed from France a century ago, is now made to order in front of the customer, and people queue for it.

A chestnut needs sun in its last weeks to fill out and to sweeten. In a month without sun the burrs stay shut and the nuts inside them small.

The pastry shops had their autumn menus printed

before the rain began. Some will fall back on last year's nuts, preserved in syrup, and on imports.

The price of the fresh ones will show in the markets over the next fortnight.

There is a consolation in the calendar. The late varieties are picked in October, and if the weather holds after next week's front they may yet ripen.

Today is the first day in five weeks on which a chestnut in eastern Japan has seen the sun.

CULTURE

Three in Ten No Longer Write by Hand. What Is Lost, and What Is Not

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The finding that about three people in ten have no habit of writing by hand will surprise nobody under forty and will dismay a good many people over sixty.

Japanese is harder to write by hand than most languages. An educated adult is expected to produce some two thousand characters from memory, each with a fixed order of strokes, and schoolchildren spend years of practice on them.

That labour is what the telephone has removed. A character is now summoned by typing its sound and choosing from a list. Recognition is enough.

The effect has been measured for years in the same survey: people report that they can read characters they can no longer write.

Some occasions for handwriting have simply gone. New Year's cards, once sent by the billion, are in steep decline. Forms are filled in on screens. The personal seal, which went with a handwritten document, has been abolished for most official purposes.

Others survive by convention. A letter of condolence is written by hand, as is the envelope for a wedding gift. Calligraphy is still taught in primary schools, and children still write their first characters of the year with a brush in January.

Whether anything of substance is lost is disputed. There is research suggesting that characters learned by writing them are remembered better than those learned by selecting them, and teachers cite it.

Against that, the same survey shows interest in the language at a record. People who write only on screens are evidently still thinking about how to write.

The more practical loss is of a skill that works without electricity. Addresses, names and messages left on a door are written by hand after a disaster.

The seven-tenths who do still write will mostly be writing lists.

CULTURE

Capitals That Moved, and One That Nearly Did: A Short History Before the 'Secondary Capital'

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

The idea that Japan might need a second capital is being treated this week as new. The country has moved its capital, or thought hard about it, at regular intervals for thirteen centuries.

The early court moved with each reign. It settled at Nara in 710 and at Kyoto in 794, where the emperor remained for more than a thousand years.

Power was often elsewhere. The first shogunate governed from Kamakura and the last from Edo, while Kyoto kept the title.

In 1868 the emperor went to Edo, which was renamed Tokyo, the eastern capital. No law was ever passed making it the capital. Kyoto was not told it had ceased to be one.

The first serious proposal to leave came after the earthquake of 1923, which destroyed much of the city. An imperial edict issued within days declared that Tokyo would remain the capital, and reconstruction began.

The nearest the government came to moving was in the last year of the war. Beneath the hills at Matsushiro, in Nagano, ten kilometres of tunnels were dug to house the imperial headquarters, the ministries and the palace in the event of invasion. The war ended before they were used.

After the war the question returned as one of congestion and then of earthquakes. The Diet resolved in 1990 to move its own seat, a law followed

in 1992, and a commission named three candidate regions in 1999. Nothing was built.

The present law is more modest. It does not move the capital. It names somewhere for the capital to go if it has to.

That is the lesson of Matsushiro, drawn eighty years late: a place of retreat has to be prepared before it is needed.

Of this week's four candidates, Aichi shared in one of the regions chosen in 1999, and Osaka was proposed as the capital in 1868, before Tokyo was preferred.

CULTURE

October 3, 1990: A Country Reunited, and a Capital That Ended Up in Two Cities

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Today is a public holiday in Germany. On October 3, 1990, less than a year after the Berlin Wall was opened, the German Democratic Republic ceased to exist and its territory joined the Federal Republic.

The anniversary has a bearing on a Japanese debate that surfaced this week, because the first large question the reunited country had to settle was where its capital should be.

The treaty of unification named Berlin the capital. It left open where the parliament and government would sit. For forty years West Germany had been governed from Bonn, a small city on the Rhine chosen in 1949 as a provisional seat.

The Bundestag debated the matter for a day in June 1991 and voted for Berlin by 338 to 320.

The move took eight years. Parliament first sat in the rebuilt Reichstag in 1999.

Bonn was not abandoned. A law of 1994 gave it the title of Federal City and guaranteed that a share of the ministries would keep their principal seat there. Six still do, and every ministry has offices in both cities.

Germans argue about the arrangement to this day. Officials travel between the two constantly, and the cost has been criticised by the federal audit office for decades.

Its defenders say that it preserved a functioning second centre of government, with buildings, staff and communications, at a time when the country could not know whether the move would succeed.

That is close to what Japan's secondary capital is meant to be, arrived at from the opposite direction. Germany kept its old capital alive when it moved to a new one. Japan proposes to prepare a place to move to while staying where it is.

The German case suggests that such a place has to be used in ordinary times if it is to work in an emergency.

