

■ TWO DEAD IN LANDSLIDES, FOUR MISSING IN KANAGAWA ■ EVACUATION ORDERS REACHED 1.9 MILLION ■ TAKAICHI MEETS TRUMP TODAY ■ VOLLEYBALL FINAL AGAINST CHINA TONIGHT ■

Two Dead in Landslides and Four Missing in Kanagawa as Typhoon No. 25 Moves Out to Sea

Evacuation orders reached more than 1.9 million people in the capital and five surrounding prefectures; Kanagawa has asked the Self-Defense Forces for help, and the danger now sits in saturated hillsides under a clear sky

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter, with Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk



Governor Yuriko Koike at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's typhoon briefing. The capital's response ran from the Zempukuji River in western Tokyo to Izu Oshima, where up to 611 millimetres of rain fell in 24 hours. (Tokyo Metropolitan Government Briefing: WPM Productions)

Typhoon No. 25 made its closest approach to the Kanto region on Monday evening and then moved out over the sea east of Chiba, leaving two people dead in landslides and four missing in Kanagawa Prefecture, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, which led its front page with the toll.

The storm was expected to have moved away to the east of Japan by this morning, according to Asahi Shimbun. Tuesday has dawned sunny across much of the region, and forecasters are asking residents to treat the fine weather with suspicion.

A woman in her sixties died in Yokosuka, and people are missing in Miura and other parts of the Miura Peninsula, according to Sankei News and Mainichi Shimbun. Kanagawa Prefecture has requested disaster relief from the Self-Defense Forces.

In Sodegaura, on the Chiba shore of Tokyo Bay, a 51-year-old man was caught in a landslide while repairing a road and died, Sankei News reported. He was doing the work that keeps a road open during a storm, on a slope that gave way while he was on it.

The scale of the preparation shows in one figure. Evacuation orders were issued to more than 1.9 million people, in roughly 900,000 households across the capital and five surrounding prefectures, according to Asahi Shimbun.

In Sakura City, Chiba, a Level 5 emergency alert covered about 2,800 people as the Takasaki River flooded. Level 5 is the top of the municipal scale and describes a disaster already under way rather than one approaching.

The heaviest rain fell on Izu Oshima, where 24-hour totals of between 540 and 611 millimetres were recorded. The island was placed under a Level 5 emergency warning for landslides, which was later lowered to Level 4.

Those figures carry a particular weight on Oshima. In October 2013 a landslide in the island's main town killed 36 people, and three more were never found, after record rain from a passing typhoon.

In the capital, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's response was led by Governor Yuriko Koike, pictured above at the metropolitan government's typhoon briefing. On Monday her administration issued a Level 4 flood risk warning for the Zempukuji River, telling residents of Nakano and Suginami wards to move to a second floor.

The power network took the wind. More than 60,000 households, mainly in Chiba Prefecture, lost electricity, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and TV Asahi News.

For the four families in Kanagawa waiting for news, the search is the only story. Self-Defense Forces relief in Japan is dispatched at a governor's request, and Kanagawa has made that request.

Searches after landslides are slow by necessity. Rescuers work on unstable ground that may move again, and they dig by hand where heavy machinery would bring more earth down.

Recovery now moves to the tasks that follow every Japanese typhoon: restoring power line by line, inspecting railway track before trains return, and assessing homes that took water on the ground floor.

Most of that work will be done during a public holiday. Today is the citizens' holiday that falls between Respect for the Aged Day and tomorrow's Autumnal Equinox, and markets are closed until Thursday.

The instruction for residents in the affected areas is the same as it was yesterday. Stay away from slopes and riverbanks, report cracks, springs or muddy water appearing on hillsides, and do not go back into a building that has flooded until it has been checked.

Takaichi Meets Trump Today After a Four-Hour Typhoon Delay, With Minerals and the Alliance on the Table

By Rachel Kim | Japan-U.S. Coverage, Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi left Haneda Airport on Monday evening about four hours late because of the typhoon and meets President Trump in New York on Tuesday, Eastern Time, according to Kyodo News.

Co-ordination on mineral supply chains and a strengthening of the alliance are expected to be the principal outcomes, Kyodo reported.

The four-hour delay is a footnote to the meeting and an accurate picture of the week. A prime minister was waiting on the runway for a storm to clear while evacuation orders covered more than 1.9 million people behind her.

Minerals come first on the agenda because of the meeting that follows it. China's Foreign Ministry has announced a state visit to the United States by President Xi Jinping, and the American-Chinese summit is scheduled for Thursday.

Rare earth elements, the minerals that go into permanent magnets, motors and electronics, are expected to be a central subject in that meeting, and Tokyo wants its own exposure understood before Washington sits down with Beijing.

The foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea have meanwhile said they firmly oppose economic coercion, a statement read as a reference to China's controls on rare earth exports, according to Sankei News.

Families of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea are also in Washington, asking that the issue be raised at the summit, Sankei News reported, which places a humanitarian subject beside a commercial one on the same afternoon.

The Prime Minister is also preparing her first general debate speech at the United Nations General Assembly since taking office, in which she plans to appeal on abductions, climate change, the rule of law and reform of the United Nations, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

Summit communiqués are drafted before leaders meet, and the useful measure of this one will be what it says about supply chains in specific terms: stockpiles, alternative sources, processing capacity and joint investment.

Japan has spent more than a decade reducing its

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WEATHER — TOKYO

30°C

Low 23°C · Sun and cloud

Sapporo

22°

Sendai

29°

Nagoya

33°

Naha

31°

Clear and warmer behind the typhoon. Saturated slopes and swollen rivers remain dangerous. Full weather, Page 11.

TODAY IN BRIEF

- Evacuation orders reached more than 1.9 million people in the capital and five prefectures.
- Izu Oshima recorded 540 to 611 millimetres of rain in 24 hours.
- More than 60,000 households lost power, mostly in Chiba; JAL and ANA cancelled 260 flights.
- Cabinet approval rises 2.9 points to 58.3% in an ANN poll.
- Beijing confirms Xi Jinping's state visit; the US-China summit is Thursday.
- Japan's women play China tonight for a first volleyball gold since 1978.

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PUBLISHING INFORMATION

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MARKETS	
USD/JPY, New York	low 157 range
USD/JPY, Sept. 21 (WPM chart)	157.3880
USD/JPY, Sept. 22 indicative	157.2570
Nikkei 225 (Sept. 18 close)	■ 65,018.95
TOPIX (Sept. 18 close)	■ 4,091.14
BOJ policy rate (from Sept. 24)	1.25%
Tokyo markets	Closed; reopen Thu.

TYPHOON NO. 25: KEY FIGURES

- 2 dead in landslides, in Yokosuka and Sodegaura; 4 missing in Kanagawa.
- Level 5 alert for 2,800 people as the Takasaki River flooded in Sakura City.
- Keisei Skyliner suspended by flooded track; Kosei Line halted from first train.
- Kanagawa has requested Self-Defense Forces disaster relief.

ASIAN GAMES TODAY

- Women's volleyball final: Japan v China.
- Matsushita in the men's 400m individual medley.
- Fencing: men's foil, women's épée individual.
- Baseball: Japan v Palestine.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

- Wed. 23: Autumnal Equinox Day; markets closed.
- Thu. 24: Markets reopen; BOJ 1.25% takes effect; US-China summit.
- Sun. 27: Aki Bashi final day.

SUMO AND BASEBALL

- Aki Bashi day 10 today; Onosato leads alone.
- NPB, Sept. 21: Hanshin 3-2 DeNA.

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dependence on Chinese rare earths since supply was interrupted in 2010, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will support research into alternative materials next fiscal year, Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

The alliance language will be read for continuity rather than novelty. Japan is revising its three security documents, and Washington has consistently pressed its allies to spend more on defence.

Trade is the uncomfortable background. Most Japanese exports to the United States now face a 15% tariff, and the bilateral surplus has fallen sharply as a result.

Domestically the Prime Minister travels with improved numbers. An ANN poll published this week put cabinet approval at 58.3%, up 2.9 points.

She also travels with a disaster behind her, and the political risk of an overseas trip during a domestic emergency is one every Japanese leader weighs. The crisis machinery at home runs through the chief cabinet secretary in her absence.

The time difference means the meeting's results will reach Tokyo overnight. NHK's morning programme is expected to lead on the typhoon, the United Nations speeches and the summit, and the afternoon news cycle will shift once the outcome is known.

Tokyo's markets, closed for the holiday, reopen on Thursday, the same day as the American-Chinese summit and the day the Bank of Japan's new policy rate takes effect.

POLITICS

Governor Koike Led the Capital Through Its Storm, From the Zempukuji River to Izu Oshima

The metropolitan government's responsibilities run from Nakano to islands a hundred kilometres out in the Pacific

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's response to Typhoon No. 25 was led by Governor Yuriko Koike, pictured on the front page at the metropolitan government's typhoon briefing.

The capital's part of the storm began on land. On Monday the metropolitan government issued a Level 4 flood risk warning for the Zempukuji River and urged residents of Nakano and Suginami wards to move to a second floor.

That instruction, vertical evacuation rather than departure, is specific to small urban rivers that rise faster than residents can safely move through flooded streets, and western Tokyo has several of them.

The more dangerous part of the storm fell offshore. Izu Oshima, which lies within Tokyo's administrative boundaries, recorded 24-hour rainfall of between 540 and 611 millimetres and was placed under a Level 5 emergency warning for landslides, later lowered to Level 4.

The metropolitan government is responsible for the Izu and Ogasawara islands, which means its disaster planning covers volcanic islands reached by ferry and small aircraft as well as the densest city in the country.

Oshima carries a painful history in exactly this kind of weather. In October 2013 a typhoon-driven landslide in the island's main settlement killed 36 people, and three more were never found.

The metropolitan government also cancelled its public viewing of the Asian Games swimming, an event built for crowds on a day when the aim was to keep people at home.

Across the capital and five surrounding prefectures, evacuation orders reached more than 1.9 million people in about 900,000 households, according to Asahi Shimbun.

Tokyo's flood defences are among the most extensive of any city in the world, including underground discharge channels and regulating reservoirs built to take peak flows off its rivers, and they are designed to protect against river flooding rather than water on the streets.

That distinction is why the ward-level instructions matter. A city can be protected from its rivers and still flood from the sky, when rain falls faster than drains can carry it away.

Briefings of this kind, held by governors in disaster uniform, are the standard structure of Japanese crisis management at prefectural level, and they exist to make the flow of information visible to the public as well as to officials.

Recovery in the capital now centres on the islands, where ferry services and the condition of saturated slopes will determine how quickly ordinary life returns.

POLITICS

Governor Koike, in Her Third Term, Faces the Storm Season Again

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Governor Yuriko Koike, who led the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's response to Typhoon No. 25, has governed the capital through a decade of crises.

She became the first woman elected governor of Tokyo in 2016, and she won re-election in 2020 and again in 2024, beginning her third term.

Before becoming governor she had a long national career. A former television newscaster, she entered the Diet in 1992, served as environment minister, where she promoted the Cool Biz campaign for lighter office clothing in summer, and in 2007 became Japan's first female defence minister.

As governor she led the capital through the pandemic and the postponed Tokyo Olympics of 2021, held largely without spectators.

The capital's disaster preparations have been a recurring theme of her tenure, from measures against a major earthquake to flood defences and heat countermeasures.

Her responsibilities extend beyond the city. The metropolitan government administers the Izu and Ogasawara islands, including Izu Oshima, which recorded between 540 and 611 millimetres of rain in 24 hours this week.

The briefing pictured on the front page is the public face of a system in which the governor chairs the disaster response and relays decisions to residents.

Tokyo's scale magnifies every decision. The metropolitan area is home to a large share of Japan's population and economic activity, and any disruption there reaches the whole country.

The typhoon's aftermath now shifts attention to recovery on the islands and to the state of saturated slopes across the region.

The storm season continues into October.

POLITICS

Kanagawa Calls In the Self-Defense Forces as the Search Goes On in Miura

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Kanagawa Prefecture has requested disaster relief from the Self-Defense Forces after landslides left one person dead in Yokosuka and people missing in Miura and elsewhere, according to Sankei News and Mainichi Shimbun.

Disaster relief dispatches in Japan are made at the request of a prefectural governor, and the request itself is the formal step that allows troops to deploy for search, rescue and support.

That procedure reflects the constitutional care with which Japan separates its military from domestic authority, and it places the judgment of when to call for help with the prefecture rather than with the national government.

In practice units are often readied before a request arrives, so that they can move as soon as the call comes.

Landslide searches are among the most demanding tasks they perform. The ground may move again, heavy machinery can bring more earth down, and much of the work is done by hand.

The Miura Peninsula combines steep hillsides with dense housing, which is the geography in which Japanese landslide deaths have concentrated in recent decades.

Disaster relief is the Self-Defense Forces' most

visible role in ordinary Japanese life, and public support for the organisation rose sharply after its work following the 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The four people missing in Kanagawa are the centre of the operation.

Clear weather today helps the searchers, and the saturated ground beneath them remains the hazard.

The prefecture will decide when the dispatch ends, under the same procedure that began it.

POLITICS

Abductions, Climate, the Rule of Law and UN Reform: Takaichi's First General Assembly Speech

By Rachel Kim | Japan-U.S. Coverage, Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Prime Minister Takaichi will deliver her first general debate speech at the United Nations General Assembly since taking office, appealing on abductions, climate change, the rule of law and United Nations reform, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

Yomiuri Shimbun had earlier reported that she would also express support for strengthening energy supply from the Middle East and address misinformation generated by artificial intelligence.

The abductions come first on Mainichi's list, and the placement is deliberate. Japanese prime ministers have raised North Korea's abduction of Japanese citizens at the Assembly for two decades, because the issue needs an international audience that bilateral diplomacy has never supplied.

The government recognises 17 citizens as abducted by North Korea. Five returned in 2002, and the families of the rest have spent the years since trying to keep the issue on the agenda of every summit and every speech.

Some of those families are in Washington this week asking that the subject be raised when the Prime Minister meets President Trump, Sankei News reported.

The rule of law is the second theme with a direct Japanese interest. Japan's position in its maritime disputes rests on international law, which is why Tokyo speaks for legal order in general terms at every opportunity.

That theme meets an awkward week. Reports indicate the United States is preparing sanctions against the International Criminal Court, to which Japan is a party and one of the largest financial contributors.

United Nations reform, including Security Council reform, has been a fixture of Japanese speeches since the 1990s, with Japan seeking a permanent seat that it has not come close to obtaining.

Climate change completes the list, and Japanese statements on it are read abroad for the distance between the targets restated and the energy mix expected to deliver them.

A first speech sets a tone that a prime minister is then measured against, and the choice to lead with abductions places a long-standing national grievance at the front of the new government's international profile.

POLITICS

Tokyo, Washington and Seoul Say They 'Firmly Oppose Economic Coercion'

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea have declared that they firmly oppose economic coercion, a statement widely read as a reference to China's restrictions on rare earth exports, according to Sankei News.

Economic coercion describes the use of trade, investment or supply restrictions to force political concessions, and it has become a standard subject of allied diplomacy over the past several years.

Japan has a particular claim to the subject. It was one of the first industrial economies to experience a rare earth supply interruption, in 2010, and it has spent the years since diversifying sources and reducing consumption.

At the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima in 2023, the member states launched a co-ordination platform on economic coercion, a mechanism intended to share information and co-ordinate responses.

A trilateral statement adds South Korea, whose manufacturers depend on the same minerals and the

same supply chains as Japan's, and whose relations with Tokyo have improved considerably in recent years.

The statement arrives on the eve of two summits. Prime Minister Takaichi meets President Trump on Tuesday, and President Xi Jinping's state visit to the United States brings the American-Chinese summit on Thursday.

Its practical force lies in signalling rather than in any new instrument. Beijing learns that its three largest neighbours in the Pacific are describing its conduct in the same terms, days before it negotiates with one of them.

Rare earth processing remains heavily concentrated in China, which is why statements of opposition are accompanied by investment in alternatives. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will support research into substitute materials next fiscal year.

South Korea's inclusion also reflects a North Korean dimension. The same three ministers meet regularly on missile launches, and North Korea fired two ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan only days ago.

Whether the language moves from declaration to co-ordinated action will be tested the first time controls are tightened again.

POLITICS

From Camp David to This Week: How Tokyo, Washington and Seoul Learned to Speak Together

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

This week's statement by the foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea opposing economic coercion rests on a framework the three countries built only three years ago.

In August 2023, President Joe Biden hosted Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and President Yoon Suk Yeol at Camp David, the first stand-alone summit of the three leaders.

They agreed to hold trilateral meetings regularly, to consult one another promptly in a crisis affecting their shared interests, and to expand co-operation on security, technology and economic resilience.

The practical results followed within months. The three countries began sharing North Korean missile warning data in real time at the end of 2023, and in 2024 they held their first multi-domain military exercise, known as Freedom Edge.

The significance lay less in any single measure than in the habit it created. For decades, American alliances with Japan and South Korea ran in parallel, with Tokyo and Seoul often divided by history.

The improvement in Japan-South Korea relations that made Camp David possible began with South Korea's plan, announced in March 2023, to compensate wartime labourers through a domestic foundation, which reopened the way to regular visits between leaders.

The framework has since passed through changes of government in all three capitals. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, President Donald Trump and President Lee Jae-myung now lead the governments that inherited it.

Economic security has become as important as military co-operation. The three countries' manufacturers share exposure to the same supply chains for minerals, chips and batteries, and to the same risks of disruption.

A joint statement opposing economic coercion, issued days before the American-Chinese summit, shows the framework doing what its designers intended: allowing the three to speak with one voice at a moment that matters.

Whether that voice is heeded in Beijing is another question, and the answer will come from China's conduct rather than its comments.

POLITICS

Abductees' Families Take Their Case to Washington Before the Summit

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Families of Japanese citizens abducted by North Korea have travelled to Washington to ask that the issue be placed on the agenda of the Japan-United States summit, according to Sankei News.

Their visit coincides with the Prime Minister's plan to

POLITICS

appeal on abductions in her first general debate speech at the United Nations, which puts the issue before two audiences in the same week.

The Japanese government officially recognises 17 citizens as having been abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s. Five returned in 2002 after Pyongyang admitted the abductions, and the government maintains that the others must be accounted for.

The families have organised for more than a quarter of a century, and their campaigning is one of the reasons the issue has remained on the agenda of every Japanese administration since.

The passage of time is now the harshest fact in the campaign. The parents of many of those taken have died without seeing their children again, and those still living are very old.

American presidents have met abductees' families before, and raising the issue with Washington serves a specific purpose: any diplomatic process with North Korea that includes the United States is one in which Japan wants the abductions to be counted.

North Korea's position has hardened over the years, asserting that the issue has been resolved, and there has been no substantive dialogue on it for a long time.

The families' request is modest in form. They want a sentence in a leaders' conversation and, if possible, a line in the statement that follows it.

In a summit dominated by minerals, technology and tariffs, that sentence competes for attention with very large commercial interests.

Its inclusion or absence will be read in Japan as a measure of how seriously the Prime Minister's first speech meant what it said.

POLITICS

Two Articles Hold the Alliance Together, Sixty-Six Years On

By William | Senior Political Analyst

When Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump discuss strengthening the alliance today, they are building on a treaty whose core has not changed since 1960.

The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States was signed in Washington in January 1960, replacing the original security treaty of 1951, which Japanese critics had considered unequal.

Its heart is two articles. Under Article 5, each country recognises that an armed attack on either party in the territories under Japan's administration would endanger its own peace and safety, and declares that it will act to meet the common danger.

Under Article 6, Japan grants the United States the use of facilities and areas in Japan for the security of Japan and for the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East.

The bargain is asymmetrical by design. The United States commits to Japan's defence; Japan provides the bases from which American forces operate across the region.

More than 50,000 American service members are stationed in Japan, a large share of them in Okinawa, and Japan contributes substantially to the costs of hosting them.

American presidents of both parties have stated that Article 5 applies to the Senkaku Islands, which are administered by Japan and claimed by China. Tokyo seeks that assurance at every summit, because it is the clearest statement of deterrence available.

The alliance has broadened over the decades from a narrow defence arrangement into co-operation on missile defence, space, cyber security, technology and, increasingly, economic security.

Critical minerals are the latest addition. The two leaders signed a framework on securing supplies of critical minerals and rare earths when President Trump visited Tokyo last October, and co-ordination on mineral supply chains is expected to be a principal outcome of today's meeting, according to Kyodo News.

The treaty itself remains untouched. What changes from summit to summit is how much weight each side places on it, and how much each asks of the other.

For a government whose foreign policy rests on the alliance, the value of today's meeting lies as much in

the reaffirmation as in anything new.

POLITICS

Japan's First Woman Prime Minister Takes Her Agenda to New York

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Sanae Takaichi arrives at the United Nations as the first woman to lead a Japanese government, eleven months after taking office.

She was elected president of the Liberal Democratic Party in October last year and became prime minister later that month, a milestone in a political culture where women remain sharply under-represented.

Born in Nara Prefecture in 1961, she entered the House of Representatives in 1993 and built her career on the party's conservative wing.

She served as Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications and later as the minister in charge of economic security, a portfolio that placed supply chains, sensitive technology and critical minerals at the centre of her work.

That background explains the shape of her agenda this week. Minerals, supply chains and the alliance dominate the summit with President Trump, and misinformation produced by artificial intelligence features in her planned speech to the General Assembly.

She has long argued for a stronger defence posture and a firm stance toward China, positions that have shaped her government's revision of the three security documents.

At home her cabinet enjoys solid support, with approval at 58.3% in the latest ANN poll, and her government has emphasised measures against rising prices.

Her first speech to the Assembly will lead with the abduction issue, a subject on which she has campaigned throughout her career.

Her position as the first woman to hold the office has drawn wide attention abroad, as it did at home when she took office.

This week's trip, delayed four hours by the typhoon, brings her to the General Assembly for the first time as prime minister.

POLITICS

Cabinet Approval Rises to 58.3% in ANN Poll

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Approval of the Takaichi cabinet has risen 2.9 points to 58.3%, according to an ANN opinion poll.

The figure is broadly in line with other recent surveys, which have shown the cabinet's standing holding well above the level at which Japanese governments typically become nervous.

Readings in the high fifties give a prime minister room to manoeuvre in the Diet and in her own party, where support tends to follow the public numbers with a short delay.

Polls measure a moment, and a government's handling of a large disaster can move its approval quickly in either direction.

The Prime Minister is abroad as the recovery begins, meeting President Trump in New York and speaking at the United Nations General Assembly.

The extraordinary Diet session that follows will test the numbers against a heavy agenda: a food consumption tax cut, a fuel subsidy of historic size and the revision of the three security documents.

Public priorities in recent surveys have been dominated by prices, which is why the rice price falling back into the 2,000-yen range for a five-kilogram bag registers politically as well as economically.

The Bank of Japan's increase in its policy rate to 1.25%, which takes effect on Thursday, pulls in the other direction for households with variable-rate mortgages.

Approval polls in Japan are conducted by the major newspapers and broadcasters with differing methods, which is why the direction of travel across several polls matters more than the level in any one.

On that measure the direction is currently positive.

POLITICS

DPFP Leader Tamaki Visits Kyiv, the First Opposition Leader to Do So Since the Invasion

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Yuichiro Tamaki, leader of the Democratic Party for the People, has visited Kyiv, becoming the first Japanese opposition party leader to go there since Russia's full-scale invasion, according to the Japan Agricultural News.

Visits to Kyiv by Japanese politicians have been rare because of the security arrangements they require, and those by serving prime ministers and ministers have been planned with great care.

An opposition leader's visit carries a different message from a government one. It signals that support for Ukraine is a position held across Japanese politics rather than the policy of one administration.

The Democratic Party for the People has occupied a distinctive place in the opposition, positioning itself as a policy-oriented party willing to co-operate with the government on individual measures.

Japan's support for Ukraine has been substantial in financial and humanitarian terms, including reconstruction assistance and help with demining and energy infrastructure, while remaining constrained on military equipment by Japanese export rules.

The visit came as Russia's parliamentary elections ended with the ruling party winning a landslide and as Ukrainian drones attacked the area around Moscow.

For Japan, the war's significance has always been partly about the Indo-Pacific: a successful change of borders by force in Europe would carry obvious lessons for East Asia.

That argument has been made by Japanese governments of both major parties and is broadly accepted in the Diet, which is why a visit by an opposition leader attracts little domestic controversy.

The practical content of the visit, including meetings and any commitments, will emerge on his return.

It adds an opposition voice to a Japanese position that has been consistent since the first weeks of the war.

POLITICS

The Opposition Leader Who Went to Kyiv: Who Is Yuichiro Tamaki?

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Yuichiro Tamaki, whose visit to Kyiv made him the first Japanese opposition party leader to go there since Russia's full-scale invasion, leads a party whose influence has grown well beyond its size.

Born in Kagawa Prefecture in 1969, he began his career as an official at the Ministry of Finance before entering the House of Representatives in 2009.

The Democratic Party for the People was formed in 2018 from the remains of earlier opposition parties, and Tamaki has led it through most of its existence.

Its breakthrough came in the general election of October 2024, when it quadrupled its seats in the lower house from seven to 28, drawing support particularly from younger voters.

The party campaigned on raising the income threshold at which tax becomes payable, known as the 1.03 million yen wall, arguing that it discouraged part-time workers from working more hours. The government has since raised the threshold.

That result gave the party leverage in a divided Diet. Its willingness to negotiate with the governing parties on individual measures, rather than oppose everything, has become its defining style.

On foreign policy, the party has supported a firm stance toward Russia and robust support for Ukraine, positions that place it close to the government.

A visit to Kyiv carries risks and requires careful security arrangements, which is why Japanese visits have been rare and those by opposition leaders unprecedented until now.

The trip also raises Tamaki's international profile at a time when opposition parties are seeking to show they are ready for government.

Details of his meetings in Kyiv are expected to be reported on his return.

POLITICS

What Japan Has Given Ukraine, and What It Has Not

By Rachel Kim | Japan-U.S. Coverage, Washington-Tokyo Liaison

Yuichiro Tamaki's visit to Kyiv draws attention to a Japanese contribution to Ukraine that has been large in some areas and deliberately limited in others.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida visited Kyiv in March 2023, becoming the first post-war Japanese prime minister to enter a country at war.

