

■ TAKAICHI AND TRUMP MEET FOR 35 MINUTES AT THE UN ■ TYPHOON TOLL RISES TO SEVEN DEAD, FIVE MISSING ■ VOLLEYBALL SILVER AS CHINA WINS 3-0 ■ KOJIMA, 17, TAKES MEDLEY GOLD ■

Thirty-Five Minutes at the United Nations: Takaichi and Trump Put the Alliance on Display

No figure was demanded on defence spending, China was discussed on security and economic security together, and the two leaders had what Tokyo called a frank exchange on sanctions against the International Criminal Court

By Rachel Kim | Japan-U.S. Coverage, Washington-Tokyo Liaison, with Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy



President Trump and Prime Minister Takaichi, with their delegations, at their meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York on Tuesday. The two leaders met for about 35 minutes on the margins of the General Assembly. (Photo: WPM Productions)

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and President Donald Trump met for about 35 minutes at United Nations headquarters in New York on Tuesday, and the Prime Minister emerged to say that Japan and the United States had been able to show the world the strength of their alliance, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Sankei News.

The meeting, held on the margins of the General Assembly's opening week, covered co-operation on security and economic security with China in view, and the two sides confirmed that they would work together on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals, Nikkei and Sankei reported.

On the question that Japanese officials had been most anxious about, the President did not ask for specific figures on an increase in Japan's defence spending, according to Sankei News.

Sanctions against the International Criminal Court, which Washington is preparing and which Japan, as a member of the court, opposes, were discussed in what was described as a frank exchange, Yomiuri and Sankei reported.

Mr. Trump set the tone at the start. He said that Prime Minister Takaichi would go down in history, and remarked that he keeps an eye on her approval ratings, according to Sankei News.

The remark about approval ratings was made with a cabinet approval figure of 58.3% fresh in the Japanese press, after an ANN poll this week showed a rise of 2.9 points.

The photograph on this page shows the two leaders seated before the General Assembly's blue backdrop, flanked by their delegations, in the format the United Nations uses for the dozens of bilateral meetings that crowd its opening week.

Thirty-five minutes is short by the standards of a full summit and long by the standards of a General Assembly week, in which leaders move from room to room on schedules measured in quarter-hours.

The substance the two governments chose to publicise was economic. Nikkei and Sankei reported that co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals was confirmed, with the co-ordination of supply chains framed around China's export restrictions.

That framing links the meeting to the one that follows it. President Xi Jinping meets Mr. Trump in Washington on Thursday during a state visit, with rare earths and artificial intelligence expected to dominate.

Japan's aim in meeting first was to have its concerns on the table before the American and Chinese leaders sat down, and the confirmation of co-operation on minerals and chips was the result Tokyo wanted.

The absence of a demand on defence spending removed the most awkward possibility from the room. Washington has pressed its European allies to commit to 5% of national output, and Japanese officials had prepared for a comparable request.

Japan is already on course to raise defence and related spending to 2% of gross domestic product by fiscal 2027 under the security documents adopted in December 2022, which the Takaichi government is now revising.

The exchange on the International Criminal Court was the meeting's point of open disagreement. Mr. Trump used his own speech to the General Assembly to call for withdrawal from the court, and reports indicate his administration is preparing sanctions that could include a ban on settlements in dollars.

Japan is a party to the court's founding treaty, one of its largest financial contributors, and the home country of its president, Judge Tomoko Akane.

Asahi Shimbun reported on its front page that the Prime Minister's side would not raise the sanctions publicly, which is the usual Japanese method of disagreeing with Washington: state the principle, avoid the confrontation.

Japan joined European countries in a statement calling for the protection of international judicial bodies, Reuters reported, with the court understood to be the focus.

The Prime Minister's own speech to the General Assembly, delivered the same day, appealed for the rule of law, pledged to press for the prompt removal of the United Nations Charter's former enemy clauses and for reform of the Security Council, and offered support for energy supplies from the Middle East, according to Sankei News and Jiji Press.

She also held her first meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine, telling him that Japan stands with Ukraine and that sanctions against Russia will continue, Sankei reported.

In a meeting with Secretary-General António Guterres, she pressed for Security Council reform and for an increase in the number of Japanese staff at the United Nations, according to Nikkei.

The foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea issued a joint statement opposing economic coercion, a phrase read as directed at Chinese export controls.

Taken together, the day's meetings delivered the sequence Japanese diplomacy had planned: the alliance reaffirmed, the economic security agenda confirmed, the disagreement on the court registered without a public quarrel.

What the meeting did not produce was a detailed joint document, and the specifics of the co-operation on minerals and chips will be read in the working-level agreements that follow.

The Prime Minister travelled to New York four hours late on Monday because of the typhoon, and returns to a country counting seven dead and five missing from the storm, with the Diet's extraordinary session and a heavy economic agenda waiting.

Tokyo's markets, closed since Friday, reopen on Thursday in the same session that will price the results of the American-Chinese summit and the

Bank of Japan's new policy rate.

For a government whose foreign policy rests on the alliance, the meeting delivered what it needed: a public affirmation, no unwelcome demand, and a path into the week's second summit with Japan's interests already stated.

Typhoon Toll Rises to Seven Dead and Five Missing as Landslides Struck One After Another in Chiba and Kanagawa

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter, with Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The toll from Typhoon No. 25 has risen to seven dead and five missing in Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures, Yomiuri Shimbun reported on its front page, as landslides struck one after another across the two prefectures during and after the storm's passage.

In the Kominato district of Kamogawa, on Chiba's Pacific coast, approximately ten houses were affected, and a man and a woman, both aged 80, died, according to Mainichi Shimbun and TBS. There were also fatalities in Yokosuka, in Kanagawa.

It is the third time since August that Chiba has been hit, Mainichi and TBS reported, and the repetition explains much of the damage: ground that had not recovered from the earlier rain took this storm on top of it.

Asahi Shimbun put figures to the destruction. In Chiba Prefecture, 23 buildings were completely or partially destroyed and 25 were partially damaged. Across the two prefectures together, 22 buildings were completely destroyed and 428 were flooded.

The area around JR Sakura Station in Chiba is widely flooded, Asahi reported, after the Takasaki River overflowed on Monday and placed about 2,800 people under a Level 5 alert.

Drainage pump trucks are to be deployed to Sakura and other flooded areas from today, and some districts are expected to remain under water for a time.

The typhoon itself is gone. As of 9 p.m. on Tuesday it had become an extratropical cyclone far to the east of Japan, according to Mainichi Shimbun, and its direct effects on the country have ended.

Its indirect effects have not. Level 4 landslide warnings remain in force in parts of Chiba and Kanagawa, and saturated slopes are at risk of collapse even with light rain.

The road network across the Boso Peninsula is still cut in places. The Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway remain closed by mudslides, according to the sixth situation report from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

Railway restoration is progressing, with some delays continuing, and power restoration work continues in Chiba Prefecture, where most of the more than 60,000 households that lost electricity were located.

The rise in the toll, from two dead and four missing on Tuesday morning, reflects the way landslide deaths are discovered: after the rain has stopped, as searchers reach houses that were buried while the storm was passing.

Kominato lies on a stretch of coast where steep, wooded hills fall almost directly to the sea, and houses are built on the narrow ground between them.

Two people of 80 dying in their homes is the pattern that recurs in Japanese landslide disasters. Older residents are the least able to leave quickly and the most likely to judge, from experience of many storms, that this one will pass.

The search for the five people still missing continues, with Self-Defense Forces relief dispatched at

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WEATHER — TOKYO

31°C

Low 23°C · Sun and cloud on the map

Sapporo

21°

Sendai

28°

Nagoya

32°

Naha

31°

Forecasters describe cloud or rain reaching Kanto and Kinki. Landslide warnings remain in Chiba and Kanagawa. Full weather, Page 10.

- TODAY IN BRIEF
- Japan and the U.S. confirmed co-operation on AI, semiconductors and critical minerals; no defence-spending figure was requested.
 - Typhoon No. 25 left seven dead and five missing; 22 buildings destroyed and 428 flooded in Chiba and Kanagawa.
 - Takaichi met Zelensky for the first time and pressed Guterres for Security Council reform.
 - The extraordinary Diet session will put the consumption tax cut first, Yomiuri reports.
 - A tropical depression south of Japan is expected to become a typhoon within 24 hours.
 - Japan's women took volleyball silver; Sugihara won the first Japanese women's all-around gold.

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Home delivery and digital access. ¥3,900/month digital; ¥6,800/month print and digital. [www.japanmorningpost.com/subscribe](#)

PUBLISHING INFORMATION

Published daily by WPM Productions. Owner: Paul Carter. Managing Editor: Dixon Yan. Est. 1887. 1-2-3 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004.

MARKETS	
Tokyo markets	Closed; reopen Thu.
Nikkei 225 (Sept. 18 close)	■ 65,018.95
TOPIX (Sept. 18 close)	■ 4,091.14
USD/JPY, New York (Mon.)	low 157 range
BOJ policy rate (from Sept. 24)	1.25%
Fed target range	3.75%-4.00%
Rice, 5 kg average	2,000-yen range

- THE SUMMIT: KEY POINTS
- About 35 minutes at UN headquarters, on the margins of the General Assembly.
 - Co-operation on AI, semiconductors and critical minerals confirmed.
 - No specific figure requested on defence spending.
 - ICC sanctions discussed in a 'frank exchange'.

- TYPHOON NO. 25: WEDNESDAY
- 7 dead, 5 missing in Chiba and Kanagawa; two residents of 80 died in Kominato.
 - Level 4 landslide warnings remain; Tateyama and Ken-O expressways closed.
 - Pump trucks deployed to Sakura, where the station district is flooded.
 - The storm became extratropical far east of Japan at 9 p.m. Tuesday.

- INSIDE
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- THE WEEK AHEAD
- Thu. 24: Markets reopen; BOJ 1.25% takes effect; US-China summit.
 - Sun. 27: Aki Basho final day; baseball tournament ends.
 - Sun. Oct. 4: Asian Games closing ceremony.

- GAMES AND SUMO
- Today: nine swimming finals; gymnastics team finals; table tennis semis.
 - Aki Basho day 11; Onosato leads after day 10.

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FROM PAGE 1

Typhoon Toll Rises to Seven Dead and Five Missing as Landslides Struck One After Another in Chiba and Kanagawa

An 80-year-old man and woman died when about ten houses were hit in Kamogawa; Chiba has now been struck three times since August, and Level 4 landslide warnings remain on slopes that could fail with light rain

Continued from Page 1

Kanagawa's request and local police and fire services working across both prefectures.

Today is Autumnal Equinox Day, the last day of the five-day holiday, and much of the recovery work is being done by people who would otherwise be with their families.

Weather across Kanto is uncertain. TBS and Weathernews forecast cloud or rain from Kanto to Kinki and a sharp drop in Tokyo's temperature as a front approaches, while today's map gives Tokyo a high of 31 with sun and cloud.

Any rain on the Boso Peninsula and the Miura Peninsula now carries risk, because the ground has no capacity left to absorb it.

The recovery follows the pattern of every major Japanese storm: search first, then power and roads, then the slow business of assessing homes, issuing damage certificates and clearing mud.

For Chiba, the third storm since August has arrived before the work from the first two was finished, and the prefecture's municipalities face a long autumn.

The Prime Minister, in New York for the United Nations General Assembly, returns to a recovery that will test her government's disaster management as its first major domestic emergency.

The full accounting of the storm, in damage certificates, insurance claims and reconstruction, will take months. The count of its dead may not yet be final.

POLITICS

At the General Assembly, Takaichi Asks for the Rule of Law and an End to the Charter's Former Enemy Clauses

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi used her first speech to the United Nations General Assembly to appeal for the rule of law, and she pledged that Japan would work for the prompt removal of the former enemy clauses from the United Nations Charter, for reform of the Security Council, and for support to energy supplies from the Middle East, according to Sankei News and Jiji Press.

The speech was delivered on the same day as her meeting with President Trump, and the two events were designed to complement each other: the summit for the alliance, the speech for Japan's standing in the wider world.

The rule of law is the theme Japanese prime ministers return to most often at the United Nations, because Japan's position in its maritime disputes rests on international law and because the country has no other lever against larger neighbours.

The former enemy clauses are a more specific grievance. Three articles of the Charter, written in 1945, refer to states that were enemies of the signatories during the Second World War, and Japan has sought their deletion for decades.

The General Assembly declared the clauses obsolete in 1995, but deleting them requires amending the Charter, and no amendment has been made.

A pledge to pursue their prompt removal is a statement of intent rather than a plan, since amendment requires the agreement of two-thirds of the membership, including all five permanent members of the Security Council.

Security Council reform is the same kind of promise, made by every Japanese government since the 1990s and no closer to fulfilment.

The support for energy supplies from the Middle East reflects the conflict in the Gulf, now in its seventh month, and Japan's dependence on the region for most of its crude oil.

The Prime Minister also met Secretary-General Guterres to press for Security Council reform and for more Japanese staff at the United Nations, according to Nikkei.

The speech was received in Japan as a competent first appearance, and it will be judged over time by whether any of its pledges move.

Its most durable line may prove to be the plainest: the appeal for the rule of law, delivered in a week in which the United States called for withdrawal from an international court to which Japan belongs.

POLITICS

'Japan Stands With Ukraine': Takaichi Meets Zelensky for the First Time

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Prime Minister Takaichi held her first meeting with President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine in New York, telling him that Japan stands with Ukraine and that sanctions against Russia will continue, according to Sankei News.

The meeting took place on the margins of the General Assembly, within days of the Democratic Party for the People leader Yuichiro Tamaki's visit to Kyiv, the first by a Japanese opposition leader since Russia's full-scale invasion.

Together, the two events show a Japanese position on the war that spans government and opposition, and that has not changed with the change of prime minister.

Japan's support for Ukraine has been concentrated on finance, reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, with military support limited by its export rules to non-lethal equipment.

The commitment to maintain sanctions matters because the sanctions regime depends on co-ordination among the Group of Seven, and any member's wavering would be noticed in Moscow.

Mr. Zelensky's meetings in New York this week come as Russia's parliamentary elections concluded with a landslide for the ruling party, a vote held without genuine opposition.

Japan's interest in the war has always been regional as well as European. Its governments have argued that a successful change of borders by force in Europe would carry lessons for East Asia.

That argument sits beside the alliance agenda of the same day. The Prime Minister's meeting with President Trump and her meeting with Mr. Zelensky were separated by hours, and American policy toward the war remains the largest variable in Ukraine's position.

The meeting was described as a first, and it established the personal contact that Japanese prime ministers have maintained with the Ukrainian leader since Fumio Kishida's visit to Kyiv in 2023.

Details of any new commitments were not reported, and Japan's assistance continues under the frameworks already agreed.

POLITICS

Japan Asks the Secretary-General for More Japanese Faces at the United Nations

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Prime Minister Takaichi met Secretary-General António Guterres in New York and pressed for reform of the Security Council and for an increase in the number of Japanese staff at the United Nations, according to Nikkei.

The second request is a long-standing Japanese complaint. Japan is among the largest contributors to the organisation's regular budget, and the number of Japanese nationals working in its secretariat has for years been well below what the United Nations' own guidelines would suggest.

The organisation calculates a desirable range of staff for each member state based on membership, population and financial contribution, and Japan has consistently fallen short of its range.

Japanese governments have tried to close the gap by funding junior professional officer positions, running recruitment campaigns and supporting Japanese candidates for senior posts.

Language is one obstacle. United Nations work requires fluency in English or French, and often both, and Japan's education system has historically produced fewer candidates comfortable working in

those languages than its size would suggest.

Career structure is another. Japanese professionals who leave domestic careers for international organisations have found it difficult to return, which discourages mid-career moves.

Japanese nationals have nevertheless held senior positions, including Sadako Ogata as High Commissioner for Refugees in the 1990s and Yasushi Akashi in peacekeeping and humanitarian roles.

The Prime Minister's request to the Secretary-General reflects the view in Tokyo that influence within an organisation depends partly on the people inside it.

Mr. Guterres, whose term runs to the end of this year, has limited power over recruitment beyond the guidelines the organisation already applies.

The meeting also covered Security Council reform, the subject on which Japan's ambitions and the organisation's structure have been at odds for three decades.

POLITICS

The Number That Was Not Asked For

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The most significant sentence in the reports of Tuesday's summit may be the one describing what did not happen: President Trump did not demand specific figures for an increase in Japan's defence spending, according to Sankei News.

Japanese officials had prepared for such a demand. Washington pressed its European allies at last year's NATO summit to commit to spending 5% of national output on defence and related items, including 3.5% on core defence, and the same expectations have been voiced about allies in Asia.

Japan's current commitment, made in the security documents of December 2022, is to raise defence and related spending to 2% of gross domestic product by fiscal 2027.

That target already represents the largest expansion of Japanese defence spending since the war, and financing it has been politically difficult, with tax increases to pay for it repeatedly deferred.

A demand for 3.5% or 5% would have forced the government to choose between disappointing Washington and committing to spending it has no way to fund.

The absence of a figure does not mean the pressure has gone. American officials have made clear in other settings that they expect allies to do more, and the revision of Japan's security documents now under way will set the next target.

The Takaichi government has its own reasons to spend more. The Prime Minister has long argued for a stronger defence posture, and the security environment, from North Korean missiles to Chinese activity around Japan, has not eased.

What the summit's silence on figures provides is room. The government can set its own path in the revised documents without appearing to respond to an American demand.

It also avoids the domestic argument that would have followed a public request, at a time when the government's priority in the Diet is a consumption tax cut.

The next American request may come in a different form, through the alliance's regular consultations rather than a leaders' meeting, and Japanese officials will be watching for it.

POLITICS

A Frank Exchange on the Court: Where Tokyo and Washington Part Ways

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

The sanctions the United States is preparing against the International Criminal Court were discussed in a frank exchange between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Sankei News.

In diplomatic language, a frank exchange is a disagreement conducted politely, and this one concerns an institution that Japan helped build and the United States has never joined.

Mr. Trump used his own speech to the General Assembly on Tuesday to call for withdrawal from the court, and reports indicate his administration's sanctions could extend to a ban on settlements in

dollars.

Japan is a party to the court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute, and one of its largest financial contributors. The court's president, Judge Tomoko Akane, is Japanese.

Asahi Shimbun reported on its front page that the Prime Minister's side would not mention the sanctions publicly, an approach consistent with how Japan has handled disagreements with Washington for decades.

The disagreement was registered in another way. Japan joined European countries in a statement calling for the protection of international judicial bodies, Reuters reported, with the court understood to be the focus.

That statement places Japan alongside Europe on the question, and it reflects the weight that Japanese foreign policy places on international legal institutions.

The court prosecutes genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression where national courts cannot or will not act. The United States has objected to its jurisdiction over non-members' nationals under administrations of both parties.

Earlier American sanctions on court officials, imposed in 2020 and lifted in 2021, were followed by measures against individual officials last year. A ban on dollar settlements would reach the institution's finances rather than individuals.

For Japan, the exchange tested whether a disagreement on principle could coexist with an alliance reaffirmed the same afternoon. The reports suggest it could, at least for now.

POLITICS

AI, Chips and Minerals: The Economic Security Agenda Confirmed in New York

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Japan and the United States confirmed at Tuesday's summit that they will co-operate on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals, with supply chains co-ordinated in light of China's export restrictions, according to Nikkei and Sankei News.

The three subjects form the core of what both governments now call economic security: the effort to ensure that the technologies and materials modern industry depends on cannot be cut off by a rival.

Critical minerals are the most immediate concern. China dominates the processing of rare earth elements, and its export controls have affected manufacturers of magnets, motors and electronics in both countries.

Semiconductors run the other way. The United States and its allies control the most advanced chips and the equipment that makes them, and Japanese equipment and materials makers are central to that control.

Japan has invested heavily in rebuilding its own chip manufacturing, through the Rapidus project in Hokkaido, which aims to produce advanced chips at scale, and through Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's plants in Kumamoto.

Artificial intelligence connects the other two. Training and running advanced models requires vast numbers of chips, and the data centres that house them are becoming strategic assets in their own right.

The confirmation at the summit builds on a framework for securing critical minerals that the two governments signed when President Trump visited Tokyo last October.

Its timing matters because of Thursday's American-Chinese summit, where rare earths and artificial intelligence are expected to dominate and where Washington will negotiate directly with the country whose controls the allies are co-ordinating against.

Japanese industry will read the outcome for detail: which minerals, which investments, and whether allied supply projects receive new money.

The education ministry will continue support for research into rare earth alternatives next fiscal year, a reminder that the long-term answer to dependence is substitution as much as diplomacy.

POLITICS

POLITICS

Three Foreign Ministers, One Statement Against Economic Coercion, Two Days Before Beijing Arrives

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea issued a joint statement opposing economic coercion, completing a set of allied positions assembled in New York before Thursday's American-Chinese summit.

The statement, the summit between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump, and the confirmation of co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals all point in the same direction: supply chains co-ordinated among allies in light of Chinese export restrictions.

Economic coercion is the term allied governments use for the use of trade and supply restrictions to force political concessions, and China's controls on rare earths are the case they have most in mind.

South Korea's participation is significant because its manufacturers share Japan's exposure to the same minerals and the same chip supply chains, and because Seoul and Tokyo have moved from rivalry to co-ordination on these questions in recent years.

The trilateral framework, established at the Camp David summit of 2023, has become the channel through which the three governments issue such positions quickly.

Statements of this kind have no enforcement mechanism. Their force lies in demonstrating to Beijing that its three largest Pacific counterparts describe its conduct in the same words at the same time.

The test of the statement comes on Thursday. If Washington reaches an arrangement with Beijing on rare earths that secures American supplies without addressing its allies', the statement will have been words.

If the allied position holds through the summit, and the co-operation confirmed on Tuesday receives funding and agreements, it will have been the start of something.

Japanese industry has heard many statements about supply chains since the rare earth interruption of 2010, and it measures them by what changes in the price and availability of what it buys.

Tokyo's markets reopen on Thursday, and the summit's language on minerals will be among the first things traded.

POLITICS

A Gulf Co-operation Plan Offered From the General Assembly Podium

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Prime Minister Takaichi announced a plan for co-operation with the Gulf region at the United Nations, aimed at strengthening the resilience of energy supplies, as part of her pledge of support for energy supplies from the Middle East.

Japan depends on the Middle East for the great majority of its crude oil, a dependence that has changed little in half a century despite repeated efforts to diversify.

The conflict in the Gulf, now in its seventh month, has made that dependence the central concern of Japanese energy policy this year, alongside the weak yen that makes every imported barrel more expensive.

Supply resilience covers several kinds of measure: stockpiles, which Japan holds at levels equivalent to many months of imports; diversification of suppliers and shipping routes; and investment in the Gulf's own infrastructure to keep exports flowing.

Japan has long cultivated relationships with the Gulf producers that go beyond the purchase of oil, including investment, technology transfer and, increasingly, co-operation on hydrogen and ammonia as future fuels.

Offering such a plan from the General Assembly podium presents it as a contribution to international stability rather than as a purely national interest, which is how Japanese governments prefer to frame their energy diplomacy.

The details of the plan will emerge through the foreign and economy ministries, and Japanese trading houses and energy companies will be the instruments

of much of it.

The plan complements the summit's confirmation of co-operation with the United States on critical minerals and semiconductors: energy, minerals and chips are the three supply chains Tokyo regards as strategic.

For households, the connection is the price of petrol, which the government continues to subsidise at record cost.

The plan's success will be measured in the least visible way possible: by tankers that continue to arrive.

POLITICS

The Tariff Nobody Mentioned

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

In the accounts of Tuesday's summit available to this desk, the word tariff does not appear, and its absence is one of the more interesting facts about the meeting.

Most Japanese exports to the United States face a 15% tariff under the agreement the two governments reached last year, which replaced the higher rates threatened during the trade confrontation of 2025.

That agreement was accompanied by a Japanese commitment to invest very large sums in the United States, and its implementation has been the subject of continuing negotiation between the two governments.

The tariff has had measurable effects. Japan's trade surplus with the United States has fallen sharply, and exporters in the automobile and machinery sectors have absorbed costs that their results are beginning to show.

A summit that confirmed co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals while leaving the tariff unmentioned describes an alliance in which the security and economic security agendas are running ahead of the trade relationship.

That is not necessarily a failure. Trade is negotiated by ministers and officials over months, and a 35-minute meeting is the wrong place to reopen it.

It is also a choice. Tokyo could have made the tariff a public issue at the summit and did not, judging that the alliance agenda and the position ahead of Thursday's American-Chinese meeting mattered more.

Japanese exporters may see it differently. For them, the tariff is a daily cost, and the minerals and chips agenda a long-term benefit.

The revision of the tariff, if it comes, will come through trade negotiations, and the summit's silence suggests those negotiations are not close to a result.

The question for the government is how long the alliance agenda can run ahead of the trade relationship before the gap becomes a political issue at home.

POLITICS

The Extraordinary Session Puts the Consumption Tax Cut First, With the Upper House in Mind

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The extraordinary session of the Diet will give priority to deliberations on a reduction in the consumption tax, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, and the ruling party is proceeding with its minority in the House of Councillors in mind.

A consumption tax cut on food has been the centrepiece of the government's response to rising prices, and passing it requires either support in the upper house or the use of the lower house's power to override.

The ruling parties hold a majority in the House of Representatives, but bills rejected by the House of Councillors can only be forced through by a two-thirds vote in the lower house, a margin the government does not command on its own.

That arithmetic makes the opposition's position decisive. Yomiuri reported that the collapse of a centrist grouping has stalled the opposition's alternative proposal for a tax cut, which leaves the government's version as the only one on the table.

The consumption tax stands at 10%, with a reduced rate of 8% for food and beverages, and the government's proposal concerns the food rate.

Opposition parties have differed on how far a cut should go and how long it should last, and the disintegration of the centrist bloc removes the vehicle through which a compromise might have been

assembled.