CULTURE

When the Games Leave: What Aichi and Nagoya Keep After Sunday

By Oliver Brooks | Sports Desk Editor

The Asian Games close tomorrow evening, and the question every host city faces on the following Monday is what it has to show for them.

Aichi and Nagoya made a deliberate choice to have less. The Games were awarded in 2016 on a plan that used existing stadiums across the prefecture and beyond it, and built very little.

There was no athletes' village. Competitors were housed in hotels and on a cruise ship moored in the port of Nagoya, an arrangement adopted to save the cost of construction after estimates rose.

The football finals were played in Shizuoka and in Toyota, the athletics in a rebuilt municipal stadium in Nagoya, the wrestling in a city sports centre.

The contrast with the Tokyo Olympics of 2021 was intended. Those Games left the capital with new venues whose upkeep has been a burden since.

What the region keeps, then, is mostly intangible: sixteen days in which Nagoya, usually passed through on the way between Tokyo and Osaka, was the place where things happened.

The timing has a use. Aichi is one of the four prefectures that qualify under the draft conditions for a secondary capital, published this week, and the ability to stage a continental event without building a district for it is an argument of a kind.

The Asian Para Games follow later this month and

will use the same sites.

Japan's athletes leave with more than 200 medals, among them the women's football title won on Friday and whatever the men add tonight.

The next Asian Games are in Doha in 2030 and the ones after in Riyadh.

CULTURE

Before It Was a Typhoon It Was a 'Field-Parter': The Old Words for Autumn Storms

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The word typhoon, in its Japanese form, is barely a century old. The storm it names has been written about here for a thousand years under another.

The court writers of the Heian period called the autumn gale nowaki, the wind that parts the grasses of the field. A chapter of The Tale of Genji bears the name, and describes a household looking over its garden on the morning after.

Sei Shonagon, in The Pillow Book, wrote that the day after such a storm is full of interest: the fences flattened, the plants in disarray, leaves driven into every lattice.

The modern word was fixed by meteorologists around the end of the Meiji era, when the new weather service needed a term to match the one used on foreign charts.

The farming calendar had its own marker. The 210th day counted from the start of spring, which falls at the beginning of September, was held to be the day storms came, and villages kept festivals to quiet the wind.

Autumn rain has a name too, akisame, as does the clear day that follows it, akibare, and the high, distant look of the sky at this season.

These words survive in the seasonal lists that poets of haiku are expected to know, in which every phenomenon belongs to a season and can stand for it.

The numbering of typhoons, by contrast, dates from the 1950s, and the international names from 2000.

A storm that the agency calls No. 27, the Americans call 26W and the region calls Choi-wan would have been, to a lady of the eleventh century, simply the nowaki.

She would have recognised this morning as well: the sky washed, the garden wrecked, and everyone out of doors to look.

CULTURE

Tug of War, Bean Bags and a Naval Academy: The School Sports Day and Its First Dry Saturday

By Hana Ito | Research & Archive

Schools that postponed their sports days through the wettest September on record have a clear Saturday at last, and an institution a century and a half old can resume.

The school sports day is usually traced to 1874, when British instructors at the naval academy in Tsukiji organised a day of athletic games for the cadets.

It spread through the school system in the 1880s, promoted by the first education minister, Arinori Mori, who saw group exercise as a way of forming disciplined citizens.

The events have changed little in living memory. There is a tug of war. There is a contest in which each class throws bean bags into a basket on a pole. There are relays, a mock cavalry battle and a dance or gymnastic display rehearsed for weeks.

Families come with picnic mats and lunch boxes.

For most of the twentieth century it was held in autumn, around the national holiday that commemorates the opening of the 1964 Olympics.

That has shifted. Many schools now hold the day in May or early June, to avoid the lingering heat of September and to keep the autumn term clear for study.

The pandemic shortened it. A number of schools cut the programme to a morning and have not restored the afternoon.

The mock cavalry battle and the human pyramid have been dropped in many places after injuries.

What remains is recognisably the same occasion: a field marked in lime, a tent for the elderly and a loudspeaker.

EDITORIAL & OPINION



Editorial cartoon by Taro Suzuki, Staff Cartoonist.

EDITORIAL

The Complaint Department Never Closes

Taro Suzuki draws a scoreboard and the people shouting at it. A month before America votes, its allies should read the board, keep their own counsel, and learn to tell a criticism from a complaint, at home as well as abroad

By the Editorial Board | Samantha Ortiz, Editorial Page Editor

Taro Suzuki's cartoon today has three parts, and the eye takes them in from left to right. On the left a crowd of men and women in suits are shouting through megaphones. Their speech balloons say 'Disaster!', 'Failing agenda!', 'Worst ever!' and 'Total failure!' A reporter with a microphone marked TV News stands among them. They are throwing tomatoes, each labelled 'Complaint', and a good deal of mud.

In the middle is what they are throwing at: a wooden signboard headed 'The Economy', with four lines painted on it. Unemployment, 4.2 per cent. Manufacturing jobs, up. Stocks, at highs. Oil supply, near pre-war. The tomatoes are bursting against it and the paint is unmarked.

