

Xi Meet Today in Washington ■ Typhoon Toll Rises to Ten as Inbanuma Levee Fails ■ Tokyo Reopens with the Yen Weaker and the BOJ Rate at 1.25% ■ Two Table Tennis Finals Against CHI

Xi Arrives in Washington: Trump and the Chinese Leader Meet Today With Trade, Taiwan and AI on the Table

Two days after Tokyo put its position on record, the summit that will shape Japan's supply chains opens in the American capital; the Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens this morning to price the result

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk, with Rachel Kim | Japan-U.S. Coverage, Washington-Tokyo Liaison



President Trump welcomes President Xi Jinping at the start of the Chinese leader's state visit to the United States. The two presidents hold their summit today, Washington time, with trade, Taiwan and artificial intelligence on the agenda. (Photo: WPM Productions)

President Xi Jinping departed for the United States on Wednesday, and his summit with President Donald Trump is held today, Washington time, with trade and Taiwan on the agenda, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun. Artificial intelligence is also expected to be discussed, according to the reports available.

The photograph above shows President Trump welcoming the Chinese leader at the start of the state visit, the highest form of official visit and one that both governments chose deliberately.

For Japan, the meeting is the second half of a week that began with its own leader in the room. Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi met Mr. Trump at United Nations headquarters on Tuesday, and the two governments confirmed co-operation on artificial intelligence and critical minerals with China in view, as Yomiuri reported on its front page.

That sequence was designed. Tokyo wanted its concerns about rare earth supplies, semiconductor controls and the alliance stated before Washington sat down with Beijing, and the confirmation on Tuesday gave it a position to point to.

Trade is the first item. Most Japanese exports to the United States face a 15% tariff, and the tariff arrangements Washington reaches with Beijing will affect Japanese companies that compete with both, in cars, machinery and electronics.

Taiwan is the second, and the one Tokyo watches most closely. Japan's south-western islands lie within sight of Taiwan, and any change in how Washington describes its commitments there is read in Tokyo as a change in Japan's own security environment.

Artificial intelligence and the minerals and chips behind it are the third. China controls the processing of rare earths on which Japanese magnet and motor makers depend; the United States and its allies, Japan among them, control the advanced chips and the equipment that makes them.

The American proposal for a system of mutual notification of accidents involving artificial intelligence, reported by Yomiuri earlier this week, will show whether the two rivals can create even one channel of co-operation in a field otherwise defined by competition.

The foreign ministers of Japan, the United States and South Korea issued a joint statement opposing economic coercion in the days before the summit, a phrase aimed at Chinese export controls, and the test of that statement is whether the allied position survives today's negotiation.

If Washington secures rare earth supplies for American firms without addressing its allies' exposure, Japanese manufacturers will have watched

their interests traded away in a room they could not enter. If the allied position holds, Tuesday's meeting will have done its work.

The Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens this morning after four closed days, and its first session since Friday will be traded against the summit's early signals, the Bank of Japan's new policy rate of 1.25%, which applies from today, and a yen that Yomiuri reports is weakening again.

Beijing has spent the week making its own positions clear. China's Foreign Ministry objected to the Prime Minister's speech to the General Assembly, insisting that the United Nations Charter's former enemy clauses are important for the post-war order, Mainichi reported.

That objection places the two subjects of the week side by side: an alliance co-ordinating supply chains against Chinese pressure, and a Chinese government defending the wartime language that Japan wants deleted.

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

The visit also carries a personal dimension. Mr. Trump's diplomacy runs through relationships with individual leaders, and his welcome for Mr. Xi, shown in the photograph, follows the pattern of the personal warmth he showed the Prime Minister on Tuesday.

Japanese officials have lived with the risk of that pattern for years: that a personal relationship between the American and Chinese leaders produces arrangements made over the heads of allies.

The safeguards are the ones Tokyo assembled this week: the confirmation of co-operation on minerals and chips, the trilateral statement, and the working-level agreements that follow leaders' meetings.

Whether they hold will be known by tomorrow morning in Tokyo, when the summit's outcome reaches Japanese readers and a second market session prices it.

The alliance was affirmed on Tuesday. Today it is tested, in a room where Japan is represented only by what its leader said two days ago.

For Japanese readers, that is the week's real story: not the ceremony in Washington but whether the position Tokyo took to New York was strong enough to survive it.

The Prime Minister, back from New York, faces an extraordinary Diet session with a consumption tax cut at its head, and a typhoon recovery whose toll rose to

ten dead on Wednesday.

She will be asked, in the days ahead, what the alliance secured for Japan in Washington, and the answer will depend on what happens today.

Toll Rises to Ten as Inbanuma's Levee Fails for the First Time on Record, Flooding Two Kilometres Inland

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter, with Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The death toll from Typhoon No. 25 in Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures has risen to ten, and four people remain missing, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, Asahi Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun.

The embankment of Inbanuma, the lake at the centre of northern Chiba's lowlands, has collapsed, the first such failure since the lake's management began, and water reached areas two kilometres away, the three newspapers reported.

The breach explains why the district around JR Sakura Station remained under water on Wednesday despite the deployment of drainage pump trucks, and why the flooding has outlasted the storm by three days.

Drainage is not progressing because the Tone River, into which the Inbanuma system discharges, is running high, fed by rain from the upper reaches of northern Kanto that continues to flow down.

When the river that a lowland drains into is higher than the lowland, sluice gates cannot open without letting water back in, and pumps must lift every cubic metre over the levee. That is the situation the engineers in Sakura face.

The railways carry the storm's longest timelines. The Uchibo Line between Anegasaki and Kisarazu is expected to take about three months to restore, and the Sobu Line between Enokido and Naruto about one month, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Both estimates describe damage to the track bed itself, embankments washed out and structures undermined, rather than debris that can be cleared in days.

The search for the four missing people continues, with Self-Defense Forces relief dispatched at Kanagawa's request and police and fire services working across both prefectures.

Landslide warnings remain in force on saturated slopes in Chiba and Kanagawa, which could collapse even with light rain, and restrictions remain on the landslide-prone sections of the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways.

Restoration of power in Chiba continues, and a temporary failure of the cable operator JCOM's systems left customers outside Hokkaido and Kyushu unable to connect to the internet, compounding the disruption for households already without power.

The toll has risen by three since Wednesday morning, when seven were dead and five missing, as searchers reached houses buried while the storm passed and as some of the missing were found.

The deaths were concentrated on the Boso Peninsula's Pacific coast and on the Miura Peninsula, where hillsides saturated by three storms since August gave way one after another.

Inbanuma's levee failure is of a different kind. The lake's reclaimed lowlands have flooded before, but the embankment that holds the lake had never breached in the period of modern management, and its failure changes the calculation for every household on the plain.

Farmers in the region face a delayed rice harvest and reduced quality from flooded fields, a concern for the production areas that supply the capital.

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WEATHER — TOKYO

30°C

Low 18°C · Sun and cloud on the map

24°

Sapporo

27°

Sendai

31°

Nagoya

32°

Naha

The front brings rain to the north and cooler nights to Tokyo. Asahi gives a 40% chance of rain. Full weather, Page 11.

TODAY IN BRIEF

- Xi Jinping departed for the United States on Wednesday; the summit is held today with trade and Taiwan on the agenda.
- The typhoon toll is ten dead and four missing; Inbanuma's embankment failed for the first time, flooding two kilometres inland.
- Takaichi expressed 'consistent support' for the ICC at the UN and did not mention U.S. sanctions; Beijing objected to her enemy-clause pledge.
- Tokyo reopens after four days with the yen weakening again and the BOJ rate at 1.25%; the Dow fell 352 points.
- The Uchibo Line will take about three months to restore; the Sobu Line about one.
- Men's gymnastics team silver by 1.269 points; Mitsunaga's butterfly record; both table tennis teams in finals tonight.

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MARKETS		
Tokyo markets		Reopen today
Nikkei 225 (Sept. 18 close)		■ 65,018.95
TOPIX (Sept. 18 close)		■ 4,091.14
Dow Jones (Sept. 23)		■ 51,511, -352
Yen		Weakening again (Yomiuri)
BOJ policy rate (from today)		1.25%
Fed target range		3.75%-4.00%

THE SUMMIT: WHAT TOKYO WATCHES

- Rare earths: whether any arrangement covers Japanese manufacturers.
- Chip controls: whether they are traded away.
- Taiwan: whether the language shifts.
- AI: whether an accident-notification channel is agreed.

TYPHOON NO. 25: THURSDAY

- 10 dead, 4 missing in Chiba and Kanagawa.
- Inbanuma levee breached; water two kilometres inland; drainage stalled by the Tone.
- Uchibo Line out about three months; Sobu Line about one.
- Landslide warnings and expressway restrictions remain.

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THE WEEK AHEAD

- Fri. 25: Summit outcome reaches Tokyo's second session.
- Sun. 27: Aki Basho final day; U-21 football v North Korea.
- Sun. Oct. 4: Asian Games closing ceremony.

TONIGHT

- Table tennis team finals, Japan v China, women and men.
- Eight swimming finals; badminton women's team final.

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www.japanmorningpost.com | newsdesk@japanmorningpost.com | 1-2-3 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004

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FROM PAGE 1

Toll Rises to Ten as Inbanuma's Levee Fails for the First Time on Record, Flooding Two Kilometres Inland

Four people remain missing; the Tone River's rising waters are holding back the drainage of Sakura, and two Chiba rail lines will take months to repair

Continued from Page 1

A tropical depression south of Japan continues to show typhoon-like conditions, and the Sakishima Islands have been told to remain cautious. Swells on the Pacific side are expected to subside gradually.

Today is the first working day after the five-day holiday, and for the households of Sakura, Kamogawa, Yokosuka and Miura it begins with water, mud and the search for the missing.

Small earthquakes continue to occur sporadically in the Kumamoto region and elsewhere, unconnected to the storm and a reminder that the country's hazards do not take turns.

Prime Minister Takaichi, back from New York, faces a Diet session that will be asked to fund the recovery alongside a consumption tax cut.

The storm became an extratropical cyclone on Tuesday evening, far to the east of Japan. Its consequences will occupy the two prefectures for months.

The full accounting of the damage will follow the drainage of the lowlands, the inspection of homes and the recovery of the missing.

POLITICS

Beijing Objects: The Former Enemy Clauses Are 'Important for the Post-War Order'

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has objected to Prime Minister Takaichi's speech to the United Nations General Assembly, insisting that the Charter's former enemy clauses are important for the post-war order, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

The objection answers the Prime Minister's pledge to seek the prompt removal of the clauses, three articles written in 1945 that refer to states that were enemies of the Charter's signatories during the Second World War.

The General Assembly declared the clauses obsolete in 1995, and the World Summit of 2005 resolved to delete them, but no amendment to the Charter has followed, because amendment requires ratification by two-thirds of the membership including all five permanent members of the Security Council.

China is one of those five, and its statement this week indicates that its ratification would not be forthcoming.

Beijing's position rests on an argument it has made for years: that the post-war order, meaning the settlement that followed Japan's defeat, must be preserved, and that the clauses are part of it.

Tokyo's position is that the clauses have been dead letters for decades, that Japan has been a member of the United Nations for seventy years, and that a founding document which still describes a major contributor as an enemy is an anomaly the organisation itself has acknowledged.

The exchange took place in the week of the American-Chinese summit, and it shows how the history of 1945 remains a live instrument in Beijing's diplomacy toward Japan.

China has used the post-war order argument before, including in its opposition to Japan's bid for a permanent Security Council seat in 2005, when the G4 proposal was defeated.

Japanese governments have kept the clauses on the agenda through speeches rather than formal proposals, aware that any amendment process would open the larger question of the Council's composition.

The Prime Minister's pledge and Beijing's objection leave the clauses where they have been since 1945: in the Charter, obsolete by the Assembly's own resolution, and protected by a veto.

Taro Suzuki takes up the subject on the editorial page this morning.

POLITICS

1995 and 2005: The Two Times the World Agreed the Clauses Should Go

By William | Senior Political Analyst

China's objection to deleting the former enemy clauses answers not only Prime Minister Takaichi but two decisions of the United Nations' own membership.

In December 1995, marking the organisation's fiftieth anniversary, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising that the clauses in Articles 53, 77 and 107 had become obsolete and expressing the intention to delete them at the earliest appropriate session.

Ten years later, the World Summit of 2005, the largest gathering of heads of government in the organisation's history, adopted an outcome document that resolved to delete the references to enemy states in those articles.

Both decisions were adopted without the amendment they called for, because deletion requires a formal amendment under Article 108, ratified by two-thirds of the membership including all five permanent members of the Security Council.

Japan and Germany, the two countries most directly described by the clauses, have pursued their deletion in speeches and in the corridors, but neither has forced a vote that a permanent member could block.

The 2005 summit was also the year in which Japan, Germany, India and Brazil proposed an expansion of the Council with new permanent seats, a proposal that China opposed and that never reached a vote.

The two questions have been entangled since. Any process to amend the Charter would open the Council's composition, and the permanent members have no interest in opening it.

China's argument that the clauses are important for the post-war order links them to the settlement of 1945 rather than to the organisation's present functioning, which is where the Assembly's resolutions placed them.

The result is a Charter that describes Japan, a member since 1956 and one of the largest contributors to the budget, in language the Assembly itself has called obsolete.

The Prime Minister's pledge to seek prompt removal restates a position that has now been Japanese policy through six decades of membership.

POLITICS

Takaichi and Erdoğan Confirm Co-operation on Defence Equipment

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

Prime Minister Takaichi confirmed co-operation on defence equipment with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey in New York, according to Asahi Shimbun, in one of the less expected meetings of her General Assembly week.

Turkey has built one of the fastest-growing defence industries in the world over the past two decades, best known for the armed drones produced by Baykar, which have been used in conflicts from Libya and Nagorno-Karabakh to Ukraine.

Japan's interest in drones is a matter of record. Asahi reported this week that the Defense Ministry is accelerating the development of attack drones, and Turkish experience in producing them cheaply and at scale is relevant to that effort.

Japan's own defence industry has moved slowly into export markets since the relaxation of its export rules, and co-operation with a producer that has moved fast offers lessons as well as possible partnerships.

Turkey, a NATO member, has pursued an independent line in its defence relationships, buying Russian air defence systems while producing its own aircraft, ships and armoured vehicles.

The two countries have a long friendship, often traced to the rescue of survivors of the Ottoman frigate Ertugrul off Wakayama in 1890, and Turkey

has been a significant market for Japanese companies.

Defence equipment co-operation would need to satisfy Japan's export principles, which restrict transfers of lethal equipment, and any specific projects would be developed by the two defence ministries.

The meeting adds Turkey to a list of Japanese defence partnerships that has grown to include Britain, Italy, Australia and the Philippines, as Tokyo diversifies beyond the alliance without weakening it.

Details of the co-operation confirmed were not reported, and the meeting's significance lies in the direction it indicates rather than in any specific agreement.

For the Prime Minister, it completed a week of meetings in which defence, minerals, sanctions and the Charter's oldest clauses all featured.

POLITICS

The Other Permanent Member That Finds the Clauses Useful: Moscow and Article 107

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

China's objection to deleting the Charter's former enemy clauses is the objection of the week, but Beijing is not the only permanent member with a use for them.

Article 107 provides that nothing in the Charter invalidates or precludes action taken or authorised as a result of the Second World War by governments responsible for it, in relation to any state that was an enemy of a signatory.

Russian officials have cited that article in defending the Soviet occupation of the Northern Territories, the islands off Hokkaido that Soviet forces seized in August and September 1945 and that Japan has claimed ever since.

The argument runs that the seizure was action taken as a result of the war and is therefore protected by the Charter from challenge, a reading Japan rejects and that the article's authors, writing about the occupation of Germany and Japan themselves, did not have in mind.

For Moscow, the clause is a legal instrument in a territorial dispute. For Beijing, it is a diplomatic one in a contest over Japan's status. Both find it worth keeping.

That convergence explains why deletion has never been attempted formally. Two of the five states whose ratification an amendment would require have positions that the clauses serve.

The Northern Territories dispute itself is frozen. Russia suspended peace treaty talks in 2022 after Japan joined sanctions over Ukraine, and the visa-free visits by former residents ended with them.

Prime Minister Takaichi's assurance to President Zelensky this week that sanctions will continue confirms that the freeze will last, and that Moscow's reading of Article 107 will go unchallenged in any negotiation for the foreseeable future.

The Japanese position on the islands does not depend on the clauses, and their deletion would not settle the dispute. But it would remove one text that Moscow cites, which is reason enough for Moscow to keep it.

Taro Suzuki's cartoon draws one man with the stamp. There are two.

POLITICS

What Japan Can and Cannot Sell: The Export Rules That Will Govern Any Deal With Turkey

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The co-operation on defence equipment that Prime Minister Takaichi confirmed with President Erdoğan will be shaped by export rules that Japan has relaxed in stages over the past decade.

For most of the post-war period, Japan prohibited arms exports almost entirely under the three principles adopted in 1967 and tightened in 1976.

The Abe government replaced them in 2014 with the Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, which permitted transfers that contribute to peace and international co-operation or to Japan's security, subject to screening and restrictions on further transfer.

The 2014 rules still barred exports of lethal equipment in most circumstances, and Japan's

defence companies found few buyers for the surveillance aircraft, radars and ships they were permitted to sell.

Further relaxations followed. In 2023, Japan allowed the export of licensed-produced equipment, including Patriot missiles, to the country that granted the licence, and in 2024 it approved the export of the fighter aircraft being developed jointly with Britain and Italy to third countries.

Those changes reflected the war in Ukraine, which showed the limits of a policy that could not supply allies, and the government's wish to sustain a defence industry that domestic orders alone could not.

Co-operation with Turkey could take forms that the rules permit: joint development, transfers of non-lethal equipment and technology, or, in some categories, the sale of finished systems.

Turkey's own independent line, including its purchase of Russian air defence systems and its differences with NATO partners, would be weighed in any screening.

The revision of Japan's security documents under the Takaichi government may relax the rules further, and the Erdoğan meeting suggests the government intends to use whatever room it creates.

The rules remain restrictive by the standards of other democracies, and every transfer is a decision rather than a routine.

POLITICS

From New York, the Prime Minister Turns to the Diet: 'I Want to Pass the Consumption Tax Cut'

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

Prime Minister Takaichi expressed her intention to pass measures including a reduction in the consumption tax at a press conference in New York, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, turning from the diplomacy of the General Assembly to the extraordinary Diet session that awaits her.

The session will give priority to deliberations on the tax cut, Yomiuri reported earlier this week, and the ruling party is approaching it with its minority in the House of Councillors in mind.

A press conference at the end of a foreign trip is the moment at which a prime minister sets the domestic agenda for the weeks ahead, and this one placed the tax cut at its head.

The cut concerns the 8% reduced rate on food and beverages, and it is the government's principal answer to the pressure that prices have placed on household budgets.

Passing it requires either opposition support in the upper house or a two-thirds vote in the lower house to override rejection, a margin the government does not command alone.

Yomiuri has reported that the collapse of a centrist grouping has stalled the opposition's alternative proposal, which leaves the government's version as the only one on the table and gives the government an opening.

The Prime Minister also returns to a typhoon recovery whose toll rose to ten dead on Wednesday, and the session will be asked to fund it alongside the tax cut, a record fuel subsidy and the revision of the security documents.

The finance ministry's resistance to any cut in the consumption tax is long-standing, and the question of how the cut is paid for will follow it through every committee.

With cabinet approval at 58.3% in the latest ANN poll, the government has the public standing to press the measure, and the press conference signalled that it intends to.

The session's timetable will be set when it opens, and the tax cut is expected to be the first major bill debated.

POLITICS



Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi addressing the United Nations General Assembly in New York. In her first speech to the Assembly she appealed for the rule of law, expressed Japan's consistent support for the International Criminal Court, and pledged to seek the prompt removal of the Charter's former enemy clauses. (Photo: WPM Productions)

POLITICS

'Consistent Support' for the Court, and No Mention of Sanctions: Takaichi's Speech to the General Assembly

The Prime Minister put the rule of law at the centre of her first address and backed the International Criminal Court in words chosen not to name the ally preparing to sanction it

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi expressed Japan's consistent support for the International Criminal Court in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly, and she did not mention the sanctions the United States is preparing against it, according to Asahi Shimbun and Sankei News.

The speech placed its emphasis on the rule of law, the theme that Japanese prime ministers have carried to the Assembly for decades and that this one made her own.

The photograph on this page shows the Prime Minister at the Assembly's green marble rostrum, in the blue suit she wore for her meeting with President Trump the same day.

Her words on the court were chosen with care. Consistent support describes Japan's position since it joined the court in 2007 and became its largest funder, and it commits Japan to nothing new.

The absence of any mention of sanctions was equally deliberate. Asahi had reported before the speech that the Prime Minister's side would not raise the American measures publicly, and the speech kept to that line.

The method is the one Japan has used for decades when it disagrees with Washington: state the principle in public, discuss the disagreement in private, and join like-minded countries in a statement that does not name the United States.

All three happened this week. The principle was stated at the rostrum. The disagreement was discussed with Mr. Trump in what Tokyo called a frank exchange. And Japan joined European countries in a statement calling for the protection of international judicial bodies.

The court's president is a Japanese judge, Tomoko Akane, which gives Japan's support a personal as well as an institutional dimension.

Mr. Trump, in his own speech to the Assembly on the same day, called for withdrawal from the court, so the two allies stated opposing positions from the same rostrum within hours of each other.

The speech also pledged to seek the prompt removal of the Charter's former enemy clauses and reform of the Security Council, and it offered support for energy supplies from the Middle East.

China's Foreign Ministry objected to the passage on the former enemy clauses, insisting that they are important for the post-war order, Mainichi Shimbun reported, and that objection is the subject of Taro Suzuki's cartoon and of the editorial today.

At a press conference in New York, the Prime Minister said she wanted to pass measures including a consumption tax cut, turning from the Assembly to the extraordinary Diet session that awaits her, Yomiuri Shimbun reported.

Her first speech to the Assembly was received in Japan as a competent one: firm on principle, careful on the alliance, and specific about the Charter's oldest anomaly.