A cut in the consumption tax on food would reduce revenue by a large sum each year, and the finance ministry has long resisted changes to a tax it regards as the most reliable in the system.

The government's argument is that household budgets are strained by prices, and that a visible cut on food offers relief faster than any other measure.

Yomiuri also reported the appointment of a lawmaker surnamed Sakamoto as chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Rules and Administration, the body that manages the chamber's business and will schedule the session's debates.

The session opens with the Prime Minister back from New York and with the typhoon's recovery competing for the government's attention.

POLITICS

How a Bill Passes When the Government Lacks the Upper House

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The ruling party's minority in the House of Councillors, which Yomiuri Shimbun reported is shaping its approach to the consumption tax cut, changes how every bill in the extraordinary session must be handled.

Japan's Diet has two chambers. The House of Representatives, the lower house, is the more powerful, but most legislation requires the agreement of both.

Under Article 59 of the Constitution, a bill passed by the lower house and rejected by the upper house becomes law only if the lower house passes it again by a two-thirds majority of members present.

The lower house can also treat a bill as rejected if the upper house fails to act on it within 60 days, but the two-thirds requirement still applies to the override.

A government with a simple majority in the lower house and no majority in the upper house therefore needs opposition votes in one chamber or the other for every ordinary bill.

The budget and treaties are exceptions. For those, the lower house's decision prevails if the two chambers cannot agree, which is why governments in this position can still fund the state.

Tax bills are ordinary legislation, and a consumption tax cut requires the upper house's assent or the two-thirds override.

Japan has experienced this configuration before, often called a twisted Diet, and it has produced both deadlock and negotiated compromise depending on the parties involved.

The practical effect is that opposition parties gain leverage over the content of legislation, and the government must build a coalition bill by bill.

Yomiuri's report that the opposition's own tax proposal has stalled suggests the government may find that leverage less organised than it feared.

POLITICS

How the Ruling Party Lost the Upper House, and Why It Matters for the Tax Cut

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The ruling party's minority in the House of Councillors, which Yomiuri Shimbun reports is shaping its approach to the consumption tax cut, dates from the upper house election of July 2025.

In that election, the Liberal Democratic Party and its coalition partner failed to hold a majority of the chamber's seats, continuing a decline that had begun with the lower house election of the previous October.

The results reflected public anger over prices, a series of political funding scandals, and the rise of newer parties that drew younger voters away from both the ruling coalition and the traditional opposition.

Upper house elections choose half of the chamber's members every three years for six-year terms, so the coalition's position will not change until 2028 unless the parties' alignments do.

Sanae Takaichi became party president and Prime Minister in October 2025 with the task of governing without an upper house majority, and her government's approval ratings have given it more authority than its parliamentary arithmetic.

Governing in this position means negotiating each bill with opposition parties, which is why the consumption tax cut is being approached with the upper house in mind.

Yomiuri's report that the collapse of a centrist grouping has stalled the opposition's alternative tax proposal suggests the opposition's leverage is less organised than the numbers imply.

The Democratic Party for the People, whose leader Yuichiro Tamaki visited Kyiv this week, has been the opposition party most willing to negotiate with the government on individual measures.

A government with strong approval and a divided opposition can pass legislation bill by bill, as several have done in previous twisted Diets.

It can also be tempted to dissolve the lower house and seek a mandate, a possibility that will accompany every autumn session until the upper house changes.

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What an Extraordinary Session Is, and Why the Autumn One Is Rarely Extraordinary

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The extraordinary session of the Diet in which the government will prioritise a consumption tax cut, as Yomiuri Shimbun reported, is extraordinary only in name.

The Diet holds one ordinary session each year, convened in January and lasting 150 days, in which the budget for the coming fiscal year is passed along with the government's main legislative programme.

Extraordinary sessions can be convened by the cabinet at any time, and must be convened if a quarter of the members of either house demand it. In practice one is held almost every autumn.

The autumn session handles the legislation that did not fit into the ordinary session, supplementary budgets for the current fiscal year, and, after an election, the government's new programme.

This year's session carries an unusually heavy agenda: the consumption tax cut on food, the financing of a record fuel subsidy, and the political consequences of the revision of the three security documents.

The government's minority in the House of Councillors means that each bill must either attract opposition support in the upper house or be passed twice in the lower house by a two-thirds majority.

The session's length is set at its opening, and extensions are common when the government's programme runs behind.

Committee assignments matter in such sessions, which is why Yomiuri reported the appointment of the new chairman of the House of Representatives Committee on Rules and Administration, the committee that manages the chamber's schedule.

Extraordinary sessions have also been the occasion for dissolutions of the lower house and general elections, when a prime minister judges the moment favourable.

With cabinet approval at 58.3% and a tax cut to deliver, that possibility will be discussed in the corridors whether or not the government intends it.

POLITICS

Who Runs the Crisis When the Prime Minister Is Abroad

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Prime Minister Takaichi flew to New York on Monday evening with a typhoon over Kanto, and she has spent the days since in meetings while the toll at home rose to seven dead and five missing.

That she could do so reflects a crisis management system built to operate without the Prime Minister in the room.

The system's centre is the Prime Minister's Office, where the Chief Cabinet Secretary co-ordinates the government's response and speaks for it in twice-daily press conferences.

Beneath the Chief Cabinet Secretary sits the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary for Crisis Management, a post created in 1998 after the government's slow response to the Great Hanshin earthquake of 1995 was criticised.

That official, typically a former senior police officer, runs the crisis management centre in the basement of the Prime Minister's Office, where ministries' liaison

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officers gather when a disaster is declared.

A prime minister abroad remains in contact, receives reports and can return if the situation demands, as several have done during major earthquakes.

The decision to travel is itself a judgment. Cancelling a summit and a General Assembly speech would have signalled that the storm was beyond the system's capacity, which it was not.

The Self-Defense Forces' disaster dispatch, the land ministry's emergency engineers and the meteorological agency's warnings all operate under their own authorities, at the request of prefectures, without waiting for the Prime Minister.

The political risk is different from the operational one. A leader photographed abroad while citizens die at home invites criticism, and governments manage it by ensuring the response is visible and the leader's attention is documented.

The Prime Minister returns to a recovery that will now become her government's responsibility in the public mind, whatever the system did in her absence.

The Room, the Flags and the Clock: How a General Assembly Bilateral Works

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

The photograph on the front page shows a format familiar to anyone who has covered the United Nations in September: two leaders in armchairs, their delegations in rows, flags behind them and a printed backdrop announcing the General Assembly.

During the opening week of the Assembly, dozens of heads of government are in the same building at the same time, and the bilateral meeting on the margins is the week's basic diplomatic unit.

Meetings are scheduled in slots of roughly half an hour, sometimes less, and delegations move between rooms on a timetable that has little tolerance for overruns.

The press is admitted at the start for what is known as a spray: a brief opportunity to photograph the leaders and record any opening remarks, after which the room is cleared and the meeting proceeds in private.

Opening remarks are where public signals are sent. President Trump's comments about the Prime Minister's approval ratings and her place in history were made in that window, which is why they were reported.

The substance follows the departure of the cameras. Officials on both sides have usually prepared the agenda and the outcomes in advance, and the leaders confirm or adjust them.

After the meeting, each side issues its own account, known as a readout, and the differences between the two readouts are often as informative as their contents.

The Japanese readout of Tuesday's meeting emphasised the strength of the alliance and co-operation on economic security; the reports of a frank exchange on the International Criminal Court indicate where the accounts diverge.

Photographers' images from the spray, like the one published today, are typically the only visual record of the meeting itself.

Taro Suzuki's cartoon on the editorial page takes up what happens on the other side of the door when it closes.

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The former enemy clauses that Prime Minister Takaichi pledged to have removed are among the oldest unfinished business in the United Nations Charter.

The Charter was signed in San Francisco in June 1945, while the war against Japan was still being fought, and three of its articles refer to states that were enemies of the signatories during the Second World War.

Article 53 allows regional arrangements to take enforcement action against a former enemy state without Security Council authorisation. Article 107 provides that nothing in the Charter invalidates action taken against a former enemy as a result of the war. Article 77 refers to territories detached from enemy

states.

The clauses have had no practical effect for decades. Japan joined the United Nations in 1956, Germany in 1973, and both became among the largest contributors to its budget.

Their continued presence nevertheless rankles. For Japan, a country that has built its foreign policy on the United Nations and served on the Security Council more often than any other member, being described as an enemy in the organisation's founding document is an anomaly.

In 1995, marking the organisation's fiftieth anniversary, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising that the clauses had become obsolete and expressing the intention to delete them at the earliest appropriate session.

That session never came. Amending the Charter requires a vote of two-thirds of the General Assembly and ratification by two-thirds of the members, including all five permanent members of the Security Council.

Deletion has been caught up in the larger argument over Security Council reform, since any process to amend the Charter opens the question of who should sit on the Council.

Japanese governments have kept the issue alive in speeches rather than in formal proposals, and the Prime Minister's pledge follows that pattern.

The clauses remain in the Charter, a reminder of the year it was written and of how difficult the document is to change.

A Charter Amended Only Three Times in Eighty Years

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The Prime Minister's pledge to seek removal of the Charter's former enemy clauses, and her call for Security Council reform, both require something that has happened only three times since 1945: an amendment to the Charter of the United Nations.

The Charter can be amended under Article 108 by a two-thirds vote of the General Assembly, followed by ratification by two-thirds of the member states, including all five permanent members of the Security Council.

The first amendments, adopted in 1963 and in force from 1965, enlarged the Security Council from eleven members to fifteen, adding four non-permanent seats, and enlarged the Economic and Social Council from eighteen members to twenty-seven.

A further amendment, adopted in 1965 and in force from 1968, adjusted the voting requirement for convening a conference to review the Charter.

The third, adopted in 1971 and in force from 1973, enlarged the Economic and Social Council again, to fifty-four members.

Since then, nothing. Every proposal to change the Council's permanent membership, to abolish or limit the veto, or to delete the former enemy clauses has failed to reach the threshold.

The requirement that all five permanent members ratify gives each of them a veto over reform, and none has been willing to accept changes that would dilute its own position.

The 1963 enlargement succeeded because the membership had grown rapidly with decolonisation and the Council's composition had become indefensible; even then, the Soviet Union and France initially voted against.

Japan's advocacy of reform has therefore always been a long-term project, restated at each General Assembly with no expectation of quick success.

The organisation marked its eightieth anniversary last year with calls for renewal and no agreement on how to achieve it, and this year's Assembly has not changed that.

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Prime Minister Takaichi's call for reform of the Security Council, made in her speech to the General Assembly and again in her meeting with Secretary-General Guterres, restates an ambition Japan has held since the early 1990s.

The Council's five permanent members, the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France, were fixed in 1945 and reflect the victors of the Second World War. Ten non-permanent members are elected for two-year terms.

Japan has been elected to a non-permanent seat more often than any other country, most recently for the 2023-24 term, and it is among the largest contributors to the United Nations' regular budget.

Its case for a permanent seat rests on that record and on the argument that a body designed for the world of 1945 cannot command legitimacy in the world of today.

Japan has pursued the goal with Germany, India and Brazil in a grouping known as the G4, whose members support one another's candidacies for permanent membership.

The closest the effort came to a vote was in 2005, when the G4 circulated a framework resolution to expand the Council. It was never put to a vote, opposed by a rival grouping known as Uniting for Consensus and lacking the necessary support.

Opposition comes from several directions. Regional rivals of each G4 member oppose their elevation, and permanent members are reluctant to dilute their own status.

Any change would require amending the Charter, with ratification by two-thirds of the membership including all five permanent members, which gives each of them a veto over reform.

Japanese governments have kept the issue on the agenda through decades of stalemate, and each prime minister restates it at the General Assembly.

The Prime Minister's request to the Secretary-General for more Japanese staff at the United Nations is a more modest and more achievable aim, reflecting the view in Tokyo that Japan's presence in the organisation falls short of its contribution.

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Japan's case for a larger role at the United Nations, pressed by the Prime Minister with the Secretary-General this week, rests partly on money and partly on a peacekeeping record that began three decades ago.

The International Peace Cooperation Act of 1992 allowed the Self-Defense Forces to take part in United Nations peacekeeping for the first time, under strict conditions including a ceasefire, the consent of the parties and the limited use of weapons.

The first deployment followed the same year, to Cambodia, where engineering units repaired roads and bridges and Japanese personnel monitored the elections that ended the country's civil war.

Deployments followed to Mozambique, the Golan Heights, Timor-Leste, Haiti and South Sudan, with engineering units the typical contribution, reflecting both Japan's strengths and the constraints on its forces.

The South Sudan mission ended in 2017 when the engineering unit was withdrawn as the security situation deteriorated, and Japan has since contributed staff officers rather than units.

The 1992 law was contested at the time as a step beyond the constitution, and every deployment since has been debated in the Diet.

Japan's financial contribution to peacekeeping, assessed on a scale similar to the regular budget, has been among the largest of any member state throughout.

The combination of money and limited personnel has shaped Japan's standing: valued as a funder, less visible in the field than countries that send infantry.

The request for more Japanese staff at the United Nations, made to the Secretary-General this week, addresses the same imbalance from a different direction.

Whether Japan expands its peacekeeping presence again will depend on the revised security documents and on the willingness of governments to accept the risks that ended the South Sudan mission.

Japan's position as a defender of the International Criminal Court, expressed this week in its statement with European countries and in the frank exchange with President Trump, belongs to a relationship that began later than most people assume.

The court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute, was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2002. Japan did not join until October 2007, when it became the 105th state party.

The delay reflected concerns in Tokyo about the compatibility of the statute with Japanese law, the cost of membership and the position of the United States, which had signed the treaty but not ratified it and was hostile to the court in the early 2000s.

Once Japan joined, it did so fully. Because assessed contributions are based on the United Nations scale, Japan immediately became the court's largest single funder, a position it held for years.

Japanese judges have served on the court since 2008, and in March 2024 Judge Tomoko Akane was elected its president, the first Japanese national to hold the office.

Japan's support for the court fits its broader foreign policy, which treats international law and institutions as the framework within which a country without nuclear weapons or a large military can protect its interests.

That policy now meets the American position directly. The court's warrants concerning the war in Gaza brought American condemnation, sanctions on individual officials, and this week the President's call for withdrawal.

Japan has never withdrawn from an international organisation it has joined in the post-war era, and there is no suggestion in the reports available that it would consider leaving the court.

Its approach, registering disagreement privately with Washington and publicly with Europe, is the approach it has taken on other questions where the alliance and the international order have pointed in different directions.

The court's finances would be affected by any ban on dollar settlements, and Japan, as a major funder, would be among the members asked to help it adapt.

Japan and Europe, Aligned on Law Where Washington Is Not

The joint statement with European countries on protecting international judicial bodies, reported by Reuters this week, is the latest expression of a relationship that has grown into a pillar of Japanese foreign policy.

Japan and the European Union concluded an Economic Partnership Agreement and a Strategic Partnership Agreement that took effect in 2019, creating one of the largest free trade areas in the world and a framework for political co-operation.

Security followed. Japan and the European Union agreed a security and defence partnership in 2024, covering maritime security, cyber security, space and defence industry, and Japan has signed reciprocal access agreements with Britain and other European states that allow their forces to train together.

European navies now visit Japan regularly, and German, French, British, Dutch and Italian vessels have taken part in exercises in the western Pacific.

The relationship rests on shared positions: support for Ukraine and sanctions on Russia, opposition to changes of borders by force, and a commitment to international law and institutions.

The International Criminal Court is one such institution. Every European Union member is a party, as is Japan, and the American sanctions now being prepared have placed the court's defenders on one side and Washington on the other.

Japan's alignment with Europe on the court does not diminish the alliance with the United States; it shows Tokyo's willingness to hold a position of its own where the two diverge.

The relationship with Europe has limits. European militaries are small in the Pacific, and European trade policy has its own frictions with Japan.

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But on the rule of law, the theme of the Prime Minister's speech to the General Assembly, Europe is Japan's most reliable partner.

The statement this week, issued in a week dominated by the alliance, was a reminder of that.

POLITICS

What 'Sanctions Will Continue' Means in Practice

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The Prime Minister's assurance to President Zelensky that sanctions against Russia will continue refers to a body of measures that Japan has built up since February 2022 in step with the Group of Seven.

The measures include asset freezes on Russian individuals and organisations, including banks, officials and businesses connected to the war, which prohibit transactions with them in Japan.

Export controls prohibit the sale to Russia of goods that could support its military, including advanced technology, machinery and parts, and Japan has extended the lists repeatedly as the war has continued.

Japan has also banned the import of certain Russian goods and participates in the Group of Seven's price cap on Russian crude oil, which restricts the shipping and insurance services available for cargoes sold above a set price.

Russian banks have been excluded from the SWIFT payment messaging system under co-ordinated measures, and Japan has restricted new investment in Russia.

The regime has exceptions, the most significant being energy. Japan continues to import liquefied natural gas from the Sakhalin projects, which its government regards as essential to energy security.

Russia responded to Japan's sanctions by suspending peace treaty talks and ending visa-free visits by former residents of the Northern Territories.

Sanctions are administered under the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Act, and violations can be prosecuted; Japanese authorities have investigated cases of goods reaching Russia through third countries.

Continuing the sanctions requires no new decision; ending them would. The Prime Minister's statement therefore confirms the existing policy rather than adding to it.

Any change in the American position on the war would test the Group of Seven's co-ordination, and Japan's assurance was made with that possibility in mind.

POLITICS

1960: The Year the Alliance Was Decided Behind Closed Doors and Fought Over in the Streets

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The alliance reaffirmed in a closed room in New York this week has its founding drama in another closed room, and in the crowds outside it, in the spring of 1960.

The original security treaty of 1951, signed the same day as the San Francisco Peace Treaty, gave the United States the right to station forces in Japan without any explicit commitment to defend the country, and Japanese critics regarded it as unequal.

Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi set out to revise it. Negotiations with Washington produced the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, signed in January 1960, which added the American commitment to Japan's defence and a requirement for consultation on the use of bases.

Ratification became the largest political crisis of post-war Japan. Opponents of the treaty, from the Socialist Party to student organisations and labour unions, saw it as binding Japan to American wars, and hundreds of thousands demonstrated around the Diet.

On May 19, 1960, Kishi's government extended the session and forced the treaty through the lower house late at night with opposition members absent, a manoeuvre that inflamed the protests.

A student, Michiko Kanba, died in the crush outside the Diet in June, and a planned visit by President Dwight Eisenhower was cancelled because his safety could not be guaranteed.

The treaty took effect on June 19, when the upper

house's thirty-day period expired without a vote, and Kishi announced his resignation shortly afterward.

The pattern set that year has held since. The alliance's most consequential decisions are negotiated privately and then subjected to public argument, and the public's consent, however reluctantly given, has been renewed at every election.

The treaty has never been revised again. The guidelines that govern how the two militaries co-operate have been rewritten three times, in 1978, 1997 and 2015, each time by officials working out of sight.

Kishi's grandson, Shinzo Abe, made the alliance the centre of his own foreign policy half a century later, and the Takaichi government stands in that line.

When the Prime Minister said this week that Japan and the United States had shown the world the strength of their alliance, she was describing an arrangement that began with a signature in Washington, a night vote in Tokyo and a resignation.

POLITICS

Three Sets of Guidelines, Written in Private, That Tell the Two Militaries How to Work Together

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The treaty at the centre of the alliance has not changed since 1960. What has changed, three times, is the document that turns it into practice: the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation.

The first guidelines, agreed in 1978, addressed a gap that had persisted for eighteen years. The treaty committed the United States to Japan's defence but said nothing about how American and Japanese forces would actually operate together if Japan were attacked.

The 1978 document set out joint planning for the defence of Japan itself, the Cold War scenario in which Soviet forces threatened Hokkaido.

The second guidelines, in 1997, responded to a different world. The Cold War had ended, North Korea's nuclear programme had produced a crisis in 1994, and the alliance needed to define what Japan would do in situations in areas surrounding Japan, a phrase chosen for its ambiguity.

Those guidelines led to legislation allowing Japan to provide rear-area support to American forces in regional contingencies, a step that critics regarded as expanding Japan's military role beyond its constitution.

The third guidelines, in 2015, followed the Abe government's reinterpretation of the constitution to permit collective self-defence in limited circumstances, and they extended co-operation to space, cyberspace and the defence of ships and other assets far from Japan.

Each set was negotiated by defence and foreign ministry officials from both countries, in consultations that produced no public record until the document was published.

The 2015 guidelines were accompanied by the security legislation that provoked large demonstrations outside the Diet, the largest since 1960.

The Takaichi government's revision of Japan's own security documents raises the question of whether a fourth set of guidelines will follow, to reflect counterstrike capabilities and the greater integration of command that both governments have discussed.

Tuesday's summit did not address the question in the accounts available, and it belongs to the working-level consultations that follow such meetings.

POLITICS

What Counts Toward Two Per Cent

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The defence-spending figure that President Trump did not demand this week would have been measured against a target that is itself a matter of definition.

Japan's commitment, made in the security documents of December 2022, is to raise spending on defence and related items to 2% of gross domestic product by fiscal 2027.

The phrase related items is doing considerable work. The 2% figure includes not only the Ministry of Defense's budget but spending on the Japan Coast Guard, on research and development with defence applications, on infrastructure such as ports and

airfields that the Self-Defense Forces could use, and on cyber security.

That accounting follows the practice of NATO members, whose 2% target has long included pensions and other items outside the core defence budget.

The core defence budget alone has risen sharply, from about 1% of output for decades to a level approaching the target as the five-year Defense Buildup Program has been implemented.

Financing has been the difficult part. The 2022 plan assumed increases in corporate, income and tobacco taxes, whose implementation has been repeatedly delayed, along with spending cuts and the use of surpluses.

Any higher target, whether 3.5% or 5% as discussed in Europe, would require either large tax increases or borrowing on a scale that would test the bond market's tolerance.

The absence of a demand at the summit leaves the government to set its own figure in the revised security documents, and the definition of what counts will matter as much as the number.

Critics of the accounting argue that including coast guard and infrastructure spending inflates the figure; defenders argue that those items contribute to security and that allies count them too.

Whatever the figure, it will be measured in Washington, and Tuesday's silence on it is unlikely to be the alliance's last word.

POLITICS

The 2022 Law That Made Supply Chains a Matter of National Security

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals confirmed at Tuesday's summit rests, on the Japanese side, on a law passed four years ago that gave economic security a legal framework.

The Economic Security Promotion Act of 2022 was enacted under the Kishida government, and Sanae Takaichi later served as the minister in charge of economic security, overseeing its implementation.

It has four pillars. The first supports the resilience of supply chains for critical goods, allowing the government to designate materials and products whose supply must be secured and to subsidise companies that diversify their sources.

The second concerns critical infrastructure, requiring operators in sectors such as electricity, telecommunications, finance and transport to submit plans for major equipment purchases so that the government can screen them for security risks.

The third supports the development of critical technologies through public-private partnerships, with funding for research in fields such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing and space.

The fourth allows patents with national security implications to be kept secret, ending a situation in which sensitive inventions were published as a matter of course.

Semiconductors, rare earths, batteries and pharmaceuticals were among the first goods designated as critical under the first pillar, and the subsidies that followed have funded much of the investment in chip manufacturing now under way.

The act placed Japan among the first democracies to legislate economic security as a distinct field, and its architecture has been studied by allies.

The Prime Minister's own history with the law gives her government a particular interest in the co-operation confirmed this week, and in extending the framework as the revision of the security documents proceeds.

The act is administered largely by the Cabinet Office, with the economy ministry and other ministries responsible for its individual pillars.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: What Thirty-Five Minutes Can and Cannot Settle

By William | Senior Political Analyst

A 35-minute meeting cannot negotiate anything. It can confirm what officials have negotiated, and it can send a signal, and Tuesday's summit did both.

The confirmation concerned economic security.

Co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals had been prepared at working level, and the leaders' endorsement gives it the authority that ministries need to spend money and sign agreements.

The signal concerned the alliance. The Prime Minister's statement that the two countries had shown the world the strength of their alliance was aimed at Beijing, at Pyongyang and at Japanese voters, in roughly that order.

The meeting's silences were as carefully managed as its statements. No figure on defence spending was demanded, which spared the Prime Minister a public commitment she could not fund.

The disagreement on the International Criminal Court was handled by the method Japan has used for decades: register the position in private, avoid the public confrontation, and sign a statement with like-minded countries elsewhere.

Mr. Trump's remarks, that the Prime Minister would go down in history and that he watches her approval ratings, were the personal element that his diplomacy relies on, and they will have been noted in Tokyo with a mixture of satisfaction and wariness.

What the meeting could not do was resolve the trade relationship, in which most Japanese exports face a 15% tariff, or settle how the alliance will handle Thursday's American-Chinese summit.

Japan's interests in that summit are now on record, which is the most a brief meeting two days beforehand could achieve.

The measure of the summit will come later, in the working agreements on minerals and chips, in the revised security documents, and in whether Washington's next request on spending arrives through consultation or demand.

By the standards of General Assembly week, in which leaders meet in rooms like the one photographed on the front page and depart within the hour, it was a productive half-hour.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: The President Watches the Polls, and So Does Everyone Else

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

President Trump's remark that he keeps an eye on Prime Minister Takaichi's approval ratings, reported by Sankei News, was an unusual thing for one leader to say to another in an opening statement.

It was also, in its way, a compliment. The ANN poll published this week put cabinet approval at 58.3%, up 2.9 points, and the President was signalling that he had noticed.

Approval ratings matter to American presidents in dealing with allies because they indicate how much a foreign leader can deliver. A prime minister with strong numbers can make commitments that a weak one cannot.

For Japanese audiences, the remark cuts two ways. It confirms that the government's standing is visible abroad, and it reminds them that Washington calculates accordingly.

The Prime Minister's numbers rest on the same foundation as most Japanese governments' popularity: prices, and the perception of competence in handling them and in handling crises.