On the right stands a figure labelled Trump, arms folded. Behind him are the American and Japanese flags and a ribbon that reads 'Allies prosper'. Along the bottom runs the caption: 'The complaint department never closes.'

It is a partisan drawing and does not pretend otherwise. We think it is also a fair one, and that its point reaches further than the American election it is about.

What the board says

The cartoonist chose his week well. On Friday the American government published its count of jobs for September, the last full reading before the country votes on November 3, and the opposition and much of the press read it as a verdict.

It was not a good report. Employers added 29,000 jobs, a third of what was expected. The two previous months were revised down by 60,000 between them. Wages rose 3 per cent over the year, less than prices, for the sixth month running. Nobody who wished to complain was short of material.

And yet the unemployment rate, after all of that, is 4.2 per cent. It rose by a tenth of a point, and it rose mainly because more Americans came into the labour market to look for work, which is not what happens in a country that believes its economy is collapsing.

A rate of 4.2 per cent is low by any standard the United States has known. The average since the Second World War is between 5 and 6. In living memory it has been above 10 on three occasions. A government presiding over 4.2 per cent in the eighth month of a war that has disrupted the world's most important oil route is not presiding over a disaster.

Factory employment rose in September for the fourth consecutive month. That is the line on the board that matters most to the president's own account of himself, since the revival of manufacturing was the reason given for the tariffs that so alarmed his allies eighteen months ago. Four months is not a revival. It is the opposite of the collapse that was forecast.

The Nasdaq index finished the week at a record. The fuel problem, which is real, was met on Friday by seven governments acting together within a day of being asked.

None of this makes the president a great economic manager, and the drawing does not say that it does. It says something narrower: that the words coming out of the megaphones bear no relation to the numbers on the board. On the evidence of this week that is correct.

The difference between a complaint and a criticism

We do not mean by this that governments should be spared. The business of an opposition is to oppose, and the business of a newspaper includes telling those in office what they would prefer not to hear. This page did so yesterday on the subject of aviation security and will do so again below.

But there is a distinction worth keeping, and the cartoon turns on it. A criticism measures a government against a standard. It says: you promised this, and delivered that; or, the figure is this, and it ought to be that; or, this policy will have the following cost, which you have not counted. It can be answered, and it can be wrong.

A complaint measures a government against a wish. It says that things are terrible, that they have never

been worse, that everything is failing. It cannot be answered, because it asserts nothing that could be checked, and it cannot be wrong, because it does not depend on the facts. That is why the tomatoes in the drawing leave no mark. They were never aimed at anything written on the board.

The trouble with a political culture that runs on complaint is not that it is unkind to those in power. It is that it wastes the public's attention. If every month's figures are a catastrophe, the word is used up before a catastrophe arrives. Voters learn to discount everything, the true along with the false, and the genuine failures of a government are lost in the noise made about its imaginary ones.

There are genuine failures to discuss. American wages have lagged prices for half a year, and for a household that is the only statistic that counts. Hiring has slowed to an average of 68,000 a month. The president's promise to pay every adult citizen 5,000 dollars if his party keeps Congress would cost well over a trillion dollars that the Treasury does not have, and is exactly the kind of offer a conservative newspaper would condemn if it came from the left. We condemn it now.

Those are criticisms. Each names a number. A party that made them calmly and proposed something better would deserve a hearing, and might get one. 'Worst ever' is easier, and it is what the megaphones in the drawing have chosen.

Why this is Japan's business

The ribbon on the right of the cartoon says 'Allies prosper', and the flag beside the American one is ours. Suzuki is making a claim about Japan, and it deserves to be examined on the same terms as the rest of his board.

The Nikkei average closed this week at 68,309. It fell on Friday, and it is still close to its highest level in a month and a half. The share that set a record on Friday while most of the market fell was Advantest, which makes the machines that test semiconductors, and it rose on the results of an American memory-chip company. There is no clearer picture of where Japanese prosperity presently comes from.

The Bank of Japan's Tankan, published on Thursday, found that large manufacturers have reported improving conditions for six consecutive quarters. Those are the companies that sell into American

demand. The companies that reported worsening conditions were the ones that sell to Japanese households and buy imported energy.

Japan's prosperity, in other words, is at present an export. It depends on an American economy that is growing, on American firms that are investing in the equipment Japan makes, and on sea lanes that the American navy keeps open. The aircraft carrier that normally lies at Yokosuka is in the Middle East this morning for that last purpose.

The same dependence was visible in what Tokyo did on Friday. It joined six other governments in agreeing to release oil from their reserves, at American urging, to bring down the price of diesel in a month when the American president needs it brought down. It prepared to extend the state's reinsurance to tankers carrying crude from the Gulf, so that the ships keep sailing. These are the acts of an ally whose interests run with those of its partner, and there is nothing in them to apologise for.