Its consequences, in the court's finances, the Charter's text and the Council's composition, lie beyond any speech's reach, and will be measured over years.

POLITICS

Yomiuri's Front Page: Japan and the U.S. Will Work Closely on China, With AI and Minerals First

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

Yomiuri Shimbun led its front page this morning with the summit between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump, reporting that the two leaders will co-operate closely in dealing with China, with artificial intelligence and critical minerals as the first items.

The framing matters because of today's date. The American-Chinese summit is held in Washington today, and Yomiuri's account presents Tuesday's meeting as the allied position going into it.

Artificial intelligence and critical minerals are the two subjects on which Washington and Beijing are expected to negotiate, and they are the two on which Tokyo most needs the allied position to hold.

Japanese manufacturers depend on Chinese rare earth processing for the magnets in motors and electronics, and Japanese equipment and materials makers are central to the export controls that restrict China's access to advanced chips.

Co-operation on artificial intelligence covers the chips that train and run advanced models, the data centres that house them and the rules that govern their use, all fields in which Japan has sought a place beside the United States rather than behind it.

The summit confirmed the direction; the working-level agreements that follow will provide the substance, and Japanese industry will read them for funding, timelines and the co-ordination of controls.

Yomiuri's account also notes that no specific figure was requested on defence spending, a fact that has reassured Tokyo since it emerged on Tuesday.

The Prime Minister's own statement, that Japan and the United States had shown the world the strength of their alliance, was directed at Beijing as much as at any other audience.

Today's summit will show whether Washington's negotiators treat the allied position as a constraint or as a bargaining chip.

The Tokyo market, reopening this morning, will be the first to render a verdict.

POLITICS

What Article 53 Actually Says

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The Charter's former enemy clauses are cited more often than they are read, and the argument over deleting them is clearer once the text is on the table.

Article 53 concerns regional arrangements. It provides that the Security Council may use such arrangements for enforcement action, and that no enforcement action may be taken under them without the Council's authorisation.

It then makes an exception: measures against any enemy state, meaning a state that during the Second World War was an enemy of any signatory, provided for under Article 107 or in regional arrangements directed against renewal of aggressive policy by such a state, until the organisation itself is charged with preventing further aggression by it.

Article 107 provides that nothing in the Charter invalidates or precludes action taken or authorised as a result of the war by governments responsible for it, in relation to any such enemy state.

Article 77 refers, among the territories that could be placed under trusteeship, to territories detached from enemy states as a result of the war.

The purpose in 1945 was to preserve the freedom of the wartime Allies to deal with Germany and Japan, whose occupation was under way or imminent, without the constraints the new organisation would place on action against other states.

That purpose expired with the occupations, and the states concerned became members. The clauses remained because the Charter is hard to amend, and because deleting them would have required a process no one wished to begin.

The General Assembly's 1995 resolution and the 2005 World Summit outcome both recognised that the clauses no longer served any purpose, and both called for their deletion.

China's statement this week that they are important for the post-war order is the first time in some years that a permanent member has defended them publicly, and it is the reason the text is worth reading.

The clauses run to a few dozen words in a document of 111 articles, and their deletion would leave the Charter's structure untouched.

POLITICS

Germany Shares the Label, but Not the Neighbour

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The former enemy clauses describe Germany as well as Japan, and the two countries have pursued their deletion together, with very different experiences of what the clauses mean in practice.

Germany joined the United Nations in 1973, seventeen years after Japan, when the two German states were admitted together, and the reunified Germany became one of the organisation's largest funders.

Germany and Japan co-operated on the 1995 resolution that declared the clauses obsolete, and they have sat together in the G4 seeking permanent Security Council seats since 2004.

For Germany, the clauses are dormant. No permanent member has found it useful to remind Germany of 1945 in the way Beijing reminds Japan, and no permanent member cites the clauses in a territorial dispute with Berlin.

The difference lies in geography and politics rather than in the text. Germany's neighbours are its partners in the European Union and NATO; Japan's neighbours include two permanent members with reasons to keep the past in play.

Germany's own path to acceptance ran through the European institutions, in which it is embedded so deeply that its wartime status has no purchase on its present standing.

Japan's path ran through the alliance with the United States and through the United Nations itself, which is why the organisation's founding document matters more to Tokyo than to Berlin.

The two governments have deepened their own relationship in recent years, with regular meetings of foreign and defence ministers and German naval visits to Japan, and the clauses are among the subjects on which they co-ordinate.

A formal proposal to delete the clauses would carry more weight if both countries introduced it, and Germany's support would be assured.

Whether Berlin would accept the risk of a visible failure, as Tokyo has so far declined to, is a question the two governments have not had to answer.

POLITICS

Seventy Years a Member: Japan's Road Into the United Nations

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

This December marks seventy years since Japan joined the United Nations, on December 18, 1956, an anniversary that gives the argument over the Charter's former enemy clauses a particular edge.

Japan's admission had been blocked for years by the Soviet Union's veto, and it followed the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries in the joint declaration of October 1956.

Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, who had signed the surrender aboard the USS Missouri in 1945, addressed the Assembly on Japan's admission and described the country's return to the international community.

Membership became the centre of Japanese foreign policy. The doctrine of United Nations-centred diplomacy, adopted in the 1950s, presented the organisation as the framework within which a country that had renounced war could pursue its interests.

Japan became one of the largest contributors to the regular budget and to peacekeeping, served on the Security Council as a non-permanent member more often than any other state, and produced senior officials including Sadako Ogata at the refugee agency.

The former enemy clauses remained in the Charter throughout. They were dormant in practice, and successive governments raised their deletion as a matter of principle rather than urgency.

The Assembly's 1995 resolution and the 2005 World Summit's outcome both endorsed deletion, and neither produced the amendment required.

For a country that has built its diplomacy on the organisation, being described as an enemy in its founding document is an anomaly that seventy years of membership have not removed.

The Prime Minister's speech this week placed the anniversary and the anomaly side by side, and Beijing's response showed why the anomaly persists.

The seventieth anniversary will be marked in December, with the clauses, in all likelihood, still in the text.

POLITICS

Ertugrul, Tehran and the Marmaray: The Ties Behind the Erdogan Meeting

By Aiko Tanaka | Senior Japan Correspondent

The meeting between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Erdogan, at which co-operation on defence equipment was confirmed, drew on a friendship that Japanese and Turkish diplomats cite with unusual warmth.

Its founding story is the wreck of the Ottoman frigate Ertugrul off Kushimoto, in Wakayama Prefecture, in September 1890, when villagers rescued the survivors and Japan returned them to Istanbul.

The story has a sequel that Turkey tells as often as Japan. In 1985, during the Iran-Iraq war, Turkish Airlines flew Japanese nationals out of Tehran when Japanese airlines could not, an act remembered in Japan as a debt repaid.

Economic ties followed. Japanese companies built the Bosphorus bridges and, with Japanese loans, the Marmaray rail tunnel beneath the strait, which opened in 2013.

Japanese carmakers manufacture in Turkey, and Turkish exporters supply Japan with textiles, food and increasingly with industrial goods.

Defence is a newer field. Turkey's industry has grown into a major exporter of drones and other systems, and Japan's Defense Ministry is accelerating its own drone development, which gives the two countries a subject to discuss.

Turkey's position within NATO, independent and sometimes at odds with its partners, and its relationships with Russia and Iran, make it a complicated partner for Japan, whose foreign policy rests on the alliance with the United States.

The meeting in New York indicates that Tokyo is willing to work with Ankara on specific projects while managing those complications.

A film about the Ertugrul, produced jointly by the two countries, was released in 2015 for the 125th anniversary of the wreck, and the story remains the reference point for every meeting between the two governments.

Defence co-operation adds a new chapter to a relationship that both sides date to a shipwreck.

POLITICS

POLITICS

The Fighter Japan Is Building With Britain and Italy

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Japan's defence partnerships beyond the alliance, extended this week to Turkey, have their largest expression in a fighter aircraft being built with Britain and Italy.

The Global Combat Air Programme, announced in December 2022, brings together the three countries to develop a next-generation combat aircraft to enter service in the middle of the 2030s.

It replaced Japan's plan to develop its own successor to the F-2 fighter and Britain's Tempest project, and it is the first major defence programme in which Japan is an equal partner with European countries rather than a customer of the United States.

The programme is managed by a joint organisation headquartered in Britain, and its industrial work is shared among Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, BAE Systems and Leonardo, with engine, electronics and other companies in each country.

In 2024, Japan approved the export of the aircraft to third countries under its relaxed transfer rules, a decision that had divided the governing coalition and that was made to keep the programme viable.

The aircraft's cost will be enormous and its success uncertain, as such programmes always are, and the three governments have set a demanding schedule.

For Japan, the programme is a hedge. It maintains a domestic aircraft industry, gives Japan technology it would otherwise buy, and diversifies its defence relationships without weakening the alliance with the United States, whose aircraft Japan continues to operate.

The Turkish meeting this week fits the same pattern of diversification, on a smaller scale and in a different field.

The programme also makes Japan an arms exporter in a way it has never been, and the politics of that change are not settled.

Its first flight is years away, and the alliance's fighters will defend Japan in the meantime.

POLITICS

The New York Ledger: What the Prime Minister Brought Home

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Prime Minister Takaichi's General Assembly week, which ended with a press conference and a flight home, produced a ledger that her government will cite for months.

On the alliance, a 35-minute meeting with President Trump that confirmed co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals, with no demand for a defence-spending figure and a frank exchange on the International Criminal Court.

At the rostrum, a first speech that put the rule of law first, expressed consistent support for the court without naming the sanctions, pledged to seek deletion of the former enemy clauses and reform of the Security Council, and offered support for Middle East energy supplies.

In the corridors, a first meeting with President Zelensky, a meeting with Secretary-General Guterres on Council reform and Japanese staff, and a meeting with President Erdoğan on defence equipment.

With allies, a trilateral statement with the United States and South Korea opposing economic coercion, and a statement with European countries on protecting international judicial bodies.

From Beijing, an objection to her speech, insisting that the former enemy clauses are important for the post-war order.

And for the Diet, a declared intention to pass a consumption tax cut, stated in New York so that the domestic agenda was set before the plane landed.

The ledger's debit side is the list of things not settled: the 15% tariff, unmentioned in any account of the summit; the sanctions on the court, which the frank exchange registered but did not prevent; and the security documents, whose spending figure Washington did not demand this week and may demand another.

What the week established is that the government can conduct a full diplomatic programme while a typhoon kills ten people at home, and that its handling of both

will be judged together.

Today's American-Chinese summit will show whether the alliance position assembled in New York holds in Washington, and that verdict will be entered in the same ledger.

POLITICS

The Press Conference That Ends Every Trip, and What It Is For

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The Prime Minister's press conference in New York, at which she expressed her intention to pass the consumption tax cut, followed a convention that ends every Japanese prime minister's foreign trip.

The end-of-trip press conference is the moment at which a leader who has spent days on foreign affairs turns back to domestic politics, and its content is planned as carefully as any speech.

Its purpose is to set the agenda for the return. By stating in New York that she wants the tax cut passed, the Prime Minister ensured that the extraordinary Diet session would be framed by her priority before she landed.

Japanese prime ministers hold two kinds of press encounter. The formal press conference, with prepared statements and questions from the reporters' club, is the setting for policy announcements. The brief exchanges known as burasagari, taken standing in a corridor, handle the day's questions.

The end-of-trip conference is the formal kind, and it is broadcast live in Japan at an hour chosen for domestic audiences rather than local ones.

Questions at such conferences are often submitted in advance, a practice criticised by reporters outside the club system and defended by the office as necessary for order.

The Prime Minister used hers to link the week's diplomacy to the domestic agenda: the alliance affirmed, the court supported, and now the tax cut to be passed.

Reporters will have asked about the typhoon, whose toll rose to ten while she was abroad, and about the summit's silence on the tariff, and her answers will be parsed in the Diet.

The convention exists because Japanese politics does not pause for foreign trips, and a leader who returns without having set the agenda finds it set for her.

Yomiuri Shimbun's report of the conference led with the tax cut, which is what the office intended.

POLITICS

After Washington Talks to Beijing, It Talks to Tokyo: How Allies Are Briefed

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

When President Trump and President Xi finish their meeting today, one of the first calls from the American side will go to Tokyo.

Briefing allies after a summit with a rival is a fixed practice of American diplomacy, and for Japan it runs through several channels at once.

The most senior is a call between national security advisers, or between the President and the Prime Minister when the outcome warrants it, within hours of the meeting.

Below that, the State Department briefs the Japanese embassy in Washington and the American embassy in Tokyo briefs the foreign ministry, in meetings that convey what was said on the subjects allies care about most, including Taiwan.

On economic questions, the trade and commerce ministries exchange accounts with their Japanese counterparts, particularly where arrangements on minerals or technology affect Japanese companies.

The briefings are the point at which Tuesday's confirmation of co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals is tested against what Washington actually agreed with Beijing.

Allies do not always hear everything, and the gap between what they are told and what later emerges is a recurring source of friction in the relationship.

Japan has its own sources: its embassy in Beijing, its intelligence relationships and its reading of Chinese official statements, which are often more informative than American briefings about what Beijing believes it secured.

The Prime Minister, back in Tokyo, will receive the assessment from the foreign ministry and the

National Security Secretariat, and her government's public reaction will be calibrated to it.

By tomorrow's papers, Japanese readers will know the outline of what was agreed; the details that matter to industry will take longer.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: What Japan Needs From a Room It Is Not In

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

Japan's interests in today's American-Chinese summit are large, specific and represented by no one at the table.

That is the ordinary condition of an ally, and it is why the week's diplomacy was arranged as it was: the Prime Minister met the President first, the three allied foreign ministers issued their statement, and the working-level agenda on minerals and chips was confirmed before Beijing's leader arrived.

The first thing Japan needs is that any arrangement on rare earths covers its manufacturers. A deal that eases Chinese export controls for American firms alone would leave Japanese magnet and motor makers exposed and would make Tuesday's confirmation of co-operation look hollow.

The second is that the semiconductor controls, which Japan helped build with its own restrictions on chip-making equipment in 2023, are not traded away for commercial concessions. Japanese equipment makers have lost sales to comply with them, and a unilateral American relaxation would leave them holding the cost without the purpose.

The third is language on Taiwan that does not shift. Japan's security planning rests on the assumption that the American commitment there is stable, and any softening in a summit statement would be read in Tokyo, and in Beijing, as a change.

The fourth is the smallest and the most likely: a channel on artificial intelligence accidents, which would make the technology competition marginally safer without affecting Japan's position in it.

Japan's leverage over the outcome is indirect. It lies in the alliance's institutional habits, in the working-level relationships that survive leaders' meetings, and in the fact that the American position on minerals and chips depends on Japanese industry to be credible.

The risk is the personal dimension of the President's diplomacy, which has produced arrangements over allies' heads before and could again.

By tomorrow morning, Tokyo will know which it got, and the market will have begun to price it.

The Prime Minister said on Tuesday that the alliance had shown the world its strength. Today the world will see whether it showed Beijing.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Why Beijing Wants the Word 'Enemy' Kept

By William | Senior Political Analyst

China's insistence that the Charter's former enemy clauses are important for the post-war order is not about the clauses, which have no operative effect. It is about who gets to define the order.

The settlement of 1945 is the foundation of China's claim to its place among the permanent members of the Security Council and of its narrative of Japan as a country whose past requires permanent vigilance.

Deleting the clauses would concede that Japan's post-war status is settled, that seventy years of membership have closed the question, and that the organisation's founding document should describe the world as it is rather than as it was in June 1945.

Keeping them preserves an instrument. Whenever Japan seeks a permanent seat, revises its security posture or, as this week, asserts its standing at the rostrum, the clauses offer Beijing a text to cite.

That is the argument of Taro Suzuki's cartoon this morning, and it is one that Japanese diplomats have made in private for years.

The objection arrived in the same week that China's Foreign Ministry announced President Xi's state visit to Washington and the allied foreign ministers opposed economic coercion, which shows the range of Beijing's diplomacy: negotiating with the United States, pressing its neighbours, and defending 1945.

Japan's response has been consistent and mild: restate the pledge, cite the Assembly's resolutions, and avoid

a confrontation that would achieve nothing against a veto.

The mildness has a cost. Positions restated for decades without result come to look ceremonial, and the clauses have outlasted every Japanese leader who promised to remove them.

The Prime Minister's pledge was stronger in tone than her predecessors', promising prompt removal rather than eventual reform, and Beijing's objection was correspondingly quick.

Neither changed the text. The Charter still says what it said in 1945, and that, for Beijing, is the point.

INTERNATIONAL

A Week at the Rostrum: Four Speeches That Framed the Assembly

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The General Assembly's opening week, which ends with the Prime Minister's return to Tokyo and the American-Chinese summit in Washington, was framed by four speeches that described the world from four directions.

Prime Minister Takaichi appealed for the rule of law, expressed consistent support for the International Criminal Court without naming the sanctions prepared against it, and pledged to seek the removal of the Charter's former enemy clauses and the reform of the Security Council.

President Trump called for withdrawal from the court, denounced climate change policies as far-left, and, away from the rostrum, signed an order for two new military bases in Greenland.

Iran's president told the Assembly that his country was the victim of terrorism, and the American representative left the chamber, in a week in which the two governments nevertheless held their first talks in two and a half months.

And China's Foreign Ministry, speaking from Beijing rather than the rostrum, objected to the Prime Minister's speech, insisting that the former enemy clauses are important for the post-war order.

The four positions describe the divisions of the moment: an ally of the United States defending institutions that Washington attacks; a President dismantling commitments that his predecessors made; an adversary presenting itself as a victim; and a rival defending the settlement of 1945 as a weapon for the present.

Japan's place in that picture is the one it has occupied for seventy years: inside the institutions, allied to the United States, and opposed by China on the terms of its own standing.

The speeches changed no policy. They set the record, which is what General Assembly speeches do, and the record will be cited when the sanctions on the court are imposed, when the Charter's amendment is next proposed, and when the strait is reopened.

The Prime Minister's press conference in New York turned from the rostrum to the Diet and the consumption tax cut, which is where her week's words will be tested first.

The Assembly's general debate continues without the leaders who opened it, and the diplomats who remain will work through its resolutions until December.

SOCIETY

Typhoon No. 25 by the Numbers, Thursday

Compiled by the Society Desk

10 dead in Chiba and Kanagawa; 4 missing.

1: the number of times Inbanuma's embankment has failed since management began. This was it.

2 kilometres: how far the water reached from the breach.

3 months: the expected restoration time for the Uchibo Line, Anegasaki to Kisarazu.

1 month: for the Sobu Line, Enokido to Naruto.

22 buildings destroyed and 428 flooded across the two prefectures, by Wednesday's count.

4 days: the search for the missing has now run.

2 expressways, the Tateyama and the Ken-O, with landslide sections still restricted.

9 p.m. Tuesday: the storm became an extratropical cyclone far east of Japan.

No. 26: the number the depression south of Japan would take if upgraded.

INTERNATIONAL



President Trump before the flags of the United States and China. His summit with President Xi Jinping is held today, Washington time, with trade, Taiwan and artificial intelligence on the agenda. (Photo: WPM Productions)

INTERNATIONAL

Trade, Taiwan and Artificial Intelligence: The Three Subjects on Today's Table

The state visit gives the two presidents the ceremony; the agenda gives them the argument
By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

President Trump and President Xi Jinping meet today in Washington with trade and Taiwan on the agenda, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun, and with artificial intelligence expected to feature alongside them.

The photograph above shows Mr. Trump before the flags of the two countries, the setting in which the visit's formal statements are made.

Trade comes first because it is where both governments can point to results. Tariffs, purchases and the terms of access to each other's markets are the subjects on which summits produce announcements, and a state visit is expected to produce some.

Taiwan is the subject on which neither side expects movement and both watch every word. The United States maintains its long-standing policy toward the island; China regards it as an internal matter; and the language each uses after the meeting will be parsed in Tokyo and Taipei.

Artificial intelligence connects the two. The chips that train advanced models are subject to American export controls that Japan helped build, and the rare earths in the equipment that makes them are subject to Chinese export controls that the allies oppose.

The American proposal for a system of mutual notification of accidents involving artificial intelligence, reported by Yomiuri earlier this week, is the one item on which the two governments could agree to co-operate rather than compete.

Japan's interests run through all three. Its exporters face a 15% American tariff and compete with Chinese rivals; its islands lie within sight of Taiwan; and its manufacturers sit inside both chokepoints, dependent on Chinese minerals and bound by allied chip controls.

Prime Minister Takaichi's meeting with Mr. Trump on Tuesday, and the confirmation of co-operation on artificial intelligence and critical minerals, were Tokyo's attempt to have those interests on the table before today.

The trilateral statement with South Korea opposing economic coercion added Seoul's weight to the same position.

What Beijing wants is clearer than what it will get: relief from technology controls, stability in trade, and American language on Taiwan that it can present at home as a gain.

What Washington wants, on the President's own account, is a deal, and the personal relationship between the two leaders is the instrument through which he has sought it.

The outcome will be known in Tokyo by tomorrow morning, in readouts, statements and the first reactions of the market that reopens today.

For a Japanese reader, the question is whether the position Tokyo put on record this week survives a room it could not enter.

INTERNATIONAL

A State Visit's Choreography, From the Tarmac to the Table

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The photographs of President Trump welcoming President Xi Jinping mark the start of a choreography that state visits follow with little variation.

A state visit is extended by one head of state to another, and its elements are fixed by protocol: an arrival ceremony with military honours, a review of troops, formal talks, a state dinner and, usually, a joint appearance before the press.

The handshake at the welcome is the visit's first image, and both governments manage it. Body language, the order of flags and the words exchanged in the first minute are studied by analysts in every capital with an interest in the relationship.

The talks that follow are prepared over months by officials, and the leaders' meeting confirms outcomes already negotiated, adjusts them where the leaders choose, and sends the signals that only leaders can send.

State dinners are occasions for commercial announcements and for the presence of business leaders, which is why Japanese companies watch the guest lists and the contracts announced on such evenings.

For today's meeting, trade, Taiwan and artificial intelligence are the reported agenda, and the written outcome, whether a joint statement or separate readouts, will show how far the two sides agreed.