Japan's support has been concentrated on finance and reconstruction. It has provided budget support, much of it channelled through international institutions, alongside humanitarian aid and help for displaced people.

Energy infrastructure has been a particular focus. Russian attacks on Ukraine's power grid created urgent demand for transformers and generators, which Japan supplied.

Demining is another. Japan has provided equipment and training to help clear the vast areas contaminated by mines and unexploded ordnance, drawing on experience from its work in Cambodia.

In February 2024, Tokyo hosted a conference on Ukraine's economic growth and reconstruction, bringing Japanese companies and Ukrainian officials together to plan long-term investment.

What Japan has not provided is lethal weapons. Its export rules have restricted defence transfers, and Japanese support in the military field has been limited to items such as protective vests and helmets.

Japan has also joined Group of Seven sanctions on Russia, including measures on Russian financial institutions and exports of sensitive goods.

The government's argument for the policy is regional as much as European: allowing borders to be changed by force would set a precedent with obvious implications for East Asia.

An opposition leader's visit shows that the argument has support across Japanese politics, which gives the policy stability whatever happens at the next election.

POLITICS

Six Prefectures and Six Major Cities Say They Want to Be Japan's Second Capital

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Six prefectures and six designated cities, including Hokkaido, Osaka and Fukuoka, have expressed interest in being designated under the sub-capital concept, according to a Yomiuri Shimbun survey. Financial measures to support the designation are being considered.

A sub-capital, or secondary capital, would be a city able to take over the functions of government if Tokyo were disabled by a catastrophe, and to host some of those functions permanently in ordinary times.

The idea has been championed for years by Nippon Ishin no Kai, which has argued for Osaka as the natural candidate given its size, its economy and its distance from the capital.

The disaster argument is the strongest one. A major earthquake directly beneath Tokyo is a scenario the government plans for, and a country whose political, financial and administrative centres occupy the same small area is exposed to a single event in a way few others are.

This week's typhoon, which placed more than 1.9 million people under evacuation orders across the capital and five surrounding prefectures, is a smaller reminder of the same concentration.

Interest from a dozen jurisdictions complicates the politics. A designation that confers money and status invites competition, and the regions that want it most are not necessarily the ones best placed to serve the purpose.

Hokkaido's interest reflects its distance and its land, Fukuoka's its role as the economic centre of Kyushu and its proximity to the rest of Asia, and Osaka's its status as the country's second metropolitan economy.

The practical questions are formidable. Duplicating government functions costs money, and moving government bodies out of Tokyo has been rare and slow; the Agency for Cultural Affairs' relocation to Kyoto, completed in 2023, took years of preparation.

The survey measures ambition rather than feasibility,

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and it shows that the concept has moved from a regional party's platform into a national competition.

Financial measures, the part that makes designation attractive, are what the government is now considering.

POLITICS

Osaka's Long Campaign to Share the Capital's Burden

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The sub-capital concept, in which six prefectures and six designated cities have expressed interest according to a Yomiuri Shimbun survey, has its roots in Osaka's long struggle to redefine its place in Japan.

The idea is associated above all with Nippon Ishin no Kai, the party founded by Toru Hashimoto, who served as governor of Osaka Prefecture and later as mayor of Osaka City.

Its first great project was the Osaka Metropolis Plan, which would have abolished Osaka City and reorganised it into special wards, similar to Tokyo's, under a stronger prefectural government.

Residents of Osaka City voted on the plan twice. In May 2015 it was rejected by a margin of less than one percentage point, and in November 2020 it was rejected again, narrowly.

Hashimoto announced his retirement from politics after the first defeat, and the party refocused on governing and on bringing large projects to the region.

The most visible of those was Expo 2025, held on an artificial island in Osaka Bay from April to October last year, which drew large crowds and international attention.

The sub-capital concept revives the underlying argument in a new form: that Japan should not depend on a single city for all its central functions, and that Osaka is the natural second centre.

The disaster case is strong. A major earthquake striking directly beneath Tokyo is one of the scenarios for which the national government plans, and a functioning backup capital would reduce the country's vulnerability.

The survey shows that Osaka's rivals are not willing to concede the role. Hokkaido and Fukuoka are among those that have expressed interest.

Financial measures to support any designation are being considered, according to Yomiuri, and those measures will decide how fiercely the competition is fought.

POLITICS

Cabinet Seeks a Tenfold Rise in Its Public Relations Budget, to 7.2 Billion Yen

The request is framed as a defence against cognitive warfare
By William | Senior Political Analyst

The Cabinet has requested a tenfold increase in its public relations budget to 7.2 billion yen, according to Sankei News, a rise presented as a defence against cognitive warfare.

Cognitive warfare is the term used for efforts by foreign states to shape another country's public opinion through disinformation, manipulated content and co-ordinated online campaigns.

The government's argument is that a country facing such campaigns needs the capacity to communicate accurately and quickly, in Japanese and other languages, rather than leaving the information space to others.

Generative artificial intelligence has made the threat cheaper to carry out. Convincing text, images and video can be produced at a scale that would have required large operations a few years ago.

The Prime Minister plans to address misinformation produced by artificial intelligence in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, which links the budget request to her international agenda.

A tenfold increase will draw scrutiny on two grounds. The first is cost, in a budget carrying large new commitments on tax and fuel subsidies.

The second is the boundary between countering foreign disinformation and promoting a government's own position, a line that democracies have found hard to draw and harder to police.

Budget requests submitted at the end of August are routinely trimmed before the government's draft is

finalised in December, and requests of this size attract particular attention from the finance ministry.

Other democracies have built similar capabilities, often inside foreign or defence ministries, and their experience suggests effectiveness depends on credibility more than on spending.

The request makes information a line item in Japanese national security, which is itself a significant change.

POLITICS

Education Ministry to Fund Research Into Alternatives to Rare Earths

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology will support the development of alternatives to important resources such as rare earth elements in the next fiscal year and strengthen research capabilities in the field, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The timing places the programme beside a diplomatic week dominated by the same minerals, with the Japan-United States summit on Tuesday and the American-Chinese summit on Thursday.

Substitution research aims to reduce how much of a scarce element a product needs, or to remove it entirely by finding different materials that deliver the same performance.

Japanese laboratories and manufacturers have a long record in this work. Magnet makers reduced their use of the scarcest heavy rare earths considerably after the supply interruption of 2010, largely through incremental engineering.

That kind of progress rarely makes headlines, and it is one of the more effective forms of economic security available to a country that cannot mine what it needs.

The ministry's role is at the research end of the chain, funding universities and national laboratories, while industrial deployment falls to companies and to the economy ministry.

Recycling is the second strand of the same strategy, recovering rare earths from discarded motors and electronics, and Japan's dense stock of old devices is sometimes described as an urban mine.

Deep-sea deposits within Japan's exclusive economic zone near Minamitorishima have been studied for years, and whether they can be recovered at a commercial cost remains unproven.

Budget requests for the next fiscal year were submitted at the end of August, and the ministry's plan will be settled as the overall budget is compiled toward the end of the year.

Research funding compounds slowly, which is the strongest argument for committing it before the next supply shock rather than after.

POLITICS

What Awaits the Prime Minister When She Comes Home

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Prime Minister Takaichi returns from New York to a domestic agenda that has grown heavier during her absence.

The typhoon recovery comes first. Two people died in landslides, four are missing in Kanagawa and more than 60,000 households lost power, and the government's disaster response will be judged in the days ahead.

The economic agenda is dominated by prices. A food consumption tax cut and a record gasoline subsidy, with a budget of approximately nine trillion yen according to Asahi Shimbun, are the centrepieces of the government's response to the cost of living.

The Bank of Japan's increase in its policy rate to 1.25%, taking effect on Thursday, adds pressure on households with variable-rate loans and on the government's own borrowing costs.

Security policy is the third strand. The revision of the three security documents raises questions about spending levels and how to pay for them.

The Cabinet's request for a tenfold increase in its public relations budget, framed as a defence against cognitive warfare, will face scrutiny in budget negotiations.

The sub-capital concept, in which six prefectures and six designated cities have expressed interest, raises

questions of cost and fairness that the government will have to address.

Relations with China and South Korea will be shaped by the week's summits and by the trilateral statement opposing economic coercion.

Public support offers room for manoeuvre, with cabinet approval at 58.3% in the latest ANN poll.

How she uses that support on her return will define the autumn.

POLITICS

How a Governor Calls In the Troops: Disaster Dispatch Explained

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Kanagawa's request for Self-Defense Forces relief this week followed a procedure laid down in the Self-Defense Forces Act, under which disaster dispatches are ordinarily made at the request of a prefectural governor.

The governor's request goes to the defence minister or a designated commander, who orders units to deploy. The same governor asks for the withdrawal when the work is done.

Municipal mayors cannot request a dispatch directly, but they can ask their governor to do so, and if communications fail they can notify the Self-Defense Forces of the situation themselves.

The rules were loosened after the Great Hanshin earthquake of 1995, when criticism of the time taken to deploy troops in Kobe led to clearer provisions for units to move on their own initiative in emergencies where a request cannot wait.

Autonomous dispatch is still the exception. The system is designed to keep civilian authorities in charge of domestic operations, a principle that reflects Japan's post-war approach to its armed forces.

Once deployed, troops carry out search and rescue, medical support, water supply, transport and the clearing of roads, under the direction of their own commanders but in co-ordination with the prefecture.

Their equipment gives them capabilities that police and fire services lack, from helicopters able to lift people off isolated slopes to engineering units that can open roads.

Disaster relief has become the most familiar face of the Self-Defense Forces for most Japanese people. The deployment after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, the largest in their history, changed public attitudes toward the organisation.

Dispatches of the kind Kanagawa requested are routine by comparison, and they are a normal part of the response to severe typhoons.

The dispatch ends when the governor judges that civilian services can manage alone.

POLITICS

The Law That Pays for Shelters, Meals and Emergency Repairs

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The Disaster Relief Act is the legal backbone of Japan's immediate response to large disasters, and prefectures decide whether to apply it after events such as Typhoon No. 25.

When the act is applied to a municipality, the costs of specified relief are borne by the prefecture, with the national government covering a large share of the burden.

The relief it covers is concrete: running evacuation shelters, supplying food and drinking water, providing clothing and bedding, medical care, the rescue of people in danger, and the removal of debris from homes.

It also covers emergency temporary housing for people whose homes are uninhabitable, including prefabricated units and privately rented flats provided at public expense.

Emergency repairs are another element, paying for minimum repairs that allow people to go on living in damaged homes rather than moving to shelters.

The law dates from 1947, shortly after the war, and has been revised repeatedly as disasters exposed gaps.

Application depends on the scale of damage, measured largely by the number of homes destroyed relative to the population, and on whether many people face continuing difficulty in obtaining basic necessities.

Prefectures can apply the act before the full extent of damage is known when people are at risk, a flexibility used increasingly in recent years.

Its counterpart for longer-term recovery is the law supporting the reconstruction of victims' livelihoods, which provides cash payments to households whose homes are destroyed or badly damaged.

Residents do not usually apply for Disaster Relief Act support directly; it reaches them through shelters, municipal services and temporary housing programmes.

POLITICS

Seventeen Names and Twenty-Four Years of Waiting

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The abduction issue that the Prime Minister will raise at the United Nations, and that families are pressing in Washington this week, has shaped Japan's relationship with North Korea for more than two decades.

North Korean agents abducted Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s, taking them from beaches, towns and cities, and in some cases from overseas.

The case that came to define the issue is that of Megumi Yokota, who was 13 when she was abducted in 1977 on her way home from school in Niigata.

For years North Korea denied involvement. In 2002, at a summit in Pyongyang with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Kim Jong Il admitted that North Korean agents had abducted Japanese citizens and apologised.

Five abductees returned to Japan that year. North Korea claimed that eight others had died, offering accounts and remains that Japan found unconvincing, and said the rest had never entered the country.

The Japanese government officially recognises 17 people as abductees and says that others may also have been taken.

The families' association has campaigned since 1997, and its members have met successive prime ministers and American presidents.

Talks with North Korea have stalled for years. Pyongyang maintains the issue is resolved, and Japan maintains that it cannot be resolved until all abductees are returned.

Time is the cruellest part of the story. Many parents of abductees have died without seeing their children again.

Each new prime minister pledges to resolve the issue, and each new speech is measured by the families against the years that have passed.

POLITICS

Why Tokyo Is Rewriting Its Security Documents Only Four Years After the Last Ones

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The revision of Japan's three security documents, which the Takaichi government has placed on its agenda, returns to texts adopted as recently as December 2022.

The three are the National Security Strategy, which sets the overall direction; the National Defense Strategy, which describes how the country will defend itself; and the Defense Buildup Program, which sets out equipment and spending.

The 2022 documents were landmarks. They committed Japan to raising defence and related spending to 2% of GDP by fiscal 2027 and to acquiring counterstrike capabilities able to hit launch sites in an enemy's territory.

Revising them within four years reflects how quickly the security environment has changed, including North Korea's continued missile development, Chinese military activity around Japan and the war in Ukraine.

It also reflects the priorities of a prime minister who has long argued for a stronger defence posture.

Washington's pressure is part of the picture. The United States has pressed its allies to spend more, and figures well above 2% of GDP have been discussed in allied capitals.

Financing is the difficult part. The 2022 plan relied partly on tax increases whose timing was repeatedly deferred, and any higher target will raise the same question more sharply.

Economic security is likely to feature more

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prominently, reflecting concern about supply chains for minerals, semiconductors and energy.

Revisions of this kind are prepared by the National Security Secretariat and approved by the Cabinet after consultation with the ruling parties.

The alliance with the United States, the subject of today's summit, remains the foundation on which all three documents rest.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: What the Warning System Did Right, and What It Cannot Do

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Typhoon No. 25 tested every layer of Japan's warning system at once, and the system largely did what it was built to do.

The meteorological agency gave advance notice of a linear rainband over Tokyo and Shizuoka half a day before it was expected, an instrument that did not exist a few years ago.

Municipalities issued evacuation orders to more than 1.9 million people across the capital and five surrounding prefectures, and Sakura City escalated to Level 5 as the Takasaki River flooded.

Railways announced suspensions before the wind arrived rather than during it, and Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways cancelled 260 flights.

Those decisions are all made by different bodies under different rules, and the fact that they moved in the same direction at roughly the same time is the product of years of practice.

None of it could hold up a hillside. Two people died in landslides, one of them a 51-year-old man repairing a road in Sodegaura, and four people are missing in Kanagawa.

Landslides are the hazard warning systems handle worst, because they give little visible notice and can occur after the rain has stopped, when people have understandably relaxed.

The second weakness is time. Warnings work for people who can act on them, and they reach an ageing population in which many residents need help to move and fewer neighbours are available to provide it.

The third is repetition. Parts of Chiba took this storm on ground still wet from heavy rain earlier in the month, which means the local risk was higher than a single storm's rainfall figures suggested.

Reviews will follow, as they do after every major Japanese typhoon, and they tend to produce incremental improvements rather than dramatic ones.

That is appropriate for a system that is mostly working. The deaths it did not prevent are the ones the review should study most closely.

INTERNATIONAL

Beijing Confirms Xi's State Visit to the United States, With the Summit Set for Thursday

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

China's Foreign Ministry has announced a state visit to the United States by President Xi Jinping, with the American-Chinese summit to be held on Thursday, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

A state visit is the highest grade of official visit, carrying ceremonial elements that a working visit lacks, and its announcement signals that both governments expect the meeting to produce something they want to be seen producing.

Rare earth elements and artificial intelligence are expected to be the main subjects, the same two that dominated the ministerial-level talks that preceded the announcement.

The United States has proposed to China a system of mutual notification for accidents involving artificial intelligence, Yomiuri Shimbun reported, with the aim of balancing development against the management of risk.

For Japan the sequencing matters more than the ceremony. Prime Minister Takaichi meets President Trump on Tuesday, two days before the American and Chinese leaders meet, and the subjects overlap almost entirely.

The foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea have said they firmly oppose economic coercion, a phrase read as a reference to Chinese controls on rare earth exports.

That statement and the state visit arrived in the same week, which describes the American position accurately: co-ordinating with allies against Chinese pressure while negotiating directly with Beijing.

Chinese state visits to the United States have historically been occasions for commercial announcements, including aircraft orders and agricultural purchases, and preparatory talks of this kind usually extend to trade as well as technology.

Japanese manufacturers are exposed to both halves of the argument, through Chinese controls on the minerals they use and American controls on the equipment they sell.

Tokyo's markets reopen on Thursday after four closed days, and the summit's results will be priced in the same session as the Bank of Japan's new interest rate.

INTERNATIONAL

Xi's Second State Visit to Washington, Eleven Years After the First

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Xi Jinping's state visit to the United States, announced by China's Foreign Ministry, will be his second, following the visit he made to Washington in September 2015.

That earlier visit, hosted by President Barack Obama, produced agreements on climate change and a pledge by both governments not to conduct or knowingly support cyber theft of commercial secrets.

It also came with a large order for American aircraft, placed during the Chinese leader's stop in Seattle, an example of the commercial announcements that typically accompany such visits.

Relations deteriorated sharply in the years that followed, through trade wars, technology controls and disputes over Taiwan, the South China Sea and the pandemic.

Chinese leaders' state visits to Washington have been rare markers of the relationship's condition. Hu Jintao made one in January 2011, and each visit has been preceded by lengthy negotiation over its outcomes.

This week's visit will be judged on rare earths, artificial intelligence and trade, according to reports of the preparatory ministerial talks.

Protocol conveys meaning. A state visit brings an arrival ceremony, a state dinner and the full honours of the host government, signalling the importance each side attaches to the relationship.

For Japan, the ceremony matters less than the substance, particularly on the minerals Japanese manufacturers depend on.

Prime Minister Takaichi's meeting with President Trump two days earlier gives Tokyo a chance to register its concerns first.

The summit on Thursday will be followed closely in every Asian capital.

INTERNATIONAL

AfD Wins Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the CDU Falls Out of a State Parliament for the First Time

Chancellor Merz called the result a disaster; the SPD is expected to try to govern with the Left and the Greens

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The far-right Alternative for Germany became the largest party in Sunday's state election in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, in north-eastern Germany, while Chancellor Friedrich Merz's Christian Democratic Union failed to win a single seat, Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

According to the preliminary official result reported in Germany, the AfD won 38.2% of the vote and the Social Democrats of state premier Manuela Schwesig 35.5%. The CDU took 4.9%, just below the 5% threshold needed to enter the state parliament.

It is the first time the CDU has been left without representation in a German state parliament, a remarkable outcome for the party that has led the federal government for much of the post-war era.

Merz called the result a disaster, and said on election night that he intends to remain party leader and chancellor.

The AfD's victory does not bring it into government. The other parties refuse to form coalitions with it, and the SPD is expected to seek a coalition with the Left

and the Greens, both of which cleared the threshold.

The result follows the state election in Saxony-Anhalt two weeks earlier, in which the AfD won around 44% of the vote. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is now the third state in which it is the largest party.

The election was also the first in the state in which 16-year-olds could vote, and Berlin held its own state election on the same day.

For Japan, German politics matters through the European Union, whose trade and regulatory positions are shaped substantially by Berlin and reach Japanese exporters directly.

Germany and Japan have deepened security co-operation in recent years, and a weakened chancellor faces less room for initiatives abroad while his party fights for its position at home.

The CDU's collapse in a state it once governed will intensify debate within the party about how to respond to the AfD, a debate that has divided it for years.

INTERNATIONAL

Why a Party Can Win 38% and Still Not Govern: Germany's State Elections Explained

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The Alternative for Germany won more votes than any other party in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on Sunday, and it is almost certain to remain in opposition.

The explanation lies in how German coalitions work. Governments are formed by parties that together hold a majority of seats, and the other parties have refused to form coalitions with the AfD.

That refusal, often described as a firewall, reflects the judgment of Germany's established parties that the AfD's positions place it outside the democratic consensus. Parts of the party are under observation by domestic intelligence agencies.

The 5% threshold shapes the arithmetic. Parties below it win no seats in the proportional allocation, and the seats are distributed among those above it.

On Sunday the Christian Democratic Union won 4.9% and the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance 4.8%, according to the preliminary official result reported in Germany, so neither entered the state parliament.

Their exclusion means the parliament is divided among four parties: the AfD, the Social Democrats, the Left and the Greens. The Social Democrats, the Left and the Greens together are expected to have enough seats to govern.

The threshold exists to prevent the fragmentation that weakened the Weimar Republic's parliament, and it has been a stable feature of German democracy since the post-war period.

The CDU's failure to cross it in a state election is without precedent, and it follows years of decline in the east of the country.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is small, with about 1.3 million eligible voters, but its results are read nationally, especially after the AfD's success in Saxony-Anhalt two weeks earlier.

The next test for the federal government will be how the CDU responds, and whether Chancellor Merz's position within his party is affected.

INTERNATIONAL

A Chancellor Who Began Weak Faces the East

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who called Sunday's result in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern a disaster, has governed from a narrower base than any recent predecessor.

His Christian Democrats and their Bavarian sister party won the federal election of February 2025 with 28.5% of the vote, while the Alternative for Germany came second with 20.8%, its best national result.

Merz formed a coalition with the Social Democrats, and in May 2025 he became the first chancellor candidate in post-war Germany to fail to win the required majority in the Bundestag's first vote, succeeding only in a second round later the same day.

That start set the tone for a government that has struggled with a stagnant economy, disputes over migration and the costs of rearmament.

The AfD's strength is concentrated in the former East German states. In Thuringia in 2024, it became the

first far-right party since the Second World War to win a German state election.

This month's results in Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern extend that pattern, and they show the CDU being squeezed between the AfD and the Social Democrats in the east.

The other parties' refusal to govern with the AfD keeps it out of power but leaves it free to campaign against every coalition formed to exclude it.

Merz has said he intends to remain party leader and chancellor, according to reports from election night.

For Japan, a stable German government matters because of Germany's weight in European trade and security policy, and because Tokyo and Berlin have deepened their defence co-operation.

A chancellor preoccupied with his party's survival at home has less room for initiatives abroad.

INTERNATIONAL

What China Controls, and Why the World Noticed

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

China's restrictions on exports of rare earth elements are the background to this week's statement by Japan, the United States and South Korea opposing economic coercion.

China mines a large share of the world's rare earths, and its dominance in the chemical processing that turns ore into usable materials is greater still.

Rare earths go into the permanent magnets used in electric motors, wind turbines, military equipment and consumer electronics, which makes them a bottleneck for industries that governments regard as strategic.

Japan learned this in 2010, when shipments to Japan were disrupted during a territorial dispute. The episode prompted a national effort to diversify sources and reduce consumption that continues today.

China has since extended export controls to other materials, including gallium and germanium, which are used in semiconductors, and introduced licensing requirements for several rare earths.

Licensing systems give Beijing discretion. Exports can be approved promptly, delayed or refused, and the uncertainty itself affects manufacturers' planning.

Parts of China's broader controls have been adjusted in the course of trade negotiations with the United States, which is why rare earths are expected to feature at Thursday's summit.

The allied response combines investment in mining and processing elsewhere, including in Australia and the United States, with stockpiling and research into alternatives.

Japan's education ministry will fund research into substitutes for rare earths and other important resources next fiscal year, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Building independent processing capacity takes years, and until it exists, the statements of opposition remain more a signal than a solution.

INTERNATIONAL

Russia's Ruling Party Claims a Landslide in a Vote Without Real Opposition

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Russia's ruling United Russia party has won a landslide in the parliamentary elections that closed at the weekend, while Ukrainian drones attacked the area around Moscow during the voting.

The result was never in doubt. Genuine opposition parties have been excluded, prominent critics are imprisoned, exiled or dead, and independent media have been closed or driven abroad.

Elections held under those conditions are demonstrations of administrative control rather than contests, and they are organised to show that the state can deliver the turnout and result it intends.

The State Duma has functioned for years as a body that endorses decisions made elsewhere, and its new composition changes nothing about how Russia is governed.

The drone attacks during the vote carried a clearer message, showing that Ukraine can reach the Russian capital's surroundings at a moment of political visibility.

Independent international observation of Russian

INTERNATIONAL

elections has effectively ceased, which leaves official figures and whatever domestic monitoring survives as the only account of the count.

For Japan the vote is a signal of the Kremlin's confidence that the war is sustainable at home, and of the absence of any domestic pressure for change.

Japan's own relationship with Russia remains frozen. Talks on the Northern Territories stopped after the invasion, and Japan has joined Group of Seven sanctions while continuing to buy liquefied natural gas from the Sakhalin projects.

An American bill allowing tariffs of up to 100% on large buyers of Russian energy now threatens that arrangement, and Japanese procurement costs with it.

The Democratic Party for the People leader Yuichiro Tamaki's visit to Kyiv, reported this week, offered a Japanese counterpoint to the Moscow result.

INTERNATIONAL

Four Islands and a Frozen Treaty: Where Japan and Russia Stand

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Russia's parliamentary elections, which ended in a landslide for the ruling party, change nothing in the one bilateral dispute that has defined Japan's relationship with Moscow since 1945.

The Northern Territories, as Japan calls them, are the islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri and Shikotan and the Habomai group, off the north-eastern tip of Hokkaido. Soviet forces occupied them at the end of the Second World War.

Japan and the Soviet Union restored diplomatic relations in 1956. Their joint declaration that year provided for the handover of Shikotan and the Habomai islands after the conclusion of a peace treaty, which has never been signed.

Negotiations continued intermittently for decades, with periods of optimism that never produced agreement.

In March 2022, after Japan joined sanctions over the invasion of Ukraine, Russia announced that it was suspending the peace treaty talks.

It also ended programmes that had allowed former Japanese residents and their families to visit the islands without visas, including visits to ancestral graves.

Former islanders, whose average age is now very high, had placed great value on those visits, and their suspension has been one of the quieter human costs of the war.

Russia has meanwhile increased its military presence on the islands and promoted economic development there.

The Japanese government's position remains that the islands are an inherent part of Japan's territory, and that the dispute must be resolved before a peace treaty can be concluded.