The fourth line on the board is about oil, and it is the one on which the alliance has been tested hardest this year. Japan buys nearly all its crude from the Gulf. When the war began in February the fear in Tokyo was of 1973: empty forecourts, rationed electricity, a decade's growth undone. That has not happened. It has not happened because reserves built up over fifty years were there to be drawn on, because the consuming countries acted together instead of bidding against one another, and because the American navy has kept the strait from closing altogether. Electricity and gas bills rose this month, and nobody in Japan is pleased about it. A bill that goes up is a different thing from a supply that stops.

Prosperity among allies is not charity from the stronger to the weaker. Japanese companies have committed large sums to plants in the United States since the tariff agreement of last year, and some of the manufacturing jobs counted on the cartoon's board are jobs they created. American investment in artificial intelligence is the reason a maker of testing equipment in Tokyo is worth more this week than it has ever been. Each side's good news shows up in the other's statistics. That is what the ribbon in the drawing means, and it is a more accurate account of the relationship than the language of burden and dependence in which it is usually discussed.

It follows that Japan has a stake in the American

EDITORIAL & OPINION

argument, though no vote in it. Our interest is not in which party wins a chamber of Congress. It is that the United States should remain solvent, open and confident, and that its politics should not persuade its own people that a country with 4.2 per cent unemployment is in ruins. A nation that believes it is failing behaves like one. It turns inward, resents its commitments and looks for someone to blame, and the allies are usually near the top of that list.

The discount for an election

Japanese readers will have noticed how much of the reporting from Washington this autumn has been in the vocabulary of the megaphones. Some of that is the season. An election a month away raises every voice, and the party out of power has no other instrument.

Some of it is the subject. This president invites strong feeling, deals in it himself, and has never used a moderate word where an immoderate one was available. He is in no position to object to exaggeration, and the folded arms in the drawing flatter him.

But some of it is a habit of the trade, and here the cartoonist's inclusion of the television reporter among the complainants is the sharpest thing in the drawing. A story headed 'Jobs growth slows' is true and dull. A story headed 'Labour market falters' is the same story with a verdict attached. The verdict travels, is translated, and arrives in Tokyo as a fact about America.

The correction is not to distrust the press, which reported the numbers accurately and in full; every figure in this article comes from it. The correction is to read to the number and stop before the adjective. This week's number for unemployment was 4.2. The adjectives were supplied separately.

Japanese policy should be made on the same principle. There will be a temptation in the coming month to trim, to wait and see who controls Congress before committing to anything, on the theory that a weakened president is one who can be waited out. The theory is mistaken on its own terms. A president who loses the House keeps the navy, the tariff schedule and the alliance, which are run from the White House. The Japan that will be valued in December is the one that was steady in October.

Our own megaphones

It would be comfortable to leave the lesson there, as one for Americans. It is not only for them.

The Diet convenes on Monday, and the opposition parties have announced how they intend to begin. They will ask about the agriculture minister, Kazuo Yana, who has admitted telling a party gathering that he had road budgets cut for two towns whose mayors did not support him.

That is a criticism, and a serious one. It names a date, a place, a remark and two municipalities. It can be tested against the ministry's records, and it should be. If the records show that money was withheld from a town to punish its mayor, the minister must go and the prime minister must say why she appointed him. If they show nothing, he has still boasted of an abuse of power to an audience he expected to be impressed by it, which tells us what he thinks his office is for. We will not be found defending him.

It is worth noticing where that criticism came from. The minister's remark was made in May and would have stayed in the room had a weekly magazine not obtained a recording and printed what was on it. The weeklies are the noisiest part of the Japanese press and the part most often accused of running a complaint department of their own. On this occasion one of them did what the cartoon's crowd does not: it produced a fact. The difference between the megaphone and the recording is the whole of the argument.

What the opposition does with the rest of the session is another matter. The government will bring bills to pay a benefit to working people on low and middle incomes from 2027. There are real questions to put about it: how much, to whom, at what cost, and whether a cash payment is a better use of the money than a lower tax. Those are criticisms waiting to be made.

The alternative is to spend two months saying that prices are a disaster, that the government has failed, that things have never been worse. Prices in Tokyo rose 2.7 per cent in the year to September. That is too high, and it is not the worst ever; within the memory of people now in their sixties it was above 20. A

household that is told every evening that it is living through a catastrophe, and can see for itself that it is not, stops listening. It will not be listening on the day the warning is true.

The governing party has megaphones of its own. A minister who answers 20 questions by saying he will refrain from answering is complaining too, in his fashion, about being asked. The remedy for bad opposition is not silence from the government. It is figures, produced promptly, including the ones that are embarrassing.

What a scoreboard is for

The sign in the cartoon is made of wood, and it is the kind that stands outside a factory gate or a village hall. Suzuki has drawn the economy as something reported in public, in plain numbers, where anyone passing can read it.

That is the right way to think of it, and it is an achievement that should not be taken for granted. The figures on that board are compiled by civil servants who do not work for the party in power, published on a timetable no minister can alter, and revised in the open when they turn out to be wrong, as two of them were on Friday. A country in which the government's critics and its supporters are arguing about the same numbers is a country whose institutions are working.