The last Chinese state visit to Washington was in 2015, and the relationship has passed through a trade war, technology controls and a pandemic since, which makes the choice of the highest form of visit a statement in itself.

Mr. Xi departed for the United States on Wednesday, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun, and the summit is held today, Washington time, which places its results in tomorrow's Japanese morning papers.

Japan's government will receive its own briefing from Washington after the meeting, through the alliance channels that exist for the purpose.

The Tokyo market, reopening today, will trade on the ceremony first and the substance tomorrow.

INTERNATIONAL

The Words on Taiwan That Tokyo Will Parse Tomorrow

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

Taiwan is on the agenda of today's American-Chinese summit, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Mainichi Shimbun, and the language the two governments use afterward will be read in Tokyo with unusual care.

American policy toward Taiwan rests on a set of documents assembled over decades: the three joint communiqués with Beijing, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, and the assurances given to Taipei in 1982.

Under them, the United States acknowledges Beijing's position that there is one China, maintains unofficial relations with Taiwan, provides it with

defensive arms and leaves deliberately unclear whether it would intervene in a conflict, a posture known as strategic ambiguity.

Beijing's aim at every summit is to move the American language toward its own formula, in which the United States opposes rather than merely does not support Taiwanese independence, and to secure statements it can present at home as concessions.

Washington's aim is to reaffirm its existing policy in terms that do not alarm Taipei or its allies, and the precise verbs and adjectives of the readout are the measure of whether it succeeded.

Japan's stake is direct. Its south-western islands lie within sight of Taiwan, its sea lanes pass beside it, and its security documents plan for contingencies in the area.

Japanese governments have described peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as important to Japan's security in joint statements with Washington since 2021, and any softening of American language would be read as a change in the environment those statements describe.

The alliance briefing that follows the summit will convey what was said, and the foreign ministry will compare the American and Chinese readouts for the gaps between them.

A summit that reaffirms existing policy is the outcome Tokyo prefers; a summit that produces new language is the outcome it fears.

By tomorrow morning the words will be known, and Japanese readers will have learned to weigh them.

INTERNATIONAL

Washington and Tehran Talk for the First Time in Two and a Half Months, With the Strait at Issue

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The United States and Iran have held talks for the first time in two and a half months, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, in a contact that offers clues to ending the fighting in the Gulf, including the conditions for reopening the strait.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which a large share of the world's seaborne oil passes, is the point at which the conflict, now in its seventh month, reaches Japan most directly.

Japan imports the great majority of its crude oil from the Gulf, and tankers bound for Japanese refineries pass through the strait. Its constriction has been the central concern of Japanese energy policy this year.

Talks after a long silence do not mean an agreement is near. They mean that both sides have judged the costs of continued fighting high enough to test what the other would accept.

Conditions for reopening the strait would presumably include arrangements for the safety of shipping, the status of forces in the region and the sanctions and pressures that preceded the conflict.

Japan is not a party to the talks, but it has an interest in them as large as any country's, and its diplomats will be seeking to learn what was discussed.

The Prime Minister's speech to the General Assembly this week offered support for energy supplies from the Middle East and announced a Gulf co-operation plan, positions that assume the strait will reopen and Japan will help keep it so.

Iran's president told the Assembly the same week that his country was the victim of terrorism, and the American representative left the chamber during his speech, an exchange that shows how far apart the public positions remain.

The United States is meanwhile considering a ban on exports of diesel oil, a measure that would tighten fuel markets further and that Japanese refiners are watching.

For Japanese households, the talks matter through the price of petrol, which the government continues to subsidise at record cost, and through the electricity generated from imported fuel.

INTERNATIONAL

From Vienna to the Strait: A Decade of American-Iranian Talks

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The talks between the United States and Iran reported by Yomiuri Shimbun, the first in two and a half months, continue a negotiation that has run, on and off, for more than a decade.

The nuclear agreement of 2015, negotiated in Vienna between Iran and six powers including the United States, limited Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for relief from sanctions.

The United States withdrew from the agreement in 2018 under President Trump's first administration and reimposed sanctions, and Iran responded by expanding its nuclear activities beyond the agreement's limits.

Attempts to revive the agreement under the Biden administration failed, and the relationship deteriorated through the wars in the Middle East that followed.

The Gulf conflict now in its seventh month is the point at which that deterioration became a war affecting the world's oil supply, with the Strait of Hormuz constricted and Japan's tankers among those affected.

Talks after two and a half months of silence suggest that both sides have reached a point at which the costs of continued fighting outweigh the costs of talking, which is the usual precondition for negotiation.

Conditions for reopening the strait, reported as a subject of the talks, would presumably involve the security of shipping, the presence of forces in the region and the sanctions that preceded the conflict.

Japan has interests in every element. It imports most of its crude oil from the Gulf, it has maintained relations with Iran throughout, and it has offered support for the region's energy supplies at the United Nations this week.

The theatre of the General Assembly, where Iran's president described his country as a victim of terrorism and the American delegate walked out, shows how far the public positions remain apart.

The negotiators' table is where the strait will be reopened, if it is, and Japan will watch it more closely than any speech.

INTERNATIONAL

The Strait That Sets Japan's Petrol Price

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The conditions for reopening the strait, reported by Yomiuri Shimbun as a subject of the American-Iranian talks, concern a waterway on which Japan's economy has depended for half a century.

The Strait of Hormuz, between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula, is the only sea route out of the Gulf, and a large share of the world's seaborne oil passes through it, along with much of the liquefied natural gas exported by Qatar.

Japan's crude oil comes overwhelmingly from Gulf producers, principally Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, and almost all of it passes through the strait on its way to Japanese refineries.

That dependence has survived every effort to reduce it, because the Gulf's reserves are the largest, its production the most reliable and its tankers the most economical route to Japan.

The conflict now in its seventh month has constricted the strait, and the effects have reached Japanese households through petrol prices, subsidised at record cost, and through the cost of electricity generated from imported fuel.

Japan holds stockpiles, government and private, built up since the oil shocks of the 1970s, which provide a buffer measured in months, and it has drawn on them before during Gulf crises.

The Maritime Self-Defense Force has conducted information-gathering missions in the region in the past under a cabinet decision, and Japan's tankers have relied on the naval presence of the United States and others for their safety.

Reopening the strait fully would require arrangements for the security of shipping that both Iran and the United States accept, which is why the talks' reported focus on conditions is significant.

The Prime Minister's Gulf co-operation plan, announced at the United Nations, assumes a reopened strait and offers Japanese support for the region's infrastructure and supply resilience.

Until the tankers move freely, the strait remains the single largest external factor in the price a Japanese driver pays at the pump.

INTERNATIONAL

INTERNATIONAL

Iran's President Tells the Assembly His Country Is the Victim of Terrorism; the American Delegate Walks Out

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Iran's president told the United Nations General Assembly that his country is the victim of terrorism, and the American representative left the chamber during his address, according to the reports available.

The exchange took place in the same week that the United States and Iran held their first talks in two and a half months, which shows the difference between the public posture of the conflict and the private search for a way out of it.

Walkouts during Assembly speeches are a form of protest with a long history, used by delegations to register objection without disrupting proceedings.

The Gulf conflict has now run for seven months, and its effect on the Strait of Hormuz has made it a matter of daily concern for Japan, which draws most of its crude oil from the region.

Iran's framing of itself as a victim addresses audiences in the region and among non-aligned countries, where the American position has fewer supporters than in the Assembly's Western bloc.

The American walkout addresses domestic and allied audiences, signalling that Washington regards the Iranian account as unacceptable even while its negotiators talk.

Japan has maintained relations with Iran throughout the confrontation, a position inherited from decades in which Tokyo sought to keep channels open to a major oil producer, and it has avoided public statements that would close them.

The Prime Minister's offer of support for Middle East energy supplies, made at the same Assembly, was addressed to the Gulf producers rather than to Iran, but its purpose, keeping oil flowing, depends on the conflict ending.

The talks reported by Yomiuri, with conditions for reopening the strait among their subjects, are the more significant development, and their continuation will matter more than any speech.

For Japanese readers, the Assembly's theatre and the negotiators' table are two views of the same question: when the tankers will move freely again.

INTERNATIONAL

Leaving the Chamber: The Walkout as a Diplomatic Instrument

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The American representative's departure from the General Assembly during the Iranian president's speech, in which he described his country as the victim of terrorism, used a form of protest with a long history at the United Nations.

A walkout registers objection without breaching the rules of the chamber. Delegations may leave at any time, and their departure during a speech is understood by everyone present as a statement about the speaker.

The Assembly has seen many. Delegations walked out of speeches by Iran's presidents in the 2000s and 2010s over remarks about Israel and the Holocaust, and the practice has been used by and against many governments since the organisation's early years.

Its advantage over a rebuttal is silence. A walkout says that the speech does not merit an answer, which is a stronger position than engaging with its claims.

Its cost is the same. A government that leaves the chamber cannot be seen to have listened, and the audience that remains hears the speech without the objection.

For Washington, walking out of the Iranian speech while its negotiators talked to Tehran about the strait describes the two tracks on which the confrontation now runs: public rejection and private negotiation.

Japan's delegation, which maintains relations with Iran and imports oil from the Gulf, would have remained seated, as it generally does, and its position is expressed in its own speeches rather than in its movements.

The General Assembly's rules of procedure govern the floor, and delegations' conduct in the chamber is otherwise a matter of custom.

Walkouts are reported because they are visible, and

the Iranian speech will be remembered in part for the empty American seat.

The talks that matter, on the conditions for reopening the strait, are held where no one walks out because no one is watching.

INTERNATIONAL

Trump Calls Climate Policy 'Far-Left' at the UN and Signs for Two New Bases in Greenland

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

President Trump denounced climate change policies as far-left in his address to the United Nations, and he has signed an order to establish two new American military bases in Greenland, according to the reports available.

The two statements come from the same General Assembly week in which Prime Minister Takaichi appealed for the rule of law and pledged support for the Middle East's energy supplies, and they show the distance between the allies' public agendas.

Japan's climate policy rests on targets restated at each Assembly, and its energy mix depends on imported fossil fuels whose cost has risen with the weak yen and the Gulf conflict.

A President who describes climate policy as far-left removes American pressure on Japan to accelerate decarbonisation, and the Japan Agricultural News reported this week that the slowdown in decarbonisation has increased the importance of domestic refineries.

Greenland is a different matter. The island, an autonomous territory of Denmark, hosts an American base at Pituffik, formerly Thule, that has watched the Arctic since the Cold War.

Mr. Trump's interest in Greenland dates from his first term, when he proposed purchasing it, and the establishment of new bases extends the American military footprint in an Arctic whose shipping routes and resources have drawn Chinese and Russian attention.

For Japan, the Arctic is a matter of shipping routes and of the Russian presence on its northern flank, and the American build-up in Greenland is part of a wider contest that reaches the seas around Hokkaido.

Denmark's reaction, and Greenland's own, were not detailed in the reports available, and the establishment of bases on another country's territory requires its consent.

The President's Assembly speech also called for withdrawal from the International Criminal Court, a position Japan opposes.

The week's speeches left the alliance affirmed in private and its members' public priorities visibly different.

INTERNATIONAL

Greenland, the Arctic and Why Tokyo Watches Both

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

President Trump's order for two new military bases in Greenland concerns an island that is far from Japan and increasingly relevant to it.

Greenland is the world's largest island, an autonomous territory of Denmark with a population of about 57,000, most of them Inuit, and a government in Nuuk that manages its internal affairs while Copenhagen handles defence and foreign policy.

The United States has maintained a military presence there since the Second World War, and the base at Pituffik, formerly Thule, in the far north-west hosts missile warning and space surveillance systems.

Mr. Trump's interest in the island dates from 2019, when he proposed purchasing it, and it revived in his second term with statements about American control that alarmed Copenhagen and Nuuk.

The strategic argument is the Arctic. As sea ice retreats, shipping routes across the top of the world are opening, and the resources beneath the Arctic seabed have drawn the attention of Russia, which has built up its northern military presence, and China, which describes itself as a near-Arctic state.

Japan's interest runs through both. The Northern Sea Route along Russia's Arctic coast would shorten voyages between Europe and Japanese ports, and the Russian build-up in the Arctic extends to the seas around Hokkaido and the Northern Territories.

Japan has an Arctic policy of its own, adopted in 2015, with research stations, an icebreaking research vessel programme and observer status at the Arctic Council.

New American bases in Greenland would strengthen the northern approaches of the alliance system that Japan belongs to on the other side of the world, and would confirm that Washington regards the Arctic as a theatre of competition.

Denmark's consent is required for bases on its territory, and Greenland's own government has views on its future that neither Washington nor Copenhagen can ignore.

For Japanese readers, the island is a reminder that the competition shaping their own region is global, and that the Arctic has become one of its fronts.

INTERNATIONAL

Cambodia Uncovers a Chinese-Linked Fraud Hub Known as 'Park No. 8'

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Cambodian authorities have uncovered and disclosed a Chinese-affiliated fraud hub known as Park No. 8, according to the reports available, the latest in a series of actions against the scam compounds that have spread across South-East Asia.

The compounds are industrial-scale operations in which workers, many of them trafficked or recruited under false pretences, run online fraud aimed at victims across Asia and beyond, from investment scams to romance fraud and impersonation.

Japan is among the countries whose citizens have been both victims and, in some cases, workers. Japanese nationals, including young people recruited through social media, have been found in compounds in Cambodia and Myanmar and repatriated with the help of Japanese diplomats.

The scale of the industry is enormous, with revenues estimated in the tens of billions of dollars a year across the region, and its operators have moved between countries as enforcement has tightened.

Cambodia has faced pressure from China, whose citizens are heavily involved as both operators and victims, and from Western governments to act against the compounds.

Disclosure of a named hub suggests a co-ordinated operation rather than a raid on a single building, and the details of arrests and rescues will follow.

For Japanese police, the compounds are connected to the fraud that reaches Japanese households by telephone and online, and to the recruitment of young Japanese into criminal work through the dark part-time jobs advertised on social media.

Asahi Shimbun reported this week on the rise in damage from part-time jobs involving fake gold necklaces, a scheme that police have warned against and that fits the same pattern of recruitment.

International co-operation against the compounds has grown, with Japan participating through police liaison and consular channels.

The industry's ability to relocate has defeated enforcement before, and whether Park No. 8's closure is a turning point or a pause will depend on what happens to its operators.

INTERNATIONAL

The Compounds: How South-East Asia Became the Factory Floor of Online Fraud

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The fraud hub uncovered in Cambodia this week belongs to an industry that has grown, within a decade, into one of the largest criminal enterprises in the world.

Scam compounds began as casino-linked operations in the border regions of Cambodia, Myanmar and Laos, where Chinese-run gambling businesses catered to mainland customers barred from gambling at home.

When the pandemic closed the casinos, the operators turned to online fraud, and the compounds became call centres for schemes aimed at victims across Asia, Europe and North America.

The workers are often trafficked. Recruited by advertisements for legitimate jobs, they arrive to find their passports confiscated and their days spent running scripted frauds under threat of punishment.

The schemes are varied and refined: fake investment platforms that show victims rising balances until they try to withdraw, romance frauds conducted over months, impersonation of officials and banks, and the fake part-time jobs that recruit accomplices.

Japan has been reached from both directions. Japanese victims lose money to the compounds' schemes, and young Japanese have been found working in them after answering online advertisements.

Governments in the region have raided compounds under pressure from China, whose citizens dominate both the operators and the victims, and from Western countries, but the operations have shown a capacity to relocate faster than enforcement can follow.

The industry's revenues have been estimated in the tens of billions of dollars a year, and its proceeds are laundered through cryptocurrency and the region's financial systems.

Japanese police co-operate through liaison officers and through international organisations, and the National Police Agency has warned repeatedly about recruitment through social media.

Cambodia's disclosure of Park No. 8 is a step; the industry's history suggests the operators will already be planning the next compound.

INTERNATIONAL

How Turkey Built a Drone Industry the World Buys From

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The co-operation on defence equipment that Prime Minister Takaichi confirmed with President Erdoğan brings Japan into contact with a defence industry that has grown from near nothing to global significance in two decades.

Turkey's defence sector was built deliberately, through state investment, protected procurement and a policy of domestic production wherever possible, after decades of dependence on American and European suppliers.

Its best-known product is the Bayraktar TB2 drone, built by Baykar, which entered service in the 2010s and gained international attention in the conflicts in Libya, Syria and Nagorno-Karabakh before being used extensively by Ukraine.

The drone's appeal was its price and its availability. Cheaper than Western equivalents and sold with fewer conditions, it found buyers across Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe.

Turkey now produces its own frigates, armoured vehicles, missiles and a fighter aircraft programme, and its defence exports have grown into the billions of dollars a year.

For Japan, whose Defense Ministry is accelerating the development of attack drones, Turkish experience in producing unmanned systems cheaply and in quantity is directly relevant.

Japan's own defence industry has the opposite profile: highly sophisticated, small in scale, and historically barred from exporting, with rules only partly relaxed in recent years.

Co-operation could take several forms, from joint development to the purchase of Turkish systems or components, and each would have to satisfy Japan's export principles and its alliance commitments.

Turkey's independent line within NATO, including its purchase of Russian air defence systems, complicates its relationships with Western partners, and Japan will weigh that in any arrangement.

The confirmation in New York indicates direction rather than detail, and the defence ministries of the two countries will decide what it becomes.

INTERNATIONAL



President Trump speaking during his visit to China in May. Today's state visit by President Xi to Washington returns the courtesy four months later. (Photo: WPM Productions)

INTERNATIONAL

From a Podium in China to a Handshake in Washington: The Year's Diplomacy Between the Two Powers

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The photograph above shows President Trump speaking during his visit to China in May, and today's state visit by President Xi Jinping to Washington returns that courtesy four months later.

Reciprocal visits by the two presidents within a single year mark the most intense period of leader-level contact between the United States and China in a decade.

The intensity reflects necessity rather than warmth. The two economies remain bound together in trade, technology and finance even as their governments compete for influence, and the confrontation over tariffs and export controls has shown both sides the costs of a breakdown.

For Japan, the pattern of visits carries a familiar anxiety. Japanese governments have long feared arrangements made between Washington and Beijing over the heads of allies, a fear rooted in President Nixon's opening to China in 1971, announced without warning to Tokyo.

That episode, remembered in Japan as the Nixon shock, shaped a generation of Japanese diplomacy and explains the effort this week to have Tokyo's position on record before today's meeting.

The alliance has institutional safeguards that did not exist in 1971: regular consultations, integrated planning and, this week, a leaders' meeting confirming co-operation on the very subjects Washington and Beijing will negotiate.

Beijing's diplomacy toward Japan has meanwhile hardened, as its objection this week to the Prime Minister's speech on the Charter's former enemy clauses shows.

The May visit and today's summit bracket a year in which the two powers have negotiated on rare earths and chips, sparred over Taiwan and the seas around Japan, and kept the relationship functioning.

Japanese companies have adjusted to the pattern by diversifying supply chains, complying with allied controls and lobbying both governments for predictability.

Whether today's meeting produces a lasting arrangement or a pause will be judged in Tokyo by whether Japanese interests were counted in it.

ECONOMY

Tokyo Reopens After Four Days With a Weaker Yen, a New Policy Rate and a Summit to Price

Yomiuri reports the depreciation trend strengthening again as the effect of the finance ministry's rate check fades

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens this morning after four closed days, and the Bank of Japan's policy interest rate of 1.25% applies from today, in a session that begins with the yen weakening again, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The yen's depreciation trend is strengthening again, Yomiuri reported, with the effect of the recent rate check by the authorities seen as temporary.

A rate check, in which officials at the finance ministry or the Bank of Japan telephone dealers to ask for exchange rate quotes, is a warning that intervention could follow, and it moved the yen briefly last week. Its effect has faded, as such effects

do when the underlying gap in interest rates remains.

That gap has narrowed by a quarter of a point with today's rate, the highest in about 31 years, and it remains wide. The Federal Reserve's target range stands at 3.75% to 4.00%, and Yomiuri reported expectations of further Fed rate increases behind Wednesday's rise in American long-term interest rates.

On Wednesday, the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 352 points to 51,511, according to Yomiuri, as those expectations pushed bond yields higher.

Tokyo's session therefore opens with three forces to absorb at once: a weaker yen that helps exporters' earnings, higher American yields that weigh on equity valuations, and a domestic rate rise whose effect on banks, borrowers and savers begins today.

The American-Chinese summit is held today, Washington time, and its results on trade, Taiwan and artificial intelligence will reach the Tokyo market during or after the session, giving it a fourth force to price.

Companies exposed to rare earths, semiconductors and artificial intelligence, the subjects on which Japan and the United States confirmed co-operation on Tuesday and on which Washington and Beijing negotiate today, will be watched most closely.

The typhoon's costs, now counted at ten dead, 22 buildings destroyed and 428 flooded, with rail lines out for months and the Inbanuma levee breached, will be priced in insurers, railways, utilities and retailers.

The Nikkei 225 last closed at 65,018.95 on Friday the 18th, after three consecutive gains, and the TOPIX at 4,091.14.

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

Brokers generally advise against reading too much into the first hour of a session after a long break, when prices can overshoot before finding their level, and today's session has more than the usual number of reasons to overshoot.

The yen's level is the number households will notice. At the levels reported this week, imported food, fuel and consumer goods stay expensive, and the fuel subsidy remains at record cost.

By this evening, the market will have delivered its first verdict on the holiday's news; by tomorrow, on the summit.

ECONOMY

From Today, 1.25%: What Changes on the First Day of the New Rate

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The Bank of Japan's policy interest rate of 1.25%, decided on September 18, applies from today, the first business day after the holiday.

The change is felt first in the interbank market, where the overnight rate at which banks lend to each other moves to the new level, and from there through the short-term rates on which loans and deposits are priced.

Banks adjust their short-term prime rate, the benchmark for many corporate loans and for

variable-rate mortgages, in the weeks after a policy change, and borrowers see the effect at their next reset.

Variable-rate mortgages, which most Japanese homeowners hold, reset their interest twice a year, and a common convention limits changes to monthly payments to once every five years, with increases capped at 125% of the previous payment, so the household effect arrives gradually.