No resumption of talks is in prospect while the war continues.

INTERNATIONAL

US Sanctions on the International Criminal Court Could Include a Ban on Dollar Settlements

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The United States is preparing sanctions against the International Criminal Court, and reports indicate the measures could include a ban on settlements in dollars.

A dollar ban would be one of the most damaging measures available to Washington. Much of the world's international payment system runs through dollar clearing, and banks everywhere avoid transactions that could expose them to American penalties.

American sanctions imposed on court officials in 2020 complicated their banking and travel without halting the court's work, and were lifted the following year; further measures against individual officials followed in 2025. Measures aimed at the institution's finances would reach further.

The court, based in The Hague, prosecutes genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression where national courts are unable or unwilling to act.

The United States has never accepted the court's jurisdiction over its citizens, a position held by administrations of both parties.

Japan is a party to the court's founding treaty and one

of its largest financial contributors, which places Tokyo in an awkward position as the Prime Minister prepares to speak about the rule of law at the United Nations.

Japanese governments have treated support for international legal institutions as central to foreign policy, not least because Japan's maritime positions rest on international law.

Tokyo's usual approach in disagreements with Washington is to restate its principles in general terms and avoid direct criticism, and that is likely to be tested if the measures are as broad as reported.

European governments, most of them parties to the court, have opposed similar American measures in the past.

The sanctions' scope, and any exemptions, will determine how far the court's operations are affected.

INTERNATIONAL

A Japanese Judge Presides Over the Court Washington Plans to Sanction

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The International Criminal Court, against which the United States is reported to be preparing sanctions, is led by a Japanese judge.

Tomoko Akane was elected president of the court in March 2024, the first Japanese national to hold the post.

Before joining the court she had a long career as a prosecutor in Japan and served in diplomatic roles, including as an ambassador for international judicial co-operation.

The presidency is responsible for the administration of the court, while its prosecutors investigate cases and its judges try them.

Her position gives Japan an unusual stake in the dispute. Japan is a party to the Rome Statute that created the court and one of its largest financial contributors.

American sanctions imposed on court officials in 2020 were lifted the following year, and further measures against individual officials followed in 2025.

Reports this week indicate that the new measures could include a ban on settlements in dollars, which would affect the court's ability to pay staff and suppliers through the international banking system.

The court has consistently described such pressure as an attack on its judicial independence, a position its member states have generally supported.

For Tokyo, the dispute lands awkwardly beside the Prime Minister's plan to speak about the rule of law at the United Nations this week.

How Japan responds, and whether it raises the matter with Washington, will be watched by other member states.

INTERNATIONAL

Hamas Official Says the Group Accepts the Gaza Roadmap 'All at Once'

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

A Hamas official has said the group accepts the Gaza roadmap all at once, according to reports, a formulation that suggests acceptance of the plan as a whole rather than in stages.

Statements of this kind from Hamas officials have often preceded lengthy disputes over interpretation, and the significance of the remark will depend on what the group means by acceptance and what conditions it attaches.

Negotiations over Gaza have repeatedly foundered on sequencing: which obligations are fulfilled first, how compliance is verified and who governs the territory afterward.

Acceptance all at once, if meant literally, would address the sequencing problem by committing the group to the entire framework rather than to its first phase.

Israel's response, and that of the mediators who have carried messages between the parties, will determine whether the statement changes anything on the ground.

For Gaza's population, the humanitarian situation remains the measure that matters, and any agreement that brings sustained aid and reconstruction would be welcomed by aid agencies.

Japan has provided humanitarian assistance for Gaza and has an interest in stability across the Middle East, from which it imports the overwhelming majority of its crude oil.

The Prime Minister plans to express support for strengthening the region's energy supply in her speech to the United Nations, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The Gulf conflict, now in its seventh month, and the war in Gaza are separate conflicts that shape the same regional environment.

The coming days will show whether the official's words represent a change of position or a change of phrasing.

ECONOMY

The Visa System Behind Japan's Foreign Farmhands

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The joint investigation into illegal employment launched by the Immigration Services Agency and other ministries, reported by the Japan Agricultural News, touches a sector that has come to depend on foreign labour through a system introduced only seven years ago.

The specified skilled worker status was created in April 2019 to allow foreign nationals to work in sectors facing severe labour shortages.

It has two tiers. The first allows workers with defined skills and Japanese language ability to stay for up to five years, generally without bringing their families. The second, for more skilled workers, can be renewed and allows family members to join them.

The number of eligible fields has been expanded over time, reaching 16 in 2024, and includes nursing care, construction, food service, manufacturing and agriculture.

Agriculture, along with fisheries, is unusual in allowing workers to be dispatched by staffing agencies, because the work is seasonal and varies from region to region.

The system sits alongside the technical intern training programme, which has been criticised for years over abuses including excessive fees, restrictions on changing employers and poor working conditions.

The government has decided to replace technical intern training with a new system of employment for skill development by 2027, intended to allow workers greater freedom to change jobs.

Illegal employment includes working without permission and working outside the permitted field, and employers who hire in breach of the rules face penalties.

Enforcement and expansion are two halves of the same policy. Japan wants more foreign workers in the fields that need them, and it wants them employed within the rules.

The details of the new joint investigation, including its scope and duration, have not been published.

ECONOMY

Immigration Agency Joins Other Ministries to Tackle Illegal Employment

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The Immigration Services Agency is conducting a joint investigation with relevant ministries aimed at correcting illegal employment, according to the Japan Agricultural News.

Illegal employment covers foreign nationals working without the right to do so, and those working outside the terms of their residence status, such as in a job category their visa does not allow.

Employers can be penalised for hiring people without work authorisation, and the law holds them responsible for checking a worker's status.

The agricultural newspaper's interest reflects the sector's dependence on foreign labour. Farms across Japan rely on foreign workers for harvesting, packing and livestock work that local labour markets cannot supply.

Japan's foreign worker population has grown rapidly over the past decade under several schemes, including the specified skilled worker system for defined occupations.

The technical intern training programme, long criticised for abuses including debt bondage and restrictions on changing employers, is due to be

replaced by a new system of employment for skill development by 2027.

Joint investigations across ministries are intended to catch cases that fall between jurisdictions, where labour, agriculture and immigration authorities each see only part of the picture.

Enforcement has a humanitarian dimension. Workers employed illegally are often those most exposed to exploitation, because they cannot complain without risking their own status.

The labour shortage that draws workers to Japan is structural, driven by an ageing population, and it will not be resolved by enforcement alone.

The agency has not published details of the investigation's scope.

ECONOMY

Four Days Without Tokyo: Why Holidays Make Currency Markets Jumpy

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Tokyo's markets are closed from Monday to Wednesday, but the yen does not stop trading. It changes hands around the clock in Singapore, London and New York.

What changes is the depth of the market. With Japanese banks, exporters and investors largely absent, fewer participants are available to absorb large orders, and prices can move further on smaller volumes.

Currency traders call this thin liquidity, and it is when sudden, sharp moves are most likely.

The most famous example came during Japan's New Year holiday. On January 3, 2019, the yen surged against the dollar within minutes in the early Asian morning, a move largely attributed to automated trading in a market emptied by holidays.

That episode reversed within hours, but it left a lasting lesson: holiday markets are more fragile than ordinary ones.

This week the yen weakened into the low 157 range in New York, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, after spending September recovering and then losing ground again.

The Bank of Japan's new policy rate of 1.25% takes effect on Thursday, and the American-Chinese summit falls the same day, giving markets two reasons to move just as Tokyo returns.

Japanese authorities can act in any market, not only in Tokyo trading hours. The joint intervention with the United States on July 31 was carried out during New York trading.

For exporters and importers, holiday periods are a reason to hedge in advance rather than wait, since conditions on the return can differ sharply from those at the start of the break.

The first Tokyo session on Thursday will show whether the holiday produced any surprises.

INTERNATIONAL

What Makes a Visit a 'State Visit'

Compiled by the International Desk

A state visit is the highest form of official visit between countries.

It is extended by a head of state to another head of state.

In Washington, it traditionally begins with an arrival ceremony at the White House.

The ceremony includes military honours and a review of troops.

A formal state dinner is held in the visitor's honour.

Working visits and official visits carry fewer ceremonial elements.

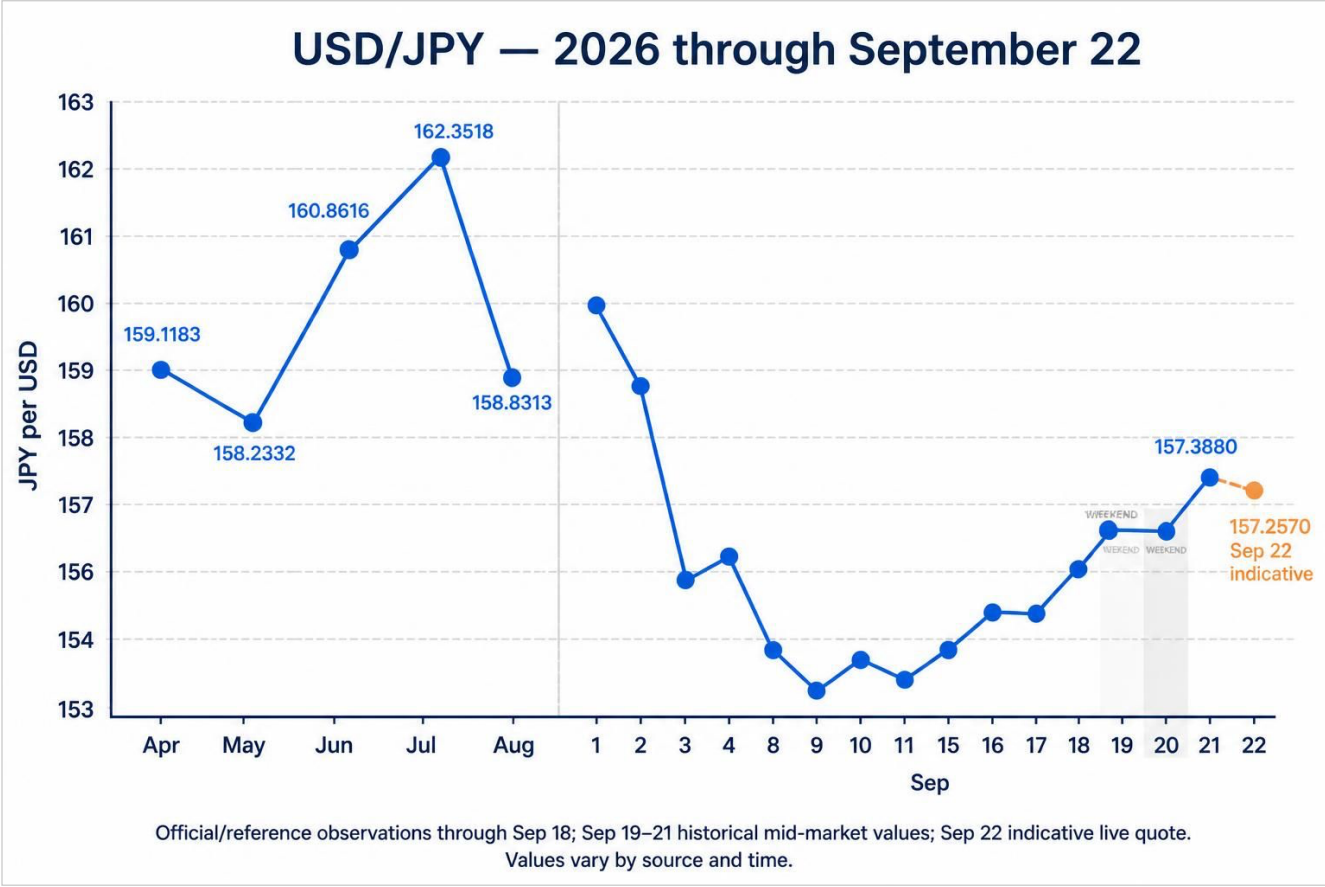
The choice of format signals how much importance the host attaches to the relationship.

Xi Jinping's last state visit to the United States was in September 2015.

His visit this week includes a summit with President Trump on Thursday.

Rare earths and artificial intelligence are expected to top the agenda.

ECONOMY



The dollar-yen rate in 2026: monthly readings from April to August (left) and daily readings through September 22 (right). The dollar peaked at 162.3518 yen in July, fell to just above 153 on September 9 and has climbed back to 157.3880; the September 22 value is an indicative live quote. Chart: WPM Productions

ECONOMY

The Dollar Buys 157 Yen Again, Erasing Most of September's Recovery

The currency weakened in New York into the low 157 range, and Tokyo cannot respond until Thursday

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter, with Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The yen weakened in New York into the low 157 range against the dollar, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, with Tokyo's markets closed for the holiday and unable to trade until Thursday.

The chart on this page, produced by WPM Productions, traces the dollar-yen rate through 2026. It puts the rate at 157.3880 on Monday and gives an indicative quote of 157.2570 for today.

Read from left to right, the chart tells a story in two parts. The monthly readings rise from 159.1183 in April and 158.2332 in May to 160.8616 in June and a peak of 162.3518 in July, before falling back to 158.8313 in August.

That July peak was the month in which the yen slid to 40-year lows. On July 31 Japan and the United States bought yen together in New York trading, the first joint intervention by the two countries since 2011, which the finance ministry confirmed on August 3.

The September panel on the right shows the daily path. The dollar started the month at about 160 yen and fell sharply within days, reaching its low for the month just above 153 on September 9.

It then climbed steadily, to about 155 on the 16th and about 156 on the 18th, the day the Bank of Japan raised its policy rate to 1.25%, and to 157.39 on Monday.

In other words, the yen has given back most of the ground it recovered in early September, and it has done so in the days around an interest rate increase that was supposed to support it.

The explanation is the one markets have offered all year. A single quarter-point increase does little to close the gap between Japanese and American interest rates, and the currency responds to the expected path of rates rather than to any one decision.

The Federal Reserve's target range stands at 3.75% to 4.00%, against a Japanese policy rate that becomes 1.25% on Thursday.

Last week the yen briefly surged in New York on expectations of rate checks and possible intervention, and one market comment quoted by Kyodo News described official action as a drop in the ocean.

The chart's own footnote is worth reading. Its observations are official reference rates through September 18, historical mid-market values from the 19th to the 21st, and an indicative live quote for today, and it notes that values vary by source and time.

That caution applies to every exchange rate quoted in the press. Kyodo News put the rate at 156.68 to 156.96 at 6 a.m. on Monday, a figure taken at a different hour from a different source.

For households, the level matters more than the daily movement. A dollar at 157 yen keeps imported food, fuel and consumer goods expensive, which is part of why the gasoline subsidy, with a budget of approximately nine trillion yen according to Asahi Shimbun, remains at a record level.

For exporters the effect runs the other way, flattering the yen value of overseas earnings, which is why corporate results have held up better than the

domestic mood.

Tokyo reopens on Thursday, the day the new policy rate takes effect and the day President Trump and President Xi Jinping meet, and the currency will be traded until then in London and New York without a Tokyo session to anchor it.

ECONOMY

The Intervention in July, and Why the Yen Has Slipped Again

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The most important date on today's exchange-rate chart falls in the monthly panel on the left. On July 31, Japanese and American authorities bought yen together during trading in New York.

The finance ministry confirmed the joint action on August 3. It was the first co-ordinated intervention by the two countries since 2011, when they acted together to weaken the yen after the Great East Japan Earthquake.

This time the aim was the opposite. The yen had slid to 40-year lows in July, and the chart's monthly reading for July, 162.3518, is its highest of the year.

Joint intervention carries more weight than unilateral action because it removes any suspicion that Washington disapproves, and markets treat it as a signal about policy rather than simply as a transaction.

The yen strengthened after the intervention and the August reading on the chart falls to 158.8313. The daily panel shows a further rally in early September, to a low for the dollar just above 153 yen on the 9th.

Since then the rally has faded. The dollar has climbed back to about 157, including in the days after the Bank of Japan's rate increase on September 18.

That pattern is consistent with what economists have said all year: intervention buys time, and the interest rate gap between Japan and the United States decides the direction.

The Federal Reserve's target range stands at 3.75% to 4.00%. Japan's policy rate becomes 1.25% on Thursday.

Talk of rate checks, in which officials call dealers to ask for prices as a warning, returned last week, and one market comment quoted by Kyodo News called official action a drop in the ocean.

The chart ends at an indicative 157.2570 for today. Where it goes next depends more on the two central banks than on anything a finance ministry can do in a single afternoon.

ECONOMY

RCEP Ministers Discuss Bringing In New Members

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Ministers from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership have discussed expanding the number of participating countries and issued a joint statement.

The partnership, which entered into force in 2022, links the ten members of the Association of Southeast

Asian Nations with Japan, China, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand, forming one of the largest trading blocs in the world by population and output.

It was the first free trade agreement to include Japan, China and South Korea together, which gave it strategic weight beyond its tariff schedules.

Several economies have applied to join, including Hong Kong and Sri Lanka, and the accession process requires agreement from existing members.

RCEP's rules are less demanding than those of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which Japan did much to preserve after the United States withdrew from its predecessor.

The two agreements serve different purposes for Japan. The trans-Pacific pact sets high standards; RCEP covers the supply chains that run through China and South-East Asia.

Expansion discussions come at a delicate moment, with the United States applying tariffs to most Japanese exports and negotiating directly with China over minerals and technology this week.

For Japanese manufacturers, RCEP's value lies in its rules of origin, which allow components from across member states to count toward preferential tariff treatment.

Any new member would have to be accepted by all fifteen existing ones, which gives each a veto and makes enlargement slow.

The joint statement signals willingness rather than a timetable.

ECONOMY

Markets, Rates and Prices at a Glance

Compiled by the Economics Desk

MARKETS CLOSED: Tokyo is closed today (citizens' holiday) and tomorrow (Autumnal Equinox Day). Normal trading resumes Thursday, Sept. 24.

CURRENCY, NEW YORK: The yen weakened into the low 157 range against the dollar, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

WPM PRODUCTIONS CHART: USD/JPY 157.3880 on Sept. 21; indicative 157.2570 on Sept. 22. September low just above 153 on Sept. 9.

KYODO, 6 A.M. SEPT. 21: 1 dollar = 156.68-156.96 yen. 1 euro = 179.92-180.34 yen.

BANK OF JAPAN: Policy rate of 1.25%, decided Sept. 18, applies from Sept. 24. Highest in approximately 31 years.

FEDERAL RESERVE: Target range 3.75%-4.00%.

DEPOSITS: Megabanks reported moving ordinary deposit interest rates to 0.5%.

NIKKEI 225 (Sept. 18 close): 65,018.95, up 882.70, a third consecutive gain. TOPIX (Sept. 18 close): 4,091.14, down 3.05.

RICE: Five-kilogram average in the 2,000-yen range. Buyback of stockpiled rice continues.

EUROPEAN UNION: Google fined 72.5 billion yen, according to TV Asahi News.

WEEK AHEAD: Japan-US summit today, Eastern Time. US-China summit Thursday. Tokyo reopens and the new BOJ rate takes effect Thursday.

BUSINESS

EU Fines Google 72.5 Billion Yen, and Japanese Firms Watch Brussels Closely

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The European Union has fined Google 72.5 billion yen, according to TV Asahi News, a penalty that has added to speculation about digital regulation affecting Japanese companies.

The European Commission enforces competition law across the bloc and has fined Google repeatedly over the past decade, in cases concerning its shopping comparison service, its Android mobile operating system and its advertising business.

Its record in court is mixed. The Court of Justice upheld the shopping decision in 2024, while the General Court annulled a separate fine over Google's AdSense advertising contracts the same year.

European competition law does not prohibit dominance itself. It prohibits the abuse of a dominant position, and the Commission has to show that a company's conduct harmed competition rather than

merely that it was large.

Fines can reach up to 10% of a company's worldwide annual turnover, although the Commission's penalties have been well below that ceiling.

The EU's Digital Markets Act adds a newer layer, imposing obligations in advance on designated gatekeeper platforms rather than waiting for a case to be proved after the harm.

Japanese companies are affected in two ways. Those operating in Europe are subject to the same rules, and Japanese regulators have been developing their own framework for digital platforms, partly modelled on European experience.

Japan's law promoting competition in smartphone software took full effect last December, placing obligations on the providers of dominant mobile operating systems and app stores.

Washington has treated European fines on American technology companies as a trade grievance, which gives any digital regulation in Japan an alliance dimension as well as a commercial one.

The editorial page today takes up the argument over what such fines achieve, alongside Taro Suzuki's cartoon.

BUSINESS

Beyond the Fine: The European Rulebook Written for Gatekeepers

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The 72.5 billion yen fine on Google reported this week belongs to a European approach to the largest platforms that has two distinct instruments, and the newer one is arguably the more important.

The older instrument is competition law, under which the European Commission investigates conduct after the fact, proves that a dominant company abused its position and imposes a fine. The Google cases of the past decade were brought this way.

The newer instrument is the Digital Markets Act, adopted in 2022, which lists obligations that designated gatekeepers must meet in advance, without the Commission having to prove harm case by case.

The Commission designated the first gatekeepers in September 2023: Alphabet, Amazon, Apple, ByteDance, Meta and Microsoft, with Booking added the following year. Their obligations applied from March 2024.

The obligations include allowing users to uninstall pre-installed apps, permitting alternative app stores and payment systems, not ranking a gatekeeper's own services above rivals' and giving business users access to the data they generate.

The first penalties under the act came in April 2025, when the Commission fined Apple 500 million euros over restrictions on app developers steering users to offers outside the App Store, and Meta 200 million euros over its model of asking users to consent to data use or pay for an ad-free service.

Those sums were modest beside the older competition fines, which reflected the act's emphasis on changing conduct rather than collecting money. Fines under the act can nevertheless reach 10% of worldwide turnover, and 20% for repeat breaches.

Washington has treated both instruments as discrimination against American companies, and the argument has spilled into trade negotiations.

Japan's own smartphone software competition law, in full effect since December, borrows the advance-obligation model for mobile operating systems, app stores and browsers, but applies it more narrowly and with more emphasis on compliance dialogue.

For Japanese firms operating in Europe, both European instruments apply, and the act's obligations are the ones most likely to shape how their products reach European users.

BUSINESS

The Chiba Company Whose Forecasts the Country Reads

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Among the sources reporting on Typhoon No. 25 this week was Weathernews, a name so familiar to Japanese readers that few pause to consider that it is a private company, and one based in the prefecture the storm hit hardest.

Weathernews Inc. is headquartered in Makuhari, in

BUSINESS

Chiba City, and it is among the largest private weather services in the world.

It was founded in 1986 by Hiroyoshi Ishibashi, whose career in weather routing for ships began after a cargo vessel sank in a storm in 1970 with the loss of its crew, an event he described as the origin of his determination to provide forecasts that could save lives.

Marine services remain part of the business, providing routing for shipping fleets, but the company is best known in Japan for its consumer app and its television and online forecasts.

Its distinctive method is crowdsourcing. Millions of users send reports and photographs of the weather where they are, which the company combines with official observations and its own models to refine local forecasts.

During typhoons, that network provides a stream of ground-level information, from flooding on a particular street to the moment rain begins in a specific district.

The company also serves airlines, railways, broadcasters and local governments, and its forecasts are widely quoted alongside those of the Japan Meteorological Agency.

The agency remains the source of official warnings, which only it can issue. Private forecasters add detail and presentation, and they are required to hold licences to issue forecasts.

Japan liberalised weather forecasting in the 1990s, allowing licensed forecasters and companies to compete, and the sector has grown with the rise of smartphones.

This week, as Chiba took the brunt of the storm, the company's own headquarters sat within the region its forecasts were describing.

BUSINESS

JAL and ANA Cancel 260 Flights as the Typhoon Crosses the Holiday

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways cancelled a combined 260 flights because of Typhoon No. 25, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and TV Asahi News.

The cancellations fell in the middle of the first five-day Silver Week in eleven years, a period of heavy domestic travel and some of the highest demand of the autumn.

Airlines decide on cancellations based on forecast wind speeds and directions at the airports involved, because crosswinds beyond an aircraft's limits make landing unsafe.

Haneda and Narita both sit on the shores of the Kanto region, which took the storm's closest approach on Monday evening.

Passengers on cancelled flights are generally offered rebooking or refunds, and the pressure on remaining seats after a large disruption can push rebooked travel back by a day or more.

The airlines also had to reposition aircraft and crews after the storm, because a plane that did not fly to its planned destination is not where the next day's schedule expects it to be.

Ground access compounded the problem. The Keisei Skyliner to Narita was suspended after its tracks flooded, leaving travellers dependent on other rail lines and buses.

Revenue lost on cancelled flights is partly recovered as passengers rebook, unlike hotel nights, which cannot be resold once they have passed.

The airlines' schedules should return to normal today under clear skies, subject to any lingering effects on crew and aircraft positioning.

Travellers should check flight status with their airline before leaving for the airport.

BUSINESS

Flooded Track Stops the Skyliner, Narita's Fastest Link

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The Keisei Skyliner was suspended after its tracks flooded during Typhoon No. 25, cutting the fastest rail connection between central Tokyo and Narita Airport, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and TV Asahi News.

The Skyliner runs from Ueno and Nippori to the airport over the Narita Sky Access line, and it is the service most international visitors use to reach the

city from Narita.

Flooded track cannot be reopened as soon as the water falls. Engineers have to check that the ballast has not been washed out and that signalling and electrical equipment has not been damaged.

The suspension fell on a holiday weekend when outbound and returning travellers were both relying on the airport link.

Other rail routes to Narita, including JR services and Keisei's slower trains, together with airport buses, carried the displaced passengers, but all of them were affected by the same storm.

Narita handles a large share of Japan's international flights, and its access links are part of the country's tourism infrastructure as much as its transport network.

Airport access is a recurring weakness in severe weather. In 2019 a typhoon left thousands of passengers stranded at Narita when road and rail links were cut.

Operators restore services progressively after inspections, and the Skyliner's return depends on the condition of the affected section.

Travellers heading to Narita today should check the status of rail services before setting out.

The episode will add to the case for more resilient airport access, which has been discussed since 2019 with limited progress.