Japan had a reminder this week of what the alternative looks like, on a small scale. A city was found to have inflated its figures in the national census, and the first question asked was whether the whole count could now be trusted. One padded number contaminates every honest one around it. The value of a scoreboard lies entirely in the certainty that nobody has repainted it overnight.

The same care is owed to forecasts. On the front page today is a map of a typhoon, with dashed circles showing where its centre will probably be on each of the next five days. The agency that draws those circles says in terms that they mean seven chances in ten and no more. It does not shout that the storm is the worst ever. It gives a pressure, a wind speed and a radius, and trusts the public to act on them. On the whole the public does.

That is the standard. It can be met in economics and in politics as well as in meteorology, and a society that expects it of its forecasters has no reason to expect less of its ministers, its opposition or its press.

The department's hours

The caption says the complaint department never closes, and that is true as a description. It was true under the last American president and will be true under the next. It is true in Tokyo. Democracies complain; it is one of the ways they are told from the other kind of country, where the megaphones are all on the government's side of the board.

We would not close it if we could. A complaint is sometimes the first sign that something is wrong, before anyone has the numbers to make it a criticism. The mayor who said this week that a minister's boast had frightened her town was complaining, and she was right to.

There is also a kind of complaint that is really a report, and governments should learn to hear it. The non-manufacturers who told the Bank of Japan's survey this week that conditions had worsened, and the small firms worried about their cash, were not demonstrating. They were answering a question. A government that replies to them only with the level of the share index has confused the board with the people standing in front of it.

But a department that never closes has a duty to keep records. It should know which of its complaints were borne out and which were not, and it should be more careful with its strongest words than the people in the drawing are being with theirs. 'Disaster' is a word this country has cause to use precisely. It was used on these pages two weeks ago of a typhoon that killed thirteen people in Chiba, and it may be needed again before next week is out.

For the American economy in October 2026 it is the wrong word. For the Japanese economy, with its share index near a six-week high and its large manufacturers reporting six quarters of improvement, it is the wrong word too. The right words are duller: slower hiring, prices still too high, a war not yet over, a fuel shortage being managed, allies doing well out of each other's success.

The figure on the right of the drawing has his arms folded. Allied governments do not have that luxury, and neither do newspapers. The proper posture in

front of a scoreboard is to read it, every line, including the lines one does not like, and then to say exactly what it says and nothing louder.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: 29,000 Jobs, a Record Nasdaq and a Firmer Yen: Friday's American Numbers, Read From Tokyo

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance

The American employment report was published at half past nine on Friday evening, Tokyo time, after the Tokyo market had closed 647 yen lower. Monday's opening will be the first Japanese response to it.

There are two ways to read the report, and they point in opposite directions for Japan.

The first is about demand. An economy that added 29,000 jobs in a month, and has averaged 68,000 this year, is not one in which households are confident. Slower hiring means slower spending, and America is the largest market for Japanese cars and a large one for Japanese machinery.

The second is about interest rates. A weak report makes it less likely that the Federal Reserve will raise rates again this month. Lower American rates than expected mean a weaker dollar, and the American share market took the news as permission to rise. The Nasdaq closed at a record.

For Tokyo the second effect usually arrives first. Japanese shares have followed American technology shares closely all year, and Advantest's record on Friday came on the back of an American chip maker's results.

The currency complicates it. The yen had already strengthened into the upper 157 range before the report, on the rise in Tokyo-area inflation to 2.7 per cent. If the dollar weakens further, the car makers that were sold on Friday will be sold again, whatever the Nasdaq does.

So Monday may repeat Friday's pattern in sharper form: a market in which the chip-equipment makers rise and most other shares do not.

The Bank of Japan will read the same report with its own question. A slowing American economy is a reason for caution about raising Japanese rates; inflation at 2.7 per cent is a reason to go on. The Tankan gave it both arguments on Thursday and the American data has not settled them.

One detail deserves more attention than it received. American manufacturing employment rose for a fourth month. Japanese firms have announced a good deal of investment in American plants since the tariff agreement last year, and those jobs are partly theirs.

The yen at 157 is still weak by the standards of the past decade. The exporters' profits were made at 160. They can live with this.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Narita Reaches for the Law It Renounced Thirty Years Ago

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The report that Narita's operator will seek project approval for its new runway in December reads as an administrative item. In the history of that airport it is the most significant step in a generation.

Project approval is the gateway to compulsory purchase. An operator does not apply for it unless it expects to need it.

Narita is the place where compulsory purchase failed in Japan. The state chose the site in 1966 without consulting the farmers on it, took their land by force, and found itself at war with them and with the student movement that joined them. People died. The airport opened seven years late and for a quarter of a century had a single runway.

The settlement reached in the 1990s was a promise as much as an agreement. The government conceded that it had been wrong to proceed without consent and undertook to complete the airport by persuasion. The second runway was built around a holdout, shorter than planned, as a monument to that undertaking.

The promise has been expensive. Narita lost ground to Seoul and to Haneda while it waited for land. The present plan, for a third runway and a longer second one, was agreed with the surrounding municipalities in 2018 and has depended since on buying the

remaining plots one at a time.