Savers see it sooner. Megabanks have been reported to be raising ordinary deposit interest rates to 0.5%, after two decades in which current accounts paid almost nothing.

Small companies feel the change fastest, since their borrowing is typically at floating rates tied to short-term benchmarks and they refinance more often than households.

Government borrowing costs rise with the rest, and the finance ministry's debt service estimates, already a constraint on the budget, will be revised upward.

The rate is the highest in about 31 years, and markets have already turned to the question of how quickly the next increase will come.

The yen has not strengthened on the decision. Yomiuri Shimbun reports the depreciation trend strengthening again, which is consistent with a gap to American rates that a quarter-point closes only slightly.

For the economy as a whole, today marks the point at which the cost of money in Japan is no longer close to zero, and every balance sheet in the country adjusts to that.

ECONOMY

The Telephone Call That Moves the Yen, and Why It Stops Working

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The rate check whose effect Yomiuri Shimbun reports is fading is the least dramatic instrument in the finance ministry's currency toolkit, and one of the most frequently used.

A rate check is a telephone call. Officials at the Bank of Japan, acting for the finance ministry, call dealers at major banks and ask for exchange rate quotes, without trading.

The call carries a message. Dealers know that the authorities check rates before intervening, and the fact of the call, which spreads through the market within minutes, warns traders that yen-selling positions could be punished.

The effect is immediate and short. The yen strengthens as traders reduce their positions, and it weakens again as they judge, over days, whether the warning will be followed by action.

Actual intervention, in which the ministry sells dollars and buys yen, is the follow-through, and it has been used this year, including the joint action with the United States on July 31.

Neither the check nor the intervention changes the interest rate gap between Japan and the United States, which is the reason the yen has been weak, and that is why their effects fade.

Today's policy rate of 1.25% narrows the gap by a quarter of a point; the Federal Reserve's target range remains at 3.75% to 4.00%, and Yomiuri reports expectations of further Fed increases.

Traders therefore treat rate checks as speed bumps rather than barriers, and the ministry uses them to slow the yen's fall rather than to reverse it.

The ministry's advantage is uncertainty. Traders cannot know when a check will become an intervention, and the memory of past interventions makes them cautious at levels the ministry is known to dislike.

With the yen weakening again as Tokyo reopens, the question is whether the next telephone call is followed by an order.

ECONOMY

Wall Street Falls 352 Points as Yields Rise on Expectations of Further Fed Increases

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 352 points to 51,511 on Wednesday, and American long-term interest rates rose on expectations of further rate increases by the Federal Reserve, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The move sets the tone for Tokyo's reopening. Higher American yields raise the return on dollar assets, weaken the yen and weigh on equity valuations, and Japanese investors returning from the holiday face all three.

Expectations of further Fed increases run against the direction in which markets had hoped the American central bank would move, and they reflect inflation that has proved more persistent than forecast.

The Fed's target range stands at 3.75% to 4.00%, and each increase widens the gap with Japan's policy rate, which becomes 1.25% today.

For the yen, the arithmetic is unforgiving: a quarter-point rise in Tokyo is offset by any quarter-point rise in Washington, and the currency trades on the expected path of both.

For Japanese exporters, a weaker yen flatters overseas earnings when converted, which has supported the Nikkei 225 through this year, while a weaker American market reduces the demand for what they sell.

American long-term rates also set the benchmark for Japanese government bond yields, which have risen with them, raising the cost of Japan's own borrowing at a time when the budget carries record subsidies and new commitments.

The Tokyo market's first session since Friday will show which force dominates: the earnings support of the yen or the valuation pressure of yields.

The American-Chinese summit today adds a fourth factor, and the market's reading of trade and technology signals will follow.

A 352-point fall is not a rout at the Dow's current level, and the market's direction will be clearer once the summit's outcome and the next inflation data are known.

ECONOMY

The Bill the Finance Ministry Fears: Debt Service in a World of 1.25%

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25%, in force from today, raises the cost of money for every borrower in the country, and the largest borrower is the government.

Japan's public debt exceeds a thousand trillion yen, more than twice the size of its economy, a burden that was manageable for decades because the interest on it was close to nothing.

As rates rise, the cost of servicing that debt rises with them, slowly at first, since existing bonds carry their original coupons, and then faster as they mature and are refinanced at the new rates.

The finance ministry's debt service estimates are already the fastest-growing item in the budget, and each increase in the policy rate revises them upward.

Long-term rates matter more than the policy rate for the government's costs, and Japanese long-term yields have risen with American ones, which climbed on Wednesday on expectations of further Federal Reserve increases.

The budget now carries a record fuel subsidy, a proposed consumption tax cut, defence spending rising toward 2% of output and the costs of a typhoon whose recovery will run for months.

Every one of those commitments is financed by borrowing, and the rate at which the borrowing is done is no longer near zero.

The finance ministry's resistance to the consumption tax cut, and its caution on defence financing, rest on this arithmetic, and the arithmetic worsened today.

Japan's debt is held overwhelmingly by domestic investors and by the Bank of Japan itself, which has limited the risk of a crisis, but the cost of servicing it is real whoever holds it.

For the government, the first day of the new rate is the day the budget's assumptions begin to change.

ECONOMY

The Last Time Tokyo Closed This Long: Ten Days in 2019

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Tokyo's four closed days, from Monday's Respect for the Aged Day to Wednesday's equinox, are unusual, but the market has closed for longer within recent memory.

In 2019, the Golden Week holidays were extended to ten days, from April 27 to May 6, to mark the

ECONOMY

accession of the Emperor on May 1, and the Tokyo Stock Exchange closed for the entire period.

The closure was the longest in the exchange's post-war history, and it produced weeks of debate about the risks of leaving Japanese investors unable to trade while the rest of the world moved.

Markets abroad fell during the break as trade tensions between the United States and China escalated, and Tokyo reopened on May 7 with a sharp fall that absorbed ten days of news in one session.

The episode taught the lesson that brokers repeat before every long holiday: positions held through a closure are exposed to everything that happens elsewhere, and the first session afterward is volatile.

This week's closure is shorter, and the news it has accumulated is of a different kind: a typhoon, a rate change already decided, a summit already held and one being held today.

The yen has traded through the break in markets without Tokyo, and Yomiuri Shimbun reports its depreciation strengthening again, which is the holiday's principal message to the reopening session.

Wall Street's 352-point fall on Wednesday, on rising yields, is the external move that Tokyo must absorb first.

The exchange has considered shortening holiday closures or opening on some holidays, and the debate revives each time a long break coincides with events abroad.

For today, the lesson of 2019 applies: expect the first hour to overshoot, and judge the market by where it closes.

ECONOMY

Gold at Records, and the Frauds That Follow It

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The police warning about part-time jobs selling fake gold necklaces, reported by Asahi Shimbun, arrives with the price of gold at record levels, and the two facts are connected.

Gold has risen through this year and last on demand from central banks, on the uncertainty created by the Gulf conflict and trade confrontations, and on the weakness of currencies including the yen, which has pushed the yen price of gold higher still.

Japanese households have bought gold in bars, coins and jewellery as a store of value, and the retail price displayed by dealers has become a figure that ordinary savers follow.

A rising price makes gold plausible to victims and attractive to criminals. A necklace described as gold seems a reasonable purchase to someone who has read the headlines, and a counterfeit costs its makers almost nothing.

The scheme's recruits, answering advertisements for easy part-time work, sell or pawn the counterfeits, or persuade older victims to buy them, and the proceeds flow to organisers who stay out of sight.

Legitimate gold is sold by dealers who assay it, stamp it and buy it back at published prices, and the police warning implicitly advises buyers to use them.

Gold's rise has also revived older frauds, from investment schemes promising gold-backed returns to the sale of gold that does not exist.

For Japan's economy, gold is a small asset class beside equities and bonds, but for households that distrust both, it has become the refuge of choice, which is why fraud has followed it.

The Tokyo market reopens today with the yen weakening again, which raises the yen price of gold further and keeps the frauds attractive.

Buyers are advised that gold sold at a discount to the dealer price, by strangers, through social media or door to door, is not gold.

ECONOMY

The Tax on the Weekend Room: How Cities Have Answered Inbound Demand

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Weekend hotel rates two to three times weekday levels, reported by Sankei News and driven by inbound bookings, have prompted a fiscal response from the cities that host the visitors.

Accommodation taxes, levied per night on hotel guests, were introduced first in Tokyo in 2002 and have spread to Osaka, Kyoto, Kanazawa, Fukuoka

and other cities as visitor numbers have grown.

The taxes are typically small, a few hundred yen a night on most rooms, and they fund tourism infrastructure, multilingual services and the management of crowding at popular sites.

Kyoto, whose temples and streets have borne the heaviest crowding, has raised its tax sharply this year, with the highest rate applying to the most expensive rooms.

The logic is that visitors who pay weekend rates of tens of thousands of yen can pay a tax that returns some of the benefit to residents who bear the costs of their presence.

The taxes fall on domestic travellers too, which is why they have been designed with lower rates for cheaper rooms, where Japanese families and business travellers concentrate.

Dynamic pricing, which sets the weekend rates, is beyond the reach of local governments, and the taxes are the instrument they have.

National policy has encouraged inbound tourism as a source of foreign earnings and regional growth, and the taxes are the local counterweight to that policy's crowding and price effects.

The typhoon week showed the other side of the market: eastern Japan's hotels priced Silver Week for a full house and found the storm had emptied them.

The autumn colour season will bring the next round of weekend pricing, and the next round of tax receipts for the cities that levy them.

ECONOMY

From Five Million Barrels to Three: How Japan Shrank Its Refineries

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The refineries whose importance the Japan Agricultural News reports rising are the survivors of a long contraction.

Japan's refining capacity peaked in the early 1980s at more than five million barrels a day, built for an economy whose oil consumption had grown without interruption since the 1950s.

Consumption then fell, as the oil shocks drove efficiency, as nuclear power and gas replaced oil in electricity generation, and, from the 2000s, as the population began to shrink and cars became more efficient.

The government pushed the industry to close surplus plants through legislation in the 2010s that set capacity targets, and refiners consolidated into three groups: ENEOS, Idemitsu Kosan and Cosmo Energy.

Closures followed. ENEOS shut its Wakayama refinery in 2023, and other plants across the country were closed or converted to terminals, bringing capacity to about three million barrels a day.

The strategy assumed continued decline in demand and an orderly transition to lower-carbon fuels, and it was sound on those assumptions.

The assumptions have changed. The Gulf conflict has made supply uncertain, decarbonisation has slowed, and the ability to refine whatever crude is available has become a strategic asset rather than a surplus cost.

The United States' consideration of a diesel export ban shows how exporters of refined products can restrict them in a crisis, which is the case for refining at home.

Reversing a contraction is harder than managing one. Closed refineries cannot be reopened cheaply, and the industry's remaining plants are ageing.

The government's energy policy, which has already reconsidered nuclear power, may now have to reconsider the refineries it spent a decade shrinking.

ECONOMY

Markets, Rates and Prices at a Glance

Compiled by the Economics Desk

TOKYO REOPENS: The Tokyo Stock Exchange resumes normal trading today after four closed days. The Nikkei 225 last closed at 65,018.95 on Sept. 18; the TOPIX at 4,091.14.

BANK OF JAPAN: The policy rate of 1.25% applies from today. Highest in approximately 31 years.

CURRENCY: The yen's depreciation trend is strengthening again, with the rate check's effect seen as temporary, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

NEW YORK, SEPT. 23: Dow Jones Industrial Average down 352 points to 51,511. U.S. long-term interest rates rose on expectations of further Fed increases (Yomiuri).

FEDERAL RESERVE: Target range 3.75%-4.00%.

SUMMIT: U.S.-China talks today, Washington time, with trade, Taiwan and AI on the agenda. Tuesday's Japan-U.S. summit confirmed co-operation on AI, semiconductors and critical minerals.

DEALS: Mitsui Fudosan invests 230 billion yen in the British Library redevelopment; construction has begun (Yomiuri).

ENERGY: Domestic refineries gain importance as decarbonisation slows and the Middle East situation continues (Japan Agricultural News). The U.S. is considering a diesel export ban.

HOTELS: Weekend accommodation rates two to three times weekday rates, driven by inbound bookings (Sankei).

RICE: Five-kilogram average in the 2,000-yen range; the harvest is late and its quality reduced by flooded fields.

BUSINESS

Mitsui Fudosan Puts 230 Billion Yen Into the British Library and Starts Building

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Mitsui Fudosan is investing 230 billion yen in the redevelopment of the British Library in London and has begun construction, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The project extends the national library's site at St Pancras, one of the largest public buildings constructed in Britain in the twentieth century, with new space for the library and for commercial development on adjoining land.

For Japan's largest property developer, it is the latest in a series of London investments that began more than a decade ago and included the redevelopment of the former BBC Television Centre in White City.

Japanese developers have expanded abroad as their home market has matured, and London has been a favoured destination for its legal stability, its depth of tenants and the long-term leases that suit patient capital.

The weak yen makes foreign investment more expensive in yen terms, which makes a commitment of this size a statement of confidence in the project's returns over decades rather than years.

The British Library holds one of the largest collections in the world, and the extension is intended to provide space for research, exhibitions and the commercial activity that funds public institutions in Britain.

Mitsui Fudosan's model, refined in Tokyo's Nihonbashi and Hibiya districts, combines offices, retail, residential and cultural uses in large mixed developments, and the London projects follow it.

Construction in central London is slow and expensive, and projects of this scale typically take years from ground-breaking to completion.

For Japanese investors, the project is a reminder that the country's capital continues to flow outward even as its own economy recovers, and that the largest Japanese companies now count London among their home markets.

The company's British portfolio will be among the assets that Tokyo's reopening market prices this morning, with the yen's level shaping their value in yen.

BUSINESS

The Developer That Built Nihonbashi Twice, and Now Builds in London

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Mitsui Fudosan, whose 230 billion yen investment in the British Library redevelopment Yomiuri Shimbun reported this week, is Japan's largest property developer and one of its oldest.

The company descends from the Mitsui group's real estate holdings, and its home ground is Nihonbashi, the Tokyo district where the Mitsui businesses began in the Edo period.

It has redeveloped Nihonbashi over two decades, replacing post-war buildings with towers that combine offices, shops, hotels and restored historic

facades, in a project designed to revive a district that the Ginza and Marunouchi had overshadowed.

Tokyo Midtown in Roppongi and Hibiya, and the LaLaport shopping centres across the country, are among its other landmarks, and its logistics and residential businesses are large.

The company's model, mixed-use development anchored by a cultural or historic institution, is the one it has taken to London, first at the former BBC Television Centre and now at the national library.

Its foreign expansion reflects the limits of a home market whose population is shrinking, and the search for growth in cities whose populations and rents are rising.

The weak yen raises the yen cost of new foreign commitments, which makes a 230 billion yen investment a statement about returns over decades.

Japanese developers' foreign holdings are also a hedge against the domestic cycle, and their income in foreign currencies is worth more in yen as the currency weakens.

The company's shares trade in Tokyo's reopened market today, and its foreign portfolio is part of what the market prices.

Nihonbashi, rebuilt twice in a century, is the model; London is the latest site.

BUSINESS

Why Japan's Developers Keep Choosing London

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Mitsui Fudosan's 230 billion yen commitment to the British Library, reported by Yomiuri Shimbun, continues a pattern in which Japan's largest property companies have made London their principal overseas market.

Mitsubishi Estate, Mitsui Fudosan, Sumitomo Realty and others have owned office towers, mixed-use developments and residential schemes in the British capital for decades, and their holdings have grown since the 2010s.

London's attraction lies in its legal system, which protects property rights and enforces long leases; in its depth of tenants, from finance to technology; and in a market large enough to absorb investments of Japanese scale.

The city's planning system, slow and demanding, suits developers accustomed to Tokyo's, and its cultural institutions offer the mixed-use, public-private projects that Japanese developers have refined at home.

Mitsui Fudosan's redevelopment of the former BBC Television Centre in White City, completed in stages over recent years, combined residential, office and leisure uses around a broadcasting landmark, and the British Library project follows the same logic around a national institution.

Japanese capital abroad is also a response to the home market's limits. Tokyo's redevelopment continues, but Japan's population is shrinking, and developers seek growth where populations and rents are rising.

The weak yen cuts both ways. It raises the yen cost of new foreign investment and raises the yen value of existing foreign holdings and their rental income.

Brexit and the pandemic tested London's appeal, and Japanese developers largely held their positions through both, which their continued investment now vindicates.

The British Library project will take years to complete, and its returns will be measured over the decades that Japanese developers plan for.

For Tokyo's market, reopening today, the company's foreign portfolio is part of what its shares are worth.

BUSINESS

The Refineries Japan Almost Closed Are Suddenly Important Again

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The presence of oil refineries in Japan is increasing in importance, with the slowdown in decarbonisation and the situation in the Middle East making domestic supply a priority, according to the Japan Agricultural News.

Japan's refining capacity has shrunk for two decades. Companies closed or converted plants as demand for petrol fell with a declining population, more efficient cars and the expectation that decarbonisation would

BUSINESS

reduce oil consumption further.

Refineries at Wakayama, Muroran and elsewhere have closed in recent years, and the industry consolidated into three major groups.

The Gulf conflict has reversed the calculation. With the Strait of Hormuz constricted and crude supplies uncertain, the ability to refine whatever crude Japan can obtain, from wherever it can obtain it, has become a matter of energy security.

The slowdown in decarbonisation, evident in the American administration's hostility to climate policy and in the delays to Japan's own transition, has extended the period over which refineries will be needed.

The United States is meanwhile considering a ban on exports of diesel oil, a measure that would tighten world fuel markets and make domestic refining of diesel more valuable.

Japan's refineries also supply the petrochemical industry, whose feedstocks come from the same plants, and their closure would have affected manufacturing beyond fuel.

The Japan Agricultural News' interest reflects the sector's dependence on diesel for tractors, combines and transport, and on kerosene for heating, all of which come from domestic refineries.

Refiners face a difficult balance between maintaining capacity that may be needed in a crisis and running plants that lose money in ordinary times, and the government's energy policy will have to address it.

The plants that the industry was preparing to retire are now assets, and their owners will be asked to keep them.

BUSINESS

Washington Weighs a Diesel Export Ban, and Fuel Markets Take Note

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The United States is considering a ban on exports of diesel oil, according to the reports available, a measure that would be a factor in energy prices worldwide.

The United States is among the largest exporters of refined fuels, and its diesel goes to Latin America, Europe and other markets that depend on it.

A ban would keep that diesel at home, lowering American prices and raising them elsewhere, as buyers who relied on American supply compete for what remains.

Japan is not a large importer of American diesel, refining most of its own from imported crude, but it is exposed to the world price, which a ban would raise.

Diesel matters more to the Japanese economy than to households. Trucks, buses, trains on non-electrified lines, ships, construction equipment and farm machinery run on it, and its price feeds into the cost of almost everything moved or built.

The Gulf conflict has already tightened fuel markets, and the consideration of an American ban shows how the effects of one crisis propagate through others.

The Japan Agricultural News' report on the rising importance of domestic refineries reflects the same concern: that Japan cannot rely on imported refined products when the world's exporters restrict them.

Japan holds stockpiles of crude and refined products, and its refiners can adjust output between petrol, diesel and kerosene within limits set by their plants.

The government's fuel subsidy, already at record cost, would face further pressure if diesel prices rose, since the subsidy covers diesel as well as petrol.

Whether the ban is imposed, and in what form, will be watched by every refiner and every trucking company in Japan.

BUSINESS

Two to Three Times the Weekday Rate: Weekend Hotel Prices Driven by Inbound Demand

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Accommodation rates in Japan are two to three times higher on weekends than on weekdays, with inbound reservations from overseas visitors the reason, according to Sankei News.

The gap reflects dynamic pricing, in which hotels adjust rates continuously to demand, a practice that has spread from airlines to almost all of Japan's hotel industry in the past decade.

Foreign visitors, who book weekends in the cities and resorts, pay in currencies that the weak yen has made strong, and hotels price to what that demand will bear.

For Japanese travellers, the result is a market in which a weekday night is affordable and a Saturday night is not, and in which the holiday periods that Japanese families depend on are the most expensive of all.

Silver Week, which ended on Wednesday, was priced accordingly, and the typhoon that emptied eastern Japan's resorts for its middle days left hotels there with empty rooms at peak rates.

The gap between weekday and weekend rates is also a gap between business and leisure travel, and between the domestic and international markets, which hotels serve on different days of the week.

Local governments have responded with accommodation taxes, adopted or raised in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and elsewhere, which fall on visitors and fund tourism infrastructure.

The pricing has a political dimension. Japanese voters who cannot afford their own country's hotels on the weekends they have free are a constituency that politicians have begun to notice.

Sankei's report frames the gap as a consequence of inbound demand, which is the industry's defence: prices follow the customers who pay them.

The autumn colour season, which begins in Hokkaido within weeks, will bring the next round of weekend pricing.

BUSINESS

Beating the Weekend Rate: A Traveller's Guide to a Market Priced for Visitors

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Sankei News' report that accommodation rates are two to three times higher on weekends than on weekdays, driven by inbound bookings, describes a market that domestic travellers can navigate if they understand it.

The first rule is the calendar. Sunday to Thursday nights are priced for business travellers and the gaps between visitor bookings, and they are often a fraction of Friday and Saturday rates in the same hotel.

The second is timing. Dynamic pricing raises rates as a date fills, so booking early for weekends secures rates that disappear as the date approaches, while last-minute weekday bookings can find rooms the algorithm has discounted.

The third is geography. Inbound demand concentrates in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and a handful of resorts, and cities an hour away by train price to domestic demand.

The fourth is the room type. Hotels raise rates fastest on the rooms visitors prefer, and the smaller rooms and older properties that domestic travellers accept often escape the sharpest increases.

Accommodation taxes, levied by Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka and other cities, add a few hundred yen a night on most rooms and more on the most expensive, and they apply to domestic guests too.

Japanese travellers have responded by shifting to weekday trips where their work allows, and to regions outside the inbound circuit, which has spread tourism's benefits and its costs.