BUSINESS

The Weak Yen's Most Visible Effect Walks the Streets

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The yen's weakness, visible in the chart on the Economy page, has a counterpart that anyone in a Japanese city can see: record numbers of foreign visitors.

Japan received a record of almost 37 million visitors in 2024, surpassing the level reached before the pandemic, and their spending in Japan also reached a record.

A weak yen makes Japan cheap for visitors from abroad. Hotels, meals, transport and shopping that cost the same in yen cost far less in dollars, euros or Hong Kong dollars than they did a few years ago.

Tourism has become one of Japan's most important sources of foreign earnings, and the government has set ambitious targets for future growth.

The boom has costs as well as benefits. Crowding at popular destinations, pressure on housing and strain on transport have prompted measures including visitor caps and fees at some sites.

This week's typhoon showed another side of the industry's exposure. Yomiuri Shimbun reported tourist destinations in chaos during the long weekend, with visitors staying in their hotels.

The suspension of the Keisei Skyliner, the main rail link from Narita used by international arrivals, disrupted travel plans at the height of the holiday.

Visitors unfamiliar with Japanese warning systems depend on hotels, transport operators and multilingual alerts for information during storms.

If the yen strengthens, the flow of visitors could moderate, although Japan's appeal rests on more than price.

For now, with the dollar at about 157 yen, the visitors keep coming.

BUSINESS

How to Claim for Storm Damage: Photographs First, Cleaning Second

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

For households whose homes or cars were damaged by Typhoon No. 25, the order in which things are done in the first days affects how much of the loss is recovered.

Photographs come first. Insurers and municipalities both need evidence of damage, and pictures taken before cleaning begins, showing water lines, damaged goods and the exterior of the building, are the most useful record.

Keeping damaged items until an adjuster has seen them, or at least photographing them thoroughly before disposal, avoids disputes later.

Japanese household insurance usually attaches wind and flood cover to a fire policy. Wind damage, such as roof tiles lifted by the storm, is covered more

widely than flooding, which depends on whether flood cover was included.

Flood policies commonly set thresholds, such as water above floor level or damage above a share of the property's value, and it is worth reading the policy terms before assuming a claim will or will not succeed.

Vehicle flood damage falls under comprehensive motor insurance. A car that has been submerged should not be started, because doing so can cause further damage.

Municipalities issue disaster damage certificates, which are needed for public support and some tax relief, and applying requires the same photographs.

Contractors offering immediate repairs door to door after storms are a known problem. Using established businesses and getting written estimates protects households from fraud.

Insurers typically set up dedicated claim lines after large events, and demand in the first days can be heavy.

Patience is part of the process. Adjusters are dispatched in order of severity, and a large storm produces claims faster than they can be assessed.

BUSINESS

Typhoon Information in Many Languages, for Visitors Who Need It Most

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Foreign visitors caught in this week's typhoon faced an extra difficulty on top of disrupted transport and closed attractions: understanding warnings issued mainly in Japanese.

Japan's disaster information system was designed for residents, and although multilingual services have expanded greatly, visitors often do not know where to find them.

The Japan National Tourism Organization's Safety tips app sends earthquake, tsunami and weather alerts in several languages and includes guidance on what to do.

Many municipalities and railway operators publish updates in English and other languages online, and major stations use multilingual displays and announcements.

Hotels play an important role. Staff are often the first point of contact for guests trying to understand whether trains are running or whether it is safe to go out.

The tourism industry has an interest in getting this right. Visitors who feel informed and safe during a disaster are more likely to return, and those who feel abandoned tell others.

Language is not the only barrier. Visitors may not understand the significance of alert levels or know that trains are suspended in advance of a storm.

Travel insurance and airline policies determine what visitors can recover for disrupted plans, and advice to check conditions before setting out applies equally to them.

This week's disruption to the Keisei Skyliner, the main rail link used by international arrivals at Narita, affected visitors disproportionately.

As clear weather returns, the rest of the holiday offers visitors a chance to resume their plans.

TECHNOLOGY

Washington Proposes an AI Accident Hotline With Beijing

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The United States has proposed to China a system of mutual notification for accidents involving artificial intelligence, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, with ministerial-level talks under way before Thursday's summit.

The aim is to balance the development of the technology against the management of its risks, Yomiuri reported.

Mutual notification arrangements have a long history in security relations between rivals. The United States and the Soviet Union built notification and hotline systems during the Cold War to reduce the chance that an accident would be mistaken for an attack.

Applying the idea to artificial intelligence reflects concern that powerful systems could fail in ways that affect other countries, or that an incident could be misread in a crisis.

What counts as an AI accident is the first question such a system would have to answer. It could cover failures in critical infrastructure, unintended behaviour by autonomous systems or misuse of models for cyber attacks.

A notification channel does not require either side to share its technology, which is what makes it conceivable between governments that are otherwise competing intensely in the field.

The proposal sits alongside export controls that restrict China's access to advanced chips and the equipment that makes them, controls in which Japanese equipment makers are directly involved.

Japan's own approach to artificial intelligence has emphasised promotion and voluntary governance rather than licensing, and Tokyo has supported international co-ordination on safety.

The Prime Minister plans to address misinformation generated by artificial intelligence in her United Nations speech, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Whether Beijing accepts the proposal, and in what form, will be one measure of Thursday's summit.

TECHNOLOGY

From Hiroshima to a Hotline: Japan's Place in AI Diplomacy

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The American proposal for a system of mutual notification on artificial intelligence accidents with China enters a field of diplomacy in which Japan has played an unusually prominent role.

At the Group of Seven summit in Hiroshima in 2023, Japan launched the Hiroshima AI Process, an effort to agree common principles for the development of advanced AI systems.

The process produced international guiding principles and a code of conduct for organisations developing the most capable systems, adopted by G7 leaders later that year.

The approach was voluntary rather than binding, reflecting Japan's preference for promoting the technology while managing its risks through shared expectations.

Japan's domestic framework follows the same philosophy. Its law promoting the research, development and use of AI, enacted in 2025, emphasises promotion and government co-ordination rather than licensing or heavy penalties.

That places Japan between the European Union, which has adopted comprehensive binding rules, and the United States, which has relied more on industry commitments and executive action.

A notification channel between Washington and Beijing would operate at a different level: between governments that regard each other as strategic rivals, focused on preventing incidents from being misread.

The Prime Minister's plan to address AI-generated misinformation in her speech to the General Assembly continues Japan's effort to keep a voice in the global conversation.

Japanese companies are heavy users of AI and significant suppliers of the hardware that supports it, from semiconductor equipment to materials.

Whether Beijing accepts the American proposal will be one of the results watched from Tokyo after Thursday's summit.

TECHNOLOGY

Japan Chose Its Own Route on Platform Rules, and Brussels Is the Comparison

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The European Union's fine on Google this week invites a comparison with Japan's own approach to regulating the largest digital platforms.

Japan's law promoting competition in smartphone software was enacted in 2024 and took full effect in December last year. It places obligations on the providers of dominant mobile operating systems, app stores and browsers.

The Japan Fair Trade Commission designated Apple and Google under the law, and the rules require them to allow alternative app stores and payment methods and to avoid favouring their own services.

The law was influenced by Europe's Digital Markets Act but was designed to be narrower, focusing on the smartphone ecosystem rather than on platforms in general.

TECHNOLOGY

The Fair Trade Commission has also used ordinary competition law. In 2025 it ordered Google to stop requiring Android device makers to give its search app preferential placement, its first order of that kind against one of the largest American platforms.

Japan's approach has tended to emphasise dialogue with companies and compliance reports rather than large fines, a style some critics consider too gentle and supporters consider more effective.

The difference matters because Washington watches foreign digital rules closely. American administrations have treated European enforcement as a trade issue, and Japan negotiates tariffs with the same government.

Japanese companies are affected from both sides. Domestic app developers stand to benefit from more open app stores, while Japanese firms operating in Europe must comply with European rules.

Speculation about digital regulation affecting Japanese companies has risen with the fine on Google, according to TV Asahi News.

The next test of Japan's law will be whether its obligations change what users actually see on their phones.

TECHNOLOGY

The Law That Makes Big Platforms Answer for What They Carry

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The Prime Minister's plan to address misinformation generated by artificial intelligence at the United Nations comes as Japan's own rules for large online platforms are still bedding in.

A law in force since April 2025 requires the largest platforms operating in Japan to respond quickly to requests to remove infringing content, such as defamation and privacy violations, and to be transparent about their removal policies.

Designated platforms must set up systems to receive complaints, decide on them within a set period and inform the person who complained of the outcome.

The law replaced a framework that had focused mainly on limiting platforms' liability, reflecting a shift toward expecting them to act.

Disinformation during disasters is one of the concerns that drove the change. After the Noto Peninsula earthquake in January 2024, false requests for rescue spread on social media, diverting attention from genuine calls for help.

Generative artificial intelligence has made convincing fabricated images and video cheap to produce, adding to the difficulty of verifying what appears online during a crisis.

The government's request for a tenfold increase in its public relations budget, framed as a defence against cognitive warfare, reflects the same concern at the level of foreign influence campaigns.

Japan's approach stops short of making platforms responsible for judging the truth of everything they carry. The law concentrates on infringements of individual rights, where legal standards are clearer.

Civil liberties advocates watch such measures closely, wary that pressure to remove content could spread to legitimate speech.

During this week's typhoon, the safest course for readers remained the simplest: rely on official announcements from municipalities, the meteorological agency and transport operators.

TECHNOLOGY

From Old Phones to Olympic Medals: Japan's Urban Mine

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Japan cannot mine the rare earths and precious metals its industries use, but it holds a vast store of them in a place most people overlook: its discarded electronics.

The idea is known as the urban mine. Phones, computers, appliances and motors contain gold, silver, copper, rare earths and other valuable materials, and Japan's dense stock of old devices makes it one of the richest such deposits in the world.

The Tokyo 2020 Olympics turned the idea into a national project. Between 2017 and 2019, the public donated tens of thousands of tonnes of small electronic devices, including millions of used mobile phones.

The metals recovered were used to make about 5,000 Olympic and Paralympic medals, the first time an

Olympics had sourced its medals entirely from recycled electronics.

Rare earths are harder to recover than gold. They are present in small quantities, often inside magnets bonded into motors and drives, and separating them economically is a technical challenge.

Japanese manufacturers have developed processes to extract magnets from used compressors, motors and hard drives, and recycling has become one strand of the country's strategy to reduce dependence on imported supplies.

Collection is the weak link. Many old devices sit in drawers rather than entering recycling channels, and a law on small appliance recycling relies on municipalities and retailers to gather them.

The education ministry's plan to fund research into alternatives to rare earths next fiscal year complements recycling. Using less of a scarce element is as valuable as recovering it.

This week's summits, in which rare earths are expected to be central, have given the subject fresh urgency.

Readers with old phones in a drawer can take them to municipal collection points or electronics retailers that accept small appliances for recycling.

TECHNOLOGY

The Satellite That Watched the Storm Every Ten Minutes

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The images of Typhoon No. 25 seen on television and phone screens this week came from Himawari-9, the geostationary weather satellite that watches over East Asia and the western Pacific.

Himawari-9 took over operations from its twin, Himawari-8, in December 2022. The two were among the most advanced weather satellites in the world when they entered service.

From its fixed position about 36,000 kilometres above the equator, the satellite images the whole visible disc of the earth every ten minutes, and the area around Japan every two and a half minutes.

That frequency transformed typhoon forecasting. Meteorologists can watch cloud structures develop almost in real time, spotting changes in a storm's intensity and organisation as they happen.

The satellite observes in multiple wavelengths, allowing forecasters to estimate cloud-top temperatures, water vapour and the development of thunderstorms.

Its data are shared with weather services across the region, making Himawari a significant contribution by Japan to international meteorology.

Satellite images are one input among many. Forecasts combine them with radar, surface observations, ocean data and computer models run on supercomputers.

The meteorological agency is preparing a successor satellite, which is expected to add instruments for measuring the vertical structure of the atmosphere, improving forecasts of heavy rain.

The name Himawari, meaning sunflower, has been used for Japan's weather satellites since the first was launched in 1977.

This week, the sunflower watched a storm cross the Kanto coast and move out to sea.

TECHNOLOGY

The Colour-Coded Map That Shows Danger Street by Street

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Residents watching Typhoon No. 25 on their phones this week had access to one of the most useful tools the meteorological agency offers: its Kikikuru risk maps.

The maps show, area by area, how close the danger of landslides, flooding from small rivers and inundation by rain has come to the level at which disasters occur.

They are colour-coded to match the evacuation scale. Yellow indicates caution, red indicates that the danger is rising, and purple means the danger is high enough for everyone in hazard areas to evacuate.

Black is reserved for the highest level, indicating that a disaster may already be occurring, the stage at which moving through the area may itself be dangerous.

The maps are updated frequently, every ten minutes

for the landslide map, using rainfall observations and short-range forecasts.

Their value lies in the detail. A prefecture-wide warning covers a large area; the map shows which valleys and neighbourhoods are approaching danger.

Several private weather apps offer push notifications when the map shows rising danger for a registered location, which can wake residents at night when warnings escalate.

The agency encourages residents to check the map when warnings are issued and to begin evacuating, particularly those who need time, while their area is still red.

Purple is the signal to complete evacuation. Waiting for black is too late.

The maps are available on the agency's website, and many municipalities link to them from their own disaster pages.

COURTS

Boy of Three Injured in Fukuoka Drink-Driving Case Has Died

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

A three-year-old boy who was in critical condition after a drink-driving incident in Fukuoka has died, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

A 68-year-old man had been arrested on suspicion of dangerous driving causing injury after the boy was found unconscious.

Japanese law provides separate offences for dangerous driving causing injury and dangerous driving causing death, and the latter carries substantially heavier penalties.

The offence was strengthened after a case in Fukuoka in 2006, when a drink-driver struck a family's car and pushed it into the sea, killing three young children.

That case changed Japanese law and public attitudes. Liability now extends to those who supply alcohol to a driver, lend a vehicle to someone who has been drinking, or ride as passengers knowing the driver is drunk.

Drink-driving deaths fell sharply after the reforms, and the cases that remain are among the most heavily punished in Japanese criminal law.

Prosecutors will consider the charge in light of the child's death, and the investigation will establish the driver's blood alcohol level and the sequence of events.

A boy of three is at an age when children are most exposed to traffic: small enough to be hidden from a driver's view and too young to judge danger.

The case returns Fukuoka to a subject it knows too well, two decades after the deaths that reshaped the law.

Drink-driving remains among the offences Japanese courts punish most severely where a child has been killed.

COURTS

Former Miyazaki Governor Higashikokubaru Referred to Prosecutors Over Defamation

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Hideo Higashikokubaru, the former governor of Miyazaki Prefecture, has been referred to prosecutors on suspicion of defamation.

A referral of papers to prosecutors, in which police send the file of a case without an arrest, is a routine step in Japanese criminal procedure and does not mean that charges will follow.

Prosecutors decide whether to indict, and a large share of referred cases end without indictment, either for insufficient evidence or because prosecution is judged unnecessary.

Defamation in Japanese criminal law covers publicly stating facts that damage a person's reputation, and it is subject to defences where the statement concerns a matter of public interest, was made for the public benefit and is shown to be true.

Mr. Higashikokubaru is a familiar public figure in Japan, known first as an entertainer and later as a politician who served as governor of Miyazaki from 2007 to 2011.

Criminal defamation cases involving well-known figures have become more common as public argument has moved online, where statements reach large audiences instantly and remain accessible.

The details of the statements in question and the identity of the complainant have not been confirmed in the reports available.

Under Japanese procedure, a person referred to prosecutors remains presumed innocent, and many such cases never reach a courtroom.

Prosecutors will now review the file and decide how to proceed.

Any decision on indictment is likely to take some time.

COURTS

From Comedy Troupe to Governor's Office: Hideo Higashikokubaru

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Hideo Higashikokubaru, referred to prosecutors this week on suspicion of defamation, has had one of the more unusual careers in Japanese public life.

Born in Miyazaki in 1957, he became famous as a comedian under the stage name Sonomanma Higashi, a member of the troupe surrounding the entertainer Beat Takeshi.

He turned to politics after studying at Waseda University's graduate school, and in January 2007 he was elected governor of Miyazaki Prefecture, after the previous governor had resigned in a bid-rigging scandal.

As governor he became known as a tireless promoter of Miyazaki's produce, appearing constantly in the media to sell the prefecture's mangoes, chicken and other products, and giving the region a national profile it had never had.

His term also brought a serious crisis: the 2010 outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease in Miyazaki, which led to the culling of hundreds of thousands of cattle and pigs and devastated the prefecture's livestock industry.

He declined to seek a second term in 2011 and ran instead for governor of Tokyo that year, finishing second to Shintaro Ishihara.

In 2012 he was elected to the House of Representatives, but he resigned the following year and ran for Tokyo governor again in 2014, without success.

He sought to return to the Miyazaki governorship in 2022 but was defeated by the incumbent.

Throughout, he has remained a frequent commentator on television and online, where public argument now takes place before large audiences and where defamation complaints have become more common.

The referral to prosecutors does not mean charges will follow, and he remains presumed innocent.

COURTS

Defamation, Insult and the Line Between Criticism and Crime

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The referral of former Miyazaki governor Hideo Higashikokubaru to prosecutors on suspicion of defamation is a reminder that Japan treats damaging speech as a potential criminal matter as well as a civil one.

Criminal defamation under the Penal Code covers publicly stating facts that damage a person's social reputation, regardless of whether the facts are true.

The law provides a defence where the statement concerns a matter of public interest, was made for the public benefit and is proved to be true, or where the speaker had good reason to believe it true.

Insult is a separate, lesser offence covering public statements that damage reputation without asserting specific facts. Its penalties were raised in 2022 after the death of a young professional wrestler who had faced a torrent of online abuse.

Both offences can only be prosecuted if the victim files a complaint, which means cases begin with the person who says they were harmed.

Civil claims for damages are more common than criminal prosecution, and courts have awarded compensation in many cases involving statements online.

Public figures face a higher threshold for claiming damage from criticism of their public conduct, reflecting the value placed on free discussion of public affairs.

A referral to prosecutors means police have

COURTS

completed an investigation and sent the file, and prosecutors decide whether to indict.

The details of the statements at issue in the Higashikokubaru case have not been confirmed in the reports available.

The case will be followed as an example of how the law treats disputes between prominent figures.

SOCIETY

Evacuation Orders Reached 1.9 Million People in 900,000 Households

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Evacuation orders were issued to more than 1.9 million people, in approximately 900,000 households across the capital and five surrounding prefectures, as Typhoon No. 25 approached, according to Asahi Shimbun.

An evacuation order is Level 4 on the five-step municipal scale. It instructs everyone in the designated area to move to safety, and since the system was revised in 2021 it has been the clear signal to leave, replacing the older and more ambiguous advisory.

In Sakura City, Chiba, about 2,800 people were covered by a Level 5 emergency alert as the Takasaki River flooded, Asahi Shimbun reported.

Level 5 is issued when a disaster is already occurring or imminent. It is not an instruction to begin evacuating; by the time it is issued, the safest course may be to move to the highest floor of a solid building.

Numbers of this size are never matched by the numbers who actually move to shelters. Japanese surveys consistently find that a small fraction of residents under an evacuation order go to a designated evacuation centre.

Many of the rest are acting sensibly. Moving in with relatives on higher ground, staying in a hotel or going to an upper floor are all legitimate forms of evacuation, and municipalities now encourage them.

The concern is the group that does none of these, typically older residents who have seen many storms pass their homes and judge that this one will be the same.

In a country where three in ten residents are over 65, helping neighbours to move increasingly depends on people who are themselves ageing.

Municipal staff will now lift orders district by district as rivers fall and slopes are assessed, which may take several days in the areas worst affected.

Residents should wait for that announcement before returning to homes in designated hazard zones, however fine the weather.

SOCIETY

A Woman Dies in Yokosuka and the Search Continues in Miura as Kanagawa's Hillsides Give Way

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

A woman in her sixties died in Yokosuka when a landslide struck during Typhoon No. 25, and people are missing in Miura and other areas of Kanagawa Prefecture, according to Sankei News and Mainichi Shimbun.

Four people are missing in the prefecture in total, Yomiuri Shimbun reported on its front page, and Kanagawa has asked the Self-Defense Forces for disaster relief.

The Miura Peninsula, which divides Tokyo Bay from Sagami Bay, is a landscape of short, steep hills cut by narrow valleys, with housing built up their sides wherever the ground allowed.

That pattern of settlement is common across Japan's coastal cities and it is the one in which landslide deaths concentrate. Homes sit at the foot of slopes or on terraces cut into them, and a failure above sends earth straight into the rooms below.

Yokosuka, a naval city of hills and tunnels, has a large number of designated landslide hazard zones within its boundaries, and residents of the older hillside districts live with the designation as a fact of the landscape.

The storm delivered hundreds of millimetres of rain across Kanto over two days, and saturated soil loses much of the friction that holds it on a slope.

Searches of this kind are slow. The ground may move again, and rescuers dig by hand where machinery

would risk bringing down more earth.

Clear skies today make the work easier, and the absence of rain gives no guarantee that the ground has stabilised.

Residents near slopes are advised to watch for cracks in the ground, water springing from hillsides, tilting trees and poles, or small stones falling, all of which can precede a failure.

Any of those signs is a reason to leave and to report it, even on a sunny morning after the storm has gone.

The prefecture and the Self-Defense Forces will continue the search for the missing through the holiday.

SOCIETY

The Hillside Gives Warning Before It Moves, If You Know What to Look For

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Both deaths confirmed from Typhoon No. 25 were caused by landslides, the hazard that kills more people in Japanese heavy rain than any other.

Japan's steep terrain and heavy rainfall make landslides common, and the country has hundreds of thousands of designated landslide hazard zones, where homes lie within reach of slopes that could fail.

The law governing those zones was strengthened after the Hiroshima landslides of August 2014, which killed more than 70 people in residential districts built at the foot of steep hills.

Slopes often give signals before they fail. Small stones falling, cracks appearing in the ground or in retaining walls, and trees or utility poles beginning to lean are all warnings.

Water provides others. Springs appearing on a hillside, well water turning muddy, or a stream suddenly dropping despite continued rain, which can mean that debris upstream has blocked it, all indicate that the ground is moving.

Sound is another. Residents who survived major landslides have described rumbling from the mountain and the sound of trees splitting before the slope came down.

Anyone who notices these signs should leave immediately, moving away from the slope and at right angles to the direction in which debris would flow, and report what they have seen.

The danger continues after the rain. Water moving through the soil can trigger failures hours or days later, which is why warnings remain in place under clear skies.

Houses on the side of a building facing away from a slope are safer, and in heavy rain, sleeping on an upper floor on that side reduces the risk for those who cannot leave.

Municipal hazard maps identify the designated zones, and residents should know whether their home lies within one.

SOCIETY

The Dam Kumamoto Cancelled, and the Flood That Brought It Back

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The full reopening of the Kumagawa Railway, six years after the floods of July 2020, closes one chapter of the Kuma River's story. Another, concerning a dam, is still being written.

Plans for a dam on the Kawabe River, a tributary of the Kuma, date from the 1960s, after a series of floods in the basin.

The project became one of Japan's longest-running public works controversies, opposed by residents of the valley to be flooded and by environmental groups concerned about the river's ecology.

In 2008, Kumamoto's governor, Ikuo Kabashima, announced his opposition, and in 2009 the national government suspended the project, one of the most prominent dam cancellations of the period.

The floods of July 2020 changed the argument. The Kuma River overwhelmed its banks, dozens of people died, including fourteen residents of a care home in the village of Kuma, and the town of Hitoyoshi was inundated.

Later that year, Governor Kabashima reversed his position and asked the national government to build a flow-through dam on the Kawabe, a type that lets the river run freely in normal conditions and holds back

water only during floods.

The design is intended to answer the environmental objections to a conventional reservoir while providing protection against another catastrophic flood.

Construction of the new dam is expected to take many years, and debate over its cost and effectiveness continues in the basin.

The dispute illustrates the shift in Japanese river policy toward basin-wide flood management, combining dams, levees, upstream storage and evacuation planning rather than relying on any single measure.

For the communities of the Kuma valley, the returning trains are the visible sign of recovery; the dam is the argument about how to prevent the next disaster.

SOCIETY

The Small Railways Japan Keeps Choosing to Rebuild

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The full reopening of the Kumagawa Railway, six years after the floods of 2020, adds another chapter to one of the more distinctive stories in Japanese transport: the survival of small, locally owned railways.

The Kumagawa Railway took over the former JR Yunomae Line in 1989, one of many rural lines transferred from the national railways to new operators in the 1980s.

Those operators are known as third-sector railways, companies jointly owned by local governments and private investors, created to keep lines running that the national railways had judged unprofitable.

Their finances are rarely strong. Rural populations are shrinking, most passengers are students and older people, and maintenance costs rise as infrastructure ages.

Disasters test them hardest. Repairing a washed-out bridge can cost far more than a small operator earns in years, and every reopening depends on national and prefectural support.

Several have been rebuilt against the odds. The Sanriku Railway in Iwate reopened after the 2011 tsunami, and the Minamiaso Railway in Kumamoto fully reopened in 2023, seven years after the Kumamoto earthquakes.

Others have not. After disasters, some damaged rural lines, including sections operated by the JR companies, have been converted to bus rapid transit rather than rebuilt as railways.

The decision to rebuild usually reflects a judgment about community rather than accounts. A railway gives a valley a connection that a bus route, however practical, does not replace in residents' minds.

Tourism is part of the calculation. Scenic rural lines attract visitors, and the Kumagawa Railway runs through the upper Kuma valley, one of the most attractive landscapes in Kyushu.

For the communities along its route, the return of the trains marks the end of a recovery that began on a single night in July 2020.

SOCIETY

The Cathedral Under Saitama: Tokyo's Hidden Flood Defences

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

When the Zenpukuji River rose to Level 4 this week, it tested a city that has invested more in hidden flood defences than almost any other in the world.

The most famous is the Metropolitan Area Outer Underground Discharge Channel in Kasukabe, Saitama, completed in 2006. It diverts floodwater from small rivers north of Tokyo through a tunnel about 50 metres underground and discharges it into the Edo River.