The decision to apply for approval indicates that the last plots will not come that way before the target date.

The airport company can argue that this case is unlike 1966. The local governments asked for the expansion. Most owners have sold willingly. The hold-outs are few and the public interest is plain.

All of that may be true, and the precedent still matters. The authority of the state to take land for public works has been used sparingly in Japan since Narita, precisely because of Narita. Roads have been bent and reservoirs abandoned to avoid it.

If the law is used here and the result is accepted, the restraint of thirty years will have ended at the place where it began. Other projects, among them the facilities a secondary capital would need, will take note.

The briefings that begin on the 28th are therefore the event to watch. How the remaining owners are spoken to will say whether the lesson of the 1990s has been kept or merely outlived.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: A Thousand Kilometres, One Ship: What a Very Strong Typhoon Asks of the Ogasawara Islands

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Most of what Japan knows about preparing for typhoons assumes a road. Warnings are issued, people drive or walk to a shelter, and help arrives from the next town when the wind drops.

None of that applies to the islands in the path of Typhoon No. 27.

Chichijima and Hahajima are a day's sailing from the mainland and have no airfield. Whatever the 2,500 residents and their visitors will need on Monday and Tuesday must already be on the islands by the time the sea becomes too rough for the ship, which is well before the wind arrives.

The decisions that matter are therefore being made this weekend, under a clear sky, on the basis of a forecast whose own authors describe its uncertainty as large.

The forecast track passes about 280 kilometres to the east. A shift of that distance to the west over three days is well within the forecast circle, and would put the islands under the eyewall of a storm forecast at 925 to 935 hectopascals.

The islands have advantages the mainland lacks. Their buildings are made for wind. Their people have seen strong typhoons before and do not need persuading. There are no large rivers to flood and few slopes above houses.

Their weaknesses are the ones distance creates. A serious injury means evacuation by Self-Defense Forces aircraft, which cannot fly in the storm. Power and communications, once down, are repaired by whoever is already there.

The ship is the hinge. If it sails early, visitors leave and supplies arrive. If it is held in Tokyo, the islands wait with what they have, and anyone due to leave stays for another week.

There is a wider point for the country that owns these islands. Japan's territory runs a thousand kilometres into the Pacific, and its claim to the waters around them rests on people living there. Those people accept, each autumn, a risk that the rest of the capital they belong to does not share.

The forecast will be clearer by Sunday night. The islands cannot wait for it.

MORE INSIDE TODAY

Typhoon No. 27 Strengthens Towards 'Very Strong' and Turns for the Ogasawara Islands as Tokyo's 37 Days of Rain Give Way to Sun — Page 1

Farm Minister Yana Admits Saying He Had Road Budgets 'Drastically Cut' for Towns Whose Mayors Did Not Back Him; Denies Pressing the Ministry and Refuses to Resign — Page 1

Typhoon No. 27 at a Glance — Page 2

The Red Line on the Map: What a Storm Warning Area Is, and How It Is Drawn — Page 2

How Strong Is 925 Hectopascals? The Forecast for No. 27 Set Beside the Storms Japan Remembers — Page 2

EDITORIAL & OPINION

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.

Friday's edition reported that rain had been recorded in central Tokyo on 36 consecutive days and that the forecast for Friday was of rain. Rain was recorded again on Friday and the run stands at 37 days. Friday's edition referred to Typhoon No. 26 by its number only; its international name was Surigae. The track graphic printed on Friday's society page drew the path of Typhoon No. 27 about ten degrees of longitude too far west, as was noted beside it. The map on today's front page was drawn for this edition from the Japan Meteorological Agency's positions.

The distances given today between the forecast track of Typhoon No. 27 and Chichijima, Iwo To, Hachijojima and Tokyo, and the statement that Chichijima and Hahajima lie inside the storm warning area, are calculations made for the map from the agency's forecast positions and radii. They are not the agency's figures. The centre will not necessarily follow the line joining the forecast positions.

The notes supplied for today's edition describe the United States unemployment rate of 4.2 per cent as lower than expected. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the rate rose to 4.2 per cent from 4.1, where forecasters had expected no change; it was the number of jobs added, 29,000, that was lower than expected. The American reports are followed. The same notes describe the Group of Seven's release as 100 million barrels of diesel; Kyodo News reports that the total combines diesel and crude oil.

The agriculture minister's name is Kazuo Yana. The notes supplied give the date from which the payments to offset the consumption tax become annual as fiscal 2030 in one place and fiscal 2018 in another; fiscal 2030 is used. The notes say that a joint police and Self-Defense Forces base at Ichigaya is to be completed around a year that has already passed; the completion date is omitted. The American astronaut who flew Sigma 7 was Walter Schirra.

On the sports pages, the wrestler who won the women's 50 kilograms is Yui Susaki, and she won without conceding a point. The women's football final ended 2-2 and was won on penalties. Hanshin would be winning consecutive pennants for the first time in the club's history, not in the history of the league. The scorer of North Korea's second goal is given differently in different reports and is not named. Wednesday's closing level of the Nikkei average, given as about 66,754, is derived from Thursday's close and its reported gain.