The typhoon that delayed her departure is the kind of event that can move approval quickly. Seven people are dead and five missing, and the response will be judged over the coming weeks.

Mr. Trump's other remark, that the Prime Minister would go down in history, was received in Japan as a reference to her position as the country's first woman to hold the office.

Personal warmth from the President is a diplomatic asset that Japanese governments have cultivated since the late Shinzo Abe's relationship with him during the first Trump administration.

It is also a variable. Presidents who watch approval ratings watch them fall as well as rise.

For now, the government travels with numbers that give it room, and the President's attention to them is one more reason to keep them there.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Trump Tells the Assembly to Leave the International Criminal Court

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

President Trump used his speech to the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday to call for withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, an institution the United States has never joined and against which his administration is preparing sanctions.

The call came hours before his meeting with Prime Minister Takaichi, whose country is a party to the court and whose national serves as its president, and the subject was discussed between them in what Tokyo described as a frank exchange.

The court, based in The Hague, was established by the Rome Statute of 1998 and began work in 2002. It has 125 member states, including every member of the European Union, Japan, Britain, Canada, Australia and most of Latin America and Africa.

The United States signed the treaty under President Bill Clinton but never ratified it, and administrations of both parties have objected to the court's claim of jurisdiction over nationals of non-member states.

The current dispute intensified after the court issued arrest warrants concerning the war in Gaza, which the United States and Israel condemned.

Sanctions on court officials were imposed in 2020 and lifted in 2021; further measures against individual officials followed last year, and the sanctions now reported would go further, potentially including a ban on the court's settlements in dollars.

A call for withdrawal aimed at member states is a new step, asking allies to leave an institution that many regard as central to the international legal order.

Japan and European countries responded with a statement calling for the protection of international judicial bodies, Reuters reported, a collective answer that avoided naming the United States.

For Japan, the speech placed the President's position and the Prime Minister's appeal for the rule of law, delivered to the same Assembly the same day, in direct contrast.

Whether any member state heeds the call for withdrawal will be watched closely in The Hague; none had indicated it would in the reports available.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan Lines Up With Europe to 'Protect International Judicial Bodies'

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Japan and European countries issued a statement calling for the protection of international judicial bodies, Reuters reported, with the International Criminal Court understood to be its focus.

The statement was issued during the General Assembly's opening week, as the United States prepared sanctions against the court and its president called for withdrawal from it.

By joining a European statement rather than issuing its own, Japan chose a form that registers disagreement with Washington without a direct bilateral confrontation.

That method is consistent with the Asahi Shimbun's report that the Prime Minister's side would not raise the sanctions publicly, and with the reports that the subject was discussed in private at her meeting with President Trump.

International judicial bodies include the International Court of Justice, which settles disputes between states, and the International Criminal Court, which prosecutes individuals, along with tribunals such as the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea.

Japan has been a consistent supporter of all of them. Its maritime positions rely on the law of the sea, and it has served on the International Court of Justice through several Japanese judges.

Europe's position on the criminal court is the strongest of any region. Every European Union member is a party, and the court's seat is in the Netherlands.

A joint statement carries more weight than the sum of its signatories because it demonstrates that the court's supporters are co-ordinating rather than responding individually.

It does not change the sanctions, which are an American decision. It signals what the response will be if they are imposed.

For Tokyo, the statement is a rare instance of aligning publicly with Europe on a question where Washington stands on the other side, and it was made the same day the alliance was reaffirmed.

INTERNATIONAL

The Secretary-General's Last Opening Week

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Prime Minister Takaichi's meeting with António Guterres this week came in the Secretary-General's final General Assembly opening week, with his second term ending on December 31.

Mr. Guterres, a former Prime Minister of Portugal and High Commissioner for Refugees, took office in January 2017 and was reappointed for a second five-year term in 2021.

His tenure has spanned the pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the war in Gaza and a financial crisis at the United Nations caused by member states' late payment of dues, and he leaves an organisation whose authority has been tested on every front.

The selection of his successor is under way this year, through a process in which the Security Council recommends a candidate and the General Assembly appoints, and in which the permanent members' preferences are decisive.

Japan's requests to him this week, for Security Council reform and for more Japanese staff, are requests that will pass to his successor, since neither can be delivered in the months that remain.

The Secretary-General has no power to reform the Council, which is a matter for member states and the Charter, and only limited power over recruitment.

Mr. Guterres has nonetheless been a consistent advocate of reform, arguing that the Council's composition reflects 1945 and undermines its legitimacy, a position that aligns with Japan's.

The organisation's finances are the more immediate concern. Member states' arrears have forced spending cuts and hiring freezes, which work against the increase in Japanese staff that Tokyo seeks.

Japan pays its dues in full and on time, a record that gives its requests a moral standing they might otherwise lack.

The next Secretary-General will inherit the same requests from Tokyo, and the same obstacles.

INTERNATIONAL

How Washington Reported the Same Meeting

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

The accounts of Tuesday's summit that reached Japanese readers came through Yomiuri Shimbun, Sankei News and Nikkei, drawing on Tokyo's readout and on the President's remarks before the door closed.

The American emphasis, in the reports available, ran through those remarks: the President's statement that the Prime Minister would go down in history, and his observation that he watches her approval ratings.

Personal endorsement of a foreign leader is a feature of the President's diplomacy, and its appearance at the start of the meeting served both governments: it gave the American press its story and the Japanese press its confirmation of a warm relationship.

The substance that Tokyo emphasised, co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals, and the frank exchange on the International Criminal Court, belongs to the working level in Washington and receives less attention in an American news cycle dominated by the President's own General Assembly speech.

That speech, with its call for withdrawal from the court, was the American story of the day, and the meeting with Japan sat within it as one of many bilateral encounters.

The difference in emphasis is normal. Each capital's press writes for its own readers, and a summit that is the lead story in Tokyo is a paragraph in Washington.

Thursday's American-Chinese summit will reverse the proportions: the lead story in Washington, and in Tokyo a story read for what it means for Japan.

The working-level agreements that follow both meetings will be reported by the ministries and companies involved, in the technical language that

leaders' meetings translate into headlines.

For Japanese readers, the useful comparison is not between the two capitals' emphasis but between what was confirmed and what follows.

The editorial page this morning takes up the question of the press and the closed door, from the Japanese side of it.

INTERNATIONAL

Tomorrow in Washington: The Meeting Tuesday Was Arranged Around

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

President Xi Jinping meets President Trump in Washington tomorrow during his state visit, two days after the Japan-United States summit that was, in part, arranged to precede it.

The subjects expected to dominate, rare earths and artificial intelligence, are the ones on which Japan and the United States confirmed co-operation on Tuesday, and the trilateral statement with South Korea opposing economic coercion was issued with the same meeting in view.

China's controls on rare earth exports affect manufacturers in Japan, the United States and South Korea alike, and the allies' interest is that any American arrangement with Beijing addresses their supplies as well as Washington's.

Artificial intelligence brings the American proposal for mutual notification of accidents involving AI systems, reported by Yomiuri Shimbun earlier this week, which would create a channel between rivals that otherwise compete for the technology.

State visits bring commercial announcements, and Japanese companies will read any aircraft orders, agricultural purchases or investment pledges for their effect on their own competitors.

Security questions, including Taiwan and the seas around Japan, are always present in American-Chinese meetings, and Tokyo will read the statements for any change in how they are described.

The Japanese summit's confirmation of co-operation on chips and minerals gives Tokyo a position on record, and the question tomorrow is whether the American position at the table reflects it.

Tokyo's markets reopen the same day, and the summit's language will be traded in the first session in five days.

President Xi's last state visit to Washington was in 2015, and the relationship has been through trade wars, technology controls and a pandemic since.

For Japan, tomorrow is the second half of a week that began with its own leader in the room; the alliance's test is whether what was said on Tuesday holds on Thursday.

ECONOMY

Governance Rules Shift From Shareholder Returns Toward Growth Investment

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Japan's corporate governance guidelines are being revised to balance return on equity with investment in growth, Yomiuri Shimbun reported in an explanation of the changes, with the stated aim of moving companies away from an overemphasis on returns to shareholders.

The revision addresses a criticism that has grown as Japanese companies have raised dividends and buybacks to record levels: that money returned to investors is money not spent on plants, research and people.

The Corporate Governance Code, introduced in 2015 as part of the growth strategy of the time, was designed to solve the opposite problem. Japanese companies then were accused of hoarding cash and neglecting shareholders, and the code pushed them toward independent directors, capital efficiency and dialogue with investors.

A decade on, the push has worked well enough that its side effects have become the concern. Return on equity has risen, share prices have reached records, and activist investors have found Japan the most receptive market in Asia.

The revision does not abandon return on equity. It asks companies to explain how they will achieve it through growth rather than solely through returning capital, and to set out their investment plans

alongside their shareholder policies.

The distinction matters for the economy as a whole. Corporate investment in Japan has lagged behind corporate profits for years, and the government has been seeking ways to convert record earnings into wages, capital spending and productivity.

Investors will read the revision for its effect on the pressure they can apply. A code that endorses long-term investment gives management a stronger answer to demands for immediate payouts.

The Tokyo Stock Exchange's own campaign, launched in 2023, asked companies trading below book value to explain how they would manage with the cost of capital in mind, and that campaign is credited with much of the recent change in corporate behaviour.

The revised guidelines apply on a comply-or-explain basis, as the code always has: companies that do not follow a principle must say why.

Their effect will be judged over several years, in capital spending figures and in the balance sheets of companies that have spent the past decade learning to reward shareholders.

ECONOMY

ROE, the Ito Review and a Decade of Reform: How Japan Learned to Court Shareholders

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The governance revision reported this week can only be understood against the decade of reform that preceded it, a decade that changed how Japanese companies think about their shareholders.

Return on equity, the profit a company earns relative to the capital its shareholders have invested, was the measure at the centre of that reform.

In 2014, a government-commissioned report led by the Hitotsubashi University professor Kunio Ito, known as the Ito Review, argued that Japanese companies should target a return on equity of at least 8%, a level many then failed to reach.

The same year brought a Stewardship Code for institutional investors, asking them to engage with the companies they owned, and 2015 brought the Corporate Governance Code for companies themselves.

Together the codes encouraged independent directors on boards, clearer capital policies, the unwinding of cross-shareholdings among companies, and a dialogue with investors that had barely existed before.

The results took years but were substantial. Independent directors became the norm, cross-shareholdings declined, and dividends and share buybacks rose to records.

In 2023 the Tokyo Stock Exchange added pressure of its own, asking companies whose shares traded below the book value of their assets to disclose plans for managing with the cost of capital in mind.

Foreign investors, who own a large share of the Tokyo market, responded, and the Nikkei 225 has reached levels far beyond its 1989 peak.

The concern that the revision addresses is the imbalance that success created: capital returned to shareholders rather than invested, in an economy that needs investment to grow.

The new emphasis on growth investment alongside return on equity is an attempt to keep the discipline the reforms brought while redirecting some of the cash they freed.

ECONOMY

Record Profits, Modest Investment: The Gap the Governance Revision Targets

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The revision of Japan's corporate governance guidelines toward growth investment, reported by Yomiuri Shimbun, addresses a gap that has defined the corporate sector for years: profits at record levels and investment that has not kept pace.

Japanese companies have reported record earnings repeatedly in recent years, helped by the weak yen's effect on overseas income and by price increases at home.

Their cash holdings have remained large, and their distributions to shareholders through dividends and buybacks have reached records of their own.

ECONOMY

Capital investment has grown, but more slowly than profits, and much of the growth has been in overseas plants rather than in Japan.

Wages have risen faster in the past two years than at any time since the 1990s, but from a low base, and the government has pressed companies to sustain the increases.

The governance reforms of the 2010s succeeded in making companies more responsive to shareholders. The revision now reported acknowledges that responsiveness can be taken too far if it starves the business of investment.

Growth investment includes plants, research and development, software, training and acquisitions, and the revised guidelines ask companies to set out their plans for it alongside their policies on returning capital.

For the economy, the difference between returning cash and investing it is the difference between rewarding today's owners and creating tomorrow's output.

Investors are not necessarily opposed. Long-term shareholders often prefer investment to buybacks, provided companies can show it will earn a return.

The revised guidelines will be tested in the annual general meetings of next summer, when companies explain how they have complied.

ECONOMY

The Investors Who Came for the Cash, and the Rules That Now Push Back

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The governance revision reported this week, shifting emphasis from shareholder returns toward growth investment, arrives after a decade in which activist investors made Japan the most active market in Asia for their campaigns.

Activists buy stakes in companies they regard as undervalued and press for changes: higher dividends, share buybacks, the sale of non-core businesses, the unwinding of cross-shareholdings, or the replacement of directors.

Japan's large corporate cash holdings, low valuations and, from 2015, a governance code that endorsed shareholder engagement made it an attractive target, and the number of shareholder proposals at annual meetings has risen to records.

Companies that once ignored such pressure now respond to it, often by adopting the measures proposed before a vote is forced.

The Tokyo Stock Exchange's 2023 request that companies trading below book value explain their plans gave activists a further lever, since a low valuation became something management had to answer for.

The results have included record buybacks and dividends, the sale of subsidiaries, and a wave of management buyouts by companies choosing to leave the market rather than face the pressure.

The revised guidelines' emphasis on growth investment gives management a new answer to demands for immediate returns: that the code itself now asks them to invest.

Activists will argue that investment and returns are not opposites, and that companies which have hoarded cash for decades cannot claim to need it all for growth.

The debate will play out at next summer's annual meetings, where the revised guidelines will be tested against specific proposals.

For the market as a whole, the question is whether a decade of pressure has changed corporate behaviour permanently or only while the pressure lasts.

ECONOMY

Unwinding the Web: Cross-Shareholdings and the Governance Decade

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

One of the quietest changes of the governance decade that this week's revision builds on has been the unwinding of cross-shareholdings, the web of mutual stakes that once bound Japanese companies to their banks, suppliers and customers.

For most of the post-war period, companies held shares in one another as a sign of commitment and a defence against unwanted takeovers, and banks held

stakes in the companies they lent to.

The practice insulated management from shareholders, since a large part of any company's stock was held by friendly parties who would not challenge it, and it tied up capital in holdings that earned little.

The Corporate Governance Code of 2015 asked companies to explain the purpose of each cross-shareholding and to review whether it was justified, and successive revisions tightened the requirement.

Companies responded by selling. Banks reduced their equity holdings sharply, and industrial companies have disposed of stakes in partners, often under pressure from activist investors and from the stock exchange's campaign on capital efficiency.

The sales released capital that companies have used for buybacks, dividends and, in some cases, investment, and they have increased the share of stock held by institutional and foreign investors who do challenge management.

Insurers, among the largest holders of cross-shareholdings, have announced plans to eliminate them over several years following scrutiny of their governance.

The unwinding has changed the ownership of the Tokyo market and is one reason activist campaigns have found more support at annual meetings.

The revised guidelines' emphasis on growth investment does not reverse this. Cross-shareholdings are still discouraged; the question is what companies do with the capital they release.

A decade ago, the web was the Japanese way. Today it is a legacy being sold down, and the revision this week assumes that the sales continue.

ECONOMY

The World's Largest Pension Fund Is Also Japan's Most Patient Shareholder

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The debate over shareholder returns and growth investment, reopened by this week's governance revision, has a participant whose interest is measured in decades rather than quarters: the Government Pension Investment Fund.

The fund manages the reserves of Japan's public pension system, and with assets of well over 200 trillion yen it is the largest pension fund in the world.

It invests roughly a quarter of its assets in Japanese equities, which makes it a major shareholder in almost every large listed company, though it holds shares through external managers rather than directly.

The fund signed Japan's Stewardship Code in 2014 and has since pressed its managers to engage with companies on governance, capital allocation and long-term value.

Its interest is structural. A pension fund that must pay benefits for decades benefits from companies that invest for growth, not only from those that return cash, which aligns it with the direction of the revised guidelines.

The fund has also been a leading investor in environmental, social and governance strategies, arguing that long-term returns depend on the sustainability of the companies and the economy it invests in.

Its size makes it influential and constrains it. A fund that owns a slice of everything cannot sell companies it dislikes without moving the market, so it must improve them instead.

Returns from its equity holdings have been strong in recent years as the Tokyo market has risen, which has supported the pension system's finances.

The fund's allocation between domestic and foreign assets and between equities and bonds is reviewed periodically, and its decisions move markets when announced.

As Tokyo reopens on Thursday, the fund's holdings will be repriced with everyone else's, in a session that will show how the market reads the governance revision.

ECONOMY

From 3% to 10%: The Tax That Every Government Has Feared

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The consumption tax cut that the Diet will prioritise this autumn concerns a tax whose every change has cost the government that made it.

Japan introduced the consumption tax in April 1989 at 3%, under Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita, whose government fell within months amid the Recruit scandal and the unpopularity of the new tax.

The rate rose to 5% in April 1997, and the increase was followed by a recession and by the ruling party's defeat in the following year's upper house election, which cost Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto his job.

After years in which no government dared to touch it, a three-party agreement in 2012 set a path to 8% and then 10%. The rise to 8% came in April 2014, and the rise to 10% in October 2019, after two postponements.

The 2019 increase introduced a reduced rate of 8% for food and beverages, other than restaurant meals and alcohol, and for newspaper subscriptions, the first time Japan had operated two rates.

The consumption tax has become the largest single source of national tax revenue, ahead of income tax and corporate tax, which is why the finance ministry has resisted every proposal to reduce it.

Its defenders argue that it is the most stable revenue in the system, less sensitive to the economic cycle than income or corporate taxes, and that an ageing society needs a tax that spreads the burden across all consumers including retirees.

Its critics argue that it falls hardest on lower-income households, who spend a larger share of what they have, and that the reduced rate on food does only part of the job of offsetting that.

A cut on food, the measure now proposed, would be the first reduction in the tax's history, and the debate over how long it should last and how it should be paid for will define the session.

Every government that has raised the tax has paid a political price. The Takaichi government is about to discover whether cutting it earns the opposite.

ECONOMY

The Barrels Behind the Speech: Japan's Dependence on the Gulf

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Prime Minister Takaichi's pledge of support for energy supplies from the Middle East, and the Gulf co-operation plan she announced at the United Nations, respond to a dependence that defines Japanese energy policy.

Japan imports almost all of its crude oil, and the great majority of it comes from the Gulf, principally Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, with Kuwait and Qatar among the other suppliers.

That dependence has persisted through half a century of efforts to reduce it, because the Gulf's reserves are the largest, its production the most reliable and its tankers the most economical route to Japanese refineries.

The conflict in the Gulf, now in its seventh month, has made the route the central concern of the year. Tankers to Japan pass through the Strait of Hormuz, and any interruption there reaches Japanese petrol stations within weeks.

Japan holds substantial stockpiles, both government and private, built up since the oil shocks of the 1970s, which provide a buffer measured in months rather than days.

Liquefied natural gas is more diversified, with Australia the largest supplier, Malaysia and the United States significant, and Qatar and Russia's Sakhalin projects in the mix.

Resilience in supply means more than stockpiles. It means investment in the Gulf's own infrastructure, agreements on emergency supplies, and the diversification of shipping routes and suppliers.

The co-operation plan offered from the General Assembly podium fits Japan's long practice of building relationships with producers that go beyond purchase, including technology, investment and future fuels such as hydrogen and ammonia.

The weak yen compounds the exposure. At about 157

yen to the dollar, every barrel costs more in yen, which is why the gasoline subsidy has reached record levels.

Energy, critical minerals and semiconductors are the three supply chains Tokyo treats as strategic, and all three featured in the Prime Minister's day in New York.

ECONOMY

Thursday's Agenda: The Longest List a Reopening Market Has Faced This Year

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens on Thursday after four closed days, and the list of news it has to absorb in a single session is unusually long.

The Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25% takes effect that day, the highest in about 31 years, with attention already on the pace of further increases.

The American-Chinese summit is held the same day in Washington, with artificial intelligence and rare earths expected to lead the agenda, and its outcome will move the shares of Japanese companies exposed to both.

The Japan-United States summit on Tuesday confirmed co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals, which supports the same companies from the other side.

The typhoon's damage, now counted at seven dead, 22 buildings destroyed and 428 flooded, will be priced in insurers, railways, utilities and retailers.

The yen, last seen in the low 157 range in New York on Monday, has traded through the holiday in markets without Tokyo, and Thursday's session will show where it settled.

Corporate governance guidelines revised to favour growth investment over shareholder returns, reported by Yomiuri Shimbun, may affect how investors value companies with large cash holdings.

Rice prices in the 2,000-yen range and rising variable-rate loan burdens continue to shape consumer sentiment, which retailers and banks will reflect.

The Nikkei 225 last closed at 65,018.95 on Friday the 18th, after three consecutive gains, and that is the level from which Thursday starts.

Brokers advise against reading too much into the first hour after a long closure, when prices can overshoot before finding their level.

ECONOMY

The Index That Reopens Thursday: What the Nikkei 225 Measures

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

When Tokyo reopens on Thursday, the number the country will watch is the Nikkei 225, last seen at 65,018.95 on Friday the 18th.

The index tracks 225 companies listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange's Prime market, selected by the Nikkei newspaper to represent the market's sectors, and it has been calculated since 1950.

It is price-weighted, meaning that companies with high share prices have more influence on it than companies with low ones, regardless of their size, a method that distinguishes it from most modern indices.

The TOPIX, the exchange's own index, weights companies by their market value and covers a much broader range of stocks, and professionals often prefer it as a measure of the whole market.

The Nikkei's history is the history of Japan's post-war economy. It peaked at 38,915 at the end of 1989, the summit of the bubble, and did not regain that level until 2024, thirty-four years later.

Its rise past 40,000 in 2024 and to the levels of this year reflects corporate reform, the weak yen's effect on exporters' earnings, and foreign investors' renewed interest in Japanese equities.

The index's composition is reviewed periodically, with companies added and removed to keep it representative, and its constituents span manufacturing, technology, finance, retail and services.

Because it is price-weighted, a small number of high-priced technology and retail stocks account for a disproportionate share of its movements, which sometimes makes it a poor guide to the average share.

Thursday's session has an unusually long list of news

ECONOMY

to absorb, from the Bank of Japan's new rate to the American-Chinese summit and the typhoon's costs.

The number reported that evening will carry all of it, weighted by price.

ECONOMY

Markets, Rates and Prices at a Glance

Compiled by the Economics Desk

MARKETS CLOSED: The Tokyo Stock Exchange is closed today for Autumnal Equinox Day. Normal trading resumes Thursday, Sept. 24, the first full session since Friday.

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

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.

CURRENCY: The yen weakened into the low 157 range against the dollar in New York on Monday, according to Yomiuri Shimbun. Tokyo has not traded since Friday.

FEDERAL RESERVE: Target range 3.75%-4.00%.

GOVERNANCE: Corporate governance guidelines revised to balance ROE with growth investment, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

RICE: Five-kilogram average in the 2,000-yen range; the harvest is running late after prolonged rain and the typhoon.

LOANS: Variable-rate mortgage burdens continue to rise as the new policy rate takes effect.

SUMMIT: Japan and the U.S. confirmed co-operation on AI, semiconductors and critical minerals, according to Nikkei and Sankei News. No specific defence-spending figure was requested.

THURSDAY: Tokyo reopens; the BOJ rate takes effect; the U.S.-China summit is held in Washington with AI and rare earths expected to lead the agenda.

BUSINESS

Paramount Settles With Twelve States, With Warner Bros. Reported as the Prize

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Paramount has reached a settlement with twelve American states, and Yomiuri Shimbun reports that the agreement may represent progress toward the company's acquisition of Warner Bros.

The reports available do not detail the terms of the settlement or the objections the states had raised, and the connection to the acquisition was reported as a possibility rather than a confirmed step.

State attorneys general in the United States have become significant actors in merger review, bringing their own challenges alongside or instead of federal regulators, and settlements with them can remove obstacles to large transactions.

A combination of Paramount and Warner Bros. would unite two of Hollywood's historic studios and their film libraries, television networks and streaming services.

For Japan, the interest is in the market for content. Japanese anime, games and film have become major exports, and the consolidation of American studios and streaming platforms affects how that content reaches global audiences and on what terms.

Sony, through Sony Pictures, is itself one of the major studios and has expanded its investment in anime through Crunchyroll, which makes the structure of the industry a direct concern for a Japanese company.

Consolidation among American media companies has accelerated as streaming has reshaped their economics, with traditional networks losing audiences and the cost of content rising.

Regulators in Washington and in the states have reviewed such deals with varying degrees of scepticism, and settlements with states do not by themselves complete a transaction.

Further details of the settlement and of any acquisition are expected from the companies and from American regulators.

Japanese media companies and investors will follow the outcome for what it signals about the value of libraries and the future of streaming.

BUSINESS

A Peninsula Economy Cut Off by Its Own Roads

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The closure of the Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway by mudslides has cut the fastest routes into southern Chiba at the end of a holiday week, and the economic effect reaches beyond the traffic jams.

The Boso Peninsula's southern half lives on visitors from the capital region. Its beaches, hot springs, flower farms and the marine park at Kamogawa draw day trippers and weekenders who arrive by expressway and the Tokyo Bay Aqua-Line.

The Aqua-Line, the bridge and tunnel across Tokyo Bay from Kawasaki to Kisarazu, made the southern peninsula a short drive from Tokyo when it opened in 1997, and the Tateyama Expressway carries that traffic south.

With the expressway closed, the journey reverts to local roads, and the day trip that made the peninsula's tourism economy possible becomes a long haul.

The peninsula's other economy is agriculture and fishing. Chiba is among the largest vegetable-growing prefectures in the country, and its produce reaches Tokyo's markets by road every night.

Road closures delay those deliveries and raise costs, at a time when the storm has already damaged crops and delayed the rice harvest.

Repair crews, pump trucks and utility workers heading south face the same detours, which slows the recovery in Kamogawa and the other towns that need them most.

The closures are temporary, and expressway operators will reopen sections as soon as slopes are declared stable, but the timing at the end of Silver Week is costly for businesses that had counted on the holiday.