Its pressure-adjusting tank, a vast chamber supported by 59 giant pillars, is often called the underground temple and has become a tourist attraction in its own right.

Inside the capital, the Kanda River and Loop Road No. 7 Underground Regulating Reservoir stores excess water in a tunnel beneath one of Tokyo's ring roads, taking peak flows off the Kanda and Zenpukuji rivers.

The reservoir was built after repeated flooding along the Kanda River basin in the late twentieth century,

and it has since been credited with preventing damage in many heavy rains.

Such facilities work by buying time and storage. They hold water that would otherwise overwhelm rivers until the flood peak passes.

They cannot protect against every threat. Rain falling faster than street drains can carry it away causes surface flooding far from any river, and underground spaces such as basements and subway entrances are particularly vulnerable.

That is why the metropolitan government under Governor Yuriko Koike asked residents of Nakano and Suginami to move to second floors rather than leave, as the Zenpukuji approached its banks.

Climate change is increasing the frequency of intense downpours, and the capital continues to expand its storage capacity, including plans to connect regulating reservoirs into longer underground channels.

The defences rarely make the news when they work. This week, largely, they did.

SOCIETY

The Two Typhoons of 2019 That Shaped This Week's Response

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Much of how eastern Japan prepared for Typhoon No. 25 was learned from two storms that struck the region within five weeks of each other in 2019.

The first made landfall near Chiba City in September 2019 with record winds. It brought down thousands of utility poles and trees, and at its peak more than 900,000 households lost power.

Restoration took more than two weeks in some areas, and the prolonged outages, during hot weather, exposed weaknesses in how utilities estimated damage and communicated with residents.

The second arrived in October and brought extreme rain across a wide area of eastern Japan. River levees failed at more than 140 points, flooding towns from Kanto to Tohoku and killing dozens of people.

In Nagano, floodwater from the Chikuma River inundated a depot of the Hokuriku Shinkansen, damaging ten trains, an image that became a symbol of the storm.

The lessons were applied widely. Utilities strengthened co-operation across regions and improved tree clearance near power lines. Railways expanded planned suspensions and moved rolling stock away from flood-prone depots when storms approached.

River management shifted toward basin-wide flood control, in which upstream storage, land use and evacuation planning are combined rather than relying on levees alone.

Evacuation guidance was revised in 2021 to make the Level 4 order the clear signal to leave, removing the confusing distinction between advisories and instructions.

This week's typhoon tested those changes, with planned rail suspensions, evacuation orders covering more than 1.9 million people and outages concentrated in Chiba once again.

The deaths in landslides show that the lessons of 2019 have not solved every problem, and the reviews after this storm will add their own.

SOCIETY

Typhoon No. 25 by the Numbers

Compiled by the Society Desk

- 2 dead in landslides, in Yokosuka and Sodegaura.
- 4 people missing in Kanagawa Prefecture.
- 1.9 million-plus people under evacuation orders.
- About 900,000 households covered by those orders.
- 2,800 people under a Level 5 alert in Sakura City.
- 540-611 millimetres of rain in 24 hours on Izu Oshima.
- 60,000-plus households without power, mostly in Chiba.
- 260 JAL and ANA flights cancelled.
- 4 hours: the delay to the Prime Minister's departure.
- 1 request for Self-Defense Forces relief, from Kanagawa.

SOCIETY

SOCIETY

Hills, Tunnels and the Sea: The Peninsula Where the Ground Gave Way

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The Miura Peninsula, where a woman died in a landslide in Yokosuka and people are missing in Miura, is a landscape shaped by hills that rise straight from the sea.

The peninsula extends south from Kanagawa Prefecture between Tokyo Bay and Sagami Bay. Yokosuka occupies its eastern shore, Miura City its tip, and Zushi, Hayama and Kamakura its western side.

Its hills are low but steep, cut by narrow valleys, and the flat land between them is scarce. Yokosuka's roads pass through so many tunnels that the city is sometimes described by their number.

Housing climbed the slopes as the city grew, and homes built at the foot of hillsides or on terraces cut into them sit within reach of ground that can fail in heavy rain.

Yokosuka's history is inseparable from its harbour. Commodore Matthew Perry's squadron anchored off the city's Kurihama district in 1853, and the shogunate founded a naval arsenal at Yokosuka in 1865 with French engineers.

The port became the Imperial Navy's principal base and, after the war, the home port of the United States Seventh Fleet's aircraft carrier, alongside a major base of the Maritime Self-Defense Force.

Miura, at the peninsula's tip, is a fishing and farming city known for the tuna landed at Misaki port and for vegetables grown on the plateau above the cliffs.

The same steep coast that makes the peninsula beautiful makes it vulnerable. Kanagawa has designated a large number of landslide hazard zones on the peninsula, and the prefecture has asked the Self-Defense Forces for help with this week's search.

Clear weather today assists the searchers, and the saturated slopes remain the hazard.

For the peninsula's residents, the geography that draws visitors is also the geography that demands vigilance every time heavy rain arrives.

SOCIETY

Road Worker, 51, Killed by a Landslide While Keeping a Chiba Road Open

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

A 51-year-old man was caught in a landslide while repairing a road in Sodegaura, Chiba Prefecture, and died, according to Sankei News.

He was doing the work that keeps a road network functioning during a storm, clearing and securing a route on a slope while the rain was still falling.

Road maintenance crews are among the least visible people in any Japanese disaster, working through the weather so that ambulances, fire engines and evacuating residents can move.

Their exposure is structural. The places that need repairs during heavy rain are precisely the places where the ground is failing, and a slope that has dropped debris onto a road may drop more.

Sodegaura lies on the eastern shore of Tokyo Bay, where industrial coastal land gives way quickly to low hills cut through by roads.

Safety guidance for road work in heavy rain typically calls for stopping when rainfall passes set thresholds and for lookouts to watch the slopes above a working crew.

Investigators will examine the circumstances, including the weather at the time, the instructions the crew had received and whether the slope had shown signs of movement.

Chiba took more of this storm than any other prefecture, with most of the 60,000 households that lost power and cars submerged in Ichihara and elsewhere.

Parts of the prefecture were also still recovering from heavy rain earlier this month, which left the ground less able to absorb what fell this week.

His death is one of two confirmed in landslides from the storm.

SOCIETY

Level 5 in Sakura City as the Takasaki River Floods

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

About 2,800 people in Sakura City, Chiba Prefecture, were covered by a Level 5 emergency alert as the Takasaki River flooded, according to Asahi Shimbun.

On Monday, reports described the Level 5 alert in Sakura as temporary. Asahi's account now puts a number on the people it covered and names the river that caused it.

Level 5 is the highest step on the municipal scale, issued when a disaster is occurring or imminent. By that stage residents are advised to take whatever action best protects life where they are, including moving to an upper floor.

The Takasaki River runs through Sakura toward the Inba lowlands, an area of flat, low-lying ground that has always been vulnerable when rivers rise.

Rivers in the Kanto plain respond differently from mountain rivers. Water spreads rather than rushing, and floods rise more slowly but last longer.

That duration is the practical problem for residents. Homes may sit in standing water for hours or days, and access to them is cut until it drains.

Sakura lies in the part of Chiba that has been hit repeatedly this month, and its residents will be among those facing a second clean-up in a short time.

Once the water recedes, municipal staff will assess damage house by house, which is the basis for the certificates households need to claim support.

Residents should photograph damage before cleaning up, because those records are used for insurance claims and for the disaster damage certificates issued by municipalities.

The alert was lowered as the river fell, and the work of recovery now begins.

SOCIETY

Sakura, the Castle Town Under a Level 5 Alert

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Sakura City, where about 2,800 people came under a Level 5 alert as the Takasaki River flooded, is one of the historic towns of Chiba Prefecture, and its geography explains this week's danger.

The city lies north-east of Chiba City on the edge of the Inba lowlands, an expanse of low, flat land around Inba-numa, the marshy lake into which the Takasaki River flows.

Land of that kind floods slowly and drains slowly. Water spreads across it rather than rushing through, and it can stand for days once a river has overflowed.

Sakura was a castle town in the Edo period, seat of the Hotta family, whose most famous head, Hotta Masayoshi, was a senior councillor of the shogunate during the negotiations with the American envoy Townsend Harris in the 1850s.

The castle grounds now hold the National Museum of Japanese History, opened in 1983, one of the country's principal museums of history and folklore.

The city also has a place in the history of Japanese medicine. Sakura Juntendo, a school of Western medicine founded in 1843, is the origin of today's Juntendo University.

Sakura's old samurai residences and its Dutch-style windmill beside Inba-numa draw visitors, and its spring tulip festival is among the largest in the region.

Chiba's north-eastern lowlands have been hit repeatedly this month, and Sakura's residents will be among those facing a second clean-up in a short time.

Residents in the affected districts should wait for the municipality to lift orders before returning to homes near the river, and photograph any damage before cleaning up.

The Level 5 alert was lowered as the river fell.

SOCIETY

Up to 611 Millimetres in a Day on Izu Oshima, an Island That Remembers 2013

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Izu Oshima recorded 24-hour rainfall of between 540 and 611 millimetres as Typhoon No. 25 passed, and the island was placed under a Level 5 emergency warning for landslides that was later lowered to Level 4.

The upper figure is more than a third of central Tokyo's average annual rainfall, delivered to a small volcanic island in a single day.

Oshima's slopes are built of layered volcanic ash and lava from Mount Mihara, and ash deposits saturate quickly and can fail over wide areas when they do.

The island knows that from experience. In October 2013 a typhoon brought record rainfall and a landslide swept through the island's main town, killing 36 people. Three more were never found.

That disaster led to searching reviews of how and when warnings reach the island, after the town was criticised for not issuing an evacuation advisory before the landslide.

The island belongs to Tokyo, and the metropolitan government under Governor Yuriko Koike is responsible for supporting it in an emergency, across a stretch of sea that closes to ferries in exactly this weather.

Lowering the warning from Level 5 to Level 4 reflects easing rainfall rather than an end to the danger. Saturated slopes remain unstable after rain stops.

Ferry and air links to the island are weather-dependent, and high waves along the Pacific coast are expected to continue today.

Damage assessment on the island begins with residents and local officials, well before any mainland team can arrive.

No casualties on the island had been reported in the accounts available at the time of writing.

SOCIETY

October 2013: The Night Oshima's Hillside Came Down

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

When Izu Oshima was placed under a Level 5 landslide warning this week, residents did not need to be told what was at stake.

On October 16, 2013, rain from a passing typhoon fell on the island at rates rarely seen in Japan, with more than 800 millimetres recorded in 24 hours.

In the early hours of the morning, the slopes of Mount Mihara above the Motomachi district, the island's main town, gave way. Mud, rock and uprooted trees swept through homes as residents slept.

Thirty-six people died. Three more were never found.

The disaster raised hard questions about warnings. The town did not issue an evacuation advisory before the landslide, and the timing of warnings at night, when moving residents is most dangerous, became a subject of national debate.

The special warning system for extreme weather had begun only weeks earlier, and its criteria, designed for events affecting wide areas, were not met by rainfall concentrated on a single island.

Changes followed, both on Oshima and nationally, in how municipalities receive and act on information about landslide risk, and in the emphasis placed on evacuating before nightfall.

The island rebuilt, and the anniversary is marked there each October.

This week's rainfall, between 540 and 611 millimetres in 24 hours, approached the scale of 2013, and the warning was lowered from Level 5 to Level 4 as the rain eased.

No deaths on the island had been reported in the accounts available as this edition went to press.

SOCIETY

An Island That Knows How to Leave: Oshima's 1986 Evacuation

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Izu Oshima's residents faced a Level 5 landslide warning this week with a history few Japanese communities share: they have evacuated their entire island before.

In November 1986, Mount Mihara, the volcano at the island's centre, erupted. Lava fountains rose from fissures, and a new eruption opened on the flank above the main town.

Within hours, the authorities decided to evacuate everyone. More than 10,000 residents and visitors were carried to the mainland overnight by ferries, fishing boats and vessels of the Maritime Self-Defense Force.

The operation, completed without loss of life, is still studied as a model of large-scale evacuation.

Residents spent about a month away from their homes before they were allowed to return.

Twenty-seven years later, in October 2013, the island faced a different disaster: a landslide that swept through the main town after record rain, killing 36 people, with three never found.

That tragedy showed that even an island with deep experience of evacuation could be caught by a hazard that struck at night, without warning in time.

This week's rainfall, between 540 and 611 millimetres in 24 hours, brought a Level 5 landslide warning that was later lowered to Level 4.

The island is part of Tokyo, and the metropolitan government under Governor Yuriko Koike supports it in emergencies across a sea that storms can close to ferries.

Oshima's residents live with a volcano and steep, ash-covered slopes, and their preparedness has been shaped by both.

SOCIETY

More Than 60,000 Households Without Power, Most of Them in Chiba

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

More than 60,000 households lost electricity as Typhoon No. 25 passed, mainly in Chiba Prefecture, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and TV Asahi News.

Chiba sat closest to the storm's track, which passed out to sea east of the prefecture on Monday evening.

Most Japanese electricity reaches homes on overhead lines strung between poles, and wind damage to those lines is the usual cause of large outages in a typhoon.

The quickest repairs are those where a line has simply come down. Poles that have toppled, often pulled over by falling trees, take much longer, because each one has to be replaced by a crew on site.

Chiba has particular reason to watch restoration closely. After a typhoon crossed the Boso Peninsula in 2019, some districts were without power for weeks, and the episode reshaped utility planning across the country.

Among the changes were stricter clearance of trees around lines and faster arrangements for bringing repair crews in from other regions.

Outages hit hardest the households that depend on electricity for more than light: residents on home medical equipment, older people relying on air conditioning, and anyone with a well pump for water.

Today's heat adds to that pressure. Tokyo is forecast to reach 30 degrees, and a house without power or air conditioning becomes hard to bear for older occupants.

Municipal welfare offices contact registered residents who need electricity for medical reasons when outages persist, and neighbours checking on elderly residents nearby can make the difference.

Utility restoration estimates are published by district and updated through the day.

SOCIETY

The Skyliner's Tracks Flooded and 260 Flights Were Cancelled

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The Keisei Skyliner, the fastest rail connection between central Tokyo and Narita Airport, was suspended after its tracks flooded, and Japan Airlines and All Nippon Airways cancelled a combined 260 flights, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and TV Asahi News.

The Sobu and Uchibo lines were also disrupted, and JR West suspended the Kosei Line from the first train this morning, according to Sankei News.

The Kosei Line runs along the western shore of Lake Biwa on long stretches of elevated track, and it is among the lines in the Kansai network most often halted by strong winds.

Flooded track is a slower problem than wind. A railway cannot run until the water has drained and engineers have checked that the ballast beneath the rails has not been washed out.

The Skyliner's suspension matters for a holiday week. Narita handles a large share of Japan's international traffic, and travellers returning from Silver Week

SOCIETY

trips depend on the link.

Alternative routes to Narita exist by other rail lines and by bus, and they were under heavy pressure as a result.

Airline cancellations are usually decided the evening before or early on the day, which allows passengers to rebook rather than wait at airports.

Metropolitan operators had warned of cancellations and delays until the early morning of Tuesday, and restoration is proceeding line by line as track is inspected.

Passengers should check operator announcements before setting out today rather than relying on published timetables.

With Tuesday and Wednesday both holidays, the network has two days of lighter demand in which to recover before the working week resumes on Thursday.

SOCIETY

Cars Submerged in Ichihara as Chiba's Earlier Flooding Is Repeated

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Cars were submerged in Ichihara and other parts of Chiba Prefecture as Typhoon No. 25 passed, and areas already damaged by heavy rain in the prefecture earlier this month suffered further damage.

A second flood on the same streets within weeks is harder than the first. Homes that were still drying out, cars not yet replaced and businesses only just reopened took the water again.

Ground saturated by earlier rain absorbs almost nothing, so the same rainfall produces more runoff and deeper standing water the second time.

Cars in floodwater are both a loss and a danger. Thirty centimetres of moving water can lift a vehicle, and the underpasses and road dips where water collects first have claimed lives in Chiba this month.

The transport ministry expanded its list of restricted underpasses this month after three people died in submerged vehicles in Chiba and Fukushima.

A vehicle that has been submerged should not be started, because water in the engine and the electrical system can cause further damage or fire. Insurers and dealers advise having it towed.

Vehicle insurance covers flood damage under comprehensive policies, and a large number of claims can be expected from the prefecture.

Households facing a second clean-up in weeks will need help. Municipal social welfare councils open volunteer centres after floods, matching requests for help with people willing to shovel mud and move furniture.

Garbage collection schedules for flood-damaged goods are published by each municipality, and separating waste as instructed speeds collection for everyone.

The repeated damage is also an argument for the drainage and river works that Chiba's municipalities have been requesting, and which take years to build.

SOCIETY

'No Time for Sightseeing': A Long Weekend Spent Indoors

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Tourist destinations during the long weekend were thrown into chaos by the typhoon, Yomiuri Shimbun reported, quoting one visitor who said it was no time for sightseeing.

Travellers were reported to be staying holed up in their hotels, a phrase that describes the particular frustration of a holiday arranged months ahead for five consecutive days off.

The first five-day Silver Week in eleven years was expected to be one of the strongest periods of the year for domestic tourism, and its third day was taken by the storm.

Travellers in Kanto and on the Izu coast bore the brunt, with transport suspended, attractions closed and events cancelled across the region.

Western Japan, outside the storm's reach, had a different holiday entirely, with Monday's map showing sunshine and temperatures above 30 degrees across much of Kyushu.

For travellers, the cost of a lost day is measured in cancelled bookings and rearranged journeys home,

with rail and air services disrupted across the region.

For the tourism industry, the losses from a weather-disrupted holiday are hard to recover. A room that stands empty on a given night cannot be sold again.

Today brings clear skies, and the remaining two days of the holiday offer a partial recovery for those who stayed.

Travellers visiting coastal areas should heed warnings about high waves, which continue along the Pacific coast, and about slopes that remain unstable after heavy rain.

The holiday ends with the Autumnal Equinox tomorrow, and the working week resumes on Thursday.

SOCIETY

Why September Typhoons Bring So Much Rain

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Typhoon No. 25 arrived in the part of the year when Japan's most dangerous storms have historically struck.

Typhoons approach Japan most often in August and September. Of the roughly 25 that form in the western Pacific in an average year, about a dozen come close to Japan, and about three make landfall.

September storms are dangerous for a particular reason: they often arrive while an autumn rain front lies across Japan.

When warm, moist air drawn in by a typhoon flows into that front, it can produce heavy rain far from the storm's centre, sometimes a day or more before the typhoon itself arrives.

That combination explains why rainfall totals can be extreme even when a typhoon passes offshore, as this week's storm did when it moved out to sea east of Chiba.

The worst typhoon disaster in modern Japanese history was a September storm. The Isewan Typhoon of 1959 struck the Nagoya area and killed more than 5,000 people, mostly in a storm surge.

That disaster led to the Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act of 1961, the foundation of Japan's modern disaster management system.

Warmer seas are adding to the concern. The waters around Japan have warmed faster than the global average over the past century, and warm water fuels stronger storms and heavier rain.

Typhoons often slow down as they turn north near Japan, before the westerly winds carry them away, and a storm that lingers delivers more rain to the same places.

The typhoon season continues into October, and forecasters advise households not to put away their preparations yet.

SOCIETY

Who Carries Grandmother Down the Stairs? Evacuation Plans for Those Who Cannot Move Alone

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

This week's evacuation orders covered more than 1.9 million people, and in a country where 29.6% of the population is 65 or older, a substantial number of them needed help to move at all.

Since 2021, municipalities have been required to make efforts to prepare individual evacuation plans for residents who need assistance, including older people living alone, people with disabilities and those who rely on medical equipment.

A plan identifies where the person will go, who will help them and how, and what they need to take. It is drawn up with the resident, family members, care managers and neighbours.

Progress has been uneven. Preparing plans takes staff time that many municipalities lack, and finding neighbours willing and able to act as helpers is increasingly difficult in ageing communities.

The problem is sharpest where the helpers themselves are elderly. In many rural districts, the people expected to assist a frail neighbour are in their seventies.

Welfare shelters, designated facilities able to receive people with care needs, are part of the system, but their capacity is limited and they often open only after general shelters.

Moving early is the single most effective safeguard. Level 3 exists specifically to give those who need time a head start, and families are urged to act on it rather than waiting for an evacuation order.

Relatives living elsewhere can help by knowing the hazard map for a parent's home, agreeing a plan in advance and calling when warnings are issued.

Recent disasters have shown the consequences when plans fail. Older people account for a large share of deaths in Japanese floods and landslides.

The ageing figures released for Respect for the Aged Day this week are also, read another way, a description of who needs help when the rain comes.

SOCIETY

What Help Is Available When the Storm Damages Your Home

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Households whose homes were damaged by Typhoon No. 25 may be eligible for public support, and the first step for almost every form of it is the same: a disaster damage certificate from the municipality.

The certificate records the degree of damage after an inspection, in categories running from fully destroyed through large-scale and medium-scale half-destroyed, half-destroyed and quasi-half-destroyed to partial damage.

The category determines what support a household can receive, which is why residents are urged to photograph damage before cleaning up and to apply promptly.

Under the law supporting the reconstruction of disaster victims' livelihoods, households whose homes are destroyed or severely damaged can receive payments of up to three million yen, combining a basic payment with additional support for rebuilding or repair.

The law applies when a disaster's damage in an area passes thresholds set in the legislation, and prefectures decide on its application.

The Disaster Relief Act covers more immediate needs when it is applied: shelters, food and water, temporary housing and emergency repairs that make damaged homes habitable.

Emergency repair support is often overlooked. It can pay for essential repairs to roofs, walls and plumbing in homes that are damaged but can still be lived in.

Municipalities may also offer tax reductions, deferred payments of public charges and reduced fees for services, and social welfare councils provide small loans to households in difficulty.

The system can be confusing, particularly for older residents, and municipal consultation desks are set up after large disasters to help people through it.

Keeping receipts for emergency repairs and purchases helps with claims under both public schemes and private insurance.

SOCIETY

Three Found Safe After a Lake Biwa Jet Ski Accident; a Friend Who Went Looking Is Missing

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Three people reported missing after a jet ski accident on Lake Biwa have been found safe, but an acquaintance who went out to search for them has now gone missing, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

It is the grim pattern of many water accidents: a rescue attempted by a friend rather than by trained searchers, in conditions that had already proved dangerous.

Lake Biwa is Japan's largest freshwater lake, and its size makes it behave more like a sea than visitors expect. Wind produces steep waves quickly across its open water.

Water safety guidance is consistent on one point. People who see someone in trouble on the water should call emergency services rather than go out themselves, unless they are trained and properly equipped.

That advice runs against every instinct of someone watching a friend in danger, which is why the instruction is repeated after almost every accident of this kind.

Personal watercraft are fast and easy to operate, and their riders are not always prepared for being thrown into the water far from shore. Life jackets are required and are the single most important piece of

equipment.

Shiga Prefecture has ordinances governing the use of recreational craft on the lake, reflecting its importance as a water source for millions of people in the Kansai region.

Police and fire services are leading the search on the lake.

The Kosei Line on the lake's western shore was suspended from the first train this morning.

Anyone planning to go out on the water during the rest of the holiday should check conditions and tell someone ashore where they are going.

SOCIETY

Lake Biwa, the Lake That Waters Kansai

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Lake Biwa, where a search continues for an acquaintance who went out to look for friends after a jet ski accident, is far more than a recreation ground.

It is Japan's largest freshwater lake, covering about 670 square kilometres in Shiga Prefecture, and one of the oldest lakes in the world, with a history of around four million years.

It supplies water to about 14.5 million people in Shiga, Kyoto, Osaka and Hyogo, through the Seta River, which becomes the Uji and then the Yodo River as it flows toward Osaka Bay.

The Lake Biwa Canal, completed in 1890, carried the lake's water to Kyoto, powering the city's first hydroelectric plant and supplying its drinking water. It remains one of the great engineering achievements of the Meiji era.

That role as a water source shapes how the lake is managed. Shiga Prefecture has adopted rules on recreational use to protect water quality and safety, including rules on the engines permitted on personal watercraft.

The lake's size surprises visitors. Winds can raise steep waves across open water quickly, and conditions can change within minutes.

Summer and holiday weekends bring large numbers of boaters, anglers and swimmers, and accidents recur despite repeated warnings.

The lake is also home to species found nowhere else, including the Biwa trout and several fish used in local dishes such as funazushi, a fermented crucian carp.

Water quality improved markedly after campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s against synthetic detergents containing phosphorus, which had caused algal blooms.

Police and fire services are continuing the search for the missing person.

SOCIETY

Oku-Noto Remembers Its Dead Two Years On, and a Missing Person's Telephone Is Found in Wajima

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Two years after the heavy rains that struck the Oku-Noto region, communities on the peninsula have marked the anniversary by remembering the victims, and a mobile telephone belonging to a missing person has been found in Wajima.

The rains fell on September 21, 2024, on a peninsula that was still in the first months of recovery from the earthquake that struck on New Year's Day that year.

Temporary housing built after the earthquake was flooded, rebuilt roads were cut again and residents who had lost homes once lost them a second time.

The discovery of the telephone is the kind of news that reopens a family's grief and also answers, in a small way, a question that has been open for two years.

People missing after floods and landslides are sometimes never found, and objects recovered later can help investigators reconstruct what happened.

Two years on, recovery on the peninsula remains slow. Reconstruction competes for construction workers and materials with every other project in the country, and many residents are elderly and undecided about rebuilding.

Monday's edition reported an eight-year-old boy's move from temporary housing into a new home, one of the small events of which recovery is actually made.

The anniversary fell on the same day as Typhoon No.

SOCIETY

25 made its closest approach to Kanto, far to the east. Noto's experience has shaped national thinking about compound disasters, in which one event strikes before recovery from another is complete. Parts of Chiba have learned the same lesson this month on a smaller scale.

SOCIETY

Kumagawa Railway Fully Reopens Six Years After the 2020 Floods

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The Kumagawa Railway in Kumamoto Prefecture has fully reopened, six years after the heavy rains of July 2020 severed the line.