The United States weather map is reproduced as supplied. Its box for Honolulu contains a drafting note and no forecast, and its Boston box is labelled sunny beside a shower symbol. The Japan weather map shows 19 cities; its lows are those recorded this morning, and its typhoon inset gives the storm's position at noon, from a later bulletin than the one of 6:45 a.m. on which the front-page map and report are based.

THE WEEK AHEAD

SATURDAY, OCT. 3: Komeito's convention. Public comment opens on the secondary capital order. Hiroshima v Hanshin at 2 p.m.; Giants v DeNA at 6 p.m. Asian Games men's football final, Japan v South Korea, 7:30 p.m. SUNDAY, OCT. 4: The Asian Games close. Yokohama's mayoral campaign opens. Rain returns to Kanto. Typhoon No. 27 forecast very strong. MONDAY, OCT. 5: The extraordinary Diet session convenes. Megumi Yokota's 62nd birthday. Typhoon No. 27 forecast at 925 hPa near the Ogasawara waters. Kirin Cup final, Japan v New Zealand.

TUESDAY, OCT. 6: The typhoon's closest approach to Chichijima on the forecast line. Japan Open final and the farewell ceremony for Kei Nishikori. WEDNESDAY, OCT. 7: Typhoon No. 27 forecast east of Japan. FRIDAY, OCT. 9: start of the period under discussion for the suspension of three Tokai Kisen vessels. OCT. 12: Sports Day. LATE OCTOBER: the secondary capital order; Nidec's deadline with the Tokyo Stock Exchange; national consumer prices for September. OCT. 27: Israel's general election. OCT. 28: briefings begin on land for Narita's new runway. NOV. 3: United States midterm elections. DECEMBER: Narita's application for project approval; the budget, with the amounts of the

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TYPHOON AND RAIN ADVISORIES

Typhoon No. 27 (Choi-wan), 6 a.m. Saturday: large and strong, over the Mariana Islands at 18 degrees 5 minutes north, 144 degrees 55 minutes east, moving north-north-east at 15 km/h; 970 hPa; maximum winds 35 m/s, gusts 50 m/s; storm-force winds within 130 km. Forecast: very strong, 945 hPa, 6 a.m. Sunday; 925 hPa, winds 50 m/s, 3 a.m. Monday; 935 hPa east-north-east of Chichijima, 3 a.m. Tuesday; east of Japan Wednesday. Phenomenal seas along the track (Japan Meteorological Agency). Follow the agency's typhoon information, updated every three hours.

Ogasawara Islands: rough seas and heavy rain at warning level possible on Monday and Tuesday. Pacific coasts of Honshu: high waves with swell. Kanto: rain from Sunday to Tuesday; strong winds possible. Chiba and Kanagawa: slopes loose after Typhoon No. 25; caution even in light rain. Northern Japan: cloud or rain early in the week; waves higher from Tuesday. Advisories at 5:52 a.m. Saturday: strong wind in Tokyo and Shizuoka among others; high waves in Hokkaido, Chiba, Tokyo and Niigata (tenki.jp).

MARKET REFERENCE

Tokyo, Friday: Nikkei 225 closed at 68,309.46, down 647, the first fall in three sessions; more than 80 per cent of Prime market issues lower (Yomiuri Shimbun). TOPIX 4,091.00, down 40.98. Advantest at an all-time high after Micron's results; SoftBank Group down 6 per cent; Toyota, Honda and Nissan lower. Yen: upper 157 range to the dollar. Thursday's close: 68,956.72. Tuesday's close: 65,481. Tokyo-area consumer prices, September: up 2.7 per cent on the year, the most in eight months. Bank of Japan policy rate: 1.25 per cent. United States, September: payrolls up 29,000; unemployment 4.2 per cent; manufacturing employment up 9,000, a fourth monthly gain (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Group of Seven: 100 million barrels of diesel and crude to be released over four months. Prudential Life: partial business suspension order in preparation; about 3.1 billion yen taken from customers. Times Car: up to about 6.6 million records, about 1.6 million with licence images. Tesla: about 480,000 vehicles in July to September, down 2 per cent. Banks: Aomori Michinoku, Iwate and Akita in merger talks.

PHOTOGRAPHS IN THIS EDITION

Front page: map of Typhoon No. 27, drawn for this edition from the Japan Meteorological Agency's bulletin of 6:45 a.m. on October 3 and the agency's track history as archived by Digital Typhoon; coastlines from Natural Earth, sea-floor relief from the United States National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration. Politics: Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at the rostrum of the House of Representatives, a file image (Photo: WPM Productions). International: a White House luncheon for technology executives in September, a file image (White House Official). Economy: the Tokyo Stock Exchange at Kabutocho (Photo: TG2 (CC)). Weather: Japan forecast map for Saturday, October 3, supplied for this edition. Weather Abroad: United States forecast map for Saturday, October 3, supplied for this edition. Editorial page: cartoon by Taro Suzuki, Staff Cartoonist.