Chiba has been hit three times since August, and each event has interrupted the peninsula's connection to its customers.

For a region whose economy depends on being reachable, the road is the recovery.

BUSINESS

A Holiday Divided: Western Resorts Full, Eastern Ones Emptied by the Storm

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The first five-day Silver Week in eleven years ends today with a ledger that will read very differently depending on where the business stood.

In western Japan, fine weather through the holiday brought strong demand to resorts, hot springs and cities from Kyushu to Kansai, and today's map shows the region still sunny and warm.

In eastern Japan, the typhoon emptied the Boso and Izu coasts, closed attractions, halted trains and left visitors holed up in hotels, as Yomiuri Shimbun reported on Tuesday.

Today, the last day, the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways remain closed by mudslides, cutting the routes to southern Chiba's resorts for the return journey and for any last-day visitors.

The economics of lost holiday nights are unforgiving. A hotel room unsold on a holiday cannot be sold later, and restaurants and attractions that closed for the storm lost their busiest days of the season.

Airlines and railways recover some of their losses as passengers rebook, but the 260 flights cancelled and the lines suspended represent revenue that is only partly recoverable.

Insurance covers property damage, not lost business, for most small tourism operators, and the storm's cost to them will show in their accounts rather than in any official tally.

The pattern repeats a lesson from earlier disasters: Japan's domestic tourism is resilient in aggregate and fragile locally, and the regions hit lose what the regions spared gain.

Chiba's operators, hit three times since August, have the least margin left for a fourth.

The autumn colour season, which begins in Hokkaido within weeks, offers the industry its next chance.

BUSINESS

Who Pays When the Storm Takes the Crop

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

With the rice harvest delayed and vegetable crops damaged across Chiba, the question of who bears the loss turns on a system of agricultural insurance that most consumers never encounter.

Japanese farmers are covered by two main schemes. Agricultural mutual aid, run through regional associations under a national framework, insures specific crops and livestock against damage from weather, disease and other causes.

Revenue insurance, introduced in 2019, takes a different approach, covering a fall in a farm's total revenue below a proportion of its recent average, whatever the cause.

Mutual aid for rice has long been the backbone of the system. Farmers pay premiums subsidised by the national government, and payouts are made when yields fall below a threshold because of insured causes.

Assessment follows the harvest, or in the case of flattened and rotting crops, the failure to harvest. Inspectors from the mutual aid associations visit fields to estimate the loss.

For vegetables, coverage is more varied, and many growers of the leafy crops for which Chiba is known rely on revenue insurance or on their own reserves.

Losses this month are cumulative. Farmers who lost crops in August or earlier in September have already claimed once, and a second or third claim in a season strains both the farmer and the scheme.

The government's rice policy adds a further layer. Its purchases of stockpiled rice support prices, and a poor harvest in Kanto would affect the balance it is trying to hold between farmers' incomes and consumers' bills.

Retail rice prices returned to the 2,000-yen range this month, and a weather-driven shortfall in one region would test whether that level holds.

For farmers in Chiba, the immediate concern is simpler: getting the combines into fields that are still too wet to bear them.

BUSINESS

Three Claims in Two Months: What Repeated Storms Do to Household Insurance

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

For households in Chiba hit for the third time since August, the insurance arithmetic is different from that of a single storm.

Each event is a separate claim under a household policy, and each carries its own assessment, its own deductible where the policy has one, and its own wait for an adjuster.

Damage that was assessed after the first event and not yet repaired complicates the second claim, because the insurer must distinguish new damage from old.

Photographs taken before and after each event are the only reliable way to establish that distinction, and households that documented the August damage are better placed than those that did not.

Premiums for fire insurance, to which wind and flood cover is attached, have risen repeatedly in recent years as insurers have absorbed the cost of more frequent and more severe storms, and this month's events will feed the next round of increases.

Some households have responded to rising premiums by dropping flood cover, which leaves them exposed to exactly the damage this month has brought.

Insurers deploy adjusters in order of severity, and a third event in a region already carrying claims from two earlier ones lengthens the queue.

Municipal disaster damage certificates are required for public support and for some tax relief, and they too must be issued event by event.

For repairs, the labour shortage in construction means that households whose August repairs had not started will now be joined in the queue by those with September damage.

The cumulative burden on Chiba's households is the storm's least visible cost, and it will be counted in family budgets over the winter.

TECHNOLOGY

The Defence Ministry Accelerates Its Attack Drones

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The Ministry of Defense is accelerating the development of attack drones, according to Asahi Shimbun, in a shift that reflects lessons from the war in Ukraine and the priorities of the security documents now being revised.

Attack drones, including loitering munitions that circle a target area before striking, have become one of the defining weapons of the war in Ukraine, where both sides use them in vast numbers at a fraction of the cost of conventional missiles.

Japan's Defense Buildup Program of December 2022 identified unmanned assets as one of seven priority areas, alongside stand-off missiles, integrated air and missile defence and the resilience of bases and supply.

The program envisaged unmanned systems for surveillance and for combat, operating in the air, at sea and underwater, and the acceleration reported by Asahi concerns the combat end of that spectrum.

The attraction is arithmetic. A drone costing a fraction of a missile can destroy a vehicle, a radar or a small vessel, and a force that fields thousands of them changes the calculations of any adversary planning an assault on islands.

Japan's south-western island chain, stretching from Kyushu toward Taiwan, is the geography the Self-Defense Forces plan for, and drones suited to defending islands against landing forces are the obvious application.

Development involves Japanese manufacturers as well as purchases from abroad, and the ministry has evaluated foreign loitering munitions while pursuing domestic designs.

Countering drones is the other half of the problem, and the same Ukrainian experience has shown how quickly cheap drones can overwhelm expensive air defences.

The revision of the three security documents under the Takaichi government will set the scale of the drone programme, and the acceleration reported by Asahi suggests the direction.

For Japan's defence industry, long organised around large platforms built in small numbers, mass-produced drones represent a different kind of business.

TECHNOLOGY

What Ukraine Taught Every Defence Ministry About Drones

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The Defence Ministry's acceleration of attack drone development follows a lesson that every military in the world has drawn from Ukraine: cheap unmanned systems have changed the battlefield.

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022, drones were a supporting tool. Within two years they had become the principal means by which both sides found and struck targets along the front.

First-person-view drones, small quadcopters flown by an operator watching a video feed, carry explosive charges to tanks, trucks and trenches for a cost measured in hundreds of dollars.

Longer-range drones strike depots, refineries and airfields hundreds of kilometres from the front, as the attacks around Moscow during Russia's parliamentary elections this week showed.

Both countries now produce drones in the millions, and the supply of components, operators and countermeasures has become as important as the supply of shells.

The lessons for Japan concern islands rather than plains. Drones that can find and strike landing craft, vehicles and command posts across the south-western islands would raise the cost of any attempt to seize them.

They also concern defence. Ukraine's experience shows that ships, bases and radars must be protected against swarms of cheap drones, a problem that Japan's air defences, built against aircraft and missiles, were not designed for.

Electronic warfare, which jams the links between drones and operators, has become a central element of the contest, and drones guided by fibre-optic cable have emerged to defeat it.

TECHNOLOGY

Japan's defence industry has historically built sophisticated platforms in small numbers; drones require the opposite, simple systems in large quantities, and the acceleration reported this week will test whether the industry can adapt.

The Ministry of Defense's programme is one part of a broader revision of Japan's security documents, and Ukraine's battlefield is the textbook it draws on.

TECHNOLOGY

Chips at the Summit: Rapidus, Kumamoto and the Alliance

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Semiconductors were one of the three subjects on which Japan and the United States confirmed co-operation at Tuesday's summit, and the confirmation lands in the middle of the largest industrial policy effort Japan has undertaken in decades.

Two projects define it. In Hokkaido, Rapidus, a company founded in 2022 with backing from the government and major Japanese corporations, is building a plant to produce chips at the two-nanometre scale, the leading edge of the industry, with mass production targeted for 2027.

In Kumamoto, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company opened its first Japanese plant in 2024 in partnership with Sony and Denso, and a second is planned, making the prefecture a centre of chip production it had never been.

Both projects depend on the alliance. Rapidus draws on technology from IBM and on equipment from American and Japanese suppliers, and the American export controls that restrict China's access to advanced chips define the market in which both plants will operate.

Japan's strength in the chip supply chain lies less in manufacturing chips than in the materials and equipment used to make them, from photoresists to etching and cleaning machines, where Japanese companies hold dominant positions.

Those companies are subject to export controls co-ordinated with Washington, which is why chip co-operation is an alliance matter as well as an industrial one.

Artificial intelligence, the third subject confirmed at the summit, drives demand for the most advanced chips and for the data centres that house them, and Japan has sought to attract both.

Critical minerals, the first subject, feed the same chain: rare earths and other materials go into the equipment and the products alike.

The summit's confirmation gives ministries the authority to proceed with agreements, and Japanese industry will look for what they contain on investment and on the co-ordination of controls.

Thursday's American-Chinese summit, where artificial intelligence and rare earths are expected to dominate, will show whether the allied position on chips holds.

TECHNOLOGY

The Twenty-Three Items: Japan's Chip-Equipment Controls and the Alliance Behind Them

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The co-ordination of semiconductor supply chains that Japan and the United States confirmed this week has an existing foundation in export controls that Japan introduced in 2023.

In July of that year, Japan added 23 types of semiconductor manufacturing equipment to its export control list, covering machines used in the most advanced stages of chip production, including lithography, etching, deposition and cleaning.

The measures followed American controls of October 2022 that restricted the sale of advanced chips and equipment to China, and they reflected months of consultation among Washington, Tokyo and The Hague, the home of the Dutch lithography maker ASML.

Japan's participation mattered because of its position in the industry. Japanese companies make a large share of the world's chip-making equipment and dominate the supply of materials such as photoresists and silicon wafers.

Controls by the United States alone would have left Chinese manufacturers able to buy comparable equipment from Japan; the co-ordinated measures

closed that gap.

The controls apply to exports to all destinations, with licences readily granted to trusted partners, rather than naming China directly, a formulation that reflects Japan's preference for avoiding explicit confrontation.

Chinese manufacturers have responded by stockpiling older equipment, developing domestic alternatives and, in some cases, obtaining controlled items through third countries, which has prompted further tightening.

Japan's equipment makers have lost sales in China as a result, and the government has offered support for their expansion in other markets.

The controls are one half of the semiconductor relationship; the other is the investment in domestic production through Rapidus and the Kumamoto plants, which the same alliance underwrites.

Thursday's American-Chinese summit, where artificial intelligence and the technology behind it are expected to feature, will show whether Washington adjusts controls in negotiation with Beijing, and Tokyo will watch for any change in a regime it helped build.

COURTS

'We Wanted to Be With Him More': The Parents of a Three-Year-Old Killed in Fukuoka

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The parents of the three-year-old boy who died after a drink-driving incident in Fukuoka have spoken publicly, saying they wanted to be with him more.

The boy died this week after being found in critical condition following the incident, in which a 68-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of dangerous driving causing injury.

His death changes the offences available to prosecutors, who can now consider a charge of dangerous driving causing death, which carries far heavier penalties.

Statements by bereaved families have played a large part in how Japan treats drink-driving. The family of the three children killed in Fukuoka in 2006, when a drunk driver pushed their car into the sea, campaigned for the changes in law that followed.

Those changes extended liability to people who supply alcohol to drivers, lend them vehicles or ride with them knowing they have been drinking, and they raised penalties substantially.

Twenty years later, a child has died in the same city in the same kind of incident, and the parents' words carry the weight of that history.

The investigation continues, and prosecutors will decide on charges once the driver's condition at the time and the sequence of events have been established.

Fukuoka's police and municipal authorities have run anti-drink-driving campaigns for two decades, and the city has been a symbol of the effort.

The case will be watched for whether the penalties imposed reflect the severity that the law now provides.

The family has asked for nothing beyond what their statement expressed: the time they will not have.

SOCIETY

Kominato: Ten Houses on a Narrow Coast, and Two Neighbours of Eighty

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Approximately ten houses were affected by landslides in the Kominato district of Kamogawa, on the Pacific coast of Chiba's Boso Peninsula, and an 80-year-old man and an 80-year-old woman died, according to Mainichi Shimbun and TBS.

Kominato is a fishing settlement on a coast of coves and headlands, where the Boso hills reach the sea and the flat land between them is measured in a few streets.

Houses in such places stand at the foot of slopes because there is nowhere else for them to stand, and when a hillside fails, the debris reaches the rooms below within seconds.

The district is known nationally as the birthplace of Nichiren, the thirteenth-century Buddhist reformer, and the temple that marks the site, Tanjo-ji, draws pilgrims through the year.

Kamogawa, which absorbed the former town of Amatsukominato in 2005, is otherwise a resort and fishing city, home to a large marine park and to beaches that fill in summer.

The storm reached the Boso coast at the end of a season in which the region had already been hit twice, in August and earlier in September, and the hills above Kominato had been saturated before Monday's rain began.

Landslide deaths among the very old follow a pattern that disaster researchers have documented for decades. Older residents are less mobile, more attached to their homes, and more likely to have weathered previous storms without leaving.

Kamogawa had been under evacuation orders like the rest of the region, and the question of whether the residents of Kominato had been able to move, or had chosen to stay, will be examined in the reviews that follow.

Access to the district has been complicated by the closure of the Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway by mudslides, which cut the fastest routes from the capital to the southern peninsula.

Searches continue in the district for anyone else who may have been caught, and the five people still missing across the two prefectures include residents of Kanagawa's Miura Peninsula.

The names of the dead had not been released in the reports available at the time of writing.

SOCIETY

Mudslides Keep the Tateyama and Ken-O Expressways Shut, Cutting the Fast Roads to Southern Boso

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway remain closed because of mudslides, according to the sixth situation report from the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the closures are shaping the recovery across Chiba.

The Tateyama Expressway runs down the western side of the Boso Peninsula toward Tateyama, and it is the main high-speed route from the capital region to the southern peninsula, connecting with the Tokyo Bay Aqua-Line at Kisarazu.

The Ken-O Expressway is the outer ring road of the capital region, running in a wide arc through Kanagawa, Tokyo, Saitama, Ibaraki and Chiba, and its Chiba sections serve the eastern side of the prefecture.

Mudslides onto expressways are cleared by removing the debris, inspecting the slope above the road for further movement, and repairing any damage to the carriageway, a sequence that can take days when the ground remains unstable.

With Level 4 landslide warnings still in force in parts of Chiba, engineers cannot declare a slope safe until it has stopped moving, which delays reopening even after the road surface is clear.

The closures matter for relief as well as for traffic. Kamogawa, where two people died in Kominato, lies on the southern peninsula, and the expressway is the quickest route for repair crews, supplies and pump trucks.

Ordinary roads across the peninsula are carrying diverted traffic, and journey times to the south of Chiba have lengthened considerably.

Today is the last day of the five-day holiday, and travellers returning from the peninsula's resorts face long drives on congested local roads.

Expressway operators publish closure and reopening information continuously, and drivers should check before setting out rather than assuming a route is open.

The land ministry's numbered situation reports track the storm's effects across the transport network, and the sixth report indicates that road recovery is now the slowest part of it.

SOCIETY

Small Earthquakes Continue in Kumamoto, One Reaching Intensity 3

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Small earthquakes have continued sporadically in the Kumamoto region and other areas, with a maximum seismic intensity of 3 recorded, according to the

reports available this morning.

Intensity 3 on the Japanese scale is felt by most people indoors, rattles dishes and swings hanging objects, but rarely causes damage.

The Kumamoto region has a recent history that makes any sequence of earthquakes there a matter of attention. In April 2016, two major earthquakes struck within 28 hours, the second of magnitude 7.3, killing dozens directly and many more in the aftermath.

That disaster damaged Kumamoto Castle, destroyed homes across the prefecture and caused a landslide that severed the Aso Bridge, and its reconstruction took years.

Small earthquakes in the region since then have been common, and most are unconnected to any larger event.

Seismologists cannot predict whether a series of small tremors will lead to a larger one, and the meteorological agency's guidance after any felt earthquake is to be aware of the possibility of further shaking for about a week.

Kumamoto is also the location of the Kumagawa Railway, which fully reopened this week six years after the floods of 2020, and of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's plants, which make the region an increasingly important industrial centre.

Earthquake preparedness in the prefecture has been reinforced since 2016, with strengthened buildings and revised evacuation planning.

Residents are advised to check that furniture is secured, that supplies are in place and that family members know where to meet if a larger earthquake occurs.

The tremors reported this week have caused no damage in the accounts available.

SOCIETY

Getting Home Today

Compiled by the Society Desk

The Tateyama and Ken-O expressways remain closed by mudslides; plan alternative routes in Chiba.

Rail restoration is continuing with some delays; check your operator's status before leaving.

Travel early. The afternoon and evening are the peak of the return rush.

Forecasts for Kanto describe cloud or rain; allow extra time on the roads.

Expressway operators publish congestion forecasts and closures online.

Airports handle returning holiday flyers in the afternoon and evening; check flight status.

Carry water and snacks for long delays, especially with children.

In western Japan the weather is fine and the usual holiday congestion applies.

Landslide warnings remain in parts of Chiba and Kanagawa; avoid roads under slopes where warned.

The working week resumes tomorrow.

CULTURE

Visiting the Family Grave Today

Compiled by the Culture Desk

The equinox is the traditional day for visiting family graves, at the centre of the Higan week.

Cemeteries in Chiba and Kanagawa may have flooded paths, fallen branches and unstable slopes; check before going.

Hillside cemeteries in areas under Level 4 landslide warnings should be avoided until the warnings are lifted.

Bring water for cleaning the stone, flowers, incense and a lighter, and take rubbish home.

Ohagi, the sweet of the autumn Higan, is the traditional offering.

Temples hold Higan services through the week; times are posted at the gate.

Older relatives visiting graves in the heat of western Japan should carry water and rest in the shade.

Public transport and roads are busy with the return rush; allow extra time.

Rain is forecast in parts of Kanto and Kinki, so carry an umbrella.

The week of Higan ends on Saturday.

SOCIETY

For visitors, the cooler weather marks the start of Hokkaido's autumn colour season, which begins on the high peaks of the Daisetsuzan range in September and moves down through October.

Temperature swings between warm days and cold nights are the condition that produces the brightest colour, and the approaching front may hasten it.

The cold front is unrelated to the typhoon's remnants, which have moved far to the east, and to the tropical depression to the south.

Residents are advised to bring out warmer clothing and to be alert to the risk of sudden temperature drops for older people and those in poor health.

SOCIETY

Naha's Night at 25: The Tropical Nights That Will Not End

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Today's map gives Naha a low of 25 degrees, the warmest night on the chart, and a reading that meets the Japanese definition of a tropical night.

A tropical night is one on which the temperature does not fall below 25 degrees, and the count of such nights each summer has become one of the measures by which Japanese cities track the warming of their climate.

Okinawa records tropical nights through much of the year, but their persistence into late September on the main islands has become common in recent summers where it was once rare.

Tokyo's low of 23 today falls just below the threshold, and forecasts of a front bringing cooler air to Kanto suggest the capital's tropical nights may be ending for the year.

Nights that stay warm are a health concern as much as a comfort one. Bodies that cannot cool overnight recover less from daytime heat, and heatstroke deaths among older people are associated with hot nights as much as hot days.

Air conditioning use at night has risen accordingly, which has implications for electricity demand and for households without power, such as those still waiting for restoration in Chiba.

The equinox is the traditional end of Japan's heat, captured in the saying that heat and cold last only until Higan, and the front approaching eastern Japan would fit that calendar.

Western Japan is a different matter, hot and humid on today's map, with Kochi at 32 and Kagoshima at 31.

Climate records kept by the meteorological agency show the number of tropical nights in Japanese cities rising over recent decades, along with the number of days above 35 degrees.

Naha's night at 25, the warmest on the map, is ordinary for Okinawa in September, and the cooler nights of Hokkaido, at 14 in Kushiro, show how wide the country's range has become.

SOCIETY

22 Buildings Destroyed and 428 Flooded: The Damage Count So Far

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Asahi Shimbun has published the first consolidated count of the damage from Typhoon No. 25, and the figures describe a storm whose harm was concentrated in Chiba.

In Chiba Prefecture, 23 buildings were completely or partially destroyed, and a further 25 were partially damaged, according to Asahi.

Across Chiba and Kanagawa together, 22 buildings were completely destroyed and 428 were flooded.

The distinction between destroyed, partially destroyed and partially damaged follows the categories that municipalities use when they inspect homes and issue disaster damage certificates, which decide what public support a household can receive.

Flooding accounts for the largest number by far. Four hundred and twenty-eight flooded buildings means hundreds of households facing the removal of mud, the drying of floors and walls, and the disposal of ruined furniture and appliances.

The area around JR Sakura Station is widely flooded, Asahi reported. The Takasaki River overflowed there on Monday, and the Inba lowlands into which it drains hold water for days once it arrives.

Drainage pump trucks are to be deployed to Sakura and other flooded areas from today, and some districts are expected to remain under water until the

pumps have done their work.

The counts will rise. Damage surveys proceed house by house after a storm, and the totals reported in the first days are always lower than the final ones.

They also do not capture everything. Cars submerged in Ichihara and elsewhere, crops flattened in the fields, and roads and slopes damaged across the peninsula are counted separately or not at all.

Seven people are dead and five missing, a human toll that no tally of buildings expresses.

SOCIETY

Pump Trucks Arrive in Sakura as the Water Around the Station Refuses to Leave

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Drainage pump trucks are scheduled to be deployed from today to flooded areas including Sakura, where the district around JR Sakura Station is widely under water, according to Asahi Shimbun and the land ministry's situation reports.

The Takasaki River overflowed in Sakura on Monday, placing about 2,800 people under a Level 5 alert. The river drains toward the Inba lowlands, an area of flat ground that does not shed water quickly.

That is why the flooding has outlasted the storm. In a mountain valley, floodwater rushes through and is gone; on a plain, it spreads and stays until it can drain or be pumped.

Drainage pump trucks are vehicles carrying large pumps that can be driven to a flooded district and set to move water into a river or channel that will carry it away.

The land ministry maintains a fleet of them across the country and deploys them through its regional bureaus after floods, together with the engineers of its Technical Emergency Control Force.

Each truck can move a large volume of water every minute, and several working together can clear a flooded district in hours where natural drainage would take days.

Their arrival marks the transition from the emergency phase to recovery. Once the water is gone, residents can enter their homes, assess the damage and begin the clean-up.

Sakura's station district is a hub for the city, and its flooding affects commuters, businesses and the rail service itself.

The city's residents are facing this for the second time in weeks, after heavy rain earlier this month affected the same low-lying part of Chiba.

Municipal staff will begin damage inspections as soon as the water has receded, and residents are advised to photograph everything before they clean.

SOCIETY

Inba-numa: The Marsh That Has Defeated Engineers Since the Eighteenth Century

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The flooding around JR Sakura Station, which pump trucks begin to clear today, is the latest episode in a very long relationship between the people of northern Chiba and the wetland at its centre.

Inba-numa is a shallow lake, once far larger, lying in the lowlands north of Sakura and draining eventually to the Tone River. The Takasaki River, which overflowed this week, is one of its feeders.

The Tokugawa shogunate tried repeatedly to drain and reclaim it. The most famous attempt, under the senior councillor Tanuma Okitsugu in the 1780s, was destroyed by floods before it could be completed, and Tanuma's fall from power followed.

Later attempts in the nineteenth century also failed, and the marsh remained a place of fishing, reeds and periodic flooding into the modern era.

After the Second World War, a national reclamation project drained much of the lake, creating farmland and dividing what remained into two basins connected by channels.

The reclaimed land is flat, low and poorly drained by nature, which is why floods that reach it stay, as the water around Sakura Station has stayed this week.

Inba-numa today is also a water source for Chiba's cities and a site of environmental concern, with water quality among the poorest of Japan's lakes and efforts under way to improve it.

The Dutch windmill on its shore, built with Dutch craftsmen as a symbol of friendship with the Netherlands, commemorates a different kind of engineering relationship, and it stands in a park that fills with tulips each spring.

Flood control in the basin combines pumping stations, channels and the regulation of the lake's level, and the storms of this month have tested all of them.

Tanuma's engineers would recognise the problem. Water that reaches this ground does not want to leave.

SOCIETY

Level 4 Stays in Force: Why the Slopes Are Not Safe Yet

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Level 4 landslide warnings remain in force in parts of Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures, and saturated slopes are at risk of collapse even with light rain, according to the warnings reported this morning.

The typhoon has become an extratropical cyclone far to the east and its rain has stopped, but the ground has not caught up with the sky.

A hillside that absorbed hundreds of millimetres of rain over two days holds that water in its soil for days afterward, and the weight and lubrication of the water reduce the friction that keeps the slope in place.

That is why landslide warnings are lifted later than rain warnings, and why they can remain in force under clear skies.

Light rain adds to the load. Ground that is already at capacity cannot absorb more, and even modest rainfall raises the pressure of water within the soil.

Chiba's slopes had absorbed two earlier periods of heavy rain since August before this storm, which is why the prefecture's warnings are proving the slowest to lift.

The Level 4 designation asks residents in designated landslide hazard zones to remain evacuated, or to evacuate if they have returned, until the municipality lifts the warning.

Residents near slopes are advised to watch for the warning signs, including cracks, springs, leaning trees and small falls of stone, and to leave immediately if any appear.

Forecasts for Kanto today are uncertain, with TBS and Weathernews describing cloud or rain as a front approaches, and any rain in the affected areas would extend the warnings further.

The seven deaths from this storm were caused by landslides, and the warnings that remain are intended to prevent an eighth.

SOCIETY

The Number That Decides When a Landslide Warning Ends

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The landslide warnings still in force in Chiba and Kanagawa will be lifted not when the rain stops but when a number falls: the soil water index.

The index is a calculation used by the meteorological agency to estimate how much water is stored in the ground in each small area of the country, based on rainfall observed and forecast.