The floods of that month overwhelmed the Kuma River basin in southern Kumamoto, killing dozens of people, including fourteen residents of a care home in the village of Kuma.

The railway, a small third-sector line running through the upper Kuma valley, lost a bridge over the river along with long stretches of damaged track and facilities.

Six years is a long time for a rural line to be out of service, and closure was a real possibility. Many local railways in Japan have not reopened after disasters, their losses judged too great for small communities to sustain.

The decision to rebuild reflected the line's place in the valley: it carries students to school, older residents to hospitals and visitors to a region whose economy depends partly on tourism.

Reconstruction of this kind is funded by a combination of national subsidies, prefectural money and the operator's own resources, and each step requires agreement among all three.

The reopening comes as the country watches repair crews at work on another storm's damage, a reminder that the recovery from a single night of rain can take years.

Local railways in depopulating regions face a difficult arithmetic, with falling ridership and rising maintenance costs, and a full reopening is a vote of confidence in the valley's future.

The line runs through some of the most scenic country in Kyushu, and its return offers the region a visible symbol of recovery.

The Kuma River flood also shaped national debate about river management, including the long-running question of dams on the Kawabe River, a tributary.

SPORTS

Ohashi Shares Gold in the 100 Breaststroke, and the 4x200 Relay Takes Silver in a Japanese Record

Tomoyuki Matsushita goes for a second gold in the 400 individual medley tonight

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Shin Ohashi won gold in the men's 100 metres breaststroke at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre on Monday, touching the wall level with a Chinese swimmer to share the title, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Japan's men's 800 metres freestyle relay team won silver in a new Japanese record on the same evening.

A dead heat for gold is rare in swimming, where races are timed to the hundredth of a second, and it produces a podium with two champions and no silver medallist.

Ohashi arrived as the Japanese record holder in the event, which carries a weight of its own. Breaststroke is the stroke in which Japan has produced Olympic champions across several generations, and a continental title in it is expected rather than hoped for.

The 100 metres is breaststroke's most demanding distance tactically. It requires the explosive start of a sprint and enough control to hold the stroke's delicate timing through the second length, where most races are decided.

Sharing the podium's top step with a Chinese swimmer is an apt picture of a rivalry that has run through Asian swimming for decades.

The relay silver is the more significant result for the programme's future. A four-by-200 metres freestyle team depends on four swimmers of similar quality, and a national record in the event reflects depth rather than a single star.

Japan won seven swimming medals on the opening

day, including a one-two in the men's 200 metres individual medley, with Tomoyuki Matsushita taking gold and 17-year-old Yuki Kojima silver.

Matsushita aims for a second gold tonight in the 400 metres individual medley, the longest and most gruelling of the medley events.

The 400 medley doubles the 200's distance over the same sequence of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, and pacing across four strokes is the discipline that decides it.

The swimming continues through the first week of the Games, with the remaining relays still to come.

SPORTS

Scoreboard and Fixtures

Compiled by the Sports Desk

ASIAN GAMES, SEPT. 21 — SWIMMING: Men's 100m breaststroke: Shin Ohashi shared gold with a Chinese swimmer in a tie. Men's 4x200m freestyle relay: Japan silver in a Japanese record.

ASIAN GAMES — GYMNASTICS: Men's individual all-around: Zhang Boheng (China) gold, Shinnosuke Oka silver, Daiki Hashimoto bronze. The team competition is Japan's next target.

ASIAN GAMES — WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL: Semi-final: Japan 3-0 South Korea. Final against China this evening; Japan seek a first gold since 1978.

ASIAN GAMES — KARATE: So Nishiyama won gold in men's kata. Sarara Shimada won gold on Sept. 21.

ASIAN GAMES — TRIATHLON: Mixed relay: Japan silver, missing a fourth consecutive title; China won the event for the first time.

ASIAN GAMES — MEN'S BASKETBALL (final, Sept. 20): South Korea 67-57 Japan. Silver for Japan, reported as its first medal in the event in 64 years.

ASIAN GAMES — KABADDI: Japan's men's and women's teams both lost their opening group matches.

ASIAN GAMES TODAY: Women's volleyball final, Japan v China. Swimming: Tomoyuki Matsushita in the men's 400m individual medley. Fencing: men's foil and women's épée individual events. Table tennis: women's team quarter-finals, mixed doubles first round. Badminton: team quarter-finals. Baseball: Japan v Palestine.

SUMO, AKI BASHO DAY 9: Onosato secured his winning record and leads alone. Day 10 today.

NPB, SEPT. 21: Hanshin 3-2 DeNA.

HORSE RACING: The Nakayama meeting, postponed by the typhoon, is held today. Hanshin raced on Sept. 21.

BASKETBALL: The B.League's new top division, the B.Premier, opens its season today.

FOOTBALL: FC Tokyo's Yuto Nagatomo has a right knee ligament injury.

SKI JUMPING, GRAND PRIX EVENT 6: Yuto Nakamura 4th, Rinko Miyajima 5th.

SPORTS

Basketball Silver for Japan After a 67-57 Final Defeat to South Korea

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's men's basketball team won silver after losing Sunday's final to South Korea 67-57 at Aichi International Arena in Nagoya, a result reported as Japan's first medal in the event in 64 years.

The basketball tournament began before the Games' opening ceremony, as preliminary rounds in team sports often do, and its final was played the day after the Emperor opened the Games.

South Korea had also won the teams' group-stage meeting, 100-83, and went on to beat Iran 77-51 in the semi-finals, while Japan came through the other semi-final to reach the gold-medal game.

The Korean win came in a final they approached without a proper practice session, after their team bus failed to arrive, an operational failure that became one of the talking points of the Games' opening days.

For Japan, a silver medal is a milestone rather than a disappointment. The country's men's basketball has grown rapidly in the past decade, driven by a professional league that has raised standards and attendances.

The national team's progress at recent World Cups and Olympic qualifying events has changed

expectations, and reaching an Asian Games final confirms that Japan now belongs among the continent's leading teams.

A 67-57 scoreline, far below the 183 points the two teams shared in their group meeting, points to a tight, defensive final.

Korea's victory gives them their first men's basketball gold since 2014, when they won on home soil in Incheon.

Japanese basketball's next stage begins immediately. The B.League's restructured top division opens its new season today.

The women's tournament continues, and the Emperor and Empress watched a women's game after their visit to Ghibli Park.

SPORTS

Oka Takes Silver and Hashimoto Bronze as Zhang Boheng Wins the All-Around

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Shinnosuke Oka won silver and Daiki Hashimoto bronze in the men's individual all-around final at the Asian Games, with the gold going to China's Zhang Boheng, according to Sponichi.

The result reverses the order of the Paris Olympics two years ago, where Oka won the all-around title and Zhang took silver.

It also places three of the finest all-around gymnasts of the past five years on one podium. Hashimoto was Olympic all-around champion in Tokyo in 2021, and Zhang has been a world champion.

The all-around demands competence on all six apparatus, with the scores added together, and small errors on a single piece are enough to decide the medals among competitors of this standard.

Japanese gymnastics treats the all-around as its signature event. The country's coaching culture, built on precision of execution, has produced a long line of champions in the discipline.

A silver and a bronze on home soil is a strong result against the strongest gymnastics programme in Asia, and the Japanese team will read it that way.

The team competition is the next target, according to Sponichi, and team gold is the title Japanese gymnastics values most.

The team event rewards depth. A country needs strong performances from several gymnasts on each apparatus, and Japan's domestic structure, from school clubs through universities to corporate teams, is built to supply them.

The rivalry with China in men's gymnastics has shaped both programmes for decades, and it has rarely been closer than on Monday.

The apparatus finals follow later in the Games, where specialists who do not contend in the all-around get their own chance at medals.

SPORTS

How a Gymnast's Score Is Built, Since the Perfect 10 Disappeared

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The all-around final that gave Shinnosuke Oka silver and Daiki Hashimoto bronze on Monday was decided under a scoring system that replaced the perfect 10 two decades ago.

Until 2006, routines were scored out of 10, a ceiling that produced famous moments and also persistent disputes about how to separate athletes who all approached it.

After judging controversies at the Athens Olympics in 2004, the international federation introduced an open-ended Code of Points, in force since 2006.

Each routine now receives two scores. The difficulty score, or D-score, adds up the value of the skills performed, with no upper limit. The execution score, or E-score, starts at 10 and loses points for every error.

The final score is the two added together, less any penalties for stepping out of bounds or exceeding time limits, which is why totals of 14 or 15 points on a single apparatus are typical at the elite level.

Men compete on six apparatus: floor exercise, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bar. The all-around adds the six scores.

The system rewards both ambition and cleanliness. A gymnast can raise a D-score by attempting harder

skills, but a fall costs a full point of execution and often more in lost difficulty.

Zhang Boheng, Oka and Hashimoto are all gymnasts who combine high difficulty with precise execution, which is why the margins between them are so small.

In team finals, each nation puts up three gymnasts on each apparatus and all three scores count, so a single fall can decide a title, as it did in the Paris final of 2024.

Japan's team gold is the next target at these Games, according to Sponichi, and the arithmetic of the Code of Points will decide it.

SPORTS

How Japan Became a Badminton Power

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's badminton teams enter today's team quarter-finals as one of the sport's leading nations, a status that would have seemed unlikely a generation ago.

For decades the sport was dominated by China, Indonesia, South Korea and Denmark, and Japanese players rarely reached the latter stages of major tournaments.

The turning point came through investment in coaching and a national training system built from the early 2000s, supported by corporate teams that employ players and fund their development.

The breakthrough arrived at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016, when Ayaka Takahashi and Misaki Matsutomo won the women's doubles, Japan's first Olympic gold in the sport.

Singles success followed. Nozomi Okuhara became women's world champion in 2017, Kento Momota won the men's world title in 2018 and 2019, and Akane Yamaguchi won the women's title in 2021 and 2022.

At the Paris Olympics two years ago, Japan won bronze medals in the mixed doubles and the women's doubles, keeping the country among the sport's medal winners.

Women's doubles has been Japan's most consistent strength, with pairs often ranked among the world's best.

Team competitions reward the depth that Japan's system produces, because a nation needs strong players in both singles and doubles to win a tie.

The Asian Games are among the most demanding events in the sport, because almost all the world's leading badminton nations are in Asia.

Today's quarter-finals will decide which teams contest the medals.

SPORTS

Women's Table Tennis Quarter-Finals and the Mixed Doubles Begin

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The women's team quarter-finals and the first round of the mixed doubles are held today in the Asian Games table tennis competition.

Both Japanese teams opened with wins, the men beating the Maldives 3-0 at the start of a campaign for their first team gold in 60 years.

The women's team has been among the strongest in the world for a decade, reaching Olympic finals and regularly contesting world championship medals.

China remains the standard in the sport, and the path through the knockout rounds is shaped by where the Chinese team sits in the draw.

Team matches are played as a sequence of singles and doubles rubbers, and a coach's choice of order can decide a tie between evenly matched teams.

Mixed doubles has grown in importance since it joined the Olympic programme, and Japanese pairs have been among the event's leading contenders.

Tomokazu Harimoto was not selected for the men's team event, the most discussed selection decision in Japanese table tennis at these Games.

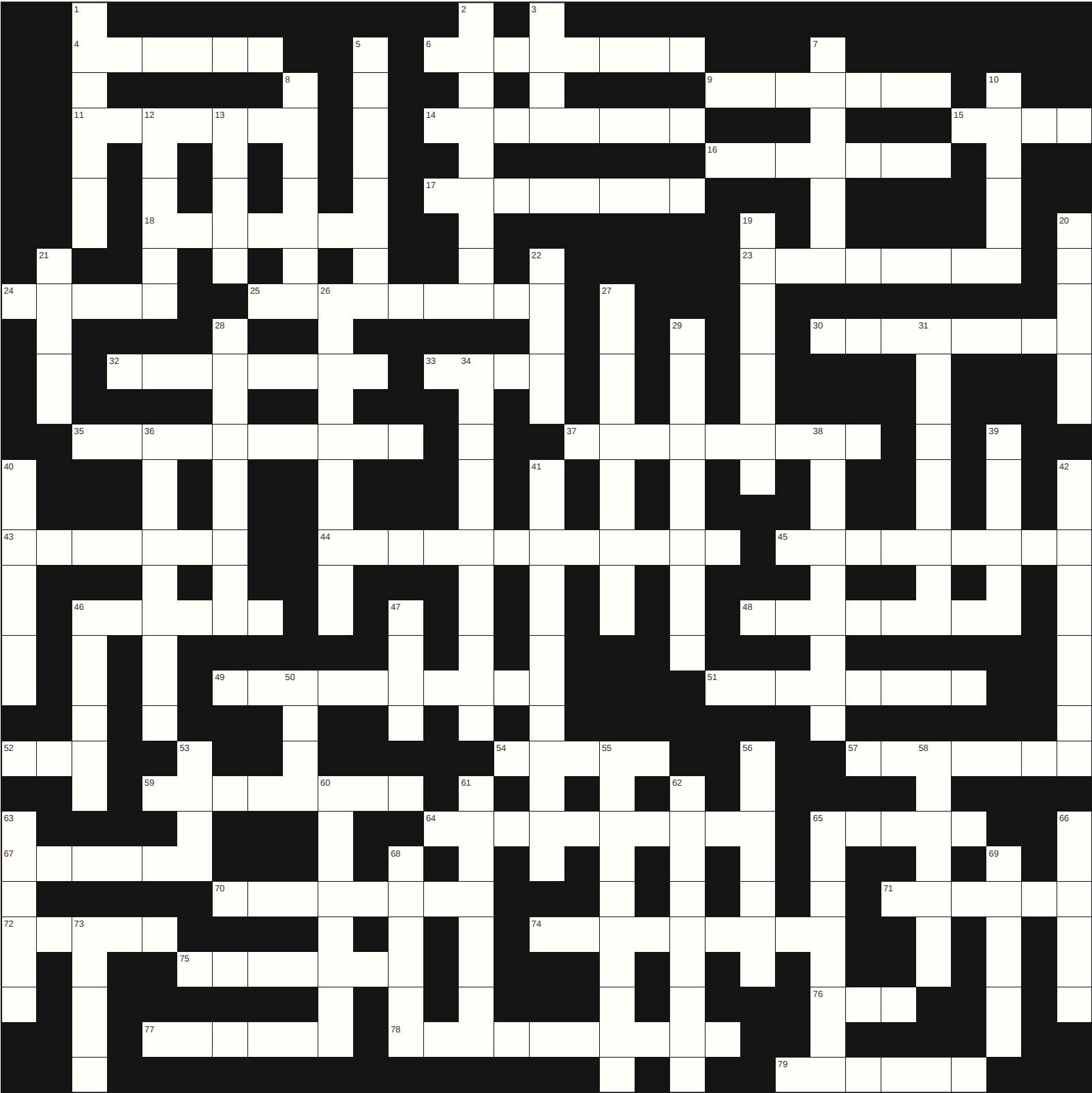
The competition is being held in Aichi, in a part of the country that the typhoon did not reach directly.

The individual events follow the team competition later in the Games.

Japanese table tennis has a large television following, and the team events are among the most watched of the Games.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 81 Words



SPORTS

Japan Beat South Korea 3-0 and Face China Tonight for a First Volleyball Gold Since 1978

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's volleyball team beat South Korea 3-0 and stand one win from their first Asian Games gold in 48 years, since 1978, according to Sports Hochi. The final against China is this evening.

A straight-sets win in a semi-final against a traditional rival is a statement of form, and it sends Japan into the final having dropped nothing in the match that decided their place in it.

Women's volleyball holds a special place in Japanese sporting memory. The national team's Olympic gold at the 1964 Tokyo Games, won by a side nicknamed the Oriental Witches, remains one of the defining moments of post-war Japanese sport.

The 48 years since the last Asian Games title reflect the rise of China, whose women's programme has been the strongest in Asia for most of that period and a regular Olympic and world champion.

Japan's modern game is built on reception, defence and speed of attack, a style developed to counter taller opponents by keeping the ball in play and moving it faster than blockers can follow.

Against China, that style faces its hardest test. The Chinese side combines height with technical quality, and a final against them is usually decided by which team controls the serve-reception battle.

Home support will be considerable. Volleyball draws some of the largest television audiences of any sport in Japan when the national teams play.

A gold medal would add to a strong start by the Japanese delegation, which has already won titles in triathlon, swimming and karate.

It would also close a gap that has lasted longer than the careers of every player in tonight's squad.

The final is scheduled for this evening.

SPORTS

The Dynasty Japan Must Beat Tonight

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's volleyball team face China tonight in a final against the country that has dominated the sport in Asia for most of the last half-century.

China's rise began in the early 1980s, when its

women's team won five consecutive global titles between 1981 and 1986, including the Olympic gold medal in Los Angeles in 1984.

The star of that team was Lang Ping, a powerful hitter known as the Iron Hammer, who became a national hero in a China that was opening to the world.

She later became one of the sport's most successful coaches, leading the United States to Olympic silver in 2008 and China to Olympic gold in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

China also won Olympic gold in Athens in 2004, and its women's team has remained among the world's best, drawing on a national system that identifies tall athletes young and trains them intensively.

Japan's own golden age came before China's. The Oriental Witches won Olympic gold in 1964, and Japan won again in 1976, but the balance of power in Asia shifted in the 1980s.

Japan's last Asian Games gold in the event came in 1978, which is why tonight's final carries a 48-year weight.

The Japanese game has adapted to Chinese height with speed, defence and precise reception, a style that has produced strong results in recent years.

Japan reached the final with a 3-0 win over South Korea, a performance that suggests the team is in form at the right moment.

Beating China in a final on home soil would be one of the most significant results in Japanese volleyball in decades.

SPORTS

Ohashi Joins Japan's Long Line of Breaststroke Champions

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Shin Ohashi's shared gold in the 100 metres breaststroke on Monday added a new name to the stroke Japan has made its own over nearly a century.

Japan's first Olympic swimming champions were breaststrokers. Yoshiyuki Tsuruta won the 200 metres at Amsterdam in 1928 and again at Los Angeles in 1932.

Masaru Furukawa won the 200 metres in Melbourne in 1956, and Nobutaka Taguchi took the 100 metres in Munich in 1972.

Kyoko Iwasaki won the women's 200 metres in Barcelona in 1992 at the age of 14, becoming the youngest Olympic swimming champion of her era

and a national celebrity overnight.

The greatest of them all, Kosuke Kitajima, won both breaststroke events at the Athens Olympics in 2004 and again in Beijing in 2008, a double double that made him one of the defining swimmers of his generation.

Why breaststroke? Coaches point to the stroke's reliance on timing and technique rather than sheer size, which suits the Japanese coaching tradition of precise, repetitive refinement.

Breaststroke is also the most technically demanding of the four strokes, with strict rules on the kick and the simultaneous two-handed touch, and small improvements in efficiency produce large gains.

Japan's pipeline has continued to produce world-class breaststrokers, and a continental title in the event carries expectations that other strokes do not.

Ohashi, the Japanese record holder, now has an Asian Games title to add to that record.

The world championships and the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028 are the next stages for Japanese breaststroke.

SPORTS

An Olympic Pool Gets Its Second Great Moment

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The swimming at the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games is being held more than 250 kilometres from Nagoya, at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre built for the 2021 Olympics.

The venue, in Tatsumi in Koto Ward, was the most expensive of the new venues the Tokyo Metropolitan Government built for the Games, and its cost made it a symbol of the debate over the legacy of Olympic construction.

It held some 15,000 spectators during the Olympics, a capacity reduced after the Games to make it viable as a permanent venue for competitions and public use.

Those Olympic finals were swum in almost empty stands, because spectators were barred during the pandemic, which gave the pool a strange place in the history of the Games.

This week it has had what the Olympics could not give it: full crowds cheering Japanese swimmers to medals.

Tomoyuki Matsushita's 200 metres individual medley gold on the opening night, and Shin Ohashi's shared gold in the 100 metres breaststroke on Monday, were

won in front of home supporters.

The Aichi-Nagoya Games have relied heavily on existing facilities, and the Olympic pool in Tokyo is the most prominent example.

The typhoon briefly complicated matters, when the metropolitan government cancelled its public viewing of the swimming because of the storm.

The pool's post-Olympic use as a national competition venue and public facility has been a test of whether expensive Games infrastructure can earn its keep.

A home Asian Games is the most visible answer yet.

SPORTS

Team Gold, the Title Japanese Gymnastics Values Most

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

After the all-around silver and bronze won by Shinnosuke Oka and Daiki Hashimoto, the Japanese men's gymnastics team has named team gold as its next target, according to Sponichi.

The team title matters more than any individual medal in Japanese gymnastics culture, because it reflects the depth of a national programme rather than the brilliance of one athlete.

The rivalry with China has defined the team event for two decades. Japan won Olympic team gold in Athens in 2004, and China answered with gold in Beijing in 2008 and London in 2012.

Japan regained the Olympic title in Rio de Janeiro in 2016 and won it again in Paris in 2024, edging China in a final decided on the last apparatus.

That Paris final remains one of the most dramatic in the sport's recent history, with China's lead evaporating after falls on the horizontal bar.

Zhang Boheng, who won Monday's all-around gold, was a member of that Chinese team, and the two nations meet again with a continental title at stake.

Team competition rewards consistency across six apparatus. Each nation fields its strongest specialists on each piece, and a single fall can decide the result.

Japan's system, running from school clubs through university programmes to corporate teams, is designed to produce exactly that kind of depth.

The Asian Games team event is also an important step toward the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

The individual apparatus finals follow later in the programme.

SPORTS

SPORTS

A Decade That Changed Japanese Basketball

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's silver medal in men's basketball, reported as the country's first medal in the event in 64 years, caps a decade of transformation in the sport.

The B.League was founded in 2016, uniting two rival professional leagues whose split had led to international sanctions against Japanese basketball.

The unified league brought professional marketing, new arenas and rising attendances, and it attracted foreign players and coaches who raised the standard of play.

The national teams followed. Japan's women won silver at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, the country's best Olympic basketball result.

The men's team co-hosted the FIBA World Cup in 2023, with games in Okinawa, and finished as the best Asian team, earning a place at the Paris Olympics.

Japanese players have also reached the NBA, most prominently Rui Hachimura, while guard Yuki Kawamura's rise from the domestic league showed how far the pathway has developed.

The restructured top division, the B.Premier, opens its first season today, with licensing standards intended to create financially stable clubs in modern arenas.

Sunday's final defeat to South Korea, 67-57, was a reminder that the continent's traditional powers remain formidable.

But reaching the final at a home Games, against a Korean side that had beaten Japan in the group stage, marks how far the programme has come.

The women's tournament continues this week.

SPORTS

Nishiyama Wins the Men's Kata, and Shimada Adds a Karate Gold on Monday

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

So Nishiyama won gold in the men's kata at the Asian Games, and Sarara Shimada added another karate gold for Japan on Monday.

The karate competition is being held at the Toyohashi City General Gymnasium in eastern Aichi, with events running until tomorrow.

Kata, the form discipline, is judged on technical and athletic performance: the precision of stances and transitions, timing, power and the quality of movement through a set sequence against imagined opponents.

Japanese competitors enter kata events under a particular kind of pressure. Karate developed in Okinawa and was shaped by mainland Japanese schools, and a Japanese defeat in the discipline is received at home as a failure.

The form standard being judged is one Japan largely defined, which gives its athletes an advantage in training and a burden in expectation.

Other nations have closed the gap considerably. Kata programmes in Europe and the Middle East have produced world champions, and Asian rivals compete for every medal.

Karate appeared at the Olympics only once, in Tokyo in 2021, which has left continental and world championships carrying more weight for the sport's athletes.

The sparring events, known as kumite and contested in weight categories, complete the programme.

Japan's delegation has now won gold in karate, triathlon and swimming, part of the rush of titles that Yomiuri Shimbun marked on its front page after the first full day.

The karate programme concludes tomorrow, the Autumnal Equinox holiday.

SPORTS

Karate's Road From Okinawa to the Asian Games

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The karate golds won by So Nishiyama and Sarara Shimada this week belong to a martial art with roots in the Ryukyu Kingdom, the island state that is now Okinawa.

Karate developed in Okinawa over centuries, drawing on indigenous fighting methods and Chinese martial arts brought through trade and cultural exchange.

Its name was originally written with characters meaning Chinese hand. In the early twentieth century, the characters were changed to the ones used today, meaning empty hand.

Okinawan masters introduced karate to mainland Japan in the 1920s, where it spread through universities and was organised into the major styles practised worldwide.

From Japan, karate spread across the world in the decades after the war, carried by instructors and by servicemen who had trained in Okinawa.

Okinawa Prefecture designated October 25 as Karate Day in 2005, and the island promotes itself as the birthplace of the art, attracting practitioners from around the world.

The sport's competitive form divides into kata, the solo performance of set sequences, and kumite, sparring under rules that reward controlled techniques.

Karate featured at the Olympics once, in Tokyo in 2021, and its absence from later programmes has made the Asian Games and world championships the sport's premier events.

Japanese karateka carry the weight of that heritage into every competition, particularly in kata, where the forms themselves originate in Okinawan and Japanese schools.

The karate programme in Toyohashi concludes tomorrow.

SPORTS

Japan Take Silver in the Mixed Relay as China Win It for the First Time

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan finished second in the triathlon mixed relay at the Asian Games, missing out on a fourth consecutive title as China won the event for the first time.

The mixed relay has been Japan's strongest triathlon event at the Asian Games since it joined the programme, and a silver ends a winning run rather than a disappointing campaign.

In the relay, two men and two women each complete a short triathlon in turn, and the format rewards a nation's depth rather than a single outstanding athlete.

The individual races had already delivered Japan's first gold of these Games, won by Takumi Hojo in the men's event at Gamagori, with Aimi Hayashi third in the women's race.

China's win ended Japan's hold on an event it had won at every Asian Games since the relay was introduced.

Relay results turn on transitions and tactics as much as on raw speed. A lead can be lost in the water or on the bike in a few hundred metres, and the handovers between team members are timed to the second.

The course on Mikawa Bay at Gamagori, west of the typhoon's track, allowed the triathlon programme to proceed in conditions that eastern Japan could not have offered.

Hojo's individual gold also carried a continental quota for the Los Angeles Olympics, which gives the Japanese programme a secure foundation for the next two years.