Official White House photographs are released as United States government works and are used with credit as the White House requests. Agency news photographs remain copyrighted and are not reproduced.

TYPHOON TERMS USED TODAY

Strong: maximum sustained winds of 33 to 43 metres a second. Very strong: 44 to 53. Violent: 54 or more. Large: gales extending 500 to 800 kilometres from the centre. Storm-force wind: 25 metres a second or more. Gale: 15 or more. Forecast circle: the area in which the centre is expected to lie with a probability of 70 per cent. Storm warning area: everywhere that could come within storm-force winds if the centre moves anywhere inside the forecast circle. These are the Japan Meteorological Agency's definitions, based on winds averaged over ten minutes.

UNITS AND CONVENTIONS

Wind speeds are given in metres a second, as the agency reports them; one metre a second is 3.6 kilometres an hour, or about 1.9 knots. Pressure is in hectopascals. Temperatures are in degrees Celsius except on the United States map, which uses Fahrenheit. Times are Japan Standard Time unless another place is named; Japan is at present nine hours ahead of Greenwich, 13 ahead of New York and 16 ahead of Los Angeles. Japanese names are given with the family name last.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Police: 110. Fire and ambulance: 119. Coast guard, for emergencies at sea: 118. Disaster message dial, to leave and hear recorded messages when lines are congested: 171. Police consultation, not an emergency: #9110. Consumer hotline: 188. Child consultation centres: 189. The Japan Meteorological Agency's typhoon information and each municipality's hazard maps are on their websites; warnings are also carried by the public broadcaster's data service.

SOURCES FOR THIS EDITION

Reports in this edition draw on the Saturday morning papers and Friday night's wires: Asahi Shimbun, Yomiuri Shimbun, Sankei News, Nihon Keizai

Shimbun, Kyodo News, Jiji Press, NHK, Nishinippon Shimbun, Dempa Shimbun, Tokai Television and the sports dailies; on tenki.jp, Weathernews and the Japan Meteorological Agency for weather; on Digital Typhoon of the National Institute of Informatics for the storm's track; and, for news from abroad, on Reuters, Bloomberg, CNBC, CNN, NBC News, Al Jazeera, the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and National Weather Service, and the report of the security company Proofpoint. Where accounts differ the difference is stated.

READER SERVICES

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TOMORROW'S EDITION

Sunday's edition carries the result from Mazda Stadium and whether Hanshin are champions; the Asian Games men's football final; whether the capital's rain run ended at 37 days; the latest track and strength of Typhoon No. 27; reaction to the American jobs figures; Komeito's convention; and the closing day of the Asian Games.

MORE INSIDE TODAY (CONTINUED)

Through the Marianas: The First Two Days of Typhoon No. 27, as the American Forecasters Saw It — Page 2

The Islands the Typhoon Crossed: The Northern Marianas, American Territory With a Japanese Past — Page 3

Why Typhoons Turn: The Bend in the Track of No. 27 — Page 3

Opposition to Open the Diet Session on Monday With the Farm Minister's Remarks and the Prime Minister's Choice of Him — Page 4

What the Minister Said in May, What He Says Now, and What 'Allocation' Means — Page 4

Special Wards or a Partnership: The Two Routes to Becoming a Secondary Capital, and Who Is Taking Which — Page 5

What a Special Ward Is: The Structure Osaka Wants and Only Tokyo Has — Page 5

State to Widen Its Reinsurance of Oil Tankers Beyond Cargoes of Iranian Crude — Page 6

Today in Politics: Komeito Confirms Okamoto; Yokohama's Campaign Opens Tomorrow; the Diet on Monday — Page 6

A Month Before the Midterms, Trump Takes to the Road in States He Already Holds — Page 7

Why Diesel? The Fuel That Moves Freight Is the One the War Has Squeezed Hardest — Page 7

November 3: What Americans Vote on, and Why the President's Party Usually Loses — Page 8

Five Thousand Dollars a Head: The Arithmetic of the Campaign's Largest Promise — Page 8

Nikkei Falls 647 Yen to 68,309, Its First Decline in Three Days; More Than 80 Per Cent of Prime Shares Lose Ground — Page 9

The Price of Sunshine: A Morning at the Wholesale Market After a Month of Rain — Page 10

Tesla's Global Sales Fall 2 Per Cent to About 480,000 in the Third Quarter — Page 11

Today in Technology History: On October 3, 1942, a Rocket From Peenemunde Reached the Edge of Space — Page 12

Today's Map: Sun From Kagoshima to Sendai, 30 Degrees in Kochi, and a Morning Low of 7 in Kushiro — Page 13

Weather Abroad: 101 Degrees in Los Angeles, Storms on the Gulf and in the Southeast, a Dry and Sunny Midwest — Page 14

Interest in the Japanese Language at a Record 83.1 Per Cent, Survey Finds; Three in Ten Say They No Longer Write by Hand — Page 15

Hanshin One Result From the Pennant: A Win or a Draw at Hiroshima This Afternoon Brings the Club's First Back-to-Back Titles — Page 16