It uses a model that treats the soil as a series of tanks, filling with rain and draining at rates that reflect how water moves through the ground, and it produces a value that rises during rain and falls slowly afterward.

Landslide warnings are issued when the index, combined with recent rainfall intensity, passes thresholds set for each area based on the history of landslides there.

They are lifted when the index has fallen back below the threshold, which can take a day or more after the last rain, because the model's tanks drain slowly.

That lag is the scientific basis for the warnings that remain under clear skies, and for the advice that saturated slopes can fail with light rain: even a small addition raises the index while it is still high.

The index underlies the colours on the agency's Kikikuru risk maps, which show landslide danger area by area in near real time.

Municipalities use the same information to decide when to lift evacuation orders, and residents in hazard zones should wait for that decision rather than judging the ground by its appearance.

Chiba's slopes have been near the threshold repeatedly since August, which is why the prefecture's warnings have proved the most persistent.

Any rain today from the front that TBS and Weathernews describe would push the index up again in the affected areas.

SOCIETY

Yellow Zones and Red Zones: How Japan Maps the Slopes That Kill

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The landslides that killed seven people this week struck in a country that has spent a quarter of a century mapping the slopes most likely to fail.

The Sediment Disaster Prevention Act of 2001 requires prefectures to survey slopes and designate two kinds of zone: warning zones, shown in yellow on hazard maps, where residents' lives could be endangered, and special warning zones, shown in red, where buildings could be destroyed.

The act followed a landslide disaster in Hiroshima in 1999 and was strengthened after another in the same city in 2014 killed more than 70 people in residential districts built at the foot of steep hills.

Designation carries consequences. In red zones, new residential construction is restricted and requires structural measures, and municipalities are obliged to include the zones in hazard maps and evacuation planning.

Prefectures have designated hundreds of thousands of zones across the country, and the surveys are ongoing, since slopes change and development continues.

Designation does not remove the risk. Houses built before the zones were drawn remain where they are, and their residents are asked to evacuate when warnings are issued rather than to move away.

Kominato, where two people of 80 died, and the hillsides of Yokosuka and Miura are the kind of terrain the act was written for: steep slopes with housing at their feet.

The Level 4 landslide warnings still in force in Chiba and Kanagawa apply to residents in designated zones, who are asked to remain evacuated until the warnings are lifted.

Critics argue that designation has been slower than the risk demands and that property owners resist it because of its effect on values, a tension the law has never resolved.

The reviews that follow this storm will ask whether the houses hit were in designated zones and whether their residents had been reached.

SOCIETY

What It Means When a Typhoon Becomes an Extratropical Cyclone

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Typhoon No. 25 became an extratropical cyclone far to the east of Japan at 9 p.m. on Tuesday, according to Mainichi Shimbun, and the transition marks the formal end of the storm as a typhoon.

A typhoon is a tropical cyclone: a warm-cored storm that draws its energy from warm ocean water and organises itself around a central eye with the strongest winds close to the centre.

An extratropical cyclone is a different kind of storm, with a cold core, fronts separating warm and cold air, and winds spread over a much wider area.

When a typhoon moves north over cooler water and into the westerly winds of the mid-latitudes, it loses its tropical structure and takes on the characteristics of the storms that cross Japan in winter.

The transition does not always mean weakening. Some storms strengthen again as extratropical cyclones, and their winds, spread over a larger area, can affect regions far from the original track.

The 1954 typhoon that sank the ferry Toya Maru off Hokkaido, killing more than a thousand people, is remembered in Japan partly because it remained dangerous long after it had left the tropics.

This week's storm made its transition far out in the Pacific, well away from Japan, and Mainichi reported that its direct effects on the country have ended.

The meteorological agency stops issuing typhoon information once a storm has become extratropical, and the storm's number retires with it.

Its indirect effects, in saturated slopes, swollen rivers

SOCIETY

and flooded districts, continue and are the subject of the warnings still in force.

A new tropical depression to the south of Japan is expected to become a typhoon within 24 hours, and if it does it will take the next number, No. 26.

SOCIETY

Third Time Since August: Chiba's Season of Storms

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Typhoon No. 25 was the third time since August that Chiba Prefecture has been hit by severe weather, Mainichi Shimbun and TBS reported, and the accumulation explains why this storm did more damage than its track alone would suggest.

Heavy rain in August and again earlier in September had already saturated ground, flooded districts in Ichihara and elsewhere, and left repairs unfinished when the typhoon arrived.

Ground that is already wet cannot absorb more water, so the same rainfall produces more runoff and more instability the second and third time.

Slopes that survived the first two events had been weakened by them, and this week's rain found hillsides that had less holding them together than they had in July.

The pattern is visible in the damage. Chiba accounts for most of the buildings destroyed and flooded, for the two deaths in Kominato, for the flooding around Sakura Station and for most of the power outages.

It also carries a lesson that Chiba learned in 2019, when two typhoons within five weeks left parts of the prefecture without power for weeks and flooded towns that had just begun to recover from the first storm.

Repeated disasters exhaust the people who respond to them. Municipal staff, volunteers and repair crews who have worked through two events face a third with the same resources and less energy.

They also exhaust household finances. Insurance covers part of the loss from each event, but deductibles, uninsured damage and the cost of temporary accommodation accumulate.

The prefecture's requests for drainage improvements and river works, which take years to build, will be repeated with more urgency after this month.

A tropical depression south of Japan is expected to become the season's next typhoon within 24 hours. Its track is not yet known, and Chiba will watch it more anxiously than most.

SOCIETY

Kamogawa: A Resort City Facing a Long Autumn

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Kamogawa, where two residents of Kominato died in this week's landslides, is a city that lives on the sea in two ways: as a fishing port and as a resort.

Its marine park, opened in 1970, is among the best-known aquariums in Japan and draws families from across the capital region to its shows and exhibits.

Its beaches fill in summer with surfers and swimmers, and its hot springs and hotels serve the weekend trade from Tokyo that the Aqua-Line and the Tateyama Expressway made possible.

The city occupies the south-eastern coast of the Boso Peninsula, where the hills of the peninsula's interior meet the Pacific, and its settlements are strung along the narrow coastal strip.

That geography makes it beautiful and exposed. The hills that frame every view are the hills that can fail in heavy rain, and the coast takes the full force of Pacific storms.

The typhoon of September 2019, which made landfall near Chiba City with record winds, caused extensive damage across the southern peninsula, and Kamogawa's recovery from it was measured in months.

This week's storm, the third to hit the prefecture since August, has cut the expressway that brings the city its visitors at the end of the holiday that should have been its busiest.

Recovery will follow the pattern the city knows: the search, the assessment of homes, the reopening of roads, and then the effort to persuade visitors to return.

For the fishing community of Kominato, the

immediate concern is the harbour and the boats, and the families of the two who died.

The marine park, the temple and the beaches will reopen. The autumn they reopen into will be a hard one for the city's businesses.

SOCIETY

Seven Now, and How the Final Toll Is Counted

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The toll of seven dead and five missing reported this morning describes the direct deaths from Typhoon No. 25: people killed by landslides, floods and the other immediate effects of the storm.

Japan's disaster statistics also recognise a second category, disaster-related deaths, which are often larger than the first.

A disaster-related death is one caused not by the event itself but by its aftermath: illness worsened by life in a shelter, exhaustion from the clean-up, the stress of displacement, or the interruption of medical care.

Municipalities determine such deaths through review committees, which examine each case and decide whether the disaster contributed to it. Recognition entitles the bereaved family to a condolence payment under the law on disaster condolence grants.

The category gained prominence after the Kumamoto earthquakes of 2016, in which the number of deaths later attributed to the aftermath far exceeded the number killed directly by the shaking.

Older people account for most disaster-related deaths, which is why the condition of shelters, the continuity of care and the pace of the return to normal life are treated as matters of life and death by disaster planners.

The five people still missing will be counted as dead only if they are found or if the search is formally ended, which can take a long time.

The two deaths in Kominato, both of people aged 80, and the deaths in Yokosuka reflect the concentration of landslide deaths among the old, which every major Japanese disaster has shown.

The final toll of this storm will therefore be known only months from now, when the reviews of related deaths are complete.

For the families involved, the categories are administrative. The loss is the same.

SOCIETY

The Land Ministry's Emergency Engineers, and the Trucks That Follow Them

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The drainage pump trucks heading for Sakura today belong to a national capability that most residents never see until their street is under water.

The Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism maintains a Technical Emergency Control Force, known by its acronym TEC-FORCE, established in 2008 to send engineers and equipment to disaster areas at the request of local governments.

Its members are ministry engineers with expertise in rivers, roads, slopes and ports, and they are dispatched to assess damage, advise municipalities and direct emergency works.

The ministry's regional bureaus hold fleets of specialised vehicles for such deployments, including drainage pump trucks, lighting vehicles, satellite communication trucks and mobile bridges.

Drainage pump trucks are the most familiar. They carry pumps that can be set up at a flooded site within an hour and move water out faster than any natural drainage.

They were used extensively after the typhoons of 2019, when whole towns in eastern Japan were flooded by river levee failures, and after the floods in Kyushu in 2020.

The ministry's numbered situation reports, of which the sixth was issued for this storm, track the deployment of these resources alongside the state of roads, rivers and ports.

Municipalities request assistance through the prefecture, and the ministry decides the scale of its response based on the damage reported.

For Sakura, the pumps will determine how quickly the district around the station can be reoccupied and how soon damage inspections can begin.

For the ministry, this storm adds to a year in which its emergency engineers have rarely been idle.

SOCIETY

As the Water Recedes, the Shelters Begin to Close

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Evacuation centres opened across Chiba and Kanagawa as the typhoon approached, and their closure, which begins as evacuation orders are lifted, marks a stage of recovery that brings its own difficulties.

Shelters in Japan are usually schools, community centres and gymnasiums, run by municipal staff with support from volunteers, and they are designed for days rather than weeks.

As rivers fall and slopes are assessed, municipalities lift evacuation orders district by district, and residents whose homes are habitable return.

For those whose homes are destroyed, flooded or in zones still under Level 4 landslide warnings, the shelter remains home, and the closure of shelters elsewhere can leave them concentrated in fewer places.

Municipalities then arrange longer-term accommodation: publicly provided temporary housing, rented private flats paid for under the Disaster Relief Act, or places with relatives.

The transition is hardest for older residents, who account for most of those still in shelters after the first days and who are least able to manage the paperwork that longer-term support requires.

Sakura's flooded station district, where pump trucks arrive today, and Kominato, where about ten houses were hit, will be among the last areas whose residents can return.

Schools that serve as shelters must reopen for pupils, which sets a practical deadline for moving evacuees elsewhere.

Disaster-related deaths are concentrated in this phase, among older evacuees exhausted by shelter life, which is why municipalities monitor their health closely.

The shelters will close within days in most districts; the recovery they were the first stage of will take months.

SOCIETY

Power Repairs Go On in Chiba as Trains Return With Delays

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Restoration of electricity continues in Chiba Prefecture, where most of the more than 60,000 households that lost power during Typhoon No. 25 were located, and railway services are being restored with some delays continuing.

Utility crews work outward from the network's core, restoring feeder lines before individual connections, and the last households to regain power are typically those in the most damaged and least accessible areas.

The closure of the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways by mudslides slows the movement of crews and materials to southern Chiba, where the damage is concentrated.

On the railways, the Keisei Skyliner's flooded track and the disruption to the Sobu and Uchibo lines were the most significant interruptions, and restoration has proceeded line by line as track inspections were completed.

Delays on the last day of the holiday affect travellers returning to the capital region from the peninsula's resorts and from further afield.

Operators publish the status of each line continuously, and passengers should check before travelling rather than relying on timetables.

Households still without power in Chiba face a fourth day without refrigeration, air conditioning or, in homes with electric pumps, running water.

Municipal welfare offices maintain contact with residents who depend on electricity for medical equipment, and neighbours checking on older residents remain the most effective safeguard.

Today's forecast for Kanto is uncertain, with TBS and Weathernews describing cloud or rain, which could slow repairs on exposed lines.

The utility's restoration estimates are published by district and revised as crews report from the field.

SOCIETY

A New Typhoon Is Forming to the South, and the Sakishima Islands Are Told to Prepare

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

A tropical depression south of Japan is expected to develop into a typhoon within 24 hours, according to Weathernews, and the Sakishima Islands and other areas have been told to be on high alert.

If the depression is upgraded, it will become Typhoon No. 26 of the year, following a storm whose effects the Kanto region is still counting.

The Sakishima Islands are the south-western end of Okinawa Prefecture, comprising the Miyako and Yaeyama groups, including Miyakojima, Ishigaki and Iriomote, and reaching to Yonaguni, the westernmost point of Japan.

They lie closer to Taiwan than to the Okinawan main island, and they sit in the path of typhoons that form in the Philippine Sea and track north-west.

The islands are accustomed to severe storms. Their houses are built low, with heavy tile roofs and concrete construction, and their residents prepare quickly when a warning is issued.

Their exposure nevertheless carries risks that the mainland does not face. Ferries and flights stop, the islands' small hospitals must manage alone, and supplies of fuel and food depend on shipping that a typhoon halts.

Tourism has grown rapidly on Miyakojima and Ishigaki in recent years, and visitors unfamiliar with typhoons need to follow local guidance on when to stay indoors.

The depression's likely track and strength will become clearer once the meteorological agency begins issuing formal typhoon information, which follows the upgrade.

September remains among the most active months for typhoons affecting Japan, and the season continues into October.

For residents of Kanto and Chiba, still recovering from No. 25, the news that another storm is forming is a reminder that the season is not over.

SOCIETY

When a Depression Becomes a Typhoon

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The tropical depression south of Japan that Weathernews expects to become a typhoon within 24 hours is passing through a transition that meteorologists define precisely.

A tropical depression is an organised area of low pressure over warm ocean with circulating winds that have not yet reached a set strength.

Under the Japan Meteorological Agency's definition, the system becomes a typhoon when its maximum sustained winds reach 17.2 metres per second, about 34 knots, at which point it receives a number and formal typhoon information begins.

The threshold differs from the American one, under which a storm becomes a typhoon at 64 knots and is called a tropical storm below that; Japanese usage applies the word typhoon across the whole range above 34 knots.

Storms form when warm sea surface temperatures, generally above about 26 degrees, supply moisture and energy to rising air, and when the winds through the atmosphere are uniform enough to allow the system to organise.

The Philippine Sea and the waters south of Japan supply those conditions through September and into October, which is why the season remains active after the equinox.

Once numbered, a typhoon's track is forecast with a probability circle showing where the centre is likely to be at intervals up to five days ahead.

The Sakishima Islands have been told to be on alert because they lie in the region where storms forming in this position typically track first.

If the system is upgraded, it will be the twenty-sixth typhoon of the year, following one whose effects Chiba and Kanagawa are still counting.

The agency's formal information, issued once the upgrade is made, is the authoritative source for its track and strength.

SOCIETY

What Intensity 3 Means, and Where the Scale Goes From There

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The earthquakes reported in the Kumamoto region this week reached a maximum seismic intensity of 3, a reading on a scale that is Japan's own and that differs from the magnitude figures used elsewhere.

Magnitude measures the energy released by an earthquake at its source. Seismic intensity measures the shaking at a particular place, which depends on distance from the source, depth and local ground conditions.

The Japan Meteorological Agency's scale runs from 0 to 7, with levels 5 and 6 each divided into lower and upper grades, giving ten steps in all.

Intensity 3 is felt by most people indoors. Dishes rattle, hanging objects swing, and some people are startled, but damage is rare.

Intensity 4 wakes most sleepers and can topple unstable objects. Intensity 5 lower is the threshold at which people find it hard to walk without holding on and furniture may move.

At 5 upper and 6 lower, walking becomes difficult and unsecured furniture falls; at 6 upper, standing is impossible and poorly built houses may collapse. Intensity 7, the maximum, describes shaking in which even well-built structures can fail.

Intensity 7 has been recorded in only a handful of earthquakes since the grade was introduced, including the Great Hanshin earthquake of 1995, the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, the Kumamoto earthquakes of 2016 and the Noto Peninsula earthquake of 2024.

The scale is measured by instruments across the country, and the agency issues intensity readings within minutes of any felt earthquake.

Earthquake early warnings are issued when the agency's instruments detect an earthquake expected to produce intensity 5 lower or greater, giving seconds of notice before strong shaking arrives.

Intensity 3 in Kumamoto is a reminder of the region's seismic history, not a cause for alarm, and no damage has been reported.

SOCIETY

A Decade After the Kumamoto Earthquakes

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The small earthquakes reported in the Kumamoto region this week fall in the tenth year since the two great earthquakes of April 2016, and the anniversary was marked in the prefecture in the spring.

The first earthquake, of magnitude 6.5, struck on the night of April 14, 2016. The second, of magnitude 7.3, came about 28 hours later, in the early hours of April 16, and was the more destructive.

Both registered intensity 7 on the Japanese scale in the town of Mashiki, the only time a single place has recorded the maximum intensity twice within days.

Dozens of people were killed directly, and many more deaths were later attributed to the aftermath, in shelters, in cars where residents slept for fear of aftershocks, and in the strain of displacement.

Kumamoto Castle, one of the finest in Japan, lost stone walls, turrets and roof tiles, and the restoration of its main keep, completed in 2021, became a symbol of the region's recovery.

The Aso Bridge, severed by a landslide, was replaced by a new bridge, and the railway and road links to the Aso region were rebuilt over several years.

The disaster reshaped national thinking about aftershocks, since the second earthquake was larger than the first, and the meteorological agency revised its guidance on the risk of further shaking after a major earthquake.

It also established disaster-related deaths as a category that governments must plan to prevent, after their number far exceeded the deaths caused by the shaking itself.

Kumamoto has since become an industrial centre through the semiconductor plants at Kikuyo, and the earthquake-resistant construction of those plants was a condition of their location.

Ten years on, the region's residents feel small tremors with a knowledge that most of the country lacks.

Wet Fields and Flattened Stalks: The Rice Harvest Falls Behind

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

Field conditions after prolonged rain and the typhoon are delaying the rice harvest, according to the reports available this morning, in a year in which rice has been at the centre of household concerns.

September is harvest month across much of Honshu, and combine harvesters cannot work in fields that are waterlogged or where the crop has been flattened by wind.

Rice that has lodged, the term for stalks pushed flat, is harder to harvest and more likely to sprout or rot if it lies in wet ground for long.

Chiba, one of the largest rice-producing prefectures in the Kanto region, took the worst of this month's weather, and its farmers face a delayed harvest on top of damage to vegetable crops.

A delay of days is manageable. A delay of weeks, with further rain, reduces both the quantity and the quality of the crop, and the grading of rice determines the price farmers receive.

The timing is awkward for a market that has only recently settled. Retail prices fell back into the 2,000-yen range for a five-kilogram bag this month for the first time in about two years, and the government has been buying back stockpiled rice.

A poor harvest in Kanto would not by itself reverse that, since the crop is national and other regions have had better weather, but it would tighten supply in the prefectures affected.

Agricultural insurance and mutual aid schemes cover part of the loss from weather damage, and claims will follow the assessments now beginning.

A tropical depression south of Japan is expected to become a typhoon within 24 hours, and a further storm crossing the harvest would compound the problem.

Farmers watch the same forecasts as everyone else this week, with rather more at stake in them.

SOCIETY

The Prefecture That Feeds the Capital, Hit Three Times

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

Chiba Prefecture, struck for the third time since August, is among the largest suppliers of vegetables to the Tokyo market, and the storms' effect will reach the capital's kitchens.

Chiba ranks among the leading prefectures for the production of daikon radish, carrots, spinach, cabbage and other vegetables, and it grows the great majority of Japan's peanuts, a crop for which the prefecture is famous.

Its position next to the capital makes it the source of much of what appears in Tokyo's supermarkets each morning, delivered overnight by road from farms across the peninsula.

Storm damage to vegetable crops takes several forms: fields flooded and crops rotted, plants flattened by wind, and seedlings for the autumn and winter harvest washed out.

The closure of the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways by mudslides adds a transport problem to the production one, delaying deliveries from the southern peninsula.

Vegetable prices in Tokyo respond quickly to supply disruption, and consumers may see higher prices for the crops Chiba supplies in the coming weeks.

The timing coincides with the health ministry's campaign for one extra plate of vegetables a day, an aim made harder by prices that have already risen with the weak yen and the cost of fuel and fertiliser.

Farmers in the prefecture face losses from three events in two months, and agricultural insurance covers part but not all of them.

Rice is also affected, with the harvest delayed by wet fields across the region.

The peanut harvest, which falls in the autumn, is among the crops at risk, and Chiba's peanuts are a seasonal fixture whose absence would be noticed.

Seven and a Half Metres for Six Seconds: The Environment Ministry Sets a Standard for Bear Spray

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The Ministry of the Environment has published requirements for bear repellent spray, specifying a spray distance of 7.5 metres or more and a continuous discharge of six seconds or more, according to Asahi Shimbun.

The ministry also confirmed that a counterfeit product has been found on the market, which is the immediate reason for setting a standard.

Bear spray is a canister of capsaicin-based irritant designed to be discharged at a charging bear, and it has become a common item for hikers, foresters and residents of mountain districts as bear encounters have risen.

Its effectiveness depends on reaching the bear before the bear reaches the person. A bear can cover the distance between them in seconds, which is why the spray must project far enough and for long enough.

A spray that reaches only a few metres, or empties in a second, offers false confidence, and a counterfeit that does neither is dangerous.

Bear injuries in Japan reached a record in fiscal 2023, when more than 200 people were injured and several killed, and encounters have remained frequent since, particularly in Tohoku and Hokkaido.

Autumn is the season of greatest risk, as bears feed heavily before hibernation and move into farmland and settlements when the mountains' crops of acorns and beech nuts are poor.

The ministry's requirements give retailers and buyers a benchmark, and products that do not meet them should not be sold as bear repellent.

Spray is a last resort. Avoiding encounters through noise, awareness and staying out of bear habitat at dawn and dusk remains the first line of defence.

Anyone who has bought spray recently is advised to check that the product states its spray distance and duration and comes from a recognised manufacturer.

SOCIETY

Contaminated Food Kills 1.52 Million a Year, WHO Estimates

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

Contaminated food kills an estimated 1.52 million people worldwide each year and makes more than 800 million ill, according to a World Health Organization estimate reported this week.

The figures are far higher than the organisation's previous global estimate, published in 2015, which put the annual toll at about 420,000 deaths and 600 million illnesses.

Foodborne disease is caused by bacteria, viruses, parasites and chemical contaminants, and its burden falls heaviest on children under five and on low-income countries where clean water and refrigeration are scarce.

Common causes include salmonella, campylobacter, norovirus and E. coli, along with toxins such as aflatoxin in stored grains and nuts.

Japan's own food safety record is strong by international standards, with a regulatory system built on the Food Sanitation Act and inspection through the health ministry and local governments.

The country nevertheless records tens of thousands of cases of food poisoning each year, with norovirus, campylobacter and anisakis, a parasite found in raw fish, among the most frequent causes.

Autumn brings particular risks in Japan: mushroom poisoning from misidentified wild fungi, and the anisakis cases that rise with the season's fish.

After floods such as this week's, food safety becomes an emergency concern. Refrigerators without power spoil their contents within hours, and floodwater contaminates anything it touches.

Households in Chiba and Kanagawa recovering from the typhoon are advised to discard any food that has been in contact with floodwater or has been unrefrigerated for more than a few hours.

The World Health Organization's estimate is a reminder that the most ordinary act of daily life carries a risk that the world has not yet controlled.

Mushrooms, Raw Fish and Floodwater: Autumn's Food Risks

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

The World Health Organization's estimate of the global toll from contaminated food, reported this week, arrives in the season when Japan's own food risks are at their most particular.

Autumn is the season of wild mushrooms, and every year the health ministry and prefectural governments record poisonings from species gathered by mistake.

The most frequent culprit is the tsukiyotake, a poisonous mushroom that grows on beech trees and is often mistaken for the edible shiitake or hiratake it resembles. It causes severe vomiting and diarrhoea within hours.

Health authorities' advice is unchanging: do not eat a wild mushroom unless its identity is certain, and do not rely on folk tests such as whether insects have eaten it.

Autumn is also the season of fish, and of anisakis, a parasite found in mackerel, squid, saury and other species that causes acute stomach pain when consumed alive in raw fish.

Anisakis cases have risen in Japan in recent years, and the ministry advises freezing fish for a period before eating it raw, or heating it, since the parasite is killed by both.

This week adds a third risk in Chiba and Kanagawa. Floodwater contaminates everything it touches, and refrigerators that lost power for days have spoiled their contents.

Households recovering from the typhoon are advised to discard any food that came into contact with floodwater, including sealed packages whose surfaces may be contaminated, and anything unrefrigerated for more than a few hours.

Japan's food safety system is among the world's strongest, and its recorded toll from foodborne illness is small beside the World Health Organization's global figures.

The seasonal risks are nevertheless real, and the ministry's advice is directed at exactly the meals that autumn makes most tempting.

SOCIETY

One More Plate: The Health Ministry's Campaign for Vegetables and Fruit

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare is promoting the idea of one extra plate of vegetables and fruit a day, a campaign aimed at closing a gap between what Japanese people eat and what health guidance recommends.

The national target for vegetable intake is 350 grams a day. The average adult falls well short of it, at roughly 280 grams, and younger adults eat less than older ones.

Fruit intake is lower still relative to the target, and has been declining for years, particularly among people in their twenties and thirties.

A single extra serving, the campaign argues, would close most of the gap for many people, and it is easier to ask for one more plate than for a changed diet.

Japan's traditional cuisine is rich in vegetables, but modern eating patterns, with more convenience food, more meals eaten out and less time for cooking, have moved away from it.

Vegetables and fruit are associated with lower rates of heart disease, stroke and some cancers, and with better control of blood pressure and weight.