The relay silver adds to a triathlon haul of a gold, a silver and a bronze.

Japanese triathlon will now turn to the world series and the Olympic qualification cycle.

SPORTS

Today at the Games: Volleyball Final, Matsushita's 400 Medley and a Day of Fencing

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Asian Games continue today with medal events in swimming, fencing and women's volleyball, and team competitions in table tennis, badminton and baseball.

The women's volleyball final against China is the evening's centrepiece, with Japan one win from their first gold in the event since 1978.

In the pool, Tomoyuki Matsushita goes for a second gold in the 400 metres individual medley, after winning the 200 metres on the opening night.

Fencing stages its men's foil and women's épée individual events from start to finish today, with Japanese athletes who competed at the Paris Olympics at the core of the team.

Table tennis holds the women's team quarter-finals and the first round of the mixed doubles. Both the men's and women's teams opened with wins.

Badminton reaches the men's and women's team quarter-finals, the stage at which the draw brings the region's strongest nations together.

In baseball, Japan's squad of corporate-league players meets Palestine in the group stage, after opening against China on Monday.

Japan's men's and women's kabaddi teams both began their group stages with defeats, and continue their campaigns.

Weather is less of a factor than it was on Monday. The typhoon has moved out to sea and today is sunny, though hot in Aichi, where Nagoya is forecast to reach 33 degrees.

NHK will broadcast results from the Games, the Aki Basho and professional baseball this evening.

SPORTS

Matsushita Chases a Medley Double in the Hardest Race in the Pool

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Tomoyuki Matsushita swims for a second Asian Games gold this evening in the men's 400 metres individual medley, after winning the 200 metres medley on the opening night of the swimming.

The 400 medley is widely regarded as the most demanding event in the pool. It combines the technical range of all four strokes with an endurance load that punishes any error in pacing.

Swimmers cover 100 metres each of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, and the race is often decided in the breaststroke leg, where technique contributes most.

A 200 and 400 medley double is one of the classic achievements in swimming, requiring both the speed for the shorter race and the stamina for the longer.

Japan has a strong tradition in the event, with Olympic medallists in the individual medley across recent Games.

Matsushita's 200 metres gold came in a Japanese one-two, with 17-year-old Yuki Kojima second, a result that pointed to the depth of the country's medley programme.

The Tokyo Aquatics Centre, built for the 2021 Olympics, has given the Japanese team a familiar venue and strong home support.

Japanese swimmers have already won multiple medals at these Games, including Shin Ohashi's shared gold in the 100 metres breaststroke on Monday.

Pacing is the tactical heart of the 400 medley. Swimmers who go out too fast in butterfly pay for it in the freestyle, and the best medley swimmers finish strongest.

The final is scheduled for this evening's session.

SPORTS

Japan's Paris Fencers Lead the Team Into a One-Day Individual Programme

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The men's foil and women's épée individual events at the Asian Games begin and end today, with athletes who competed at the Paris Olympics at the core of Japan's team.

Japanese fencing produced its best Olympic results in Paris two years ago, winning five medals, including gold in the men's individual épée through Koki Kano and gold in the men's team foil.

That success transformed the sport's profile in Japan, where fencing had previously been a minority interest with occasional medal hopes.

Individual events are contested as a knockout after pools, and a day that begins with dozens of fencers ends with a champion in the evening.

Foil and épée differ fundamentally. In foil, only touches to the torso count and rules of right of way decide who scores when both fencers hit; in épée, the whole body is a target and there is no right of way, so near-simultaneous hits can both score.

The men's foil team gold in Paris gives Japan

particular strength in that discipline, and the individual event draws on the same fencers.

Asian fencing is highly competitive, with China, South Korea and Hong Kong among the strongest nations.

Japan's investment in coaching, including foreign coaches, has been credited with the rise in results.

Team events follow later in the Games.

A strong day in fencing would extend a Japanese medal count that has grown quickly since the Games opened.

SPORTS

Chasing China at the Table

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's table tennis team plays its quarter-final today with a record that places it second only to China in the modern era of the sport.

At the Olympics, Japan's women have won team medals at four consecutive Games: silver in London in 2012, bronze in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, and silver in Tokyo in 2021 and in Paris two years ago.

Three of those four runs ended in finals against China, whose dominance of table tennis is among the most complete in any Olympic sport.

Japan's greatest moment against China came in Tokyo in 2021, when Jun Mizutani and Mima Ito won the mixed doubles gold medal, beating a Chinese pair in the final.

That victory showed that China could be beaten in a major final, and it inspired a generation of young Japanese players.

Japan's men have their own record, including Olympic team silver in 2016 and bronze in 2021. At these Asian Games they are pursuing the country's first team gold in 60 years.

The Japanese system produces players young. Many begin before they start school, and several of Japan's leading players reached the world elite as teenagers.

Mixed doubles, which begins today, is an event in which Japan has been particularly competitive since it joined the Olympic programme.

Table tennis draws large television audiences in Japan, and a home Games raises the stakes for every match.

The women's team competition proceeds to the semi-finals after today's quarter-finals.

SPORTS

Badminton's Team Quarter-Finals Bring the Region's Best Together

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The men's and women's team quarter-finals are held today in the Asian Games badminton competition.

Asia dominates world badminton. China, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, India, Thailand and Chinese Taipei produce most of the world's leading players, which makes the Asian Games one of the strongest tournaments in the sport.

Team events are contested over singles and doubles matches, and depth across all five matches is what separates the strongest nations.

Japanese badminton rose rapidly in the past fifteen years, producing world champions in singles and doubles and Olympic medallists, built on a national training system and corporate team support.

Women's doubles has been a particular strength, with Japanese pairs among the world's best for most of the past decade.

Quarter-finals are where a team draw becomes unforgiving, with any defeat ending a nation's hopes of a team medal.

The individual events follow the team competition, giving players a second chance at medals.

Badminton draws large crowds in Japan when the national team plays at home, and a home Games offers the sport a rare showcase.

Results from today will determine the semi-final line-up.

Japan's players will hope to follow the delegation's strong start in other sports.

SPORTS

SPORTS

Japan's Baseball Squad Meets Palestine, the Surprise Name in Group A

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's baseball team plays Palestine today in the group stage of the Asian Games tournament, after opening against China on Monday.

Group A contains Japan, China, the Philippines and Palestine, with South Korea, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Thailand in Group B. The top two teams from each group advance to the Super Round.

Palestine's presence surprised many observers. The team won its first international title at the 2025 West Asia Baseball Cup in Iran, beating Pakistan 5-4 in the final, and rose to fifth in the Asian rankings.

The Palestinian delegation to the Games is one of the more remarkable stories of the competition, with athletes drawn from Palestine and its diaspora competing across a range of sports.

Japan fields a squad of corporate-league and amateur players rather than professionals, as it usually does at the Asian Games, because the Nippon Professional Baseball season is still running.

That choice has cost Japan at this tournament before. The country's only Asian Games gold in baseball came as host in Hiroshima in 1994, and South Korea, which sends professionals, is chasing a fifth consecutive title.

The tournament runs until September 27 at Okazaki Central Park Baseball Stadium and Toyohashi Municipal Baseball Stadium in Aichi.

Corporate-league baseball in Japan has a long history and a high standard, and several NPB players each year are drafted from its ranks.

For the players in Japan's squad, a national team appearance at a home Games is the peak of their careers.

The Super Round, where the medals are decided, follows the group stage.

One Gold in Three Decades: Japan's Uneasy Record in Asian Games Baseball

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's baseball team at these Asian Games carries a record that would surprise anyone who knows the country's baseball culture: one gold medal since the sport joined the programme.

Baseball was first played at the Asian Games in Beijing in 1990 and became a full medal sport in 1994, when Japan won the title as host in Hiroshima.

Since then, South Korea has dominated, and it arrives in Aichi seeking a fifth consecutive gold. Chinese Taipei has been its principal rival.

The reason for Japan's modest record is selection. Japan sends players from its corporate leagues rather than professionals, because the Nippon Professional Baseball season is still running when the Games are held.

South Korea's team is made up of professionals from its domestic league, and the incentive for them is considerable: Korean gold medal winners have historically been granted exemptions from military service.

Japan's recent results have been bronzes. At Incheon in 2014, the team lost to Chinese Taipei in the semi-finals and beat China 10-0 in the bronze medal game.

In Hangzhou in 2023, Japan again took bronze, coming from behind to beat China 4-3 in the third-place game after losing to them earlier in the tournament.

This year's home Games give the corporate-league players a rare stage. Group A pairs Japan with China, the Philippines and Palestine.

The Super Round, contested by the top two teams from each group, decides the medallists.

A home gold would be the country's first since Hiroshima, 32 years ago.

SPORTS

Japan's Kabaddi Teams Open With Defeats

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's men's and women's kabaddi teams both began their Asian Games group stages with defeats.

Kabaddi is a contact team sport from South Asia in which a raider enters the opposing half, tries to tag defenders and return without being tackled, all in a single breath traditionally marked by a continuous chant.

It has been on the Asian Games programme since 1990 for men and since 2010 for women, and India dominated the competition for most of that time.

Iran broke India's hold at the 2018 Games, and the sport's strongest nations remain in South and West Asia.

Japan's kabaddi programme is small, built largely by enthusiasts and supported by exchanges with Indian coaches and leagues.

Defeats in opening matches against more experienced nations are expected, and the Japanese teams measure progress by performance as much as by results.

Kabaddi's professional league in India has given the sport a large television audience and a model that other countries study.

The Asian Games provide the sport's widest international stage, which is part of why smaller nations enter teams.

The group stage continues, with the Japanese teams seeking their first wins.

The Asian Games programme's regional sports, such as kabaddi and sepak takraw, are among the features that distinguish it from the Olympics.

The Emperor and Empress Watch Women's Basketball After Ghibli Park

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress watched a women's basketball game at the Asian Games after their visit to Ghibli Park in Aichi.

The imperial couple have spent several days in the prefecture since the Emperor opened the Games at Paloma Mizuho Stadium on Saturday evening.

At Ghibli Park they were photographed with No-Face, the silent masked figure from Spirited Away, an image that circulated widely.

Japan's women have also been the dominant force in Asian basketball for much of the past decade, winning five consecutive FIBA Women's Asia Cup titles from 2013 to 2021.

Imperial attendance at sporting events has a long tradition in Japan, from the Emperor's Cup finals to sumo tournaments, and it confers a particular status on the occasion.

Women's basketball in Japan has a strong recent record, including an Olympic silver medal at the Tokyo Games in 2021, the country's best basketball result at an Olympics.

The men's team won silver in Sunday's final, losing to South Korea, which gives Japanese basketball two teams contending seriously at these Games.

The Games run until October 4, and the imperial couple's programme in Aichi has combined sport with visits to the region's cultural sites.

Their presence has also drawn attention to venues across the prefecture, spread from Nagoya to Toyota, Gamagori and beyond.

The couple's schedule for the rest of the Games has not been published in full.

The Oriental Witches and the Long Shadow of 1964

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Tonight's women's volleyball final against China carries the weight of one of the most celebrated teams in Japanese sporting history.

At the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, Japan's women's team, built largely from the Nichibo Kaizuka company team and coached by Hirobumi Daimatsu, won gold in the sport's first Olympic appearance.

They beat the Soviet Union in the decisive match, and the television audience for it was one of the

largest in Japanese broadcasting history.

Foreign journalists called them the Oriental Witches, a name that stuck, for a style built on relentless defence and extraordinary fitness.

Daimatsu's training methods were famously severe, and they have been debated ever since as both a model of dedication and an example of the harshness of Japanese sports culture of the era.

The team's success made volleyball a national passion and established the women's game as one of the most followed sports in the country.

Japan won Olympic gold again in 1976, and the women's team remained among the world's best through the 1970s.

The 1978 Asian Games gold, the last Japan has won in the event, came near the end of that golden period.

China's rise in the 1980s, led by teams that won successive world titles and Olympic gold, reshaped the balance of power in Asia.

Tonight's final offers the current team a chance to close a 48-year gap against the country that opened it.

Two Golds, No Silver: How Swimming Handles a Dead Heat

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Shin Ohashi's shared gold in the 100 metres breaststroke on Monday was the product of a timing rule that surprises many spectators.

Swimming results are recorded to the hundredth of a second by touchpads at the end of each lane, which the swimmers stop with their hands.

Times are not ranked more finely than that, even though the equipment could measure them. The reason is that pools cannot be built with lanes of perfectly identical length, and a thousandth of a second corresponds to a distance smaller than construction tolerances.

When two swimmers record the same time in a final, they share the place. A tie for first produces two gold medals, and the next finisher receives bronze, with no silver awarded.

Swim-offs are used only where a tie affects qualification, such as for a place in a final, not to separate medallists.

Dead heats for gold are rare at major championships but not unknown, and they have produced some of the sport's memorable moments.

The touchpad system requires a firm touch. A swimmer who glides in gently may not register immediately, which is why finishes are practised so carefully.

Breaststroke finishes add a technical requirement, since the rules demand a simultaneous two-handed touch, and judges watch for violations.

For Ohashi, sharing gold means an identical place in the record books, and the same title of Asian Games champion.

The shared result also produced one of the week's more unusual images: two champions on a single step of the podium.

Onosato Clinches a Winning Record and Leads the Aki Basho Alone

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Onosato secured his winning record on the ninth day of the Autumn Grand Sumo Tournament and holds sole possession of the lead, according to Kyodo News. Today is the tenth day.

A winning record, known as kachi-koshi, means eight wins in a fifteen-day tournament, and it guarantees a wrestler cannot finish with more losses than wins.

For a yokozuna, the sport's highest rank, kachi-koshi is a minimum rather than an achievement. The expectation is to contend for the title, and anything less invites criticism from the Yokozuna Deliberation Council.

Leading the tournament alone after nine days places Onosato in control of the race, with six days to go and the hardest bouts, against the other top-ranked wrestlers, still to come.

The final days of a basho are traditionally reserved for meetings among the leading wrestlers, which means the leader's schedule gets harder as the tournament approaches its end.

The Aki Basho is held at the Ryogoku Kokugikan in

Tokyo and runs until Sunday, when the champion is decided.

The typhoon's approach on Monday coincided with the tournament's ninth day, and the Kokugikan's programme continued.

Onosato's rise through the ranks was one of the fastest in the modern era, and he has drawn large crowds since his first appearances in the top division.

NHK broadcasts the day's results this evening.

A title on Sunday would add to his standing as the dominant figure of the current era.

How a Sumo Title Is Won in the Final Week

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Onosato leads the Aki Basho alone after nine days, but in sumo the final week is where the title is decided.

The championship, known as the yusho, goes to the top-division wrestler with the best record after fifteen days.

The schedule is set by the Japan Sumo Association's judges, who make the day-by-day pairings. In the second week they deliberately match the leaders against the highest-ranked opponents and against each other.

That means a leader who has faced lower-ranked wrestlers in the first week often has his hardest bouts in the final days.

If two or more wrestlers finish level, they meet in a playoff bout after the final day's scheduled bouts, with the winner taking the title.

The Emperor's Cup is presented on the final day, together with prizes from sponsors, and the champion rides in an open-car parade.

Three special prizes, for outstanding performance, fighting spirit and technique, are awarded to wrestlers ranked below ozeki who have impressed.

For a yokozuna such as Onosato, the expectation is to win, and even a strong record without the title can attract comment.

The tournament ends on Sunday at the Ryogoku Kokugikan.

The results of each day's bouts are broadcast by NHK in the evening.

Hanshin Edge DeNA 3-2 as the Pennant Races Run On

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Hanshin Tigers beat the Yokohama DeNA BayStars 3-2 on Monday as the Central and Pacific League races continued through the holiday.

A one-run win is valuable for Hanshin at this stage of the season. Their position at the top of the Central League came under pressure over the weekend, when their magic number was threatened by results elsewhere.

The Giants' 3-2 win over Yakult on Sunday was among the results that kept the race open.

The result keeps Hanshin in front on a day when the typhoon disrupted much of the country's holiday programme.

Close games in September test bullpens more than any other part of a team, and managers begin to shorten their pitching staffs as the postseason approaches.

In the Pacific League, SoftBank have already clinched the pennant, and the race is for second place and home advantage in the Climax Series First Stage.

Seibu led Nippon-Ham by two games in that race after Sunday's results.

The Climax Series decides which teams reach the Japan Series, and the league champions start their final stage with a one-game advantage.

NHK will broadcast the day's professional baseball results this evening.

The regular season runs into October.

SPORTS

SPORTS

Nakayama Races Today After the Typhoon Postponement

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Japan Racing Association's Nakayama meeting is being held today after its postponement because of Typhoon No. 25, while the Hanshin meeting went ahead as planned on Monday.

Nakayama, in Funabashi in Chiba Prefecture, lies close to the coast that took the storm's closest approach, and racing there on Monday was never realistic.

Today's clear weather allows the meeting to proceed, and the going will depend on how much of Monday's rain the course absorbed.

Track condition is graded before every race and matters enormously to form. Some horses handle soft ground well and others struggle, and trainers and punters adjust accordingly.

Postponement rather than cancellation preserved the card and its prize money, and today's citizens' holiday made a Tuesday meeting possible.

Japanese horse racing generates one of the largest betting turnovers in the world, which gives a postponed meeting financial as well as sporting significance.

Horses entered at Nakayama have had their preparation disrupted by a day, which in racing, where training is carefully timed, can affect performance.

The Hanshin meeting on Monday ran in the fine weather of western Japan, a contrast that illustrated how sharply the storm divided the country.

Racegoers heading to Nakayama should check rail services, with some lines in Chiba still recovering from the disruption.

The autumn racing season builds toward the major races of October and November.

SPORTS

Japanese Basketball's New Top Division Opens Its First Season Today

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The B.League's restructured top division, the B.Premier, opens its season today, beginning a new era for Japanese professional basketball.

The reform replaces promotion and relegation decided on the court with entry based on licensing standards, including attendance, revenue and the quality of a club's home arena.

The league's argument is that stable, well-funded clubs in modern arenas will raise the standard of play and the commercial value of the sport, following the model of major leagues elsewhere.

Critics have worried that the system favours clubs in large cities with wealthy backers, and that smaller clubs with loyal local followings may find themselves shut out.

Japanese basketball has grown rapidly over the past decade. Attendances have risen, arenas have been built, and the national teams have produced their best international results.

The men's national team's silver medal at the Asian Games, won in Sunday's final against South Korea, arrives as the league launches its new structure.

Several of the national team's players compete in the domestic league, which gives the new season an immediate audience.

New arenas built to meet the league's standards are also intended as year-round venues for concerts and events, which is part of their business case.

The first season will be watched for whether the new model delivers the growth its designers promised.

The season runs through the spring.

SPORTS

FC Tokyo's Yuto Nagatomo Injures a Ligament in His Right Knee

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

FC Tokyo's Yuto Nagatomo has suffered a ligament injury to his right knee.

Nagatomo is one of the most experienced players in Japanese football, a full-back whose international career spanned several World Cups and whose energy became his trademark.

He returned to FC Tokyo after a long career in Europe, including spells in Italy with Inter Milan, and has remained a leading figure in the dressing room.

Knee ligament injuries vary widely in severity, from sprains that heal in weeks to ruptures that require surgery and months of rehabilitation.

For a player of Nagatomo's age, any significant injury raises questions about the future, though he has repeatedly defied expectations about how long he could continue at the top level.

FC Tokyo will have to reorganise their defence for the remainder of the J.League season.

Details of the injury's severity and the expected recovery time have not been confirmed in the reports available.

His influence at the club extends beyond his appearances on the pitch, as a mentor to younger players and a public face of the team.

Supporters will be hoping for an update from the club in the coming days.

The J.League season continues toward its conclusion in December.

SPORTS

Nakamura Fourth and Miyajima Fifth in the Sixth Grand Prix Ski Jumping Event

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Yuto Nakamura finished fourth and Rinko Miyajima fifth in the sixth event of the ski jumping Grand Prix, according to Sankei News.

The Grand Prix is ski jumping's summer circuit, contested on hills fitted with artificial surfaces that allow jumpers to compete without snow.

Summer results are a useful guide to form ahead of the winter World Cup season, although conditions on plastic surfaces differ from snow, particularly on the in-run.

Japan has a long tradition in ski jumping, including Olympic champions and world record holders, and the sport attracts a strong following during the winter.

A fourth place just off the podium and a fifth place show Japanese jumpers competitive in a field that includes many of the athletes who will contest the World Cup.

Ski jumping rewards consistency across two rounds, and small variations in take-off timing or wind conditions can separate the top places by a few points.

The Grand Prix calendar continues into the autumn before the winter season opens.

Japanese jumpers use the summer to refine technique and equipment, which is increasingly scrutinised under the sport's rules on suits.

The next Winter Olympics follow the 2026 Games in Milan and Cortina, and the cycle toward them has already begun.

Results from the remaining Grand Prix events will shape expectations for the winter.

CULTURE

No-Face at Twenty-Five: Spirited Away's Quarter Century

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The photograph of the Emperor and Empress beside No-Face at Ghibli Park, which circulated widely this week, came in the year of a significant anniversary: Spirited Away was released 25 years ago, in July 2001.

Hayao Miyazaki's film tells the story of Chihiro, a ten-year-old girl who wanders into a world of spirits and must work in a bathhouse to save her parents, who have been turned into pigs.

It became a phenomenon. For almost two decades it was the highest-grossing film ever released in Japan, until it was overtaken in 2020 by the animated feature Demon Slayer: Mugen Train.

Its international recognition was unprecedented for Japanese animation. It shared the Golden Bear at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2002 and won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2003.

The film's characters have become part of the national imagination, and No-Face, the silent masked spirit who follows Chihiro through the bathhouse, is among the most recognisable.

Critics have read the film in many ways: as a story

about growing up, as a commentary on greed and consumption, and as a meditation on memory and identity in a changing Japan.

Its influence on animation worldwide is difficult to overstate. A generation of animators outside Japan cites it as the film that showed what the medium could do.

Studio Ghibli's work continues to draw audiences, and Miyazaki's later film, The Boy and the Heron, won another Academy Award in 2024.

Ghibli Park, where the imperial couple were photographed, allows visitors to step into scenes from the films, including the train carriage where No-Face sits beside Chihiro.

A quarter of a century on, the film remains one of the most beloved works of Japanese culture at home and abroad.

CULTURE

The Red Flowers That Arrive With the Equinox

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Higanbana, the red spider lily, flowers around the autumn equinox with such regularity that it takes its name from Higan, the Buddhist week centred on the equinox.

The flowers appear suddenly on bare stems, without leaves, and their vivid red lines rice paddy banks, riversides and the edges of cemeteries across the country.

Their association with graves and with the equinox gives them a sombre reputation in Japanese culture, reflected in many local names linking them to death and the other world.

There is a practical history behind their placement. The bulbs are poisonous, and farmers planted them along paddy banks and around graves in part to deter burrowing animals.

The leaves appear after the flowers have faded and last through the winter, so that leaves and flowers never meet, a separation that has inspired poetry and folklore.

Kinchakuda in Hidaka, Saitama Prefecture, is one of the best-known places to see them, with a large colony along a bend of the Koma River.

Timing varies with the weather. A hot late summer can delay flowering, and the plants respond to falling temperatures.

The flowers are also known as manjushage, a name of Buddhist origin describing a celestial flower.

Visitors to riverside colonies this week should take care, as rivers swollen by the typhoon may still be running high.

The flowering lasts only a week or two, a brief red punctuation mark between summer and autumn.

SOCIETY

Evacuating With a Dog or Cat: Plan Before the Warning

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Pet owners caught in this week's evacuation orders faced a question that official guidance has addressed more directly in recent years: what to do with the animals.

The environment ministry's guidance encourages owners to evacuate together with their pets, a practice known as accompanied evacuation, rather than leaving them behind.

That does not always mean the pet can stay in the same room. Many evacuation shelters accommodate animals in a separate area, to protect people with allergies or fears.

Owners should check in advance whether their local shelter accepts pets and under what conditions.

Preparation makes the difference. A carrier or cage, a lead, food and water for several days, medications and identification such as a microchip or tag are the essentials.

Training a pet to be comfortable in a carrier, and socialising dogs so they stay calm among strangers, eases life in a shelter.

Staying with friends or relatives outside the hazard zone, or in a pet-friendly hotel, can be an alternative to shelters.

The reluctance to leave pets behind has kept some people in danger during past disasters, which is why authorities now plan for animals rather than

excluding them.

After the storm, owners should check that pets have not been injured and keep them away from floodwater and debris.

Registering pets with microchips improves the chances of reunion if they are lost during an evacuation.

SPORTS

Three Times the Host: Japan and the Asian Games

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Aichi-Nagoya Games are the third Asian Games hosted by Japan, after Tokyo in 1958 and Hiroshima in 1994.

The Games began in New Delhi in 1951, inspired by the idea of a continental sporting event for the newly independent nations of Asia.

Tokyo's hosting in 1958 came as Japan rebuilt after the war, and it served as a rehearsal for the city's successful bid for the 1964 Olympics.

Hiroshima's Games in 1994 carried particular meaning as an event of peace in a city rebuilt from atomic devastation.

The Games have grown enormously since the first edition, and the Aichi-Nagoya programme spans more than 40 sports.

Unlike the Olympics, the programme includes sports with strong Asian traditions, such as kabaddi and sepak takraw, alongside the global mainstream.

Japan led the medal table in the early decades, before China's rise from the 1980s onward made it the dominant nation.

The Games are governed by the Olympic Council of Asia, and they are usually held every four years, midway between Summer Olympics.

The Aichi-Nagoya Games return the event to its traditional cycle after the Hangzhou Games were postponed from 2022 to 2023.

The Games close on October 4.

SPORTS

Japanese Medallists in Today's Pages

Compiled by the Sports Desk

Gold: Shin Ohashi, men's 100m breaststroke (shared).

Gold: So Nishiyama, men's kata.

Gold: Sarara Shimada, karate.

Gold: Takumi Hojo, men's triathlon.

Gold: Tomoyuki Matsushita, men's 200m individual medley.

Silver: Yuki Kojima, men's 200m individual medley.

Silver: Shinnosuke Oka, men's all-around.