The typhoon week showed the market's other face: eastern Japan's hotels priced for a full house and found the storm had emptied them, and rates fell as fast as they had risen.

The autumn colour season, beginning in Hokkaido within weeks, will bring the next round of weekend pricing, and the rules above will apply.

The market is priced for the visitors who pay its rates, and the traveller who knows when and where they do not book can still find a room.

BUSINESS

Sankei Calls on Rakuten Mobile to Withdraw Its Forced Contract Terminations

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Sankei News has published an editorial criticising Rakuten Mobile's measures to terminate contracts forcibly and calling for their withdrawal, according to the reports available.

Rakuten Mobile entered the market in 2020 as Japan's fourth mobile carrier, promising low prices and a network built on new technology, and it has spent heavily and lost heavily in building its subscriber base.

The measures Sankei criticises, described as forced contract terminations, were not detailed in the summary available to this desk, and the carrier's own explanation of them was not included.

An editorial in a national newspaper calling for a company to withdraw a customer policy is unusual, and it indicates that the policy has drawn complaints beyond the ordinary run of customer disputes.

Mobile contracts in Japan are regulated by the telecommunications ministry, which has intervened repeatedly over the past decade to reduce switching costs and to protect consumers from practices that lock them in.

A carrier terminating contracts against customers' wishes raises the opposite concern: that customers who want to stay are being removed, and the ministry's consumer protection rules would apply.

Rakuten Mobile's financial pressure is well known. Its parent, the Rakuten group, has carried the mobile unit's losses for years while promising that subscriber growth would eventually bring profit.

The criticism arrives as the group faces the market's reopening this morning, and any regulatory reaction to the policy would affect its shares.

The company had not responded to the editorial in the reports available.

For consumers, the episode is a reminder that the terms of a mobile contract can change from the carrier's side as well as their own.

BUSINESS

The Fourth Carrier's Long Road, From a Cheap Plan to a Criticised Policy

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Sankei's editorial criticising Rakuten Mobile's forced contract terminations arrives six years into an experiment that has cost its parent company more than almost any venture in Japanese corporate history.

Rakuten Mobile launched full service in 2020 as Japan's fourth mobile carrier, challenging the three incumbents with low prices and a network built on virtualised, software-based technology rather than on the specialised hardware the industry had used.

The government had encouraged a fourth entrant to bring down mobile prices, which it regarded as too high, and Rakuten's entry coincided with pressure on the incumbents to cut their own rates.

The network's build-out was slower and more expensive than planned, and the company relied on roaming agreements with a rival to cover the gaps while it constructed its own base stations.

The Rakuten group has carried the mobile unit's losses for years, raising capital repeatedly and selling assets to fund it, on the promise that subscriber growth would eventually bring profit.

Subscribers have grown, helped by low prices and by bundling with the group's shopping, payment and banking services, and the company has reported progress toward profitability.

Any policy that terminates contracts against customers' wishes sits awkwardly with a strategy built on acquiring them, and Sankei's call for withdrawal suggests the policy has drawn complaints that reach beyond ordinary disputes.

The telecommunications ministry regulates mobile contracts closely, having intervened repeatedly to reduce switching costs and to protect consumers, and its rules would apply to any forced termination.

The details of the policy were not included in the summary available to this desk, and the company's own account of it will matter to any regulatory response.

For the group, whose shares trade in Tokyo's reopened market today, the mobile unit remains the question investors ask first.

BUSINESS

The Railway That Carries Goods, Not People, and Why Its Governance Matters

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The arrest of a JR Freight employee on suspicion of bribery draws attention to a company that most Japanese never use and that the economy depends on more than its size suggests.

Japan Freight Railway Company was created in 1987 when the Japanese National Railways were broken up, taking the freight business as a single national company while passenger services were divided among six regional companies.

It runs its trains over track owned by those passenger companies, paying access charges, and it operates freight terminals across the country.

Rail freight carries a small share of Japan's goods by tonnage, since most freight moves by truck and coastal shipping, but it dominates long-distance container transport between the main islands, where road haulage is expensive and slow.

The government has promoted a shift from road to rail, known as modal shift, to reduce emissions and to address the shortage of truck drivers that the 2024 cap on drivers' overtime made acute.

That policy gives JR Freight a public role, and its procurement of maintenance, construction and other services from subcontractors is expected to meet the standards of a public body.

The company remains in public ownership, unlike the largest passenger companies, which were privatised, and its finances depend partly on public support for infrastructure.

Bribery in subcontractor selection, the allegation in the arrest reported by Mainichi Shimbun, is the kind of governance failure that undermines the case for public money.

The storm's damage to the Uchibo and Sobu lines in Chiba, on which freight as well as passenger trains run, is a reminder of the network's vulnerability and of the company's dependence on track it does not own.

The arrested employee is presumed innocent, and the company's internal review will follow the investigation.

TECHNOLOGY

The Algorithm Behind the Weekend Rate

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The weekend hotel rates that Sankei News reports at two to three times weekday levels are set by software, and the software has changed how Japanese hotels do business.

Dynamic pricing systems, adopted from airlines, adjust room rates continuously to demand, using booking data, competitor rates, events and seasonality to set the price that fills the hotel at the highest revenue.

The systems learned during the recovery from the pandemic that inbound visitors would pay far more for weekend nights than domestic travellers, and they priced accordingly.

The result is visible to anyone who has searched for a room: the same hotel, the same room, at a weekday price and a weekend price with no obvious relationship between them.

Revenue management of this kind has spread from large chains to independent hotels through platforms that offer the software as a service, and few hotels now set prices by hand.

The technology is neutral about who pays; it prices to demand, and the demand on weekends is dominated by visitors whose currencies have strengthened against the yen.

For domestic travellers, the practical response is to travel on weekdays where possible, to book early and to use the same platforms that hotels use to compare rates.

Regulators have shown little interest in constraining dynamic pricing, which is legal and common across industries, and local governments have responded instead with accommodation taxes that fall on all guests.

The systems also cut the other way: when demand collapses, as it did in eastern Japan during the

TECHNOLOGY

typhoon, rates fall quickly, and hotels that priced Silver Week for a full house found the algorithm cutting prices for rooms that stayed empty anyway.

The weekend rate is the visible face of a market that now runs on data, and Sankei's report describes its consequence for the Japanese who live in it.

TECHNOLOGY

One Engine Is Enough: Why the ANA Aircraft Could Land Safely

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

The engine trouble that prompted the ANA aircraft's emergency landing at Naha, and the evacuation of 158 people by slides, occurred on an aircraft designed to land safely with one engine out of service.

Modern airliners with two engines are certified to take off, climb, fly and land on one engine, and their crews train for engine failures at every stage of flight.

The certification standard known as ETOPS allows twin-engine aircraft to fly routes far from any airport precisely because a single engine failure is a manageable event rather than an emergency in itself.

When an engine fails or shows a warning, the crew's procedure is to secure it, adjust the aircraft's trim and power, and divert to the nearest suitable airport, which is why emergency landings after engine trouble are common and crashes after it are rare.

The decision to evacuate by slides after landing is separate, and it is taken when the crew judges that the aircraft cannot be safely taxied, because of fire, smoke, structural concern or the risk of a further failure.

Three minor injuries among 158 people evacuated is within the range airlines regard as a successful outcome, since the slides themselves cause most injuries in an otherwise orderly evacuation.

Engine trouble covers a range of events, from a warning indication to a failure, and the transport ministry's safety board will examine the engine to establish what occurred.

Aircraft engines are among the most reliable machines ever built, and failures in flight are rare, but the system is designed on the assumption that they will happen.

Japan's airlines have strong safety records, and incidents of this kind are investigated and published as a matter of routine.

For the passengers, the engineering that made the landing safe is invisible; the slides were what they remember.

SOCIETY

When the Cable Goes Down: JCOM's Outage and the Households That Depend on It

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

JCOM's temporary system failure, which left customers outside Hokkaido and Kyushu unable to connect to the internet, exposed how many Japanese households rely on a single cable for television, internet and telephone.

JCOM is the country's largest cable operator, formed through the consolidation of regional cable companies and owned by the telecommunications group KDDI and the trading house Sumitomo Corporation.

Its customers, concentrated in the Tokyo, Kansai and other metropolitan areas, receive bundled services over the same network, so a failure in the network's core affects all of them at once.

The company described the failure as temporary, and the regions spared, Hokkaido and Kyushu, are served by separate systems, which suggests a fault in the infrastructure serving the main islands rather than a local one.

Outages of this kind are distinct from the storm damage that cut power in Chiba, since they affect customers far from the typhoon and result from equipment or software failure.

Japan's telecommunications regulator requires operators to report major outages and their causes, and large failures prompt reviews of network resilience.

For households, the outage was a reminder that internet service through a single provider has no backup unless the household keeps a mobile connection, which is why many now do.

Remote work on the first day after the holiday

depended on connections that, for JCOM customers, were not there.

The company will be expected to explain the cause and the measures taken to prevent a recurrence, and compensation for customers is a question that follows long outages.

The failure was resolved, according to the reports available, but its timing at the end of a holiday made it more disruptive than its duration alone would suggest.

COURTS

JR Freight Employee Arrested Over Bribes in the Selection of Subcontractors

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

An employee of Japan Freight Railway Company has been arrested on suspicion of bribery involving approximately one million yen in connection with the selection of subcontractors, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

JR Freight is the only nationwide rail freight operator in Japan, created in 1987 when the national railways were broken up, and it runs its trains over track owned largely by the passenger JR companies.

The company's status makes the case a governance question for public works. JR Freight remains in public ownership, and its procurement of maintenance and construction services is subject to the standards expected of public bodies.

Bribery in subcontractor selection is a recurring pattern in Japanese public works cases: an official with influence over which firms receive work accepts money or favours from a firm that wants it.

One million yen is a modest sum by the standards of such cases, but the offence lies in the corruption of the selection rather than in the amount.

The arrest will prompt an internal review of the company's procurement controls and, if the allegations are proved, disciplinary and possibly further criminal consequences.

Rail freight carries a small share of Japan's goods by tonnage but an important one by distance, moving containers between the main islands on routes where road transport is costly, and the government has promoted a shift from road to rail to reduce emissions and driver shortages.

The company's reputation for reliability, tested this week by the storm's disruption of the Chiba lines it uses, is part of its case for that shift.

Under Japanese procedure, the arrested employee is presumed innocent, and prosecutors will decide whether to indict after investigation.

The company had not commented in the reports available.

SOCIETY

The River Downstream Is Too High to Drain Into: The Tone and the Stalled Pumps

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Drainage of the flooded lowlands around Sakura is not progressing because the Tone River is running high, with rain from the upper reaches of northern Kanto still flowing down to it, according to the reports available.

The Tone is Japan's largest river by basin area, draining the mountains of Gunma, Tochigi and Saitama across the Kanto plain to the Pacific at Choshi, and the Inbanuma system discharges into it through channels and sluices.

When the Tone is low, the lowlands drain by gravity through gates that open toward the river. When the Tone is high, the gates must stay shut, or the river would flow back into the lowlands, and every cubic metre must be pumped over the levee.

Pumping capacity is finite, and pumping against a high river is slower and more expensive than draining by gravity, which is why the pump trucks deployed on Wednesday have not cleared the water.

The rain that feeds the Tone fell days ago in the mountains, and rivers of that size take days to carry it to the lower reaches, so the river can rise at Sakura's outlets after the local rain has stopped.

The Tone's floods have shaped Kanto's history. In 1947, Typhoon Kathleen breached its levee at Kurihashi in Saitama and sent water across the plain toward Tokyo, a disaster that drove decades of levee

construction and flood control.

Modern management combines dams in the upper basin, levees along the lower reaches and regulating reservoirs, and it has prevented a repeat of 1947, but it cannot make the river drain a lowland faster than gravity allows.

For the residents of Sakura's station district, the practical meaning is that the water will recede when the Tone falls, and the Tone will fall when the mountains stop sending rain.

Forecasts for Kanto today include a 40% chance of rain in Tokyo, according to Asahi Shimbun's pinpoint forecast, and any rain in the upper basin would delay the fall further.

The Inbanuma breach adds a second reason the water stays: the lake itself is feeding the flood until the embankment is closed.

SOCIETY

A Breach Without Precedent: What the Failure of Inbanuma's Embankment Means

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The collapse of the Inbanuma embankment, the first since management of the lake began, has turned a slow flood into a standing one across the lowlands north of Sakura.

Inbanuma is a shallow lake, reduced by post-war reclamation to two basins connected by channels, and its embankments hold the water above land that was once part of the lake bed.

The reclaimed land sits low, and the levees that protect it were built to keep the lake in its basins during ordinary floods; a breach lets the lake out onto ground that has nowhere to send it.

Water reached two kilometres from the breach, according to the reports available, which describes an inundation across farmland and the districts around JR Sakura Station.

Levees fail in two principal ways. Overtopping occurs when water rises above the crest and erodes the landward face; seepage occurs when water finds a path through or beneath the embankment and washes out its core. Engineers will determine which happened here.

The distinction matters for repair. An overtopped levee may be intact below the crest; a levee undermined by seepage may need rebuilding from its foundations.

Emergency closure of a breach is done with sandbags, steel sheet piles and dumped rock, followed by permanent reconstruction that can take months.

Until the breach is closed, pumping the lowlands is pointless, since the lake refills what the pumps remove, and the drainage pump trucks deployed on Wednesday have been working against the lake as well as against the rain.

The Tone River's high water compounds the problem by preventing the lowlands from discharging through their normal outlets.

The failure is a first for a system that has managed the lake through decades of storms, and the review that follows will ask why this storm, on ground saturated by two earlier ones, was the one that breached it.

SOCIETY

Women's Higher Education Explains Only About 5% of the Falling Birthrate, Kyoto University Analysis Finds

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

An analysis by Kyoto University has found only a weak relationship between women's higher education and childbirth, estimating the effect on the declining birthrate at about 5%, according to the reports available.

The finding addresses one of the most persistent claims in Japan's debate about population: that the rise in women's university attendance is a principal cause of the fall in births.

If the effect is about 5%, the other 95% of the decline lies elsewhere, in the economics of marriage and child-rearing, in employment conditions, in housing and in the timing of life events that the education variable does not capture.

Japan's births fell to a record low of about 686,000 in

2024, and the total fertility rate fell to 1.15, far below the level of about 2.1 at which a population replaces itself.

Successive governments have responded with child allowances, expanded childcare and subsidies for education, on the assumption that cost is the main obstacle to having children.

The Kyoto analysis supports that assumption by reducing the weight of a competing explanation, and it will be cited in the debate over what the government's measures should target.

Women's university enrolment has risen for decades and now approaches men's, and the finding that this has contributed only modestly to the birthrate's decline removes a stigma that has sometimes attached to the debate.

Marriage rates, which have fallen sharply, and the age at first marriage, which has risen, are the variables that demographers regard as most directly linked to the number of births, since most births in Japan occur within marriage.

The analysis's methods and its full findings will be examined by other researchers, and the 5% figure is an estimate rather than a measurement.

For a government whose approval rests partly on its handling of prices, the cost of raising children remains the policy lever most likely to be pulled.

SOCIETY

Earth, Stone and Super Levees: How Japan Holds Back Its Water

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The breach of the Inbanuma embankment, the first since the lake's management began, is a failure of the most common structure in Japanese flood control: the earth levee.

Most of Japan's river and lake levees are embankments of compacted earth, often with a clay core, faced with grass, stone or concrete on the water side to resist erosion.

They fail in two principal ways. Overtopping occurs when water rises above the crest and erodes the landward slope; seepage occurs when water finds a path through or beneath the embankment and carries its material away from inside.

Prolonged high water is the enemy of both. The longer a levee holds back a flood, the more saturated its body becomes and the more likely seepage is to find a path, which is why levees fail after days of high water as often as at its peak.

Chiba's embankments had held through two periods of heavy rain since August before this storm, and the ground beneath and within them had not dried between events.

Tokyo and Osaka have built a different kind of structure along their most critical rivers: super levees, embankments so wide that their landward slopes are gentle enough to build on, and that cannot be breached by overtopping because the water simply flows over a slope that will not erode.

Super levees are enormously expensive and take decades to complete, which is why they exist only where the population at risk justifies them.

Lakes such as Inbanuma present a particular problem. Their embankments hold water permanently rather than only in floods, and they are subject to wave action and to the pressure of a full basin as well as to flood loads.

The review of the breach will examine the embankment's design, its maintenance and the loads it bore, and the repair will be built to a standard informed by what the review finds.

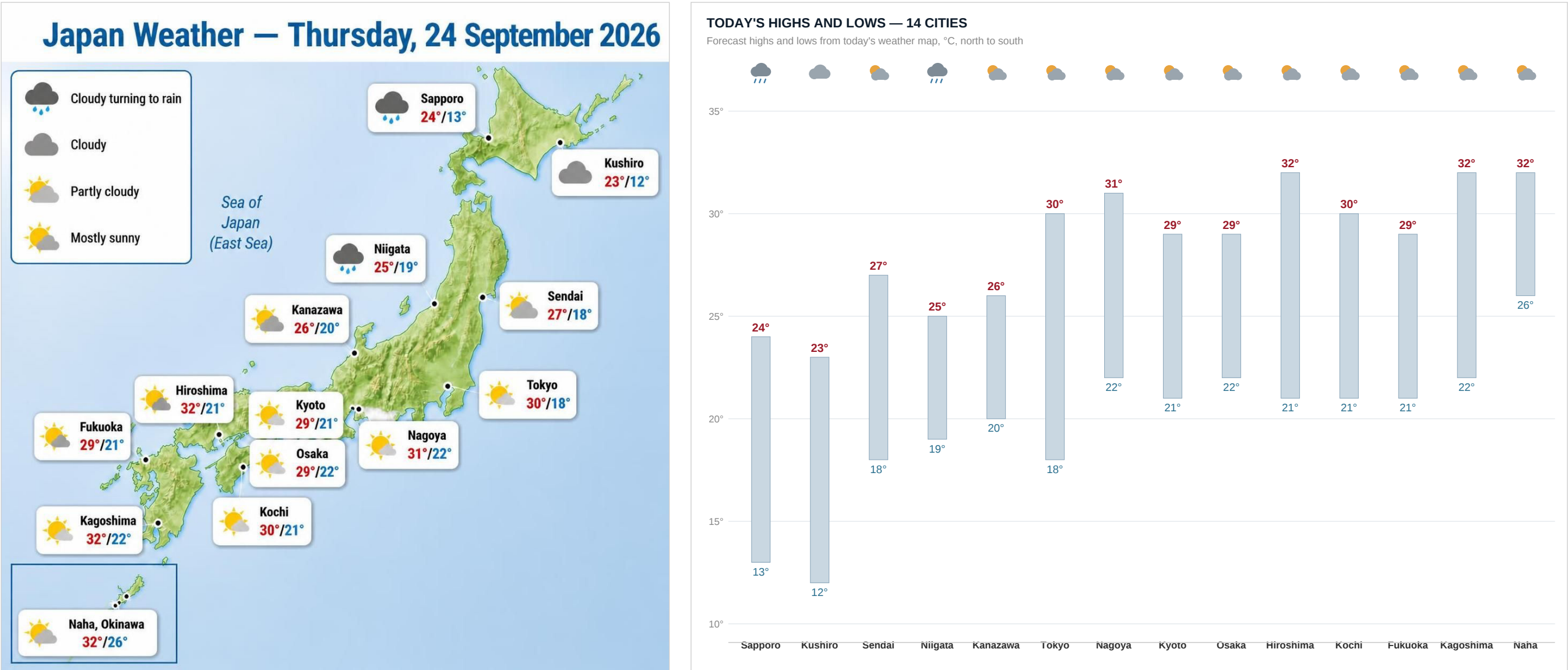
For the households of Sakura, the engineering is the difference between a flood that recedes in days and one that recedes in weeks, and this one is the second kind.

WEATHER & SOCIETY



30°C

Low 18°C on the map · Asahi pinpoint: around 29, 40% chance of rain · Landslide warnings remain



TODAY'S WEATHER

The cold front has reached the north. Today's map shows cloud turning to rain in Sapporo and Niigata, cloud in Kushiro, and sun and cloud across the rest of the country, with the capital's nights suddenly cooler: Tokyo's low of 18 is five degrees below Wednesday's on the map. Western Japan keeps its lingering summer heat and humidity, and some areas have pleasant weather for outdoor activities.

For the first working day after the holiday, Asahi Shimbun's pinpoint forecast gives Tokyo a high of around 29 degrees and a 40% chance of rain; the map supplied for this edition gives 30 with sun and cloud. Carry an umbrella and check the Japan Meteorological Agency's latest forecast before travelling.

REGIONAL FORECASTS

Hokkaido: Sapporo cloudy turning to rain, 24/13; Kushiro cloudy, 23/12. The front brings the first rain and the coldest night of the season on the east coast.

Tohoku: Sendai sun and cloud, 27/18. Drier than earlier in the week, with the front to the north-west.

Sea of Japan side: Niigata cloudy turning to rain, 25/19; Kanazawa sun and cloud, 26/20. Rain reaches Niigata as the front crosses.

Kanto: Tokyo sun and cloud, 30/18 on the map; Asahi forecasts around 29 and a 40% chance of rain. Landslide warnings remain on saturated slopes in Chiba and Kanagawa, which could collapse even with light rain, and the drainage of Sakura's flooded lowlands waits on the Tone River.

Tokai: Nagoya sun and cloud, 31/22. Warm under sun and cloud for the athletics at Paloma Mizuho Stadium.

Kansai: Kyoto sun and cloud, 29/21; Osaka sun and cloud, 29/22. Warm, with the front's cooler air still to come.

Chugoku and Shikoku: Hiroshima sun and cloud, 32/21; Kochi sun and cloud, 30/21. Lingering summer heat and humidity.

Kyushu: Fukuoka sun and cloud, 29/21; Kagoshima sun and cloud, 32/22. Hot and humid, with sunshine between the clouds.

Okinawa: Naha sun and cloud, 32/26, the warmest readings on the map. The Sakishima Islands to the south-west remain cautious as the tropical depression south of Japan continues to show typhoon-like conditions.