The campaign fits a broader public health strategy known as Health Japan 21, which sets targets for diet, exercise, smoking and other behaviours over a period of years.

Price is an obstacle this year. Vegetable and fruit prices have risen with the weak yen and with the cost of fuel and fertiliser, and this month's storms have damaged crops in Chiba, one of the country's largest vegetable-growing prefectures.

The ministry's message is deliberately modest: not a diet, but an addition.

For readers marking the equinox with ohagi and other seasonal sweets today, the ministry would presumably suggest a plate of vegetables alongside.

SOCIETY

SOCIETY

The Last Day of Silver Week, and a Return Home That Depends on the Weather

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Today is Autumnal Equinox Day and the last day of the five-day holiday, and for millions of people it is the day of the journey home.

The first five-day Silver Week in eleven years has been a holiday of two halves. Its first days were dominated by the typhoon in eastern Japan, and its last by the recovery, while the west of the country enjoyed fine weather throughout.

Return travel today depends on the weather, with TBS and Weathernews forecasting cloud or rain from Kanto to Kinki and a sharp fall in Tokyo's temperature, while today's map shows sun and cloud in the capital with a high of 31.

Whatever the sky does, the roads will be full. The end of a long holiday brings the return rush on expressways and trains, and this year the closure of the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways by mudslides adds to the congestion in Chiba.

Rail services are being restored with delays continuing, and travellers returning to the capital region should check the status of their lines before setting out.

The equinox itself is a day for visiting family graves, and cemeteries will be busy in the regions where the weather allows.

The holiday's economic effect will be counted later. Tourism businesses in the affected areas lost days they cannot recover, while destinations in western Japan reported strong demand.

The working week resumes on Thursday, with two days before the weekend, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens after four closed days.

For the households in Chiba and Kanagawa cleaning mud from their homes, the holiday ended on Monday, if it began at all.

For everyone else, the equinox marks the point at which the days become shorter than the nights, and autumn begins in earnest.

SOCIETY

The U-Turn Rush: Japan's Great Homeward Migration

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The last day of a long holiday in Japan has its own name and its own rituals. The U-turn rush, the return of millions of people from hometowns and resorts to the cities, is today's national event.

The term describes the reversal of the outbound rush that begins a holiday, and it is tracked by railways, expressway operators and broadcasters with the attention other countries give to elections.

Expressway operators forecast the length of traffic jams days in advance, in kilometres, and the evening news reports them as they form: forty kilometres inbound on one route, thirty on another.

Shinkansen trains run at full occupancy, with standing passengers in the unreserved cars, and airports handle the return of holiday flyers in the afternoon and evening.

This year's U-turn rush is complicated in the east by the typhoon. The Tateyama and Ken-O expressways remain closed by mudslides, railway restoration is continuing with delays, and forecasts for Kanto describe cloud or rain.

In the west, where the holiday was untroubled and today's map is sunny, the return will follow its usual pattern of crowded trains and long jams.

The five-day Silver Week, the first in eleven years, concentrated travel into a single block, and its return day concentrates it again.

Rail operators advise travelling early, and expressway operators advise avoiding the afternoon peak, advice that is given every holiday and followed by few.

For the families of Chiba and Kanagawa clearing mud from their homes, there is no U-turn; the holiday ended when the storm arrived.

Tomorrow, the working week resumes, the markets reopen, and the rush becomes the ordinary commute.

SPORTS

Silver, Not Gold: Japan's Women Fall 0-3 to China After Leading in the Third Set

The wait for a first Asian Games title since 1978 goes on; China takes a third consecutive championship

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's volleyball team lost the Asian Games final to China 0-3 on Tuesday evening and took silver, missing the first gold in 48 years that had seemed within reach, according to Sports Hochi and Yomiuri Shimbun.

The scoreline understates how close the match came to turning. Japan led in the third set before losing momentum, Sports Hochi reported, and with it the set and the match.

China's victory gave them a third consecutive Asian Games title, extending a dominance of the continental championship that has run for most of the past half-century.

Japan had reached the final in the best possible form, beating South Korea 3-0 in the semi-final without dropping a set.

Against China, the style that had carried them there, built on reception, defence and speed of attack, met the height and technical quality of the strongest team in Asia.

A lead in the third set of a match already two sets down is the moment at which a comeback becomes imaginable, and the moment at which it slipped away will be the one the players remember.

The last Japanese gold in the event came in 1978, before any member of this squad was born, and the team's campaign had been framed from the start around ending that wait.

Silver on home soil is a considerable result, and it continues a run of strong performances by a Japanese team that has adapted its game to counter taller opponents.

Volleyball draws some of the largest television audiences in Japanese sport, and Tuesday's final was watched across the country on the last full evening of the holiday.

The team's next stage is the international calendar and the cycle toward the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028.

China's third straight title confirms what Japanese volleyball has known for four decades: the path to an Asian gold runs through Beijing's team, and it has not yet been found.

The women's tournament ended with the final; the men's competition continues later in the Games.

SPORTS

Paddles, Red Cards and a Straight Knee: How Race Walking Is Judged

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Race walking, contested on the roads of Aichi today, is the only athletics discipline in which an athlete can lose a medal for the way they move rather than for how fast they move.

The rules require that a walker keep contact with the ground at all times, with no visible loss of contact, and that the advancing leg be straightened from the moment of first contact until it passes beneath the body.

Judges stationed around the course watch for violations with the naked eye, since the rule concerns visible loss of contact, and they signal cautions with paddles showing the fault observed.

A judge who sees a clear violation issues a red card. Red cards from three different judges result in disqualification, and the chief judge can disqualify a walker in the final stretch if the third card arrives there.

The rules create a tension that defines the sport. Walkers move at speeds that would be a fast jog for most people, with a technique that keeps them just within the definition, and the best judges of that line are the judges.

Some competitions add a penalty zone, in which a walker who has received red cards must spend a set time before continuing, rather than being disqualified outright.

Japan's success in the discipline reflects a training culture attentive to technique, and Japanese walkers have a reputation for clean form as well as speed.

Toshikazu Yamanishi's world titles in 2019 and 2023

and the Olympic medals of Yamanishi and Koki Ikeda in 2021 were won under these rules against the world's best.

Today's races in Aichi bring Japan's walkers against rivals from China and India in particular, and the judging will be as decisive as the pacing.

For spectators along the course, the paddles held up by judges are the sport's most distinctive sight.

SPORTS

Three in a Row: How the Hawks Built the Pacific League's Dynasty

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

SoftBank's third consecutive Pacific League title continues the most sustained run of success in modern Japanese baseball.

The Fukuoka club, owned by the telecommunications group SoftBank since 2005, won the Japan Series in 2014, 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020, including four in succession, a run that established it as the sport's dominant organisation.

Its success rests on resources that no other Pacific League club can match: a large payroll, a modern home ground in Fukuoka, a farm system that develops players in depth and a scouting operation that has found talent at home and abroad.

The Hawks' farm system is the envy of the league. The club maintains more development players than any other, and its minor-league facilities produce a stream of major-league contributors.

Fukuoka's fan base, drawn from across Kyushu, gives the club attendances and revenue that sustain its investment, and the Hawks have become the identity of a region as much as a team.

Hiroki Kokubo, a former Hawks player and national team manager, has led the club as manager since 2024, and the three consecutive pennants coincide with his tenure.

The Pacific League's postseason system gives the champions a one-win advantage in the Climax Series final stage, and the Hawks have used it well, though the Japan Series has eluded them in some years despite the pennant.

The Hawks' dominance has raised questions in the league about competitive balance, which Japanese baseball has never addressed through a salary cap or a draft designed to level resources.

For rivals, the season's remaining contest is for the right to face SoftBank in October.

For Fukuoka, a third straight pennant is the expected result, and anything short of the Japan Series will be counted as a disappointment.

SPORTS

Vault, Bars, Beam and Floor: The Four Tests of the Women's All-Around

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The all-around title that Sugihara won on Tuesday, the first for a Japanese woman at the Asian Games, is decided across four apparatus that test very different qualities.

Vault is the shortest and most explosive: a sprint, a spring from the board, a push from the vaulting table and a flight of twists and somersaults ending in a landing that judges scrutinise for every step.

Uneven bars demand swing, release and catch, with gymnasts moving between two bars of different heights in a continuous sequence that rewards fluency and punishes any pause.

Balance beam is the discipline of nerve. Ten centimetres wide and 1.25 metres high, the beam turns every skill into a test of precision, and a fall costs a full point.

Floor exercise combines tumbling with choreography to music, and it is the apparatus on which Japanese gymnasts have had their greatest international success, including Mai Murakami's world title in 2017.

The all-around adds the four scores, and a champion must be strong on all four, since a weakness on any one is measured against rivals who have none.

Scores are built from a difficulty component, which adds up the value of the skills attempted without limit, and an execution component that starts at 10 and loses points for errors.

The team final, held today, uses the same apparatus with three gymnasts per apparatus and all scores

counting, which makes consistency across the squad decisive.

Japan's first place in team qualifying suggests that depth, and Misa Nishiyama's bronze in the all-around confirms it.

The apparatus finals later in the Games give specialists their chance, and Japanese gymnasts are expected to contend on floor in particular.

SPORTS

Twenty-One Kilometres on a Holiday Morning: The Half Marathon at the Games

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The men's and women's half marathon are run today at the Asian Games, bringing the road-running event closest to the national heart onto the programme.

Distance running occupies a place in Japanese sport that few other countries share. The New Year relay races draw enormous television audiences, corporate teams employ runners as staff, and the marathon has produced some of the country's most celebrated athletes.

The half marathon, at 21.1 kilometres, is a distance Japanese runners race frequently, and the depth of the field in domestic competition is unmatched anywhere.

That depth does not always translate into victories at the very top, where East African runners have dominated the longest distances for a generation, but at a continental Games Japan's runners are among the favourites.

A road race at the Asian Games is also an occasion for the host region. The course brings the Games out of stadiums and onto public streets, where spectators can watch without a ticket.

Weather favours the runners today in Aichi, where the map shows Nagoya sunny at 32 degrees, which is warm for distance running and will reward those who pace conservatively.

The race walks are held the same day, making today the Games' principal day of road athletics.

Japan's corporate running system, in which companies employ athletes who train full time and compete for the firm, is the engine of its distance success, and its runners at these Games come from that system.

The marathon itself is not on today's programme, and the half marathon carries the distance-running honours.

Results will be known by the afternoon.

SPORTS

Badminton's Team Semi-Finals: The Last Four in the Sport's Strongest Continent

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The men's and women's team semi-finals in badminton are held today at the Asian Games, the stage at which the region's dominance of the sport becomes a contest among its strongest nations.

Almost all of the world's leading badminton countries are Asian, which makes the Asian Games team competition as demanding as any in the sport.

Team ties are played over five matches, three singles and two doubles, and a nation needs strength across all of them to prevail.

Japan rose to the top of the sport over the past fifteen years through a national training system and corporate team support, producing world champions in singles and doubles.

Women's doubles has been the most consistent strength, with Japanese pairs among the world's best for most of the past decade.

The quarter-finals on Tuesday decided the last four, and the semi-finals today will settle the finalists.

A team medal at a home Games would confirm Japan's standing in a sport where China, Indonesia, South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and India all contend.

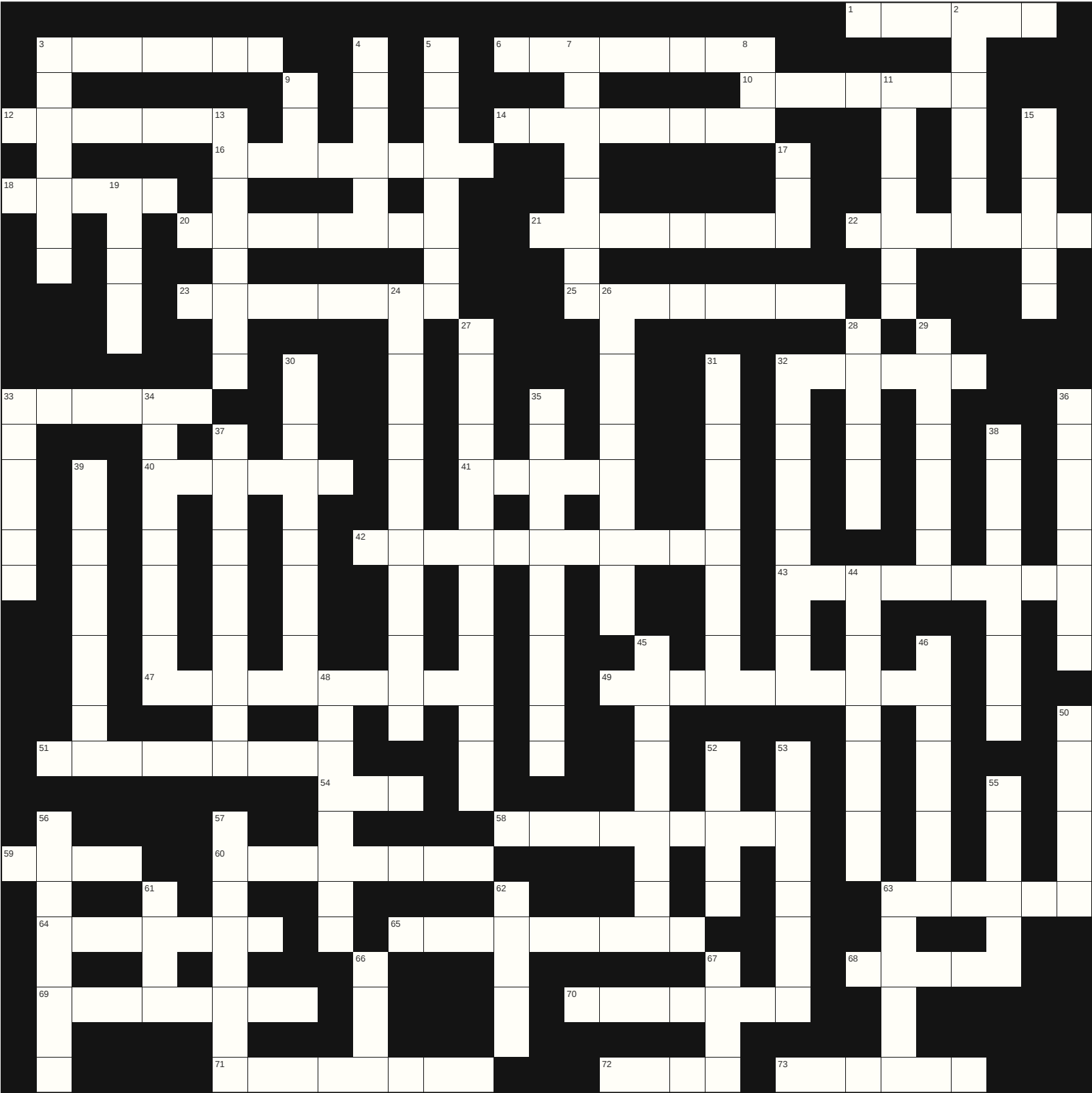
The individual events follow the team competition, giving players a second chance at medals later in the Games.

Badminton draws strong crowds in Japan when the national team plays, and the semi-finals on a holiday should be well attended.

Results will be known this evening.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 77 Words



Solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Puzzle difficulty: Professional.

ACROSS

1. Cheap ball that created a sport (6)
3. Hokkaido chip venture (7)
6. River that overflowed at Sakura (8)
10. No. 25, now extratropical (7)
12. Temple marking his birthplace (7)
14. Region with intensity 3 tremors and TSMC plants (8)
16. Monk born on the Boso coast in 1222 (8)
18. South ____, table tennis semi-final opponent (5)
20. The other prefecture in the toll (8)
21. New chairman of the Rules and Administration Committee (8)
22. Race ____, on the roads today (7)
23. Secretary-General who leaves in December (8)
25. Two-thirds lower-house vote that passes a bill (8)
32. City with rain showers today (6)
33. Okitsugu, whose reclamation failed (6)
40. Attack ____, being accelerated by the ministry (6)
41. Winners of a third straight volleyball title (5)
42. House of ____, where the ruling party is a minority (11)
43. Misa ____, all-around bronze (9)
47. Heavier pan on the balance (10)
49. Silver behind Kojima (10)
51. Hazard of the Level 4 warnings (9)
54. Return on equity, briefly (3)
58. Twice world champion race walker (9)
59. __ spray, now with a 7.5-metre standard (4)
60. What the summit showed the strength of (8)
63. Hottest city on the map, at 32 (6)
64. Today's holiday (7)
65. Studio that settled with twelve states (9)
68. Tomoko ____, the court's Japanese president (5)
69. Pacific League champions, three in a row (8)
70. Chiba's famous crop (7)
71. General ____, where she spoke (8)
72. Pension fund, world's largest (4)
73. Host of the first Asian Baseball Championship (6)

DOWN

2. Where Japan's men last won table tennis gold, 1966 (7)
3. A government's account of a meeting (7)
4. Yuki ____, medley champion at 17 (6)
5. Critical ____, on the co-operation list (8)
7. Birthplace of Nichiren, hit by landslides (8)
8. Kunio ____, whose 2014 review set an 8% target (3)
9. Court discussed in a frank exchange (3)
11. Leader of the Aki Basho after day 10 (7)
15. ____, Bros., the reported prize (6)
17. Estimated 1.52 million food deaths (3)
19. Former __ clauses, to be removed (5)
24. What the storm became at 9 p.m. (13)
26. One extra plate of these (10)
27. Chips confirmed for co-operation (14)
28. Mispronounced, prompting criticism (6)
29. Prime Minister who met Trump for 35 minutes (8)
30. Corporate __ guidelines revised (10)
31. Sport with two team finals today (10)
32. Sport Japan invented and swept (10)
33. The 15% levy nobody mentioned (6)
34. What closed the expressways (9)
35. Japan's baseball opponent at noon (11)
36. First Japanese woman to win the all-around (8)
37. Sport of the 0-3 final (10)
38. Irritant in bear spray (9)
39. Swimmer profiled as 'two-way' (9)
44. Islands on alert for a new typhoon (9)
45. Team semi-finals today (9)
46. Closed expressway to southern Boso (8)
48. Economic ____, opposed by three ministers (8)
50. City whose station district is flooded (6)
52. Prime Minister who forced the 1960 treaty through (5)
53. Parasite in raw autumn fish (8)
55. Japan joined it on protecting judicial bodies (6)
56. President Takaichi met for the first time (8)
57. City where two residents of 90 died (8)
61. Where the consumption tax cut comes first (4)
62. Fukuoka's team (5)
63. Index last at 65,018.95 (6)
66. Ten centimetres wide, the discipline of nerve (4)
67. Region of the co-operation plan (4)

SPORTS

The Set That Got Away

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Volleyball finals are decided in moments, and Tuesday's was decided in the third set, when Japan led China and then did not.

Two sets down, a team that leads in the third is playing for a foothold. Win it, and the match becomes a contest again; lose it, and the evening is over.

Sports Hochi reported that Japan lost momentum after leading in the third set, and the phrase describes something every volleyball player recognises: a run of points for the opponent that changes the mood on both sides of the net.

Momentum in volleyball is made of serves. A server who strings together difficult serves disrupts the opponent's reception, and a team whose reception is disrupted cannot run the fast attacks that Japan's game depends on.

China's height gives them another lever. When a rally becomes a contest of blocks and hard hits rather than of speed and placement, the taller team has the advantage, and finals tend to become such contests as the pressure rises.

Japan's coaches will study where the run of points began and what changed, and the answer is likely to lie in a few serves and a few blocks rather than in any failure of effort.

Losing 0-3 after leading in a set is a familiar kind of defeat against China, whose ability to raise its level at the decisive moment has defined its dominance.

The result does not diminish the semi-final, in which Japan beat South Korea in straight sets, or the standard the team has reached.

It does confirm the gap that remains at the very top, and it gives the team its next target.

For the players, the silver medal will sit uneasily for a while beside the memory of a third set that was theirs to take.

SPORTS

Kojima, 17, Wins the 400 Medley in a Games Record, and Matsushita Takes Silver

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Yuki Kojima, 17, won the men's 400 metres individual medley at the Asian Games on Tuesday in a new tournament record, with Tomoyuki Matsushita taking silver and missing the double he had sought after his 200 metres title, according to Olympics.com and TBS.

The result reversed the order of the 200 metres final on the opening night, when Matsushita won gold and Kojima, then the surprise of the evening, took silver.

A 17-year-old winning the most demanding event in the pool in a Games record marks the arrival of a swimmer who was a promising junior a year ago.

The 400 metres individual medley requires 100 metres each of butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle, and it punishes any weakness in technique or pacing across the four strokes.

Kojima's victory over the swimmer who had beaten him three days earlier points to a rivalry that could shape Japanese medley swimming for the rest of the decade.

Matsushita's silver adds to his gold and confirms him as the senior figure in a discipline where Japan has produced Olympic medallists across recent Games.

Japan's swimming programme has now won medals in both medley events, the men's 100 metres breaststroke, where Shin Ohashi shared gold on Monday, and the 4x200 metres freestyle relay.

The Tokyo Aquatics Centre, host of the swimming, has given the Japanese team crowds and familiarity that its swimmers have used well.

Nine events hold their finals tonight, the largest single session of the swimming programme.

Kojima's record will be one of the marks that stand from these Games, set by a swimmer who has not yet finished school.

SPORTS

Seventeen and a Champion: Japan's Teenage Swimmers

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Yuki Kojima's gold medal at 17 places him in a line of Japanese swimmers who reached the top before they finished school.

The most celebrated is Rikako Ikee, who at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta, aged 18, won six gold medals and was named the most valuable athlete of the Games.

Her story became one of the most followed in Japanese sport when she was diagnosed with leukaemia the following year, and her return to competition in time for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 was received as a national event.

Kyoko Iwasaki won Olympic gold in the 200 metres breaststroke in Barcelona in 1992 at 14, the youngest Olympic swimming champion of her era.

The pattern reflects how Japanese swimming is organised. Swimming clubs identify talent early, and the school system allows promising athletes to train intensively through their teens.

Medley swimmers often mature later than sprinters, because the event demands endurance and technique across four strokes, which makes Kojima's title at 17 unusual even by the standards of the sport.

His progression from silver in the 200 metres on the opening night to gold in the 400 metres three days later, beating the swimmer who had beaten him, suggests a competitor who learns quickly.

The Los Angeles Olympics in 2028 are two years away, and a swimmer who is 17 now will be 19 then, an age at which many medley champions have reached their peak.

Japanese swimming has managed the careers of its young stars with mixed results, and the pressure that follows a Games gold at 17 is considerable.

For now, a tournament record and a gold medal at a home Games are a beginning that few swimmers of any age have had.

SPORTS

The Pool's Biggest Night

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Nine swimming finals are held tonight at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, the largest single session of the Asian Games swimming programme.

Japan enters the session with momentum. Yuki Kojima's gold in the 400 metres individual medley on Tuesday, in a Games record, followed Shin Ohashi's shared breaststroke gold on Monday and Tomoyuki Matsushita's medley title on the opening night.

Nine finals in one evening means a session that runs long and tests the depth of every team, since swimmers doubling in events face a crowded

schedule.

For spectators, it offers the rare experience of medals decided every few minutes across a range of strokes and distances.

Japan's programme has traditionally been strongest in breaststroke, the medleys and the middle-distance freestyle, and the session's medal chances follow that pattern.

China remains the standard in Asian swimming, and the two nations have shared most of the medals so far, including the tie for gold in the 100 metres breaststroke.

The Tokyo venue, far from the Games' Aichi base, has nonetheless given the Japanese team home crowds and a pool its swimmers know well.

Relays add to the drama of a large session, with national records and team depth on display.

The results will shape the final medal table in swimming, which concludes later in the week.

NHK will broadcast the session this evening.

SPORTS

Sugihara Wins the Women's All-Around, a First for Japan, With Nishiyama Taking Bronze

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Sugihara won gold in the women's individual all-around at the Asian Games on Tuesday, the first time a Japanese woman has won the title, and Misa Nishiyama took bronze.

The Japanese women's team also placed first in the team qualifying round and contests the team final today.

The all-around combines scores on the four women's apparatus, vault, uneven bars, balance beam and floor exercise, and a champion must be strong on all of them.

Japan's women have never held the Asian Games all-around title, a reflection of the dominance of China's programme and, for a period, of North Korea's and South Korea's.

The victory continues a rise in Japanese women's gymnastics over the past decade, in which Mai Murakami won a world title on floor in 2017 and the team has become a regular contender for medals at world championships.

Nishiyama's bronze puts two Japanese gymnasts on the podium, which speaks to depth rather than to a

SPORTS

single star.

The team's first place in qualifying makes it the favourite for today's team final, an event the Japanese women have never won at these Games.

Gymnastics is being contested in the same week as the men's competition, in which Shinnosuke Oka and Daiki Hashimoto took silver and bronze in the all-around and the men's team also contests its final today.

A double of team golds in one day would be the finest day in the history of Japanese gymnastics at the Asian Games.

The women's apparatus finals follow later in the Games.

SPORTS

From a Bronze in 1964 to Gold in Nagoya: Japan's Women in Gymnastics

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The first Japanese women's all-around gold at an Asian Games arrives more than sixty years after the country's women first reached a major podium.

At the Tokyo Olympics of 1964, Japan's women won the team bronze medal, a result that stood for decades as the high point of the women's programme while the men dominated the sport.

The men's success shaped the women's neglect. Japanese gymnastics invested in the discipline that produced champions, and the women's programme lagged behind those of the Soviet Union, Romania and, later, China.

The revival began in the 2010s. Mai Murakami won the world title on floor exercise in 2017 and the all-around silver at the world championships in 2018, and she took bronze on floor at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.

Behind her, a generation of gymnasts came through a club and school system that had begun to produce depth as well as individual talent.

The team's first place in qualifying at these Games, ahead of China, and the two podium places in the all-around show how far that depth has developed.

Women's gymnastics rewards a combination that Japanese coaching has always prized in the men's discipline: precision of execution and consistency under pressure.