Silver: men's 4x200m freestyle relay, Japanese record.

Silver: triathlon mixed relay.

Silver: men's basketball.

Bronze: Daiki Hashimoto, men's all-around.

Bronze: Aimi Hayashi, women's triathlon.

CULTURE

Day and Night Are Not Quite Equal Tomorrow

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Tomorrow's Autumnal Equinox is usually described as the day when day and night are equal.

In fact daylight is slightly longer.

Sunrise and sunset are timed from the moment the top edge of the sun touches the horizon, not its centre.

The atmosphere also bends sunlight, lifting the sun into view before it has geometrically risen.

Together, those effects add several minutes of daylight at each end of the day.

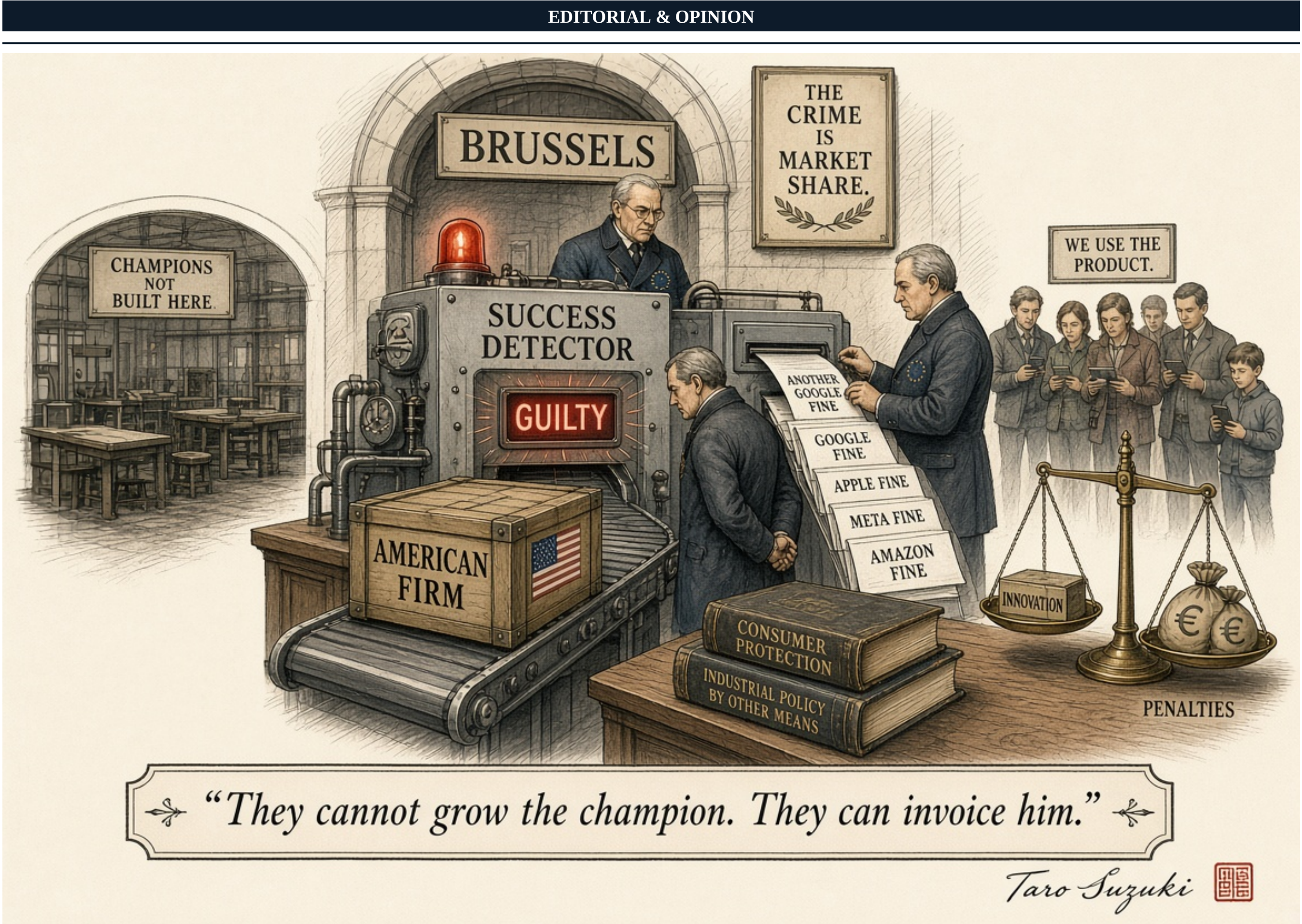
Truly equal day and night arrive a few days after the autumn equinox.

The equinox itself is an astronomical moment, when the sun crosses the celestial equator.

After it, nights grow longer than days until the winter solstice in December.

Japan marks the moment with a national holiday honouring ancestors.

Tokyo's sunset today, about 5:40 p.m., will come earlier each evening from now on.



Editorial cartoon by Taro Suzuki, Staff Cartoonist.

EDITORIAL

They Cannot Grow the Champion. They Can Invoice Him.

Taro Suzuki's machine in Brussels finds every successful American firm guilty. His empty workshop is the sharpest image of the week, and Japan, which has no platform champions of its own either, should look hard at it

By Samantha Ortiz | Editorial Page Editor

There is a machine in Brussels in Taro Suzuki's cartoon this morning, and it has only one setting. It stands under a stone arch with the city's name carved above it, a grey industrial contraption of pipes, gauges and rivets. A red warning lamp turns on its roof. Its label reads SUCCESS DETECTOR, and the display on its front panel glows with a single word: GUILTY.

A wooden crate rides toward it on a conveyor belt. The crate is stamped AMERICAN FIRM and carries the Stars and Stripes, and it is plainly on its way in rather than on its way out.

Three officials tend the machine, all in dark coats with the circle of European stars on their lapels. One stands at the controls on top. A second, bent forward with his hands clasped behind his back, peers at the crate like a customs officer at a suspicious parcel.

The third pulls a long printout from the machine's side. The entries on it read, in order, ANOTHER GOOGLE FINE, GOOGLE FINE, APPLE FINE, META FINE, AMAZON FINE, and the paper keeps coming.

On the wall hangs a framed motto, wreathed in laurel like a civic inscription: THE CRIME IS MARKET SHARE.

Suzuki has filled the edges of the picture as carefully as its centre. Through a second arch on the left is an empty workshop, its tables bare and its stools unoccupied, under a sign that reads CHAMPIONS NOT BUILT HERE.

On the right, a crowd of ordinary people, parents and children among them, stand absorbed in their phones and tablets beneath a sign of their own: WE USE THE PRODUCT.

On the desk in front sit two heavy volumes. The top one is titled CONSUMER PROTECTION. The one beneath it, holding it up, is INDUSTRIAL POLICY BY OTHER MEANS.

And beside them stands a brass balance. In one pan sits a small crate labelled INNOVATION, riding high and light. The other pan, labelled PENALTIES, is

weighed down with money bags marked with the euro sign.

The caption beneath reads: They cannot grow the champion. They can invoice him.

The occasion is this week's news, reported by TV Asahi, that the European Union has fined Google 72.5 billion yen, and that the fine has fed speculation about how digital regulation may come to affect Japanese companies.

It is a sharp cartoon, and its sharpness is earned. Satire works by compression and exaggeration, and the argument it provokes deserves to be taken seriously on its own terms.

Begin with the empty workshop, because it is the truest thing in the picture.

Europe has not produced a single consumer technology platform of global scale in the internet era. The search engines, operating systems, app stores, social networks and marketplaces that Europeans use every day are overwhelmingly American, with a Chinese exception or two.

This is not for want of talent. European universities train superb engineers, and many of them build their careers in California. It is for want of the things that turn a good company into a dominant one: deep pools of risk capital, a single market that is actually single for services, and a tolerance for failure that lets founders try again.

Suzuki's workshop is empty because those conditions are missing, and no competition authority can supply them.

The printout is fair too. The fines have become recurring events, reported with the regularity of quarterly earnings, and the phrase ANOTHER GOOGLE FINE at the head of the list is the cartoonist noticing that the news has stopped being news.

A regulatory relationship that produces a fresh penalty every year or two is not working as intended, whichever side one takes. Either the conduct is not changing, or the penalties are not the right

instrument.

The printout also invites a distinction that matters to the policy argument. The penalties it lists are not all of the same kind, and they do not all come from the same authority.

Some are competition fines imposed by the European Commission for abusing a dominant position. Some are penalties under the Digital Markets Act, which Europe applied for the first time last year when it fined Apple and Meta for breaching their new obligations.

And some of the largest are not competition penalties at all. Meta's biggest European fine was imposed by Ireland's data protection regulator under privacy law, over transfers of European users' data to the United States. Amazon's largest European penalty came from Luxembourg's data protection authority, while the Commission's own competition cases against Amazon were settled with commitments rather than fines.

A single scroll makes the point vividly. For policymakers, though, privacy law, competition law and platform regulation answer different questions, and a company can be in the clear under one and in breach of another.

The crowd on the right makes a point that competition lawyers often prefer to avoid. People choose these products, and they choose them in enormous numbers, frequently without paying a yen for them.

Consumer harm is the foundation of competition law, and it is genuinely difficult to show when the service is free, fast and good. A shopper who finds what she wants in two seconds does not feel robbed.

And the second book, the one propping up the first, is a pointed and not unreasonable suspicion. Almost every company designated under Europe's Digital Markets Act, the law that imposes obligations on so-called gatekeepers in advance, is American.

When the rules of a market fall almost entirely on foreigners, it is fair to ask whether they are rules or tariffs, and Washington has asked exactly that question, loudly, and threatened retaliation.

Those are real blows. The case for Brussels deserves a hearing too, and it begins with what the law actually says.

The motto on the wall is satire's compression of a complaint that European officials hear constantly. The law itself is narrower.

European competition law does not make market share a crime. Dominance is perfectly lawful. What the treaty prohibits is the abuse of a dominant position, and the Commission has to show specific conduct that harmed competition.

The Google cases were not about size. They concerned conduct: placing the company's own shopping service above rivals in its search results, requiring phone makers to pre-install its apps as a condition of licensing others, and the way its advertising contracts restricted competitors.

One can think the Commission was wrong on any of those, and many serious people do. But they are arguments about conduct, and that is where the real dispute lies.

The Commission's defenders would add that its machine sometimes says innocent. The Commission loses in court regularly.

The European Court of Justice upheld the shopping decision against Google in 2024. The General Court annulled the Commission's separate fine over Google's AdSense contracts the same year, and it annulled a large fine against Intel in 2022 after years of litigation.

Those are not the results of a rigged apparatus. They are the results of a legal system in which the regulator must prove its case and frequently fails to.

Defenders of the rules would also answer the crowd. WE USE THE PRODUCT is the oldest defence of every incumbent, and on its own it proves less than it seems to.

People use the default search engine on their phone because it is the default, and defaults are extraordinarily powerful. People use the dominant social network because their friends are on it, and they are on it because everyone else is.

Those network effects are what make digital markets different. Once a platform is large enough, being good is no longer what keeps it on top; being large is. Competition law exists precisely for markets in which a leader can stay a leader without continuing to earn it.

The balance is the most interesting image of all,

EDITORIAL & OPINION

because it poses exactly the right question.

The pans ask whether penalties outweigh innovation. But the innovation that competition law claims to protect is not the incumbent's. It is the innovation that never reaches the market because the incumbent has closed the door: the rival search engine that cannot get onto phones, the app that cannot use an alternative payment system, the challenger that is bought before it can grow.

Nobody can photograph a product that was never built. That is why the crate labelled INNOVATION looks so small in the drawing, and it is why the question is harder than the scale makes it look.

Economists who study these markets describe a kill zone around the largest platforms: a space in which investors hesitate to fund young companies because they expect the incumbent either to copy them or to buy them. The evidence for it is contested, but the concern is serious enough that competition authorities in Europe, the United States and elsewhere now look more closely at acquisitions of small companies by large ones.

And the caption carries a further point worth drawing out. An invoice is a weak instrument, and the size of this one shows it.

Seventy-two and a half billion yen is a great deal of money to a household and a small fraction of one per cent of the annual revenue of Google's parent company. It will not change what the company does. It will be paid, booked and forgotten.

Europe itself appears to have reached that conclusion, which is why the Digital Markets Act exists. It replaces after-the-fact fines with rules in advance about what gatekeepers may and may not do, on the theory that changing conduct matters more than collecting money.

Its early record is mixed. Compliance reports have been voluminous, arguments over what the obligations actually require have multiplied, and the first penalties under the act were modest by the standards of the old competition fines. Supporters say the point was always behaviour rather than money. Critics say the behaviour has changed less than promised.

So Brussels is not only invoicing the champion. It is trying, clumsily and with plenty of mistakes, to change how he behaves. Whether that works is an open question. That it is a different project from sending a bill is not.

Now to Japan, which is where this page's interest lies, and where the cartoon's most uncomfortable point applies with equal force.

Replace the word BRUSSELS above the arch with TOKYO and the empty workshop on the left does not need redrawing.

Japan, too, has failed to produce a consumer internet platform of global scale. The phones in the crowd's hands run American operating systems. The apps on them are sold through American stores. Japanese households and companies pay large and growing sums every year for foreign digital services, cloud computing and advertising.

That imbalance is the digital deficit that economists now track alongside the trade balance, and it is growing in a country that built the Walkman, the games console and the bullet train.

Japan has not responded as Brussels has. It has not issued a string of large fines. Its law promoting competition in smartphone software, which took full effect last December, is narrower than Europe's, focused on mobile operating systems, app stores and browsers, and it relies more on dialogue and compliance reports than on penalties.

Nor has Japan tried to tax the platforms specially. Several European countries introduced digital services taxes aimed at large technology firms. Japan instead extended its ordinary consumption tax to digital services supplied from abroad, so that a foreign app and a domestic one are taxed alike, which is the kind of even-handedness Suzuki's cartoon implicitly demands.

The Fair Trade Commission has acted when it judged it necessary. In 2025 it ordered Google to stop requiring Android phone makers to give its search app preferential placement, the first order of its kind against one of the largest American platforms.

That is a defensible approach, and it is a distinctly Japanese one: target specific conduct, avoid theatrical penalties, and keep the relationship with the regulated

companies workable. It is a long way from the machine in the cartoon.

But it carries its own risk, which is that gentleness becomes inaction, and inaction becomes a quiet acceptance that Japanese markets will always be served by someone else's platforms on someone else's terms.

There is a further complication that Japanese readers should keep in mind before cheering the cartoon too loudly. Japan does have platform champions, just not on the phone.

The country's games industry built some of the most successful closed digital ecosystems in the world. Nintendo and Sony run their own stores on their own consoles, take a commission on the software sold through them, and decide what may be sold there, much as Apple and Google do on phones.

Japan's smartphone law does not reach games consoles, and there is no sign that it will. But the principle behind it, that the owner of a dominant device should not be the sole gatekeeper of what runs on it, does not respect the boundary between a phone and a console by nature.

If Japan ever finds itself on the other side of Suzuki's conveyor belt, with a crate marked JAPANESE FIRM riding toward a detector in some other capital, it will want the rules to be about conduct rather than success. That is the best argument for insisting on that standard now, while the crates are mostly American.

There is also an alliance dimension that Europe does not face in the same way. Japan negotiates its trade with the same American administration that regards European digital enforcement as a hostile act, and it does so while most Japanese exports face a 15% tariff.

The Prime Minister meets President Trump today. It would be naive to think that Japan's approach to American technology companies plays no part in how Washington views Japan's requests on everything else.

That is a reason for Japan to regulate carefully. It is not a reason to stop regulating, and it would be a poor alliance that required Japan to leave its own consumers and developers without protection.

Allies disagree about regulation all the time without damage to their security relationship. Japan and the United States have argued over semiconductors, automobiles, beef and rice for half a century, and the alliance has outlasted every one of those disputes.

The mistake would be to treat digital rules as uniquely untouchable, as though American technology companies were an arm of American foreign policy. They are companies, and Japanese law applies to companies.

The speculation reported this week, about how digital rules might come to affect Japanese companies, cuts in both directions. Japanese app developers and game publishers stand to gain from more open app stores and cheaper payment options. Japanese firms operating in Europe must comply with European rules like everyone else.

So what should Japan take from the cartoon?

First, that Suzuki is right about the workshop. The solution to having no champions is not found in the competition authority. It is found in capital markets that fund risk, in universities that spin out companies, in a government that buys from young domestic firms instead of defaulting to established foreign ones, and in an employment culture that lets talented people leave large companies to start their own.

Japan has made progress on some of those and very little on others, and a decade of startup strategies has not yet produced a company that the rest of the world cannot do without.

The obstacles are well documented. Japanese pension funds and insurers have historically placed little money in venture capital. Large employers still hire graduates for life, which makes leaving to found a company feel riskier than it is. Government procurement favours established suppliers with long records, which is exactly what a young company lacks.

None of those is the fault of a regulator, and none of them would be fixed by treating large foreign firms more harshly. They would be fixed by the kind of patient, unglamorous reform that rarely makes a front page, and that Japanese governments of both parties have promised more often than they have delivered.

Second, that the motto on the wall describes exactly what Japan must never do. It should never adopt a policy that treats success as the offence. It should police conduct, precisely and predictably, so that large companies know the rules and small ones can rely on them.

Third, that invoices are not a strategy. A fine that a company can pay out of loose change teaches the market nothing. Rules that change behaviour, applied evenly to domestic and foreign firms alike, are the only regulation worth having.

Evenness is the part that matters most for Japan. A rule that falls only on foreign firms invites exactly the retaliation Washington has threatened against Brussels. A rule that would bind a Japanese firm in the same position is much harder to call protectionism, because it plainly is not.

The same principle cuts close to home. In messaging, payments and online retail, Japanese companies hold strong positions in their own market, and a competition policy that is serious about conduct will sometimes find its cases among them. When it does, it should act as firmly as it would against anyone else.

And fourth, that the crowd in the picture deserves more respect than either side usually gives it. The people on the right are not fools for using the product. They are the reason the argument matters, because it is their choices that competition is supposed to widen and that dominance can quietly narrow.

Suzuki has drawn a machine that finds every success guilty. The better machine, the one no country has yet built, would find guilt only where it exists and would spend the rest of its time making the empty workshop full.

That second task belongs to finance ministries, universities, pension funds and personnel departments far more than to any competition authority, and it is the task Japan has found hardest.

It is also the only one that would change the picture. A Japan with champions of its own would argue about platform rules from a position of strength, as a country with interests on both sides of the conveyor belt, rather than as a market that others supply.

They cannot grow the champion, the caption says. That is Europe's problem, and it is Japan's problem too. The invoice was never going to solve it, and neither, on its own, is admiring the champion someone else grew.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Digital Regulation Has Become Part of the Alliance Agenda

By Rachel Kim | Japan-U.S. Coverage, Washington-Tokyo Liaison

The European Union's fine on Google, reported this week at 72.5 billion yen, arrives as Japan's prime minister sits down with an American president who has treated European digital enforcement as a trade dispute.

That juxtaposition describes a change in how technology regulation works. Rules that once belonged to competition authorities and consumer agencies now sit on the agenda of leaders' meetings.

The reason is concentration. The platforms that dominate consumer technology outside China are overwhelmingly American, which means that almost any rule governing them falls mainly on American companies.

Washington reads that as discrimination. Regulators read it as the unavoidable consequence of regulating a market that American firms happen to dominate.

Japan's smartphone software competition law, in full effect since December, applies to Apple and Google because they are the dominant providers, not because they are American, and Japanese officials have been careful to say so.

The distinction matters in a relationship where most Japanese exports face a 15% tariff and where Tokyo has every interest in avoiding new grievances.

Japanese regulators have chosen a lower-key style than Brussels, favouring compliance dialogue over headline penalties, which reduces the diplomatic temperature without removing the rules.

Speculation that digital regulation could come to affect Japanese companies more directly, reported by TV Asahi News, reflects the other side of the same trend: rules written for one set of firms eventually apply to others.

For now, the practical question is whether Japan's approach can deliver more open markets for its own developers without becoming a point of friction with its most important ally.

The answer will depend more on implementation than on legislation, and implementation is where Japanese regulators have historically preferred to work.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: A Recovery Conducted During a Holiday, Before a Market Reopens

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Typhoon No. 25 struck on the third day of a five-day holiday, and the timing shapes both the damage and the recovery.

The holiday reduced some risks. Commuter trains were emptier than on a working day, schools were closed and many offices were shut, which meant fewer people travelling through the storm.

It raised others. Tourists unfamiliar with local hazards were in coastal and mountain areas, and holiday traffic added to the number of people on the roads.

Recovery now runs through two more holidays, today's citizens' holiday and tomorrow's Autumnal Equinox, which gives railways and utilities time to repair before the working week resumes on Thursday.

Markets follow the same calendar. Tokyo reopens on Thursday, and investors will assess the storm's costs in the same session as the Bank of Japan's new interest rate and the American-Chinese summit.

Insurers are the obvious focus, but the more telling indicator will be how quickly transport and power return, because those determine how much economic activity the storm actually removes.

More than 60,000 households lost power, mostly in Chiba, and 260 flights were cancelled. Those numbers are large for a day and small for a week, if restoration proceeds at the usual pace.

The human costs are not measured in the same terms. Two people died in landslides and four are missing in Kanagawa, and the search will continue through the holiday.

Chiba's repeated flooding this month is the pattern that should worry planners most, because it shows that the recovery from one event may not be complete before the next arrives.

The economic effect of a typhoon on a country the size of Japan is usually modest in national figures. For the households and businesses in its path, it is anything but.

SOCIETY

After the Storm, Restock the Cupboard

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Households that drew on emergency supplies during this week's typhoon should restock them now, before the next warning.

Official guidance recommends keeping at least three days of supplies, and preferably a week, since relief may take time to reach every home after a large disaster.

Water is the priority. The usual guideline is three litres per person per day for drinking and cooking.

Food that needs no cooking, such as tinned goods, crackers and retort pouches, together with a portable gas stove, covers most needs.

Rolling stock, the practice of buying a little extra of what the household normally eats and using the oldest items first, keeps supplies fresh without waste.

Portable toilets and bags are often overlooked, and they become essential when water or sewage systems fail.

Mobile phone batteries, a radio, torches and spare batteries keep a household informed and connected during power cuts.

Medications, prescriptions and copies of important documents should be kept together and ready to take in an evacuation.

Households with infants, older people or pets need supplies specific to them, such as formula, nappies, care products and pet food.

This week's storm is a reminder that the next warning may come at short notice.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

CORRECTIONS

Monday's edition said in two economy articles that Japan and the United States conducted their joint yen-buying intervention earlier this month. The coordinated intervention took place on July 31 and was confirmed by the Ministry of Finance on August 3. It was the first joint action by the two countries since 2011.

Sunday's edition reported that domestic markets would reopen on Tuesday, September 22. Today is a citizens' holiday and tomorrow is Autumnal Equinox Day; markets reopen on Thursday, September 24. Monday's edition gave the correct date but did not carry a correction.

Sunday's edition listed Tomokazu Harimoto among the players in the men's table tennis team at the Asian Games. Harimoto was not selected for the team event. Monday's edition reported his omission correctly but did not carry a correction.

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.

THE WEEK AHEAD

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22 (citizens' holiday): Japan-U.S. summit in New York, Eastern Time. Asian Games: women's volleyball final, Japan v China; men's 400m individual medley with Tomoyuki Matsushita; men's foil and women's épée individual events; women's team table tennis quarter-finals; badminton team quarter-finals; baseball, Japan v Palestine. Aki Basho day 10. Nakayama races, postponed from Monday. The B.Premier opens its first season.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23 (Autumnal Equinox Day): Final day of the five-day holiday. Asian Games karate concludes. Financial markets closed.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 24: Tokyo markets reopen after four closed days. The Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25% takes effect. U.S.-China summit during President Xi Jinping's state visit to the United States.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 27: Final day of the Aki Basho at the Ryogoku Kokugikan. Asian Games baseball tournament concludes at Okazaki and Toyohashi.

SUNDAY, OCT. 4: Closing of the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

HOLIDAY SERVICES

Banks, post office counters and most government offices are closed today and tomorrow. ATMs operate on holiday schedules, which vary by bank and location. Hospitals operate emergency services only; municipal holiday clinic information is available from local government websites.

Garbage collection on holidays follows each municipality's own calendar, and several municipalities affected by the typhoon are arranging separate collection for flood-damaged household goods. Check municipal announcements before putting waste out.

Rail and air services are recovering from the typhoon line by line. Passengers should check operator announcements before travelling today.

TYPHOON ADVISORIES

Evacuation orders remain in force until lifted by municipalities; do not return to homes in designated hazard zones until the order is lifted. Report cracks in the ground, springs on hillsides or falling stones to the municipality or to emergency services.

Photograph flood and wind damage before cleaning up. The photographs are needed for insurance claims and for the disaster damage certificates issued by municipalities. Do not start a vehicle that has been submerged.

Volunteers wishing to help with the clean-up should contact the disaster volunteer centre of the municipality concerned before travelling, register in advance and bring their own food, water and equipment.

MARKET REFERENCE

Tokyo markets are closed today and tomorrow and reopen Thursday. The yen weakened into the low 157 range against the dollar in New York, according to Yomiuri Shimbun. The WPM Productions chart puts the dollar at 157.3880 yen on Monday and gives an indicative 157.2570 for today. The Nikkei 225 last closed at 65,018.95 on September 18.

ABOUT TODAY'S GRAPHICS

The front-page photograph shows Governor Yuriko Koike at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's

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typhoon briefing. The exchange-rate chart on the Economy page was produced by WPM Productions. The weather map was supplied for today's edition, and the chart of city highs and lows beside it is drawn from the map's figures.

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Today's crossword solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Monday's solution is published separately with this edition.

IN TOMORROW'S EDITION

The outcome of the Japan-U.S. summit and the Prime Minister's first speech to the United Nations General Assembly. The women's volleyball final against China, and Tomoyuki Matsushita's 400m individual medley. The search in Kanagawa and the recovery across Chiba. The Autumnal Equinox and the close of Silver Week. The Aki Basho's tenth day. And the markets' preparations for Thursday's reopening.

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