AFTER THE TYPHOON

Ten people are dead and four missing in Chiba and Kanagawa. The Inbanuma embankment has collapsed for the first time since management of the lake began, and water reached areas two kilometres away. Drainage is not progressing because the Tone River is running high with rain from the upper reaches of northern Kanto.

Landslide warnings remain in force: saturated slopes

SOCIETY

Thursday's Map: Rain Reaches Hokkaido and Niigata, Sun and Cloud Elsewhere, Tokyo Cooler at Night

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Thursday's map shows the cold front's arrival in the north, with cloud turning to rain in Hokkaido and along the Sea of Japan coast, while the rest of the country has sun and cloud.

Hokkaido has the rain. Sapporo is cloudy turning to rain with a high of 24 and a low of 13, and Kushiro is cloudy at 23 with the coolest night on the map at 12.

Niigata also has cloud turning to rain, at 25 with a low of 19, as the front crosses the Sea of Japan side.

Tohoku and Hokuriku are drier. Sendai has sun and cloud at 27 with a low of 18, and Kanazawa sun and cloud at 26 with a low of 20.

Tokyo has sun and cloud with a high of 30 and a low of 18, the coolest night the capital has seen this week, five degrees below Wednesday's. Asahi Shimbun's pinpoint forecast gives a high of around 29 and a 40% chance of rain, and readers should check the agency's latest forecast before travelling.

Tokai and Kansai are warm under sun and cloud. Nagoya is at 31 with a low of 22, Kyoto at 29 with a low of 21, and Osaka at 29 with a low of 22.

Western Japan keeps its lingering summer heat and humidity. Hiroshima has sun and cloud at 32 with a low of 21, and Kochi sun and cloud at 30 with a low of 21.

Kyushu is warm, with Fukuoka under sun and cloud at 29 and a low of 21, and Kagoshima at 32 with a low of 22.

Okinawa is the warmest region on the map, with Naha under sun and cloud at 32 and a low of 26, while the Sakishima Islands to the south-west watch the tropical depression.

Some areas of the country will have pleasant weather for outdoor activities, and swells on the Pacific side are expected to subside gradually.

The map uses two very similar symbols for partly cloudy and mostly sunny conditions, and cities showing either are described here as having sun and cloud.

Back to Work Under a Forty Per Cent Chance of Rain

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Tokyo returns to work today under a forecast that gives the capital a high of around 29 degrees and a 40% chance of rain, according to Asahi Shimbun's pinpoint forecast, while today's map shows 30 with sun and cloud and a low of 18.

The low is the news. At 18 degrees, the night was the

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coolest of the week by a wide margin, and it marks the arrival in Kanto of the cooler air behind the front that TBS and Weathernews described on Wednesday.

The transition from tropical nights to cool ones is the moment at which Japan's summer ends in the capital, and it has come two days after the equinox this year.

A 40% chance of rain on the first commuting day after a five-day holiday argues for an umbrella and extra time, particularly with the Uchibo and Sobu lines in Chiba suspended and expressway sections restricted.

Rain in the Kanto region matters beyond the commute. Slopes in Chiba and Kanagawa remain saturated, and the landslide warnings in force there note that they could collapse even with light rain.

Rain in the upper basin of the Tone River would also delay the fall in the river that the drainage of Sakura's flooded lowlands is waiting for.

The front's passage brings the north its rain today, with Sapporo and Niigata cloudy turning to rain, and it will move east across the country over the coming days.

Western Japan stays warm and humid, with Hiroshima and Kagoshima at 32, while some areas have pleasant weather for outdoor activities.

The map's figures are the forecast snapshot supplied for this edition, and the agency's short-range forecasts, updated through the morning, are the authoritative guide.

For the first working day after Silver Week, the practical advice is simple: leave early, carry an umbrella, and check the trains.

The Front Arrives: Rain for Sapporo and the Coldest Night of the Season in Kushiro

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The cold front that forecasters watched approach Hokkaido on Wednesday has arrived, and today's map shows Sapporo cloudy turning to rain, at 24 degrees with a low of 13, and Kushiro cloudy at 23 with a low of 12.

Kushiro's 12 is the coldest reading on any map this week, and it marks the turn of the season on Hokkaido's Pacific coast, where autumn arrives weeks before the rest of the country.

Niigata, across the Sea of Japan from the front's path, also has cloud turning to rain, at 25 with a low of 19.

Rain behind a cold front tends to be steady rather than torrential, and Hokkaido's harvest of potatoes, onions and beans continues around it, with farmers watching for the early frosts that follow such fronts on the high ground.

The island's autumn colours, already begun on the peaks of the Daisetsuzan range, will be hastened by the cold nights, and the season of leaf-viewing on the

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ropeways at Asahidake and Kurodake begins in earnest.

For Sapporo, the rain closes a warm and dry holiday and opens a working week under grey skies, in a city whose winter preparations begin as soon as the leaves turn.

The front will move east and south across the country in the coming days, bringing the cooler nights already felt in Tokyo, where the low fell to 18, to the rest of Honshu.

Western Japan remains outside its reach for now, with lingering summer heat and humidity from Hiroshima to Kagoshima.

The change in the north is unrelated to the tropical depression south of Okinawa and to the typhoon's remnants far to the east.

Hokkaido's residents are advised to bring out warmer clothing and to be alert to sudden drops in temperature, particularly for older people.

SOCIETY

Eighteen Degrees: The Night Tokyo's Summer Ended

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Today's map gives Tokyo a low of 18 degrees, the coolest night the capital has recorded this week by five degrees, and a figure that marks the end of the tropical nights that have persisted since summer.

A tropical night is one on which the temperature does not fall below 25 degrees, and Tokyo's lows had hovered at 23 through the holiday, close to the threshold.

A fall to 18 means the cooler air behind the front that TBS and Weathernews described on Wednesday has reached the capital, and that the season has turned.

The change is felt first at night and in the early morning, when commuters on the first working day after the holiday will notice a chill that has been absent for months.

Daytime highs remain warm, at 30 on the map and around 29 in Asahi Shimbun's pinpoint forecast, so the days are still summer's while the nights are autumn's, which is the pattern of late September.

Cooler nights improve sleep and reduce the heat stress on older people that hot nights impose, and hospitals see fewer heat-related admissions once they arrive.

For the households in Chiba still without power, cooler nights are a relief that arrives before the electricity does.

The front's rain has reached Hokkaido and Niigata on today's map, and its passage over the coming days will bring similar cool nights to the rest of Honshu.

Western Japan remains outside the change for now, with Hiroshima and Kagoshima at 32 and lingering humidity.

The equinox was Wednesday; the weather caught up with the calendar on Thursday.

SOCIETY

September 1947: The Night the Tone Broke and Came to Tokyo

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The Tone River's high water, holding back the drainage of Sakura's lowlands this week, recalls the disaster that shaped everything Japan has since built along the river.

In September 1947, Typhoon Kathleen brought days of rain to the mountains of the upper Tone basin, and on the night of the 15th the river's levee broke at Kurihashi, in Saitama, on its right bank.

The water spread south across the Kanto plain over the following days, through Saitama's farmland and into the eastern wards of Tokyo, flooding Katsushika and Edogawa and reaching the edge of the capital's centre.

More than a thousand people died across the affected regions, and the flood remained on the plain for weeks, in a country still recovering from the war and with little capacity to respond.

The disaster drove the post-war programme of levee construction, dam building in the upper basin and the diversion of the river's floods that made the modern Tone the most heavily engineered river in Japan.

It also produced the regulating reservoirs and the underground discharge channels that protect the capital from the river's tributaries, including the great

chamber beneath Kasukabe.

The Tone has not broken toward Tokyo since 1947, and its levees held through this week's storm, but the river's high water is holding back the drainage of the lowlands that depend on it.

That dependence is the plain's condition. The Tone was diverted eastward to Choshi in the Edo period precisely to keep it away from the capital, and the lowlands of northern Chiba have drained into it ever since.

Inbanuma's breach is a smaller event than 1947 by every measure, and it is a reminder that the river's system has limits that three storms in two months can find.

Kurihashi's memorial to the 1947 breach stands beside the river, and the engineers who manage the Tone today were trained on its lesson.

SOCIETY

Three Months for the Uchibo Line, One for the Sobu: Chiba's Rail Recovery Measured in Seasons

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The Uchibo Line between Anegasaki and Kisarazu is expected to take about three months to restore, and the Sobu Line between Enokido and Naruto about one month, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The estimates are the longest of any transport recovery from Typhoon No. 25, and they describe damage that no amount of debris clearance can fix.

The Uchibo Line runs down the western shore of the Boso Peninsula from Chiba toward Tateyama, and the section between Anegasaki, in Ichihara, and Kisarazu serves commuters and students across the industrial coast of Tokyo Bay.

A three-month restoration indicates embankments washed out, track beds undermined or structures damaged, requiring reconstruction rather than repair.

The Sobu Main Line's section between Enokido and Naruto, in the north-east of the prefecture, serves the towns of Yokoshibahikari and Sanmu, and a one-month estimate suggests damage of a lesser but still structural kind.

JR East will run substitute buses on the affected sections, as it does during long suspensions, and the buses will carry commuters on roads that are themselves recovering from the storm.

Rail suspensions of this length reshape daily life. Commutes lengthen by an hour or more, students change how they reach school, and businesses along the line lose customers who arrived by train.

Chiba experienced similar suspensions after the typhoons of 2019, when sections of the peninsula's lines were closed for weeks by fallen trees and damaged track.

The estimates are provisional and may lengthen if inspections find more damage, or shorten if repairs proceed faster than planned.

For a prefecture hit three times since August, the timelines add a fourth season to a recovery that began in summer.

SOCIETY

When the Trains Stop for Months, the Buses Begin

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

With the Uchibo Line's Anegasaki-Kisarazu section expected to take about three months to restore and the Sobu Line's Enokido-Naruto section about one month, JR East faces the task that follows every long suspension: replacing trains with buses.

Substitute bus services run between the stations of a suspended section, timed as closely as possible to the trains they replace, and passengers travel on them with their ordinary tickets and passes.

The buses cannot match the trains' capacity or speed. A commuter train carries hundreds of passengers; a bus carries dozens, and it runs on roads that in Chiba this week are restricted by landslide controls of their own.

Commutes on the affected sections will lengthen by an hour or more, and passengers who once read on the train will queue for buses at stations that were not built for them.

Schools along the lines adjust timetables, employers accept later arrivals, and the local economy absorbs the friction of a connection that has become slow.

JR East has run such services after previous disasters,

including the typhoons of 2019, and its procedures for contracting buses and scheduling them are practised.

The bus operators, themselves short of drivers since the 2024 cap on overtime, must find vehicles and staff for months of additional service.

For the towns along the Uchibo Line's Tokyo Bay coast and the Sobu Line's north-east, the suspension is an economic event as well as a transport one, since businesses near stations depend on the passengers who arrive by train.

Restoration estimates can shorten if repairs proceed faster than planned, and JR East's updates will be watched by every commuter on the routes.

Three months is a season; the buses will run through the autumn and into winter before the trains return.

SOCIETY

Anegasaki and the Keiyo Coast: Where the Uchibo Line Stopped

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Anegasaki, the northern end of the Uchibo Line section that will take three months to restore, sits in the middle of one of Japan's largest industrial coasts.

The Keiyo industrial zone runs along the eastern shore of Tokyo Bay from Chiba City south through Ichihara, Sodegaura and Kisarazu, on reclaimed land built up from the 1950s for steel, petrochemicals and power generation.

Ichihara, which includes Anegasaki, hosts a petrochemical complex and refineries whose importance the Japan Agricultural News reported rising this week as the Middle East situation and the slowdown in decarbonisation make domestic supply a priority.

The workers who staff the plants commute on the Uchibo Line from the residential districts of the bay coast, and the line's suspension between Anegasaki and Kisarazu cuts the connection for a large share of them.

Sodegaura, where a road worker died in a landslide during the storm, lies within the affected section, as does the industrial and residential belt around Kisarazu.

The coast's reclaimed land is flat and its industry is built on it, but the residential districts inland rise into the Boso hills whose slopes gave way this week.

The rail damage, described as taking three months to repair, indicates embankments or structures failed rather than track blocked, and the section's route through the hills behind the coast is where such failures occur.

The Keiyo zone's plants operate continuously and cannot pause for a suspended railway, which is why substitute buses and the restricted expressways will carry a heavy load.

Ichihara's cars submerged in the storm's floods and its districts flooded twice in a month describe a city hit repeatedly, and the rail suspension adds a third blow.

For the coast that refines Japan's fuel and makes its plastics, the storm's longest consequence is a railway that will not run until winter.

SOCIETY

A Line Around the Bay: The Uchibo Railway's Century

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The Uchibo Line, whose section between Anegasaki and Kisarazu is expected to take three months to restore, has served the western shore of the Boso Peninsula for more than a century.

The line runs from Soga, near Chiba City, down the Tokyo Bay coast through Ichihara, Kisarazu and Kimitsu to Tateyama and around the peninsula's tip to Awa-Kamogawa, where it meets the Sotobo Line from the Pacific side.

It was built in stages in the early twentieth century, reaching Kisarazu before the First World War and completing the circuit of the peninsula in the 1920s.

For decades it carried holidaymakers to the peninsula's beaches and hot springs, and its express services from Tokyo were the way the capital reached the southern Boso before the Aqua-Line and the expressway.

The Aqua-Line's opening in 1997 shifted much of that traffic to the road, and the line's southern sections have since carried local traffic while the northern sections serve the industrial coast's commuters.

Kamogawa, where two residents of Kominato died in this week's landslides, is the line's southern terminus, and the storm has cut the peninsula's rail connections at both ends.

The line was closed for weeks after the typhoons of 2019, and its exposure to the peninsula's weather is a feature of its route along a coast of hills and cuttings.

Three months of substitute buses will be the longest interruption in the line's recent history, and the towns along it will feel the absence of trains that have run for a hundred years.

JR East's estimate may shorten with repairs, and the line's return will be marked along the coast as the end of the storm's longest consequence.

The line's century has included earthquakes, typhoons and the war, and it has always reopened.

SOCIETY

Four Still Missing as the Search Enters Its Fourth Day

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Four people remain missing in Chiba and Kanagawa after Typhoon No. 25, and the search for them continues into its fourth day, according to the reports available.

The number has fallen from five on Wednesday as the toll of the dead has risen to ten, the grim arithmetic by which landslide searches proceed.

Searches in landslide debris are slow by necessity. The ground may move again, heavy machinery can bring more earth down, and much of the work is done by hand by Self-Defense Forces personnel, police and firefighters.

Dogs are used where the terrain allows, and searchers work outward from the last known positions of the missing, in houses that were buried or on slopes that gave way.

Kanagawa requested Self-Defense Forces relief on Monday, and the dispatch continues under the prefecture's authority until the governor judges that civilian services can manage alone.

Families of the missing typically wait near the search sites, and municipal staff and volunteers support them through days that offer little news.

Landslide warnings remain in force on the slopes where searchers work, and any rain would halt operations for safety, as it has during previous disasters.

The four missing will be counted among the dead only if they are found or if the search is formally ended, a decision that authorities are reluctant to take while any possibility remains.

The deaths confirmed so far include two residents of 80 in Kominato, victims in Yokosuka, and others across the Boso and Miura peninsulas.

Today is the first working day after the holiday, and the searchers have not had one.

SOCIETY

Landslide Sections of the Tateyama and Ken-O Expressways Stay Restricted

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Traffic restrictions remain on the landslide-prone sections of the Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway, according to the reports available, as the first working week after the holiday begins.

The restrictions have moved from full closure, reported by the land ministry on Wednesday, to controls on specific sections, which indicates that clearance has progressed while the slopes above the roads are still being assessed.

A section reopens when the debris has been removed, the slope has stopped moving and engineers have judged that further failure is unlikely, a judgment that saturated ground makes difficult.

The Tateyama Expressway is the main high-speed route to the southern Boso Peninsula, and its restriction lengthens journeys for commuters returning to work today and for repair crews heading south.

The Ken-O Expressway's Chiba sections serve the eastern side of the prefecture, including the areas around Sakura where the flooding continues.

Commuters who travelled by rail before the storm face the additional problem of the Uchibo and Sobu line suspensions, which push more traffic onto roads already congested by the restrictions.

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Expressway operators publish the status of each section continuously, and drivers are advised to check before setting out rather than assuming a route is open.

Landslide warnings remain in force on slopes in Chiba and Kanagawa, which could fail with light rain, and the expressway restrictions follow the same logic.

The end of the holiday means that the peninsula's economy, from factories on the bay to farms in the interior, is trying to resume with its roads and railways only partly restored.

Full reopening will follow the stabilisation of the slopes, and no timetable was given in the reports available.

SOCIETY

The Ring Road and the Peninsula Road: Two Expressways the Storm Cut

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The Tateyama Expressway and the Ken-O Expressway, whose landslide-prone sections remain restricted, serve two different purposes in Chiba's road network, and the storm cut both.

The Ken-O Expressway is the outer of the capital region's ring roads, running in a wide arc through Kanagawa, Tokyo, Saitama, Ibaraki and Chiba at a distance of forty to sixty kilometres from the centre.

Its purpose is to let traffic pass around Tokyo rather than through it, connecting the radial expressways that run out from the city, and its Chiba sections link Narita Airport and the prefecture's east to the rest of the ring.

Sections of the ring in Chiba remain unfinished, and the road's incompleteness has long been a complaint of the prefecture's businesses.

The Tateyama Expressway runs south from the Keiyo industrial belt down the western side of the Boso Peninsula to Tateyama, connecting at Kisarazu with the Tokyo Bay Aqua-Line that crosses to Kawasaki.

Together, the Aqua-Line and the Tateyama Expressway turned the southern peninsula into a day trip from Tokyo when the crossing opened in 1997, and the peninsula's tourism economy was built on them.

Both roads pass through the low hills of the Boso interior, where cuttings and embankments are exposed to the landslides that heavy rain produces, and both were closed by mudslides this week.

Restrictions on their landslide sections continue because the slopes above the roads remain saturated, and engineers cannot declare them stable while landslide warnings are in force.

For commuters returning to work today, the restrictions combine with the suspension of the Uchibo and Sobu lines to make the peninsula's connections to the capital region the slowest they have been in years.

The expressway operators publish the status of each section continuously, and full reopening will follow the stabilisation of the ground.

SOCIETY

Flooded Fields Cut the Harvest's Quality as Well as Its Timing

By Grace Park | Food & Restaurants

Delays in rice harvesting and reduced quality from flooded fields are a concern for production areas after Typhoon No. 25, according to the reports available, in a season that had already run late because of prolonged rain.

Rice that stands in water after it has ripened suffers in two ways. Grains can sprout on the stalk or discolour, and the crop cannot be harvested until the field has drained enough to bear a combine.

Quality is measured by inspectors who grade rice into first, second and third grades and off-grade based on the appearance of the grains, and lower grades bring lower prices to the farmer.

Chiba's flooded lowlands around Inbanuma include rice paddies that have been under water since Monday, and the levee breach has extended the flooding to fields two kilometres from the lake.

The rice harvest in the Kanto region falls in September, and every week of delay in wet conditions increases the share of the crop that will be downgraded.

Prices for consumers returned to the 2,000-yen range for a five-kilogram bag this month, and a lower-quality harvest in Kanto would affect supply in the prefectures concerned, though other regions with better weather will cushion the national picture.

Agricultural mutual aid and revenue insurance cover part of the loss, and inspectors from the associations will assess fields as the water recedes.

Vegetable growers face the same problem, with crops rotted in flooded fields and seedlings for the winter harvest lost, in a prefecture that supplies much of the capital's produce.

The Japan Agricultural News reported this week on the rice harvest delays, reflecting concern across the sector that the season's problems are accumulating.

For farmers around Sakura, the harvest waits on the Tone River, the pumps and the closure of a breach that has never happened before.

SOCIETY

Power Repairs in Chiba and a JCOM Failure Leave Households Doubly Cut Off

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Restoration work on electricity supplies in Chiba continued into Wednesday, and a temporary failure of the cable operator JCOM's systems left customers outside Hokkaido and Kyushu unable to connect to the internet, according to the reports available.

For households in the storm-hit parts of Chiba, the two outages compounded each other: no power for some, no connection for others, and for some neither. JCOM is the largest cable television and internet operator in Japan, serving millions of households across the country's major urban regions, and a failure of its systems affects far more customers than a local storm.

The company's failure was described as temporary and as a system failure rather than storm damage, and it affected regions untouched by the typhoon.

Its timing was unfortunate. The end of the holiday brought people home to connections that did not work, and the first working day after Silver Week depends on remote work and online services for many.

Utility crews in Chiba have been working outward from the network's core since Monday, and the last households to regain power are those in the most damaged and least accessible districts of the southern peninsula.

The closure and now the restriction of the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways have slowed the movement of crews and materials south, lengthening the outage for the areas that were hit hardest.

Households without power for four days face spoiled food, no air conditioning in weather still warm, and, where pumps are electric, no running water.

Municipal welfare offices maintain contact with residents dependent on electricity for medical equipment, and the utility publishes restoration estimates by district.

The internet outage, once resolved, will leave the electricity restoration as the longer task, and its completion depends on the roads.

SOCIETY

The Depression to the South Keeps Its Typhoon-Like Shape, and Sakishima Keeps Watch

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The tropical depression south of Japan continues to show typhoon-like conditions, and the Sakishima Islands have been told to remain cautious, according to the reports available.

Weathernews had expected the depression to develop into a typhoon within 24 hours on Wednesday, and the reports this morning describe continued observation rather than a formal upgrade.

A depression becomes a typhoon under the meteorological agency's definition when its maximum sustained winds reach 17.2 metres per second, and until then it receives no number and no formal typhoon information.

Systems that hover near the threshold can persist for days, strengthening and weakening with sea temperatures and the winds around them, and they can bring heavy rain to islands in their path whether or not they are numbered.

The Sakishima Islands, the south-western end of Okinawa Prefecture, lie in the region where such systems typically track first, and their residents prepare quickly when warned.

Ferries and flights to the islands stop in severe weather, and their supplies of fuel and food depend on shipping that a storm halts, which is why early caution matters more there than on the mainland.