The Code of Points, which replaced the perfect 10 in 2006, gives credit for difficulty without limit, and Japanese women have raised their difficulty while keeping the execution that was always their strength.

Today's team final is the chance to turn a qualifying result into the first team gold, on the same day the men contest theirs.

Whatever happens, the all-around gold has already changed the history of the women's programme.

SPORTS

Oka and Hashimoto Lead the Men Into the Team Final

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The men's gymnastics team final is held today, with Shinnosuke Oka and Daiki Hashimoto aiming to convert their silver and bronze in the individual all-around into the title Japanese gymnastics values most.

The all-around on Monday went to China's Zhang Boheng, with Oka second and Hashimoto third, in a final that reversed the order of the Paris Olympics two years ago.

The team event is a different contest. Each nation puts its specialists on each apparatus, and the result depends on depth across the squad rather than on the two best all-rounders.

Japan and China have divided the Olympic team title between them for two decades, and their meeting today continues a rivalry that has defined the sport.

Japan won the Olympic team gold in Paris in 2024 in a final decided on the last apparatus, when China's lead disappeared after falls on the horizontal bar.

China will be seeking to answer that result on Japanese soil, and Zhang, a member of the Paris team, leads its challenge.

In team finals, three gymnasts perform on each apparatus and all three scores count, which means a single fall can decide the outcome.

The Japanese squad's strength lies in its consistency

of execution, the quality that has underpinned its all-around champions for generations.

The women's team final is held the same day, with the Japanese women having qualified first, and a double would be unprecedented.

The Asian Games team title is also a step toward Los Angeles in 2028, where the two nations will meet again.

SPORTS

Sixty Years in the Balance: Both Table Tennis Teams Reach the Semi-Finals

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's table tennis team has reached the semi-finals of the Asian Games, where it will face South Korea today, and the men's team has also reached its semi-final, with the men pursuing a first team gold in 60 years, according to NTV NEWS.

In the other women's semi-final, China plays North Korea, which means the final could bring the encounter with China that has ended Japanese campaigns at four consecutive Olympics.

South Korea is a formidable semi-final opponent in its own right, with a long tradition in the sport and a history of close matches against Japan.

The men's team last won the Asian Games title in 1966, at the Games in Bangkok, and every men's team since has fallen short.

The women's team has won Olympic team medals at four consecutive Games, and its semi-final today is the stage at which the tournament's serious contests begin.

Team ties are decided over a sequence of singles and doubles matches, and the order in which coaches deploy their players can decide a tie between evenly matched teams.

Tomokazu Harimoto's absence from the men's team, the most discussed selection decision in Japanese table tennis at these Games, has not prevented the team from reaching the last four.

Table tennis has a large television following in Japan, and the team events at a home Games are among the most watched sessions of the whole programme.

Both semi-finals are played today, with the finals to follow.

A women's final against China would be the match the sport has been waiting for since the draw was made.

SPORTS

North Korea at the Table: The Other Semi-Final

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

While Japan's women face South Korea in today's table tennis semi-final, the other semi-final pairs China with North Korea, a team whose presence at the Games is itself a story.

North Korea withdrew from international sport almost entirely during the pandemic, skipping the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, and returned to multi-sport competition at the Hangzhou Asian Games in 2023.

Table tennis has long been among its strongest sports, and North Korean women have won medals at world championships and Olympics across several decades.

The sport also holds a special place in inter-Korean history. In 1991, a unified Korean women's team won the world team championship in Chiba, beating China in a final that became one of the most celebrated moments of Korean sport and, later, a film.

That unity has not been repeated in table tennis, and the two Koreas compete separately at these Games, with the South in Japan's half of the draw and the North in China's.

North Korean athletes at international events compete under tight supervision and rarely speak to the press, and their results are followed at home as demonstrations of national strength.

For Japan, North Korea's presence at a Games it hosts carries an unavoidable political dimension, given the abduction issue that the Prime Minister raised at the United Nations this week and the missile tests that continue.

Sport and diplomacy are kept formally apart at the Games, and North Korean athletes are accredited and treated like any others.

A final between China and either Japan or South

Korea remains the likeliest outcome, but a North Korean upset of China would be the story of the tournament.

The semi-finals are played today, with the final to follow.

SPORTS

Two Wins From Two: Samurai Japan Meet the Philippines at Noon

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's baseball team, having opened the Asian Games tournament with two consecutive wins, plays the Philippines at noon today in its final group match.

The wins over China and Palestine put the team in a strong position to reach the Super Round, where the top two teams from each of the two groups decide the medals.

The Philippines has a baseball tradition older than most in Asia, dating from the American colonial period, though the sport has since been overshadowed there by basketball.

Japan's squad is drawn from the corporate leagues rather than from Nippon Professional Baseball, whose season is still running, and it has begun the tournament as the corporate game would hope: efficiently and without alarm.

The corporate leagues have a long history and a high standard, and several of their players are drafted into the professional game each year.

South Korea, in the other group, sends professionals and is chasing a fifth consecutive Asian Games gold, which makes it the team Japan must eventually beat.

Japan's only Asian Games baseball gold came as host in Hiroshima in 1994, and a home Games offers the best opportunity since.

The tournament is being played at Okazaki and Toyohashi in Aichi and runs until September 27.

A noon start on a holiday should draw a strong crowd, weather permitting, in a prefecture that has been spared the storm.

The Super Round follows the completion of the group stage.

SPORTS

The Philippines, Asia's First Baseball Champions, Meet Japan at Noon

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's opponent in today's group match has a place in Asian baseball history that its current standing does not suggest.

Baseball arrived in the Philippines with American soldiers and teachers at the beginning of the twentieth century, and for decades it was among the country's most popular sports.

When the first Asian Baseball Championship was held in Manila in 1954, the Philippines won it, ahead of Japan, South Korea and Chinese Taipei.

The sport was gradually overtaken by basketball, which became the Philippines' national passion, and baseball's infrastructure and player base declined through the second half of the century.

The national team has nonetheless continued to compete at Asian championships and Asian Games, and it has drawn in recent years on players from the Filipino diaspora as well as the domestic game.

Group A at these Games pairs the Philippines with Japan, China and Palestine, and Japan's two wins from two have put it in a strong position for the Super Round.

For Japan's corporate-league squad, the Philippines represents a chance to complete the group stage unbeaten before the medal round, where South Korea's professionals await.

A noon start on a holiday at the Aichi venues should draw a good crowd, in fine weather that the Kanto region cannot offer today.

Baseball's future on the Asian Games programme has been debated, and the tournament in Okazaki and Toyohashi is one of the region's few occasions for the sport at a multi-sport event.

The Philippines' 1954 title is a reminder that the map of Asian baseball once looked very different.

SPORTS

The Walkers Take to the Road: Japan's Quiet Strength in an Unglamorous Event

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Race walking events are held today at the Asian Games, in a discipline in which Japan has become one of the strongest nations in the world with little public fanfare.

Race walking requires that one foot remain in contact with the ground at all times and that the supporting leg be straight from first contact until it passes under the body, rules enforced by judges who can disqualify athletes for violations.

Japanese walkers have won world titles in the past decade. Toshikazu Yamanishi won the 20 kilometres at the world championships in 2019 and again in 2023, and Yusuke Suzuki won the 50 kilometres in 2019.

At the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, Koki Ikeda took silver and Yamanishi bronze in the 20 kilometres, on a course moved to Sapporo because of the heat.

The sport's rise in Japan reflects the country's distance-running culture, with its corporate teams, its university programmes and its attention to pacing and endurance, applied to an event that rewards exactly those qualities.

Race walking is judged as well as timed, and the technical discipline required suits a training culture built on precision.

Asian Games walking has been dominated in recent editions by China, Japan and India, and today's races bring those rivals together on the roads of Aichi.

The half marathon is also held today for men and women, another endurance event in which Japan's depth of distance runners gives it strong prospects.

Road events on a holiday, with spectators along the course, are among the Games' most public occasions.

Results from both disciplines will add to a medal count that has grown steadily since the opening ceremony.

SPORTS

Gold Already in Fencing and Soft Tennis, With More to Come

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan has already won medals including gold in the individual fencing events at the Asian Games, and its fencers continue in the team competitions that follow.

The individual programme drew on the fencers who won five medals for Japan at the Paris Olympics two years ago, including the men's team foil gold and Koki Kano's individual épée title.

In soft tennis, Japan has won gold in the men's and women's team events and in the mixed doubles, a sweep of the sport's team disciplines.

Soft tennis is a sport of Japanese origin, developed in the 1880s using a soft rubber ball on a standard court, and it remains hugely popular in Japanese schools, where it is among the most played sports.

It has been on the Asian Games programme since the Hiroshima Games of 1994, and Japan and South Korea have shared most of its medals since.

The sport rewards long rallies, consistency and doubles teamwork, and its national championships in Japan draw thousands of entrants.

Three golds in a sport that most of the world has never seen played illustrate one of the Asian Games' distinctive features: regional sports alongside the Olympic programme.

Fencing's team events, which follow the individual competition, offer further medal chances in a sport whose profile in Japan was transformed by the Paris results.

Both sports contribute to a Japanese medal count that has grown steadily since the Games opened on Saturday.

The Games run until October 4.

SPORTS

The Game Japan Invented Because Tennis Balls Were Too Expensive

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's three gold medals in soft tennis at the Asian Games are victories in a sport that the country invented, for reasons that were as much economic as athletic.

SPORTS

Lawn tennis reached Japan in the 1870s and 1880s through foreign teachers and residents, and it was taken up at schools in Tokyo.

Imported tennis balls were expensive and hard to obtain, and by the 1880s teachers had substituted a soft rubber ball, which was cheap, durable and made in Japan.

The soft ball changed the game. It flew more slowly, bounced lower and rewarded long rallies and doubles play, and the sport that grew around it developed its own rules and its own culture.

Soft tennis spread through Japanese schools and universities and became one of the most widely played sports in the country, with junior high and high school teams in almost every town.

It was exported to Korea and Taiwan during the period of Japanese rule, and those countries remain its strongest nations alongside Japan, with South Korea a particular rival.

The sport joined the Asian Games at Hiroshima in 1994 and has been contested at every Games since, with Japan and South Korea sharing most of the medals.

Its national championships in Japan draw entrants in the thousands, and its governing body claims millions of players, most of them in schools.

A sport played by so many and watched by so few outside Asia illustrates the Asian Games' distinctive place in world sport, where regional games sit beside the Olympic programme.

Three golds in the men's team, women's team and mixed doubles are a clean sweep of the sport's team events, in a discipline that Japan gave to the continent.

SPORTS

Today at the Games: Nine Finals in the Pool, Two Team Finals in Gymnastics, and the Table Tennis Semis

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Wednesday is one of the fullest days of the Asian Games programme, with finals in nine swimming events, both gymnastics team finals, semi-finals in table tennis and badminton, and road athletics.

In the pool, nine finals make tonight the largest single session of the swimming competition, following Yuki Kojima's gold in the 400 metres individual medley on Tuesday.

In gymnastics, the men's team final brings Japan and China together after Zhang Boheng's all-around victory over Shinnosuke Oka and Daiki Hashimoto, and the women's team final follows Japan's first all-around gold and its first place in qualifying.

Table tennis holds its women's semi-final between Japan and South Korea, with China playing North Korea in the other, and the men's semi-finals, with the men pursuing a first team gold in 60 years.

Badminton's men's and women's team semi-finals decide the finalists in the sport's strongest continent.

On the roads, the men's and women's half marathon and the race walking events are held, with Japan strong in both disciplines.

Baseball sees Japan, with two wins from two, play the Philippines at noon in its final group match.

Fencing continues with its team events after individual medals including gold, and soft tennis has already delivered three golds.

Sumo's Aki Basho reaches its eleventh day with Onosato in the lead, and professional baseball's pennant races resume after the long weekend.

The weather in Aichi is fine, with Nagoya sunny at 32 degrees, while Kanto watches forecasts of cloud and rain.

SPORTS

Onosato Still Leads After Ten Days as the Aki Basho Enters Its Final Stretch

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Onosato retains the lead of the Autumn Grand Sumo Tournament after the tenth day, and today, the eleventh, begins the final third of the fifteen-day basho.

The yokozuna secured his winning record on day nine and has held sole possession of the lead through the tournament's middle days.

The final five days bring the hardest bouts. The tournament's judges pair the leaders against the highest-ranked opponents and against each other in the second week, so that the title is decided by the strongest possible contests.

Onosato's rise through the ranks was among the fastest in modern sumo, and he has become the dominant figure of the current era.

For a yokozuna, leading the tournament is the expectation rather than an achievement, and a championship on Sunday would confirm his standing.

The Ryogoku Kokugikan in Tokyo has been full through the holiday, and today's holiday crowd will see the first of the decisive bouts.

The Emperor's Cup is presented on the final day, together with prizes from sponsors, and the champion rides in an open-car parade.

The tournament continued through Monday's typhoon, with the Kokugikan's programme unaffected.

NHK broadcasts the day's results each evening, and the final days draw the largest audiences of the tournament.

The Aki Basho ends on Sunday, September 27.

SPORTS

The Pennant Races Resume After the Long Weekend, With SoftBank Already Champions

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Professional baseball's Central and Pacific League races continue after the long weekend, with SoftBank having already won the Pacific League title for the third consecutive year.

In the Pacific League, the remaining contest is for second and third place and the home advantage that comes with finishing second, which decides where the first stage of the Climax Series is played.

In the Central League, Hanshin's position at the top has been under pressure through September, and the chasing teams compete for the remaining postseason places.

Hanshin beat DeNA 3-2 on Monday in the last Central League result reported in the accounts available.

The Climax Series, which decides the two teams that reach the Japan Series, begins in October, and every game from here shapes the seedings.

SoftBank's third consecutive pennant confirms the Fukuoka club as the dominant force of the era, with a payroll, a farm system and a fan base that no other Pacific League team can match.

The Hawks now wait for the Climax Series final stage, which the league champions enter with a one-win advantage and home advantage throughout.

Managers begin to shorten their pitching rotations and bullpens in the season's final weeks, and close games in September test the arms that will decide October.

The regular season runs into early October, and the schedule is congested by games postponed earlier in the year.

Results from tonight's games will be broadcast by NHK.

SPORTS

Foreign Media Call the Games' Management 'Immature' After an Anthem Mishap

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Foreign media have criticised the management of the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games as immature, citing problems including the mispronunciation of a national anthem, Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

The criticism follows other operational troubles in the Games' opening days, including the failure of South Korea's basketball team bus to arrive before their final, which left the team without a proper practice.

Anthem ceremonies are the most visible moments of any Games, and an error in playing or announcing a national anthem is felt by the delegation concerned as a slight, whatever the intention.

Multi-sport events of this scale involve tens of thousands of staff and volunteers, hundreds of ceremonies and thousands of transport movements, and errors occur at every Games.

Japan's reputation for organisation, built on the

Tokyo Olympics and on decades of hosting international events, raises expectations that make any lapse more noticeable.

The organising committee has not responded in the reports available, and correcting the problems identified will be its priority as the Games continue.

The criticism comes as Japanese athletes deliver strong results across the programme, which tends to dominate domestic coverage while foreign media focus on operations.

The Games are spread across Aichi and beyond, with swimming in Tokyo, which adds to the logistical complexity that organisers face.

The typhoon, which struck the Kanto region during the Games' first days, disrupted the metropolitan government's public viewing of the swimming but did not reach Aichi.

With eleven days remaining before the closing ceremony on October 4, the organisers have time to change the story.

SPORTS

A Swimmer Built by Baseball: Yomiuri Profiles Mitsunaga's 'Two-Way' Power

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Yomiuri Shimbun has profiled the swimmer Mitsunaga as a two-way talent, describing explosive power developed through baseball as the foundation of his swimming.

The term two-way, borrowed from baseball to describe a player who both pitches and hits, has entered Japanese sporting vocabulary through Shohei Ohtani, and its application to a swimmer signals a crossover story that Yomiuri found worth telling.

Explosive power matters in swimming at the start and the turns, where a swimmer's ability to drive off the blocks and the wall can decide a race, and in the sprint events where every hundredth counts.

Baseball training builds exactly that quality, through rotational power, sprinting and the plyometric work that produces a fast first step.

Athletes who move between sports in their youth are common in some countries and less so in Japan, where specialisation tends to come early, which makes a swimmer with a baseball background unusual.

The profile appears during a Games in which Japan's swimmers have won gold in the medley events and the breaststroke and silver in the relay, and in which nine finals are held tonight.

Yomiuri's framing suggests a swimmer whose results at these Games have drawn attention to how he was made.

Details of his events and results were not included in the summary available to this desk, and readers can find them in Yomiuri's own coverage.

The story fits a broader interest in athlete development that has grown in Japan since Ohtani's success made versatility fashionable.

The pool holds its largest session of the Games tonight.

SPORTS

Scoreboard and Fixtures

Compiled by the Sports Desk

ASIAN GAMES, SEPT. 22 — WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL FINAL: China 3-0 Japan. Silver for Japan; China's third consecutive title.

ASIAN GAMES — SWIMMING: Men's 400m individual medley: Yuki Kojima (17) gold in a Games record; Tomoyuki Matsushita silver.

ASIAN GAMES — WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS: Individual all-around: Sugihara gold, a first for Japan; Misa Nishiyama bronze. Japan first in team qualifying.

ASIAN GAMES — TABLE TENNIS: Women's team reached the semi-finals (v South Korea today). Men's team also in the semi-finals.

ASIAN GAMES — BASEBALL: Japan has won its first two group games; v Philippines at noon today.

ASIAN GAMES — SOFT TENNIS: Gold for Japan in the men's team, women's team and mixed doubles. FENCING: Individual medals including gold for Japan.

ASIAN GAMES TODAY: Swimming, nine finals. Gymnastics, men's and women's team finals. Table

tennis and badminton semi-finals. Half marathon and race walking.

SUMO, AKI BASHO: Onosato leads after day 10. Day 11 today.

NPB: Central and Pacific League games resume after the holiday. SoftBank have won the Pacific League for a third consecutive year.

GAMES MANAGEMENT: Foreign media criticised organisers as 'immature' after troubles including an anthem mispronunciation, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

CULTURE

Before It Was a Holiday: The Equinox Rite at the Palace

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Autumnal Equinox Day, which closes the five-day holiday today, is one of two national holidays that began as imperial rites.

In 1878, the Meiji government established the Autumn Imperial Ancestors Ceremony, or Shuki Koreisai, as a national holiday on the day of the autumn equinox, with a spring counterpart at the vernal equinox.

The ceremony honours the spirits of past emperors and members of the imperial family, and it is performed at the Koreiden, one of the three sanctuaries within the grounds of the Imperial Palace.

After the war, the holidays act of 1948 renamed the two days Vernal Equinox Day and Autumnal Equinox Day and gave them secular purposes: the spring day for praising nature and living things, the autumn day for honouring ancestors and remembering the dead.

The imperial rites continued regardless. The Emperor performs the ceremony at the palace sanctuaries on the equinox each year, in a tradition that the public holiday no longer names.

The dates are set annually by the National Astronomical Observatory, which calculates the equinox and publishes the holiday dates in an official gazette in February of the preceding year.

That is why the equinox holidays are the only Japanese national holidays whose dates are not fixed in law but determined by astronomy.

The secular purpose of the autumn day, honouring ancestors, aligns closely with the Buddhist observance of Higan, during which families visit graves, and the two traditions have long overlapped in practice.

For most people, the day is simply the end of a long weekend and, in years like this one, the last day of Silver Week.

Its origins in the palace and its dates in the stars make it, quietly, one of the more distinctive days on the Japanese calendar.

CULTURE

The Coast Where Nichiren Was Born

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Kominato, where two people died in this week's landslides, holds a place in Japanese religious history out of all proportion to its size.

It is the birthplace of Nichiren, the Buddhist monk born in 1222 who founded the school that bears his name and whose followers today number in the millions across several organisations.

Nichiren was the son of a fishing family on this coast, and he went on to study at the great monasteries of his day before proclaiming that the Lotus Sutra alone contained the truth of Buddhism.

His uncompromising message brought him persecution, exile and, on one famous occasion, a sentence of execution that was not carried out. He died in 1282.

Tanjo-ji, the temple that marks his birthplace, was founded in the thirteenth century. Its original site is said to have been lost to the sea in an earthquake, and the present temple stands on ground to which it was later moved.

The temple's great gate and main hall draw pilgrims and visitors through the year, and the town's identity is bound up with them.

The coast around Kominato is also known for a marine sanctuary of sea bream, protected for centuries by a prohibition on fishing that tradition connects to Nichiren himself.

CULTURE

Amatsukominato, as the former town was called, merged into Kamogawa in 2005, and it remains a district of fishing harbours, temples and steep wooded hills.

Those hills are the reason for this week's tragedy. Houses stand at their feet because the coast offers no other ground.

The district has known storms for eight centuries, and it will bury its dead and repair its homes as it has done before.

CULTURE

The Sea Bream of Kominato, Protected for Centuries

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Off the coast where landslides took two lives this week lies a stretch of water where fishing has been forbidden for so long that the fish come to the boats.

Tai-no-ura, the bay of sea bream, at Kominato in Kamogawa, is a place where large red sea bream gather near the surface in numbers found nowhere else, behaviour unusual for a fish that normally lives deep.

Tradition connects the phenomenon to Nichiren, born in Kominato in 1222, and holds that the fish have been protected as sacred since his time.

The prohibition on fishing has been maintained through centuries of changing rulers, and the bay was designated a special natural monument by the national government, one of the highest levels of protection given to a natural site.

Boats take visitors out from the harbour to see the fish, which rise to the sound of the boats and to food thrown from them.

The sea bream is itself a fish of celebration in Japan, served whole at weddings and New Year, and a bay where they gather unmolested carries meaning beyond the scientific.

Kominato's identity is built on the temple that marks Nichiren's birthplace, on the bay, and on the fishing harbour that has sustained the settlement for centuries.

That identity survived this week's storm, but the settlement's houses did not all survive, and two of its residents died.

The bay and the temple will draw visitors again when the roads to the southern peninsula reopen.

The fish, protected by a rule older than most of Japan's laws, will be there.

CULTURE

Nichiren's Followers, Eight Centuries On

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The monk born at Kominato in 1222, whose birthplace was struck by this week's landslides, founded a tradition that remains among the largest and most visible in Japanese Buddhism.

Nichiren taught that the Lotus Sutra contained the complete truth of Buddhism and that chanting its title, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, was the practice suited to the age.

His followers organised after his death in 1282 into schools that spread across Japan, and Nichiren Buddhism became one of the country's major traditions alongside Pure Land, Zen and the older schools.

The tradition's temples include Kuon-ji on Mount Minobu in Yamanashi, where Nichiren spent his final years and which serves as the head temple of Nichiren Shu, and Tanjo-ji at his birthplace.

In the twentieth century, lay movements drawing on Nichiren's teaching grew into some of the largest religious organisations in Japan, with millions of members, and became influential in education, culture and politics.

Nichiren's insistence on the Lotus Sutra alone, and his criticism of other schools and of rulers who did not follow it, gave the tradition a reputation for assertiveness that its modern branches interpret in different ways.

His life of persecution and exile, including his banishment to Sado Island, is commemorated at sites across the country and in the tradition's festivals.

The Oeshiki festival, held in October at Ikegami Honmon-ji in Tokyo, where Nichiren died, draws large crowds with lantern processions and drumming.

Kominato's temple and the sea bream bay beside it are the tradition's origin, and pilgrims will return when the roads to the southern peninsula reopen.

For the fishing settlement that was his birthplace, the monk is history, identity and, this week, a source of comfort.

CULTURE

Inside the Press Club: How Japanese Reporters Get Their Access

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The journalists in Taro Suzuki's cartoon this morning, shut out of a closed session and shouting about access, would puzzle a Japanese political reporter, whose problem has traditionally been the opposite.

Japanese journalism is organised around kisha clubs, reporters' clubs attached to ministries, political parties, police headquarters, courts and major companies, whose members receive briefings, documents and access denied to outsiders.

The clubs date from the Meiji era and became the standard structure of news gathering in the twentieth century. A reporter assigned to a ministry works from a room inside the building, alongside colleagues from rival newspapers and broadcasters.

The system delivers extraordinary access. Reporters attached to the Prime Minister's Office follow the leader's movements minute by minute, and the daily record of whom the Prime Minister met, published in every major newspaper, is a product of it.

It also delivers the criticism that has followed the clubs for decades: that access breeds deference, that reporters embedded in institutions come to share their perspective, and that the clubs exclude freelancers, magazines and foreign correspondents.

Reforms have opened some briefings to non-members, and the rise of online media has created outlets outside the system, but the clubs remain the core of Japanese political reporting.

The contrast with the American press, whose reporters are drawn in Suzuki's cartoon with their fedora and trench coat and their complaint that they needed access, is instructive. American journalism prizes adversarial distance; Japanese journalism has prized proximity.

Neither model guarantees good reporting. Proximity can become tameness, and distance can become hostility, which is the charge the cartoon's notebooks make.

Tuesday's summit was reported in Japan through the readouts and briefings that the club system exists to obtain, and the reporting on this morning's pages reflects it.

The editorial page takes up the question of what the press is for, from the inside.

CULTURE

The First Colours of Autumn Are Already on Hokkaido's Peaks

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The cold front approaching Hokkaido this week will hasten a change that has already begun on the island's highest ground: the first autumn colours of the year.

The Daisetsuzan range in central Hokkaido, whose peaks rise above 2,000 metres, is usually the first place in Japan to turn, with colour appearing in mid-September and spreading down the slopes through the month.

The rowan, the alpine plants and the birches of the high valleys turn red and gold weeks before the maples of Kyoto, and visitors ride the ropeways at Asahidake and Kurodake to see them.

The colour descends with the temperature. From the peaks it moves to the foothills, the lakes and the plains, reaching Sapporo's parks in October and the rest of the country through November.