If the system is upgraded, it will be the twenty-sixth typhoon of the year, following one whose toll in Chiba and Kanagawa rose to ten on Wednesday.

Swells on the Pacific side of the main islands are expected to subside gradually, easing conditions for shipping and for the coast, while the southern system keeps the seas around Okinawa unsettled.

The season remains active into October, and the agency's formal information, once issued, will be the authoritative guide to the system's track.

For now the depression is a watch rather than a warning, and the islands are treating it as the former with the readiness of the latter.

SOCIETY

The Swells Begin to Subside on the Pacific Coast

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Swells on the Pacific side of Japan are expected to subside gradually, according to the reports available, three days after Typhoon No. 25 moved out to sea east of Chiba.

Swell is the storm's longest-travelling legacy. Waves generated by its winds crossed the ocean for days after the system had become extratropical, and they have kept beaches, breakwaters and harbours dangerous through the holiday.

Gradual subsidence means that the largest waves have passed and the sea is returning to its ordinary September state, though individual sets can still arrive larger than the average.

Fishing from breakwaters and rocks, the activity most associated with deaths in swell conditions, remains dangerous until the sea has settled fully.

Ferry services to islands along the Pacific coast, including the Izu islands administered by Tokyo, can resume normal schedules as the swell falls, restoring supplies and movement to communities that the storm isolated.

Coastal fishing fleets, kept in harbour during the storm, return to sea as conditions allow, and the markets that depend on them see their supply recover.

The subsidence on the Pacific side contrasts with the unsettled seas to the south, where the tropical depression near the Sakishima Islands continues to generate waves.

Surfers, who are drawn to swell, are advised that the conditions that follow a typhoon are the most dangerous of the year, with strong currents and shifting sandbars.

Coast guard patrols continue along the affected coast, and the emergency number for incidents at sea is 118.

By the weekend the Pacific coast should be back to its ordinary conditions, weather permitting.

SOCIETY

Kumamoto's Small Earthquakes Continue, With No Damage Reported

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Small earthquakes continue to occur sporadically in the Kumamoto region and other areas, according to the reports available, extending a sequence that has been felt through the holiday.

The tremors have reached a maximum seismic intensity of 3 on the Japanese scale, a level felt by most people indoors but rarely damaging, and no damage has been reported.

Kumamoto's residents feel such sequences with a knowledge that most of the country lacks, ten years after the two great earthquakes of April 2016, the second of which was larger than the first.

That experience led the meteorological agency to revise its guidance after major earthquakes, warning that a larger one can follow, and it shapes how the region responds to any sequence of tremors.

Seismologists cannot predict whether small earthquakes will lead to a larger one, and most sequences of this kind end without incident.

The region's importance has grown since 2016 with the semiconductor plants at Kikuyo, built to earthquake-resistant standards as a condition of their location, and with the reopening of the Kumagawa Railway this week after the floods of 2020.

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

The earthquakes are unconnected to the typhoon or to the tropical depression to the south, and they fall within the ordinary seismic activity of a region that sits on active faults.

The agency issues intensity readings within minutes of any felt earthquake, and early warnings are issued for earthquakes expected to produce intensity 5 lower or greater.

Kumamoto begins the working week with tremors in the ground and, so far, nothing broken.

SOCIETY

ANA Flight Makes Emergency Landing at Naha; 158 Leave by the Slides, Three Slightly Hurt

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

An All Nippon Airways aircraft made an emergency landing at Naha Airport after engine trouble, and 158 people evacuated by the emergency slides, with three suffering minor injuries, according to Sankei News and Yomiuri Shimbun.

An evacuation by slides is the outcome that airlines train for and hope never to use. It is ordered when the crew judges that the aircraft cannot be safely taxied to a gate and passengers must leave immediately.

Passengers slide from the doors onto inflatable chutes and are directed away from the aircraft, and the injuries typical of such evacuations, sprains, scrapes and bruises, come from the slide itself and the ground at its foot.

Three minor injuries among 158 people is within the range that airlines regard as a successful evacuation, and it suggests the crew's procedures worked.

Engine trouble covers a range of possibilities, from a warning indication to a failure, and the airline and the transport ministry's safety board will examine the aircraft to establish what occurred.

Naha, the gateway to Okinawa, handles heavy holiday traffic, and the incident on the last day of Silver Week disrupted the airport's schedule as the runway was cleared.

Aircraft engines are designed to allow continued flight and landing on the remaining engine when one fails, and a diversion or return to the nearest airport is the standard response.

Passengers are instructed to leave bags behind during slide evacuations, since bags slow the exit and can puncture the slides, and the speed of an evacuation depends on their compliance.

ANA will report the incident to the ministry, and the safety board's findings will be published in due course.

The three injured passengers were treated for minor injuries, and the remaining passengers continued their journeys by other flights.

SOCIETY

Naha Airport, Where the ANA Aircraft Came Down

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The emergency landing of an ANA aircraft at Naha, with 158 people evacuated by slides, took place at an airport that is among the busiest in Japan and the gateway to a prefecture that lives on visitors.

Naha Airport lies on the coast just south-west of the city, and it handles the great majority of flights into Okinawa, from the domestic routes to Tokyo and Osaka that carry most of the island's tourists to the regional flights that link the outer islands.

A second runway, built on reclaimed land offshore, opened in 2020 to relieve congestion that had made the airport one of the most delay-prone in the country.

The airport shares its runways with the Japan Air Self-Defense Force and the coast guard, and military and civil traffic operate side by side, an arrangement that complicates operations when an emergency closes a runway.

Wednesday's landing, on the last day of Silver Week, came at the peak of holiday traffic, and the runway's

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closure while the aircraft was cleared disrupted the afternoon's schedule.

Naha has handled emergencies before. In 2007 a China Airlines aircraft caught fire after landing, and all 165 people aboard escaped by the slides before the aircraft was destroyed, an evacuation studied since as an example of procedures working under the worst conditions.

The airport's importance to Okinawa is total. The prefecture has no rail link to the mainland and no ferry service that could replace air travel for visitors, so the airport's operation is the island's economy.

Tourism to Okinawa has grown with the weak yen and the inbound boom, and the airport's international routes to Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong and China have expanded.

The safety board's investigation of Wednesday's engine trouble will be published in due course, and the airline will report to the transport ministry.

For the 158 passengers, the airport was the place they left an aircraft by slide, which is not what a gateway is supposed to be.

SOCIETY

Ninety Seconds and No Bags: How an Aircraft Evacuation Works

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The evacuation of 158 people by slides from the ANA aircraft at Naha, with three minor injuries, followed procedures that every airliner must be certified to meet.

Certification requires that a fully loaded aircraft be evacuated in 90 seconds using only half of its exits, in darkness, a test conducted with volunteers before an aircraft type enters service.

The rule shapes everything about an evacuation: the number and position of exits, the design of the slides, the training of cabin crew and the instructions given to passengers.

Crew members open the doors and deploy the slides, which inflate in seconds, and they direct passengers with commands designed to be shouted over noise and panic.

Passengers are instructed to leave everything behind, because bags slow the exit and can puncture the slides, and the evacuations that go badly are often those in which passengers stopped for luggage.

The slides themselves cause most of the injuries in an otherwise successful evacuation, as passengers land awkwardly at the foot or collide at the bottom, which is why three minor injuries among 158 people is regarded as a good outcome.

Naha has seen a more serious evacuation. In August 2007, a China Airlines aircraft caught fire after landing there, and all 165 people aboard escaped by the slides minutes before the aircraft was destroyed.

That incident is studied as an example of an evacuation that worked under the worst conditions, and the procedures used on Wednesday are its descendants.

The transport ministry's safety board will examine the engine trouble that prompted the emergency landing, and its findings will be published in due course.

For the passengers, the experience of leaving an aircraft by slide is one most never have, and one that the crew are trained to make routine.

SOCIETY

Restaurant Fire Near Shinjuku Station's East Exit Injures Four

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

A fire broke out at a restaurant in a building near the east exit of Shinjuku Station, injuring four people, according to the reports available.

The east exit district is among the densest commercial areas in Tokyo, with multi-storey buildings packed with restaurants, bars and shops, and fires there draw a large response because of the number of people at risk.

Restaurant fires typically begin in kitchens, where open flames, oil and ventilation ducts coated with grease create conditions in which a small fire can spread quickly upward through a building.

Four injuries in a building of that kind is a modest outcome, and the details of how the fire started and how the occupants escaped were not reported.

The district's fire safety has been shaped by one disaster above all. In September 2001, a fire in the

Myojo 56 building in Kabukicho, a short walk from the east exit, killed 44 people trapped in upper-floor bars and gaming rooms.

That fire led to amendments to the Fire Service Act that tightened inspections, required visible fire safety compliance labels for small buildings and gave fire authorities stronger enforcement powers.

Buildings in the district are inspected more rigorously than they were, but the combination of restaurants, crowded stairwells and blocked emergency exits remains a hazard that inspectors find repeatedly.

The Tokyo Fire Department will investigate the cause, and the building's compliance with fire regulations will be examined.

Shinjuku Station is the busiest in the world by passenger numbers, and any incident near its exits affects tens of thousands of people passing through.

The four injured were taken to hospital, and their conditions were not reported as serious.

SOCIETY

The Fire That Rewrote Japan's Fire Law, a Short Walk From Wednesday's Blaze

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The restaurant fire near Shinjuku Station's east exit that injured four people on Wednesday occurred within walking distance of the site of the deadliest building fire in Tokyo's recent history.

On the night of September 1, 2001, a fire broke out in the Myojo 56 building in Kabukicho, a narrow multi-storey building housing bars, a mahjong parlour and other businesses, and 44 people died.

The dead were trapped on the upper floors, where the single staircase was blocked with stored goods and the emergency exits were obstructed, and where smoke reached them before they could escape.

The fire's cause was never established with certainty, and arson was suspected but not proved.

Its consequences were legal. The Fire Service Act was amended in 2002 to strengthen inspections of small buildings, to require that compliance be displayed through a labelling system, and to give fire authorities stronger powers to order corrections and to prosecute violations.

The amendments targeted exactly the buildings that fill Shinjuku's east exit and Kabukicho districts: narrow, tall, packed with restaurants and bars, with stairwells that double as storage.

Inspections since have found repeated violations in such buildings, and the Tokyo Fire Department conducts campaigns in the district before the year-end season, when the bars are fullest.

Wednesday's fire, with four injuries, was of a different order from 2001, and its cause and the building's compliance will be examined.

The district's density has not changed, and neither has the hazard, which is why every fire there is reported with the memory of Myojo 56 behind it.

A memorial for the 44 victims is held each September, and this year's fell in the same month as Wednesday's fire.

SOCIETY

Police Warn as 'Part-Time Jobs' Selling Fake Gold Necklaces Spread

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Damage from part-time jobs involving fake gold necklaces is increasing, and police have issued a warning, according to Asahi Shimbun.

The scheme follows the pattern of the dark part-time jobs that police have been fighting for several years: recruits answer advertisements on social media for easy, well-paid work and find themselves committing fraud.

In this version, recruits are sent to sell or pawn gold necklaces that turn out to be counterfeit, or to persuade victims, often older people, to buy them, and the money flows back to organisers who remain anonymous.

The recruits are typically young, often in financial difficulty, and they discover the nature of the work only after they have provided identification that the organisers then use to threaten them.

Gold is an attractive vehicle because its price has risen to records, which makes a necklace described as gold seem a plausible store of value to a victim and a plausible commodity to a recruit.

Police warnings address both sides: potential victims are told to be suspicious of unsolicited offers of gold, and potential recruits are told that jobs promising high pay for simple tasks, contacted through encrypted messaging apps, are criminal.

The dark part-time job phenomenon reached national attention with a series of violent robberies directed from abroad by organisers who recruited through social media, and the National Police Agency has since made recruitment through such channels a priority.

The organisers of the necklace scheme may sit in the same South-East Asian compounds that run online fraud aimed at Japanese victims, one of which Cambodian authorities disclosed this week.

Recruits who realise what they have joined are urged to contact police, who have offered protection to those who come forward before committing offences.

The warning comes as the holiday ends and the autumn job market opens, the season in which such advertisements multiply.

SOCIETY

From 'Luffy' to Gold Necklaces: How Dark Part-Time Jobs Became a National Problem

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The police warning about part-time jobs involving fake gold necklaces, reported by Asahi Shimbun, is the latest chapter in a phenomenon that Japanese police have fought for several years under the name of dark part-time jobs.

The term describes criminal work advertised on social media as ordinary employment: high pay for simple tasks, contact through encrypted messaging apps, and no questions asked.

Recruits are typically young and in financial difficulty, and they discover the nature of the work only after providing identification that the organisers then use to threaten them into continuing.

The phenomenon reached national attention in 2022 and 2023 through a series of violent robberies of homes across the country, directed by organisers based in the Philippines who recruited through social media and became known by the alias Luffy.

Those cases led to arrests, extraditions and a national police campaign against recruitment through social media, and platforms were pressed to remove the advertisements.

The schemes have since diversified. Recruits have been used as couriers for telephone fraud, as mules for laundering, and now as sellers of counterfeit gold to victims who believe they are buying a store of value.

Gold's rise to record prices has made the necklace scheme plausible to victims and attractive to organisers, and the damage is increasing, according to Asahi.

Police offer protection to recruits who come forward before committing offences, and the National Police Agency has repeated that jobs promising high pay for easy work through messaging apps are criminal.

The organisers often sit abroad, in the South-East Asian compounds that also run online fraud, one of which Cambodian authorities disclosed this week.

The autumn job market, opening as the holiday ends, is the season in which the advertisements multiply, and the warning is timed to it.

SOCIETY

The Numbers Behind the Kyoto Analysis: 686,000 Births and a Fertility Rate of 1.15

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The Kyoto University analysis finding that women's higher education explains only about 5% of the falling birthrate addresses a decline whose scale is measured in the government's own statistics.

Japan recorded about 686,000 births in 2024, the lowest number since records began in the nineteenth century and less than half the figure of the early 1970s.

The total fertility rate, the number of children a woman would have over her lifetime at current rates, fell to 1.15 in 2024, far below the level of about 2.1 at which a population sustains itself.

The decline has been continuous for decades, and the government's target of reversing it has been restated

by every administration since the 1990s.

Marriage is the variable demographers watch most closely, since most births in Japan occur within marriage, and the number of marriages has fallen sharply, with the age at first marriage rising past 30.

Marriages rose slightly in 2024, which offered a rare piece of encouraging news, but the trend of the past two decades has been downward.

The explanations offered include the cost of housing and education, the insecurity of non-regular employment, the long working hours that leave little time for family, and the difficulty of combining work and child-rearing in a labour market still organised around a male breadwinner.

Women's higher education has been cited as a cause, and the Kyoto analysis's finding that its effect is small removes one variable from the list and points policy toward the others.

Government measures have concentrated on cost, through child allowances, free childcare and education subsidies, and on encouraging fathers to take parental leave.

The population is now shrinking by hundreds of thousands a year, and the analysis arrives in a debate that has become one about the country's future size.

SOCIETY

Cheating, Falsified Answers and Stand-Ins: Fraud in the Eiken English Test Reported Repeatedly

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Fraud in the Eiken English proficiency test, including cheating, the falsification of answers and the use of substitutes, has been reported repeatedly, according to the reports available.

The Eiken, formally the Test in Practical English Proficiency, is the most widely taken English examination in Japan, administered by the Eiken Foundation of Japan in grades from 5, the most basic, to 1, the most advanced.

Its significance has grown as universities have adopted it in admissions, granting credit or exemption from English examinations to applicants who hold a sufficient grade, and as schools have used it to measure progress.

That significance is the source of the fraud. A test that opens doors to universities and jobs creates a market for cheating, and the reports describe three kinds: cheating during the examination, tampering with answers afterward and sending someone else to sit the test.

Substitute test-takers are the most serious, since they defeat the test entirely, and their use requires either lax identity checks or the co-operation of insiders.

The foundation has tightened procedures over the years, including photograph identification and monitoring, and the repeated reports suggest the measures have not kept pace with the incentive.

Test fraud is a problem for every high-stakes examination in Japan, from university entrance tests to professional qualifications, and it has been treated as a criminal matter in the most serious cases.

For the students who take the test honestly, and for the universities that rely on it, fraud devalues a credential that has become a standard part of Japanese education.

The foundation had not announced new measures in the reports available, and the scale of the fraud detected was not specified.

The reports will add to pressure for stricter administration of a test that millions of Japanese have taken.

SOCIETY

Exams and the People Who Cheat Them: From a Smartphone in 2011 to the Eiken Today

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The repeated reports of fraud in the Eiken English test, including cheating, falsified answers and substitute test-takers, place the examination in a history of Japanese test fraud that has followed technology and incentive.

The case that changed how examinations are administered came in February 2011, when a candidate for Kyoto University's entrance examination posted questions to an online question site during the test and received answers in real time.

SOCIETY

The candidate was arrested, and universities across the country responded with restrictions on devices, more invigilators and, eventually, signal detection in examination halls.

Substitute test-takers are an older problem, and identity checks with photographs were introduced for the national university entrance test decades ago to prevent them.

The Eiken's growth from a school-level measure of English ability into a credential used in university admissions raised its stakes, and stakes create fraud.

The reports describe three kinds: cheating during the test, tampering with answers afterward and sending someone else to sit it, each of which requires a different countermeasure.

Falsified answers are the most troubling, since they imply access to answer sheets after the examination, and the reports do not indicate whether insiders were involved.

Universities that accept Eiken grades in admissions rely on the foundation's administration, and repeated fraud undermines a credential that millions of students have earned honestly.

The foundation had not announced new measures in the reports available, and pressure for stricter identity checks and monitoring will follow.

Every examination that opens doors attracts people who would rather not earn the key, and the Eiken has joined the list.

SOCIETY

Six-Year-Old Missing in Sakata; a Body in Similar Clothing Found on Tobishima

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

A six-year-old child is missing in Sakata City, Yamagata Prefecture, and a body wearing similar clothing has been found on Tobishima, the island off the city's coast, according to the reports available.

Police are working to establish the identity of the body, and the reports available did not confirm that it is the missing child.

Tobishima lies about 39 kilometres north-west of Sakata port in the Sea of Japan, and it is the only inhabited island in Yamagata Prefecture, reached by ferry from the city.

The distance between the city and the island indicates the sea, and a search along the coast and across the water would have followed the child's disappearance.

Sakata is a port city at the mouth of the Mogami River, historically a centre of the rice trade and today a quiet regional city on a coast known for its winds and its winters.

Searches for missing children mobilise police, fire services, coast guard and volunteers, and the sea makes them harder and slower than searches on land.

The family and the community will be waiting for the identification, which police typically complete within a day or two through the procedures available to them.

The circumstances of the disappearance were not detailed in the reports available, and police had not indicated whether any crime was suspected.

Cases of this kind are reported with restraint in the Japanese press until identification is confirmed, and the same restraint applies here.

The city's residents, and readers far from it, will hope for an answer that is not the one the discovery suggests.

SOCIETY

Sakata and Its Island: The Port and the Rock in the Sea Where the Search Led

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The search for a missing six-year-old in Sakata, and the discovery of a body in similar clothing on Tobishima, have brought attention to a city and an island that most of Japan knows little about.

Sakata sits at the mouth of the Mogami River on Yamagata's Sea of Japan coast, and it grew rich in the Edo period as a port for the rice of the Shonai plain, shipped south on the coastal trading vessels known as kitamaebune.

The Sankyo rice warehouses, built in 1893 and still in use, and the Honma family's mansion and museum recall a merchant wealth that once rivalled the

domain lords'.

Tobishima lies about 39 kilometres north-west of the port, a small island of a few hundred residents reached by a ferry of about an hour and a quarter, and it is the only inhabited island in the prefecture.

It is known for its bird life, its fishing and its isolation, and it lies in the path of the currents that carry objects north along the coast.

The distance between the city and the island describes the sea that a search would have had to cover, and it explains why the discovery on the island was made rather than on the mainland shore.

Police were working to identify the body in the reports available, and the identification had not been confirmed.

Sakata's residents have followed the search with the concern of a small city in which a missing child is everyone's child.

The port and the island are connected by the ferry, by the fishermen who work the waters between them, and now by a search that the whole coast has watched.

The answer, when it comes, will be reported with the restraint that such cases require.

SPORTS

Sixty Years and Forty-Four Years: Both Table Tennis Teams Reach Tonight's Finals Against China

The women beat South Korea 3-0 and chase a first team gold since 1966; the men are in their first final since 1982

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's table tennis team beat South Korea 3-0 to reach the Asian Games final, where they will face China tonight in pursuit of a first team gold in 60 years, since 1966, according to Sponichi.

The men's team also beat South Korea to reach their final, the first time Japan's men have reached the Asian Games team final in 44 years, and they face China tonight as well.

Sponichi named Tomokazu Harimoto, Teruaki Matsushima and Shunsuke Togami as the men who carried the semi-final.

Two finals against China in one evening give the sport its biggest night at these Games, and the largest television audience that table tennis draws in Japan.

The women's semi-final was as one-sided as a 3-0 scoreline suggests, and it sends the team into the final having lost nothing on the way, as the volleyball team did before its own final on Tuesday.

The 1966 title came at the Bangkok Games, before any current player's parents were competing, and every women's team since has been stopped by China or, on occasion, by the Koreans.

The men's last final came at the New Delhi Games of 1982, and reaching one after 44 years is itself the men's best result in a generation.

China's dominance of the sport is the most complete in any Olympic discipline, and its teams enter both finals as favourites by a wide margin.

Japan's best recent result against China came at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, when Jun Mizutani and Mima Ito won the mixed doubles gold in a final against a Chinese pair, which showed the gap can be closed on a given night.

Team ties are decided over a sequence of singles and doubles matches, and coaches' choices of order can decide close ties, though against China every rubber is a test.

Tuesday's volleyball final, lost 0-3 after Japan led in the third set, is the memory the table tennis players will be asked about, and the result they will be trying not to repeat.

Both finals are played tonight, and the results will lead tomorrow's sports pages.