The brightest colours come from days that are warm and nights that are cold, which is the pattern the approaching front will bring.

Hokkaido's autumn is short. The first snow follows the colours on the peaks within weeks, and the ropeways that carry leaf-viewers in September carry skiers by December.

For travellers, the season offers a reason to head north as the rest of the country cools, and the island's hotels and hot springs fill for it.

Bears are active in the same weeks, feeding before

hibernation, and the Environment Ministry's new requirements for bear spray are timely for anyone walking the island's trails.

Today's map has Sapporo at 21 and Kushiro at 23, the coolest readings in the country, with a low of 14 on the east coast.

By the time the maples turn in the south, Hokkaido's colours will be under snow.

SOCIETY

Evacuating With a Dog or Cat: Plan Before the Warning

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Pet owners under 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.

SOCIETY

Numbers to Keep by the Telephone

Compiled by the Society Desk

Emergencies: 110 for police, 119 for fire and ambulance. Both can be reached from mobile phones and public telephones free of charge.

Coast guard: 118 for emergencies at sea, including people swept from breakwaters or in trouble on the water.

Medical advice: #7119 connects to emergency medical consultation services in many prefectures, to help decide whether an ambulance is needed.

Children's health: #8000 connects to paediatric consultation services for parents seeking advice outside clinic hours.

Disaster message dial: 171, operated by NTT, lets people record and retrieve voice messages when calls to disaster areas are congested.

Online message boards operated by mobile carriers serve the same purpose in text form during major disasters.

Weather and risk: the meteorological agency's website and its Kikikuru risk maps show landslide and flood danger area by area.

Hazard maps: the land ministry's hazard map portal site brings municipal flood and landslide maps together in one place.

Visitors: the Japan National Tourism Organization's Safety tips app provides alerts and guidance in several languages.

Keep a written copy of important numbers, including family contacts, in case a phone's battery runs out.

POLITICS

The Prime Minister's Day in New York

Compiled by the Politics Desk

Summit with President Trump, about 35 minutes, at UN headquarters.

General debate speech: rule of law, former enemy

clauses, Security Council reform, Middle East energy.

Gulf co-operation plan announced to strengthen energy supply resilience.

First meeting with President Zelensky: Japan stands with Ukraine; sanctions continue.

Meeting with Secretary-General Guterres: Council reform and more Japanese UN staff.

Trilateral foreign ministers' statement with the U.S. and South Korea opposing economic coercion.

Joint statement with European countries on protecting international judicial bodies (Reuters).

Asahi: the Prime Minister's side will not raise ICC sanctions publicly.

Departure from Haneda on Monday was about four hours late because of the typhoon.

Return: to a typhoon recovery, an extraordinary Diet session and a consumption tax cut.

SPORTS

Japanese Medallists in Today's Pages

Compiled by the Sports Desk

Gold: Yuki Kojima, men's 400m individual medley, Games record.

Gold: Sugihara, women's individual all-around, a first for Japan.

Gold: soft tennis, men's team.

Gold: soft tennis, women's team.

Gold: soft tennis, mixed doubles.

Gold: fencing, individual events (medals including gold reported).

Silver: women's volleyball team.

Silver: Tomoyuki Matsushita, men's 400m individual medley.

Bronze: Misa Nishiyama, women's individual all-around.

Earlier: Shin Ohashi, shared gold, 100m breaststroke; Matsushita, gold, 200m medley; Shinnosuke Oka, silver, and Daiki Hashimoto, bronze, men's all-around.

SOCIETY

Sunrise and Sunset on the Equinox

Compiled by the Society Desk

Tokyo: sunrise 5:29 a.m., sunset 5:38 p.m..

Osaka: sunrise 5:46 a.m., sunset 5:55 p.m..

Sapporo: sunrise 5:21 a.m., sunset 5:32 p.m..

Naha: sunrise 6:17 a.m., sunset 6:26 p.m..

Times are calculated for each city; official tables may differ by a minute.

Daylight is still slightly longer than night, because of refraction and how sunrise is defined.

From tomorrow the nights lengthen until the winter solstice in December.

The equinox holiday's date is set by astronomy, not by law.

The Emperor performs the autumn ancestral rite at the palace today.

Tokyo's sunset will come earlier each evening from now on.

SOCIETY

Buying Bear Spray: The Ministry's Checklist

Compiled by the Society Desk

Spray distance of 7.5 metres or more, according to the Environment Ministry's requirements.

Continuous discharge of six seconds or more.

A counterfeit product has been confirmed on the market; buy from recognised makers.

Check that the product states its distance and duration on the label.

Carry it where it can be reached in seconds, not in a pack.

Practise removing the safety clip before you need to.

Spray is a last resort; noise and awareness prevent most encounters.

Avoid bear habitat at dawn and dusk in autumn, when bears feed before hibernation.

Check expiry dates; propellant weakens with age.

Never spray on yourself or clothing as a repellent.

EDITORIAL & OPINION



Editorial cartoon by Taro Suzuki, Staff Cartoonist.

EDITORIAL

They Wanted the Quote. So Did We. The Allies Wanted the Meeting.

Taro Suzuki's press pool stops at a closed door at the United Nations. What happened on the other side of it mattered more than anything shouted through it, and a newspaper that says so has to explain what it is for

By Samantha Ortiz | Editorial Page Editor

There is a door in Taro Suzuki's cartoon this morning, and a piece of paper taped to it that reads PRESS POOL ENDS HERE.

On the near side of the door stand three journalists. One, grey-haired and in a dark suit, has flung out an arm and is saying HOW DARE THEY. A second, in a trench coat and a fedora, holds a camera and a notebook whose cover says HOSTILE COPY. A third, with a microphone in one hand and a notebook marked ALWAYS WRONG in the other, is saying WE NEEDED ACCESS.

On the far side, in a room under a sign that reads UNITED NATIONS, President Trump and Prime Minister Takaichi sit across a table. Between them stand the flags of their two countries and a nameplate that reads ALLIANCE BUSINESS.

A map labelled ASIA hangs on the wall behind them. A sign on the wall reads CLOSED SESSION. On a shelf, a folder marked CHINA AGENDA stands upright with a red star on its cover.

In the foreground, Suzuki has placed the two objects that carry his argument. On the left stands a brass balance, one pan labelled SCOOP and the other STATECRAFT, and the pan marked STATECRAFT sits lower. In the centre lies a stack of newspapers whose headline, in the largest type in the drawing, reads BOTH ARE UNFIT.

The caption beneath reads: They wanted the quote. The allies wanted the meeting.

The occasion is Tuesday's meeting between the Prime Minister and the President at United Nations headquarters, which lasted about 35 minutes, and the press arrangements that surrounded it, which followed the usual form of General Assembly week: cameras in for the opening remarks, cameras out for the substance.

Suzuki's cartoon is a jab at the press, and it is aimed at a target that includes the page you are reading. That is a reason to answer it carefully rather than to dismiss it, and the honest place to begin is with a

confession.

We wanted the quote.

Every newspaper in Tokyo wanted the quote, and every newspaper got one. The President said, in the moments before the door closed, that the Prime Minister would go down in history, and that he keeps an eye on her approval ratings. Sankei News reported both remarks, and so did we, on the front page.

The quotes were newsworthy. They told readers something about how the President regards the Prime Minister, and about the personal register in which he conducts diplomacy. They will be repeated for weeks.

But Suzuki's point is that they were not the meeting. The meeting was what happened after the door closed, and its contents were reported not by the journalists at the door but by the two governments afterwards, in the accounts that diplomats call readouts.

From those readouts, and from the reporting of Yomiuri Shimbun, Sankei News and Nikkei that drew on them, the substance emerged. The two governments confirmed co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals. The President did not ask for a figure on defence spending. Sanctions against the International Criminal Court were discussed in what Tokyo called a frank exchange.

None of that was said in front of the cameras, and none of it could have been. That is the first thing to be said in defence of the closed door.

The alliance between Japan and the United States is a relationship built almost entirely in rooms without cameras. The treaty at its centre was negotiated over years by officials who did not brief the press on each session, and its revision in 1960 was completed while the streets outside the Diet were full of people who opposed it.

The arrangements that have followed, on bases, on burden-sharing, on the defence guidelines revised in

1978, 1997 and 2015, were all made by people who could speak frankly to each other precisely because no one was listening.

A frank exchange on the International Criminal Court is a good example. Japan is a party to the court and one of its largest funders; the United States is preparing sanctions against it. The Prime Minister's position and the President's are opposed. In front of cameras, neither could have said what they think. Behind the door, each could.

That is what a closed session is for, and the sign on the door is the condition that makes it possible. HOW DARE THEY is not a serious response to it.

Nobusuke Kishi, who forced the revised treaty through the Diet in 1960 and resigned once it took effect, made the alliance's most consequential decision in private and paid for it in public. That sequence, private decision and public accounting, is the bargain on which the alliance has run ever since.

The reporters in Suzuki's drawing, with their fedora and trench coat and hand-held microphone, are drawn in the style of the American press corps, and the complaint on their lips, WE NEEDED ACCESS, is the American complaint. The Japanese press has the opposite reputation. Its reporters' clubs sit inside the ministries they cover, briefings are routine, and the charge most often made against Japanese political journalism is not hostility but tameness.

Both failings are failings of the same kind. A press that shouts at doors and a press that waits politely outside them are both mistaking access for work.

So far, Suzuki's balance is right. The pan marked STATECRAFT should sit lower. A meeting that confirmed the economic security agenda, removed a feared demand on spending and registered a disagreement without a quarrel weighed more than any sentence shouted across a room.

Now for what the cartoon leaves out, which is what the press is for.

The three journalists outside the door are drawn as people who wanted to be inside. But access to the room was never the point of their job, and the best of them know it. The point is what they do once the door closes.

A readout is a government's account of a meeting. Both governments issue one, and the two accounts

are never identical. The Japanese account of Tuesday's meeting emphasised the strength of the alliance and co-operation on economic security. The frank exchange on the court appeared in the Japanese press; the phrase was not the American side's.

Finding the gap between the two readouts is the press's job, and it cannot be done from inside the room. It is done afterwards, by reporters who read both accounts, call officials on both sides, and ask what was said about the court and what was said about spending and what was left unsaid about tariffs.

That work produced the reporting on this morning's front page. It found that no defence figure was demanded, which is a fact of real consequence for Japan's budget, and it found that the Asahi Shimbun's sources on the Prime Minister's side would not raise the sanctions publicly, which tells readers how Tokyo intends to handle the disagreement.

None of it required the door to be open. All of it required the press to be doing something other than waiting outside it.

That is the distinction the cartoon's notebooks blur. HOSTILE COPY and ALWAYS WRONG are Suzuki's charge against a press that has decided its verdict in advance, and the newspaper on the floor, BOTH ARE UNFIT, is the verdict.

The charge has force. A press that treats every closed door as a scandal and every leader as unfit is not reporting; it is performing. Readers can tell the difference, and they have been telling it, in falling trust and falling circulation, for years.

But the answer to hostile copy is not deferential copy. It is sceptical copy, which is a different thing, and the difference is worth stating plainly on a page that exists to state things plainly.

Hostile copy knows what it thinks before the meeting begins. Sceptical copy waits for the readouts, compares them, and asks the questions the readouts do not answer. Hostile copy shouts HOW DARE THEY at the door. Sceptical copy asks, the next morning, what exactly was confirmed on critical minerals and when the working-level agreements will be signed.

The alliance needs the second kind of press more than it needs the first, and more than its leaders sometimes admit.

EDITORIAL & OPINION

Consider what was not settled on Tuesday, because that is where sceptical copy earns its keep.

The President did not ask for a figure on defence spending. That is welcome, and it is also temporary. Washington asked its European allies for 5% of national output at last year's NATO summit, and the expectation has not been withdrawn. The revised security documents that the Takaichi government is preparing will set Japan's own figure, and the press will need to ask whether that figure was chosen in Tokyo or anticipated from Washington.

The frank exchange on the court registered a disagreement. It did not resolve it. If the sanctions are imposed and include the reported ban on dollar settlements, Japan's position as a member and funder of the court will require a response, and the press will need to ask what it is.

Co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals was confirmed. Confirmation is not funding. The framework signed when the President visited Tokyo last October has yet to produce the investments it promised, and the press will need to follow the money rather than the communiqué.

And the tariff, at 15% on most Japanese exports, was not mentioned in any account of the meeting that reached this desk. Its absence is itself a fact, and a sceptical press notes it.

Nor was there any word on the question that hangs over every alliance meeting this year: what Washington expects of Tokyo if the confrontation with Beijing over technology and minerals hardens into something more. That question is not asked in a 35-minute meeting, and it is not answered in a readout. It is the subject of the security documents now being written, and the press will have to read them as closely as it read Tuesday's accounts.

A further absence deserves notice. The abductions of Japanese citizens by North Korea, which the Prime Minister raised in her speech to the Assembly and which the families travelled to Washington to press, did not feature in the accounts of the meeting available to this desk. Whether the subject was raised behind the door is a question the families will be asking, and the press should ask it for them.

Those are the questions that follow the meeting. None of them could have been asked at the door, and all of them are the press's work in the days ahead.

There is also a Japanese reason to weigh the meeting above the quote, and it is on the shelf in Suzuki's drawing, in the folder marked CHINA AGENDA.

The meeting on Tuesday came two days before the President meets President Xi Jinping in Washington. Rare earths and artificial intelligence, the subjects on which Japan and the United States confirmed co-operation, are the subjects on which the United States and China will negotiate on Thursday.

Japan's interest was to have its position on the table before Beijing's leader arrived. That interest was served in 35 minutes, and it could not have been served in a press conference.

Japanese manufacturers depend on Chinese minerals and on American technology controls. Their exposure is not a quote; it is a supply chain. A meeting that co-ordinated the allied position before Thursday's summit did more for them than any headline could.

That is the alliance-first case, and this page has made it before: the alliance is the foundation of Japan's security, its most consequential decisions are made in private, and the measure of a meeting is what it changes rather than what it yields for the evening news.

The case has a limit, and honesty requires stating it. Private decisions are legitimate only if they are eventually accounted for in public.

The security documents will be published. The agreements on minerals and chips will be signed and disclosed. The court sanctions, if they come, will be public acts with public responses. The tariff is a matter of public record. Every one of Tuesday's private subjects will surface, and when it surfaces, the press will do its job.

That is the bargain a democracy strikes with its diplomats: negotiate in private, answer in public. The sign on the door is the first half of the bargain. The press outside the door exists to enforce the second.

Suzuki's journalists have forgotten the second half in their outrage at the first. But a government that forgets the second half is a greater danger than three

reporters shouting in a corridor, and a newspaper that does not say so has misread its own cartoon.

There is one more object in the drawing that deserves a second look, and it is the newspaper on the floor.

BOTH ARE UNFIT is the headline of a paper that has stopped reporting and started ruling. It is a headline this page will not write, about either leader, because fitness is not a fact that a newspaper can establish in a morning.

What this page can establish is what each leader did. The Prime Minister delivered a speech to the General Assembly that appealed for the rule of law, met the Secretary-General to press for Council reform, met the Ukrainian president to reaffirm sanctions on Russia, and secured an alliance meeting that produced what her government needed. That is a day's work by any standard.

The President, in a speech to the same Assembly, called for withdrawal from an international court to which Japan belongs. That is a position this page opposes. It is also a position stated in public, by a leader accountable for it, and the press's answer to it is argument, not a verdict on fitness.

Judging leaders by outcomes rather than by headlines is slower and less satisfying than the alternative. It is also the only method by which a newspaper earns the trust that the notebook marked ALWAYS WRONG has lost.

Suzuki has drawn a balance, and this page accepts the weighing. On Tuesday, statecraft outweighed the scoop, and a press that cannot see that is not looking.

But the balance is not a choice between the two pans. A democracy needs both. It needs leaders who can close a door and speak frankly, and it needs reporters who can open the readouts the next morning and find what the frankness produced.

The scoop and the statecraft are not rivals. The scoop, when it is done properly, is how the public learns whether the statecraft was any good.

There is a version of Tuesday's meeting in which the press pool sign is a scandal. It is the version in which the readouts lie, the agreements never appear, and the public learns what was decided only when the consequences arrive. Nothing in the reporting of the past day suggests that version. Everything in the press's job for the next month is to make sure it does not become true.

Japan has a particular reason to take that job seriously. Its alliance rests on public consent, renewed at every election and tested at every crisis, and consent requires knowledge. The public that supports the alliance is entitled to know what the alliance is asking of it, in spending, in bases, in the disputes its government chooses not to raise publicly with Washington.

The press that provides that knowledge is not hostile. It is the alliance's best friend, because an alliance that cannot survive scrutiny has already failed.

The Japanese public has, over seven decades, extended that consent through crises that a less resilient alliance would not have survived: the treaty riots of 1960, the reversion of Okinawa, the trade wars of the 1980s, the base disputes of every decade since. It did so because, in the end, it knew what it was consenting to. The press told it.

That record is the strongest argument against the notebook marked ALWAYS WRONG. The Japanese press has been wrong often enough, and tame more often than that, but on the alliance it has done the work of keeping the public informed, and the alliance has held.

So: they wanted the quote. So did we, and we printed it, and it told readers something true about the President's manner and the Prime Minister's standing.

The allies wanted the meeting, and they got it, and it produced what Japan needed before Thursday.

And the readers wanted both, and they were right to. The quote came first, because that is how the door was arranged. The meeting's substance came the next morning, because that is how readouts work.

What comes now is the part that neither the cartoon's journalists nor its leaders can supply alone: the working agreements, the security documents, the sanctions decision, the tariff that nobody mentioned. Those are the stories, and they will be reported from outside the door, by people who have stopped shouting at it.

The sign says the press pool ends here. It does. The press does not.

That is the answer this page offers to Taro Suzuki this morning, and it is offered with respect, because he has drawn the question exactly as it should be asked.

The door will close again on Thursday, in Washington, with a different leader on the other side of the table and the same folder on the shelf. The allies will want that meeting too. So will Japan.

And the morning after, this page will do what it did today: read the readouts, find the gap, and ask what it means. That is not access. It is something better.

It is the job.

There is a final reason to take the cartoon's balance seriously, and it concerns the stack of newspapers more than the scales.

A press that prints BOTH ARE UNFIT on the morning of every summit will not be believed when it matters, when a readout really does conceal something, when a government really has conceded what it should not have. Credibility is a reserve that is spent every time it is drawn on cheaply.

The alliance will have its bad days. There will be a demand on spending that Japan cannot meet, a sanction that Japan cannot support, a tariff that Japan cannot absorb. On those days the public will need a press whose scepticism they trust, because it has been earned on the ordinary days.

Tuesday was an ordinary day, and a good one. The meeting did its work. The quote did its lesser work. The press's work begins now, and it will be judged, like the leaders', by what it produces.

Suzuki's journalists wanted the room. This page wants the readouts, the documents and the money, and it intends to get them.

They wanted the quote. The allies wanted the meeting. Both got what they came for. The rest is ours.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Two Readouts, One Meeting, and the Gap Between Them

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

Every bilateral meeting produces two accounts, and the distance between them is where reporting begins.

The Japanese account of Tuesday's meeting, as reported by Yomiuri Shimbun and Sankei News, emphasised the strength of the alliance, co-operation on security and economic security with China in view, and the absence of any demand for a defence-spending figure.

It also included the phrase that will be remembered: a frank exchange on sanctions against the International Criminal Court.

Frank exchange is diplomatic vocabulary for disagreement, and its appearance in the Japanese account tells readers that Tokyo wanted the disagreement on record, at least in Japan.

The American side's emphasis, by contrast, ran through the President's own remarks before the door closed: that the Prime Minister would go down in history and that he watches her approval ratings.

Neither account is false. Each is selective, and the selection reveals what each government wants its public to take from the meeting.

Tokyo wants the alliance affirmed and the economic security agenda confirmed, with the disagreement on the court acknowledged but not amplified, which is consistent with Asahi Shimbun's report that the Prime Minister's side would not raise the sanctions publicly.

Washington wants a personal relationship displayed, in the register the President prefers, with the substance left to officials.

What neither account mentions is the tariff of 15% on most Japanese exports, which remains the largest unresolved question in the economic relationship, and its absence from both readouts is itself informative.

The working-level agreements on minerals and chips, the revised security documents and the sanctions decision will fill in what the readouts left out, and that is where the next month's reporting lies.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Seven Dead, and a Government That Will Be Judged on the Recovery

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The Prime Minister's day in New York will fill the political pages for a week. The typhoon's recovery will fill them for months, and it is the recovery on which her government will be judged at home.

Seven people are dead and five missing. Twenty-two buildings are destroyed and 428 flooded. Level 4 landslide warnings remain in force, two expressways are closed, and a district around a railway station is under water on the last day of a national holiday.

Japanese governments are rarely rewarded for handling a disaster well and often punished for handling one badly, and the asymmetry shapes how they respond.

The Takaichi government's response has so far run through the ordinary machinery: evacuation orders issued by municipalities, Self-Defense Forces dispatched at Kanagawa's request, the land ministry's emergency engineers and pump trucks deployed, and the chief cabinet secretary co-ordinating in the Prime Minister's absence.

That machinery works, as this week has shown, and it also insulates the government from credit. The response is seen as the system's rather than the cabinet's.

The judgment will come on the slower questions. How quickly Chiba's households receive damage certificates and support. Whether the third storm since August prompts investment in the drainage and river works the prefecture has requested. Whether the deaths of two people of 80 in Kominato lead to changes in how evacuation reaches the old.

The Prime Minister returns to those questions with a Diet session that prioritises a consumption tax cut, a security document revision, and a budget carrying record subsidies and new commitments.

Disaster recovery competes with all of them for money and attention, and it has the advantage of visibility: flooded streets are on television, and tax debates are not.

Cabinet approval at 58.3% gives the government room, and the President's remark that he watches the figure is a reminder that others are watching too.

The alliance was affirmed on Tuesday. The government's competence will be tested in Sakura, Kamogawa and Miura, and that test has only begun.

POLITICS

The Summit at a Glance

Compiled by the Politics Desk

Where: United Nations headquarters, New York.
When: Tuesday. Length: about 35 minutes.

Takaichi: Japan and the U.S. showed the world the strength of the alliance.

Agenda: security and economic security co-operation with China in view.

Confirmed: co-operation on AI, semiconductors and critical minerals (Nikkei, Sankei).

Defence spending: no specific figure requested (Sankei).

ICC sanctions: a frank exchange (Yomiuri, Sankei).

Trump: the Prime Minister will go down in history; he watches her approval ratings.

Not mentioned in available accounts: the 15% tariff on Japanese exports.

Same day: the Prime Minister's General Assembly speech, and meetings with Zelensky and Guterres.

Next: the U.S.-China summit on Thursday, and Tokyo's markets reopening the same day.

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EDITORIAL & OPINION

CORRECTIONS

The Japan Morning Post corrects errors of fact as soon as they are identified. Correction requests may be sent to corrections@japanmorningpost.com, giving the date, page and headline of the article concerned.

Tuesday's edition reported the typhoon's toll as two dead and four missing, the figures available at the time of publication. The toll had risen to seven dead and five missing in Chiba and Kanagawa by Wednesday morning, as reported on today's front page. This is an update, not a correction.

THE WEEK AHEAD

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23 (Autumnal Equinox Day): Last day of the five-day holiday. Asian Games: nine swimming finals; men's and women's gymnastics team finals; table tennis semi-finals, Japan v South Korea (women); badminton team semi-finals; half marathon and race walking; baseball, Japan v Philippines at noon. Aki Basho day 11. Drainage pump trucks deployed to Sakura. Financial markets closed.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 24: The Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens after four closed days. The Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25% takes effect. U.S.-China summit in Washington during President Xi Jinping's state visit, with AI and rare earths expected to lead the agenda. The working week resumes.

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 ceremony of the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

HOLIDAY SERVICES

Banks, post office counters and most government offices are closed today for Autumnal Equinox Day and reopen on Thursday. ATMs operate on holiday schedules. 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. Municipalities in Chiba and Kanagawa affected by the typhoon are arranging separate collection for flood-damaged household goods; check municipal announcements before putting waste out.

TYPHOON ADVISORIES

Level 4 landslide warnings remain in force in parts of Chiba and Kanagawa. Residents in designated hazard zones should stay evacuated until municipalities lift the warnings; saturated slopes can fail with light rain. Report cracks in the ground, springs on hillsides or falling stones to the municipality or to emergency services.

The Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway remain closed by mudslides. Rail services are being restored with delays. Check operators' announcements before travelling, particularly on the return journey today.

Photograph flood and wind damage before cleaning up; the photographs are needed for insurance claims and for municipal disaster damage certificates. Discard food that has been in contact with floodwater or unrefrigerated for more than a few hours. Do not start a vehicle that has been submerged.

A tropical depression south of Japan is expected to become a typhoon within 24 hours. The Sakishima Islands and other areas should follow the meteorological agency's information once it is issued.

MARKET REFERENCE

Tokyo markets are closed today and reopen Thursday. The Bank of Japan's 1.25% policy rate applies from Thursday. The Nikkei 225 last closed at 65,018.95 on September 18; the TOPIX at 4,091.14. The yen was last reported in the low 157 range against the dollar in New York on Monday, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

ABOUT TODAY'S GRAPHICS

The front-page photograph shows President Trump and Prime Minister Takaichi at their meeting at United Nations headquarters in New York (Photo: 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. The editorial cartoon is by Taro Suzuki.

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THE JAPAN MORNING POST

Japan-first, alliance-first. Founded in service of accurate coverage of Japan's security, industry, families and culture.

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Today's crossword solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Tuesday's solution is published separately with this edition.

IN TOMORROW'S EDITION

The U.S.-China summit in Washington and what it means for rare earths, artificial intelligence and Japan. Tokyo's first market session in five days, with the Bank of Japan's new rate in force. The gymnastics team finals and the table tennis semi-finals. The search in Kanagawa and the drainage of Sakura. The new typhoon, if it forms. And the return to work after Silver Week.

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