SPORTS

Silver by 1.269 Points: China Take the Men's Team Title as Hashimoto's Horizontal Bar Falls Short

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan lost the men's gymnastics team final to China, 253.826 to 255.095, and took silver, missing the gold for the first time in 12 years, according to TBS.

Daiki Hashimoto's 15.233 on the horizontal bar, the final apparatus, was not enough to overturn China's

lead, TBS reported, in a final that reversed the outcome of the Paris Olympics two years ago.

In Paris, Japan won the team gold on the last apparatus after falls on China's horizontal bar erased a Chinese lead; in Nagoya, China held its lead through the same apparatus and took the title on Japanese soil.

A margin of 1.269 points across six apparatus and three gymnasts per apparatus is close, and it describes a final decided by tenths of a point in execution rather than by any collapse.

Hashimoto, the Olympic all-around champion of 2021, and Shinnosuke Oka, the champion of 2024, had taken bronze and silver in the individual all-around on Monday behind China's Zhang Boheng, and the team final followed that order.

The result leaves Japanese gymnastics with the women's all-around gold won by Aiko Sugihara, the first for a Japanese woman, and the men's team silver, from a week in which both teams contested finals against China.

Team gold is the title Japanese gymnastics values most, and missing it at a home Games will sting, though a silver against the strongest programme in the world is no disgrace.

The apparatus finals follow later in the Games, where specialists get their chance at medals and where Hashimoto's horizontal bar and Oka's strengths will be tested again.

The rivalry with China now stands at one each in the two finals of this Olympic cycle, and the next meeting is the world championships and, in 2028, Los Angeles.

TBS's description of the horizontal bar routine as insufficient for a comeback captures the final's shape: Japan needed something extraordinary on the last apparatus and delivered something excellent.

SPORTS

Shoto Mitsunaga Wins the 100 Butterfly in a Japanese Record, and Ikee Adds a Relay Silver

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Shoto Mitsunaga won the men's 100 metres butterfly at the Asian Games in a new Japanese and tournament record, and Rikako Ikee won silver in the mixed 4x100 metres medley relay, described in reports as her third consecutive medal, according to the accounts available.

Mitsunaga is the swimmer whom Yomiuri Shimbun profiled on Wednesday as a two-way talent, with explosive power developed through baseball, and his record confirms the profile's point.

The 100 metres butterfly rewards exactly that power: a fast start, a strong underwater phase off each wall and the ability to hold stroke rate through a second length in which the arms burn.

A national record at a home Games, in an event where Japan has produced Olympic finalists but few champions, is a result that will place Mitsunaga among the swimmers Japan takes to Los Angeles in 2028.

Ikee's silver continues a story that Japanese sport has followed since 2018, when she won six golds at the Jakarta Asian Games at 18 and was named the Games' most valuable athlete.

Her diagnosis with leukaemia the following year, her recovery and her return to competition at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 made her the most followed swimmer in the country, and every medal since has carried that history.

The mixed medley relay, in which two men and two women swim one stroke each, is among the newer events on the programme, and a silver in it adds to Japan's relay medals at these Games.

Eight finals are held tonight at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, following the nine on Wednesday, as the swimming programme approaches its close.

Japan's pool results now include Yuki Kojima's 400 metres medley gold, Tomoyuki Matsushita's 200 metres medley gold, Shin Ohashi's shared breaststroke gold and Mitsunaga's butterfly record.

The Tokyo venue, far from the Games' Aichi base, has given Japanese swimmers home crowds and a pool they know, and they have used both.

SPORTS

Football's Most Political Fixture: Japan, North Korea and a Match That Was Never Played

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's under-21 quarter-final against North Korea on the 27th continues a football rivalry in which politics has decided as many results as goals.

The two countries' senior teams met in Tokyo in March 2024 in a World Cup qualifier that Japan won 1-0, and the return match, scheduled for Pyongyang five days later, was never played.

North Korea declined to host it, citing reasons that FIFA did not accept, and the governing body awarded Japan a 3-0 win, an outcome that decided the group without a ball being kicked.

Earlier meetings in Pyongyang, including a qualifier in 2011, were played before hostile crowds with Japanese supporters barred, and matches in Japan have been accompanied by security measures unusual for football.

The rivalry sits on top of the abduction issue, the missile tests and the absence of diplomatic relations, and every fixture between the two countries is treated by Japanese authorities as a security event as well as a sporting one.

North Korea's football has been competitive at Asian level for decades, built on physical, defensively organised teams, and its youth teams have won Asian titles.

The Asian Games tournament, for players under 21, is an unusual venue for the fixture, since the political dimension weighs less on youth teams and the Games' rules require neutral treatment of all delegations.

Japan's under-age teams have been the strongest in Asia in recent years, and their 3-0 win over Thailand, with Keita Kosugi scoring on arrival, sets up the quarter-final as favourites.

The North Korean team's presence at a Games hosted by Japan, alongside its table tennis team's semi-final against China, follows its return to international competition after the pandemic.

The match will be played in Aichi on Sunday, and it will be reported for what happens on the pitch, which in this fixture is not always the case.

SPORTS

When Japan Ruled the Table: The Golden Age That 1966 Belonged To

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The first team gold since 1966 that Japan's women pursue tonight belongs to an era when Japanese table tennis was the best in the world, not merely the best in Asia.

In the 1950s, Japanese players arrived at the world championships with sponge-covered rackets and an attacking style that overwhelmed the European defenders who had dominated the sport.

Ichiro Ogimura won the men's singles world title in 1954 and 1956, and Japan won a string of team, doubles and singles titles through the decade.

The women followed. Kimiyo Matsuzaki won the world singles title in 1959 and 1963, and Japanese women's teams won world team championships in the same period.

China's rise in the 1960s ended the dominance. Chinese players adapted Japan's attacking game and added their own innovations, and by the end of the decade China had become the power it has remained.

The 1966 Asian Games in Bangkok fell at the end of Japan's golden age, and the team golds won there were among the last before the balance shifted permanently.

Japan remained a strong second for decades, producing world-class players and Olympic medallists, but the world and Asian team titles went to China with a regularity that no other sport matches.

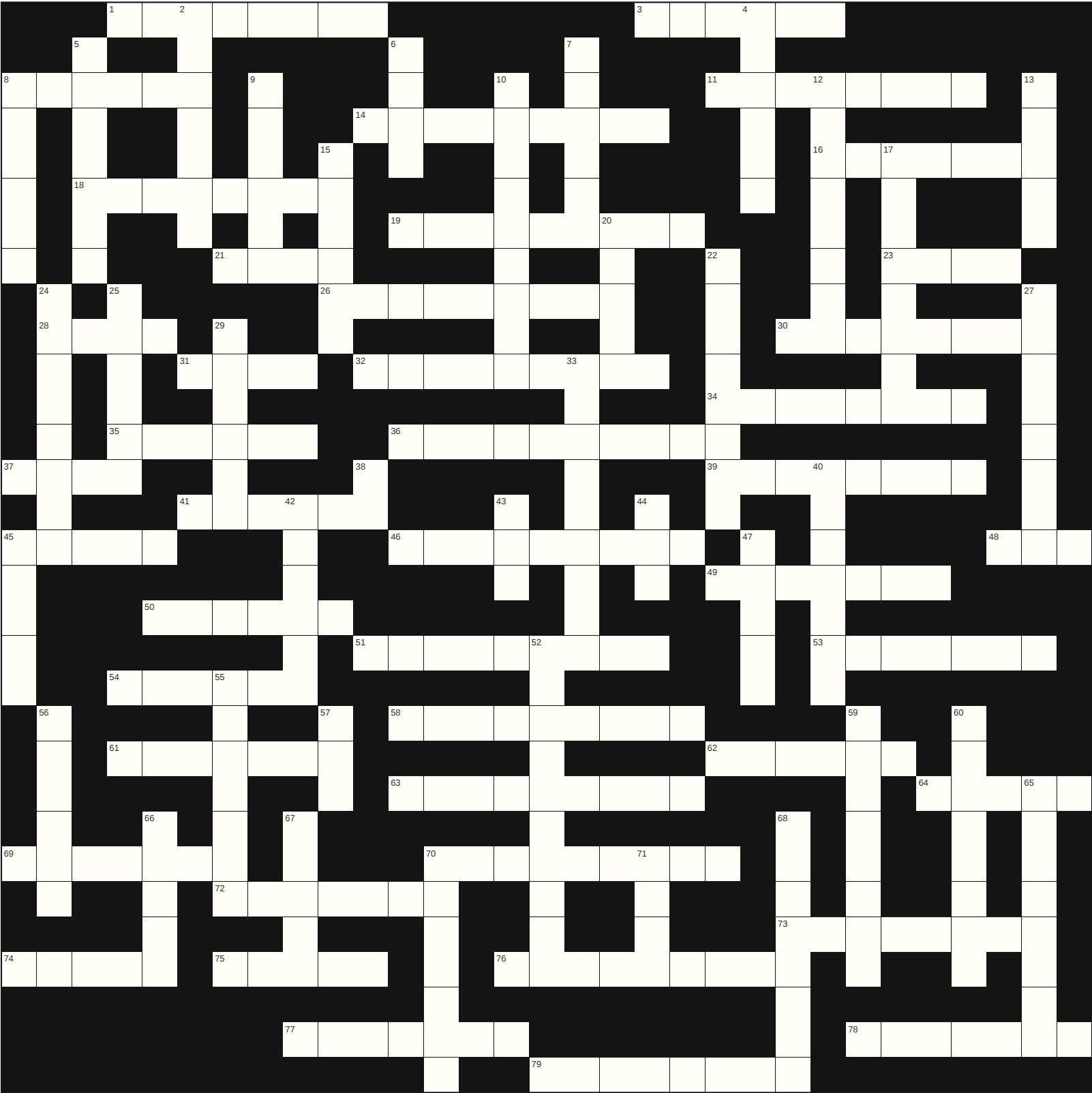
The revival of the past fifteen years, built on players identified young and trained intensively, produced the Olympic mixed doubles gold of 2021 and the team medals at four consecutive Olympics.

Tonight's finals, women and men, against China are the test of whether that revival can close the last gap.

Sixty years is a long time in any sport, and the players who take the table tonight were trained by coaches whose own coaches remembered 1966.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 82 Words



Solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Puzzle difficulty: Professional.

SPORTS

How a Table Tennis Team Tie Is Won

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Tonight's finals against China, for both Japan's women and its men, will be decided by the team format that gives table tennis its most dramatic evenings.

A team tie is played as a sequence of matches, and the first team to win three takes the tie, so a tie can end 3-0 after three matches or run to a fifth and deciding match.

Each team names three players, and the order in which they play is decided by the coaches before the tie, in a submission that sets the pairings for the singles and the doubles.

The order is the coaches' tactical choice: whether to lead with the strongest player to secure an early match, or to hold that player for a later match where the tie may be decided.

Against China, the choice matters less than usual, because every Chinese player is a potential world champion and there is no weak rubber to target.

Japan's women beat South Korea 3-0 in the semi-final, a result that describes a tie won without reaching a fourth match, and the men beat South Korea to reach their first final in 44 years.

Individual matches are played to the best of five games, each to 11 points, and a match can turn on a few points in a deciding game.

The crowd's role in team events is larger than in singles, since teammates and supporters can lift a player between games, and a home Games gives Japan that advantage.

The women's last team gold came in 1966 and the men's last final in 1982, which gives tonight's ties a weight that the format's simplicity does not convey.

The results will be known this evening, and tomorrow's sports pages will lead with them.

SPORTS

The Last Apparatus: Why Team Finals End on the Horizontal Bar

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Daiki Hashimoto's 15.233 on the horizontal bar, which TBS reported was not enough to overturn China's lead in the men's team final, was scored on the apparatus that decides more finals than any other.

The horizontal bar is the last of the six men's apparatus in the Olympic order, after floor, pommel horse, rings, vault and parallel bars, and teams rotate through the apparatus in sequence, so the final rotation of a team final often falls on it.

It is also the most spectacular and the most dangerous. Gymnasts swing around a single bar 2.8 metres above the floor, releasing and catching it in flight, and a missed catch means a fall and the loss of a full point and more.

A score of 15.233 combines a difficulty score for the skills attempted with an execution score that starts at 10 and loses tenths for each error, and it represents a routine of high difficulty performed well.

In Paris in 2024, China's lead in the team final disappeared when its gymnasts fell on the horizontal bar, and Japan won gold; in Nagoya, China held its routines and the margin of 1.269 points stood.

Hashimoto is among the world's best on the apparatus, and his routine was the one Japan needed to be extraordinary; TBS's judgment that it was insufficient describes a routine that was excellent instead.

The apparatus finals later in the Games give the bar its own medal, and Hashimoto will contend for it.

For spectators, the horizontal bar is the apparatus they wait for, and team finals are arranged so that they wait until the end.

The men's team silver, 253.826 to 255.095, was decided across all six apparatus and eighteen routines, but it will be remembered for the last one.

That is the bar's place in the sport: the apparatus on which the final act is performed and the result is written.

SPORTS

Aiko Sugihara's All-Around Gold, a First for Japan, and Nishiyama's Bronze

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Aiko Sugihara won the women's individual all-around gold at the Asian Games, the first gold medal in the event for Japan, and Misa Nishiyama took bronze, according to the reports available.

Sugihara is a veteran of the Rio Olympics of 2016, and her return to the top of the sport a decade later, at a home Games, is among the more remarkable stories of the competition.

The all-around combines vault, uneven bars, balance

beam and floor exercise, and a champion must be strong on all four against rivals who have no weakness.

Japan's women had never won the Asian Games all-around, a title dominated by China and, in earlier decades, by the Koreans, and the gold marks the arrival of a programme that has risen steadily over the past decade.

Nishiyama's bronze puts two Japanese gymnasts on the podium, evidence of depth rather than of a single star, and the team's first place in qualifying for the team final reflected the same strength.

The women's team final result was not included in the reports available to this desk, and it will be reported when confirmed.

The men's team, by contrast, lost their final to China by 1.269 points on Wednesday and took silver, which leaves the women's all-around as the gymnastics gold of the Games so far.

Mai Murakami's world title on floor in 2017 was the previous high point of Japanese women's gymnastics, and Sugihara's gold surpasses it in the context of a multi-sport Games.

The women's apparatus finals follow, with Japan expected to contend on floor and beam.

For a gymnast who first competed at the Olympics as a teenager, the gold is a career's reward at its far end.

SPORTS

Rikako Ikee's Third Games, and a Silver That Carries a History

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Rikako Ikee's silver in the mixed 4x100 metres medley relay, described in reports as her third consecutive medal, adds to a story that Japanese sport has followed for eight years.

At the Jakarta Asian Games in 2018, aged 18, she won six gold medals and was named the Games' most valuable athlete, the first woman to receive the honour, and she was expected to lead Japan's swimming at the Tokyo Olympics.

In February 2019 she announced that she had been diagnosed with leukaemia, and the country followed her treatment and recovery with an attention given to few athletes.

She returned to competition in 2020, qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in 2021 in relay events, and swam at the Paris Olympics in 2024, results that would have been unremarkable for another swimmer and were

ACROSS

- Aiko, all-around champion (8)
- City whose station district stays flooded (6)
- Men's team medal, by 1.269 points (6)
- Beaten 3-0 by the under-21s (8)
- Women's team final today (9)
- Site of the women's last team gold, 1966 (7)
- Station near Wednesday's restaurant fire (8)
- District of the 2001 Myojo 56 fire (9)
- Line out for about one month (4)
- Expressway, the outer ring road (4)
- Where the Tone's levee broke in 1947 (9)
- Talked to Washington after two and a half months (4)
- Prime Minister who backed the court 'consistently' (8)
- River too high to drain into (4)
- Turkish drone (9)
- Typhoon of September 1947 (8)
- Shunsuke ____, in the same line-up (6)
- Mitsui Fudosan's home district (10)
- Airport of the ANA emergency landing (4)
- Plant whose importance is rising again (8)
- Index reopening at 65,018.95 (6)
- Alias of the robbery organisers (5)
- Telephone call whose effect fades (9)
- Its expected increases lifted yields (3)
- President who confirmed defence co-operation (7)
- Strait whose reopening is under discussion (6)
- Northern end of the suspended section (9)
- Rain reaches it as the front crosses (7)
- Paper whose editorial demanded a withdrawal (6)
- 15.233 on the horizontal bar (9)
- Forced out Fujinokawa on day eleven (7)
- On today's summit agenda with trade (6)
- Sport starting in earnest today (9)
- His 1971 shock still shapes Tokyo's caution (5)
- Document amended only three times (7)
- Islands watching the southern depression (9)
- World champion of 1954 and 1956 (7)
- Frigate wrecked off Wakayama in 1890 (8)
- President hosting a state visit today (5)
- University whose analysis put education at about 5% (5)
- Stroke of the Japanese record (9)
- Where she won six golds in 2018 (7)
- Mobile carrier criticised by Sankei (7)
- Uncovered fraud hub 'Park No. 8' (8)

DOWN

- Shares the label, joined in 1973 (7)
- Line out for about three months (6)
- Former enemy ____, which Beijing calls important (7)
- Fighter programme with Britain and Italy (4)
- ____ Fudosan, investing in the British Library (6)
- How 158 people left the aircraft (6)
- Kumamoto town with chip plants (6)
- Shoto, butterfly record holder (9)
- Lake whose embankment failed for the first time (8)
- English test hit by repeated fraud (5)
- Taro, today's cartoonist (6)
- Fake gold ____, in a part-time job scam (8)
- Opponent in both finals tonight (5)
- The frontal force-out (8)
- Southern end of it (8)
- Yamagata city where a child is missing (6)
- Sumo's 82 winning techniques (8)
- River at whose mouth Sakata sits (6)
- Island where a body was found (9)
- Jinping, arriving in Washington (2)
- Bookings behind the weekend rates (7)
- Scored straight after joining the squad (6)
- Weakening again, Yomiuri reports (3)
- Court she supported without naming sanctions (3)
- Embankment that breached at Sakura (5)
- Cold ____, arriving in the north (5)
- Foreign minister who addressed the Assembly in 1956 (10)
- Coldest night on the map, at 12 (7)
- Stadium where athletics begins (6)
- Fell 352 points to 51,511 (3)
- Named by Sponichi in the men's line-up (8)
- Marked DELETE in the cartoon (8)
- What the Assembly called them in 1995 (8)
- Marked PERMANENT MEMBER (5)
- Industrial coast of Tokyo Bay (5)
- Expressway with restricted landslide sections (8)
- Cloudy turning to rain, 24/13 (7)
- Relay silver, her third consecutive medal (4)

extraordinary for her.

A relay silver at these Games, at 26, is a medal won on merit against Asia's best, and it completes a return that her illness had made uncertain.

The mixed medley relay, in which two men and two women each swim a stroke, is among the newer relay events and one in which Japan's depth in breaststroke and butterfly counts.

Her presence in the team alongside a new generation, including 17-year-old Yuki Kojima, links the swimming programme's past to its future.

Shoto Mitsunaga's Japanese record in the 100 metres butterfly on the same evening was the night's other headline, and the two results together describe a programme in good health.

Eight finals are held tonight, and Ikee's relay silver may not be her last medal of the Games.

For the crowds at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, her races have been the emotional centre of the swimming, as they were at the Olympics five years ago.

SPORTS

Japan's Under-21s Beat Thailand 3-0, With Kosugi Scoring Straight After Joining the Squad

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's under-21 football team beat Thailand 3-0 at the Asian Games, with Keita Kosugi scoring a goal immediately after joining the team, and they will play North Korea in the quarter-finals on the 27th, according to Gekisaka.

Kosugi's arrival mid-tournament, and his goal on arrival, describe the way Asian Games squads are assembled, with players released by their clubs at different times and joining the team when they can.

The Asian Games football tournament is an under-age competition, and it serves as a proving ground for the players who will contest the next Olympics and, in time, the senior national team.

A 3-0 win over Thailand completes the group stage with the kind of margin the tournament's stronger nations expect, and it sets up a quarter-final with a political as well as a sporting edge.

Japan and North Korea have a football history shaped by politics. In 2024, a World Cup qualifier scheduled in Pyongyang was cancelled after North Korea declined to host it, and FIFA awarded Japan a 3-0 win.

SPORTS

North Korea's presence at these Games, like its table tennis team's, follows its return to international competition after the pandemic, and its football teams have been competitive at Asian level for decades.

The quarter-final on the 27th will be played in Aichi, and the North Korean team's approach, physical and defensively organised, is one Japanese teams have found difficult in the past.

Japan's under-age teams have been the most successful in Asia in recent years, winning the Asian Games in 2010 and the under-23 continental title on several occasions.

The Olympic team for Los Angeles in 2028 will be drawn largely from the players at these Games, which gives the tournament a significance beyond its medals.

Kosugi's goal, on his first day, was the kind of introduction that coaches remember when squads for larger tournaments are chosen.

SPORTS

Onosato Forces Out Fujinokawa on Day Eleven, and the Race for the Title Continues

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Onosato defeated Fujinokawa by yorikiri, the frontal force-out, on the eleventh day of the Autumn Grand Sumo Tournament, and the battle for first place continues, according to Nikkei.

Yorikiri is sumo's most common winning technique and its most fundamental: the winner takes a grip on the opponent's belt or body, drives forward and forces him over the straw bales at the edge of the ring.

For a yokozuna of Onosato's size and power, the force-out is the natural finish to a bout in which he has secured his grip, and the win kept him at the head of the tournament with four days remaining.

Nikkei's description of the race for first place continuing indicates that the title is not yet decided and that challengers remain within reach as the tournament enters its final days.

The final four days pair the leaders against the highest-ranked opponents and against each other, by the judges' design, so that the championship is settled by the strongest possible bouts.

Onosato secured his winning record on day nine and has led through the tournament's middle days, which is the position a yokozuna is expected to hold.

The Ryogoku Kokugikan has been full through the holiday, and the working week's crowds will see the bouts that decide the Emperor's Cup.

The tournament ends on Sunday, when the champion is decided and the prizes presented, and the possibility of a playoff on the final day remains if the leaders finish level.

NHK broadcasts each day's bouts in the late afternoon, with the final days drawing the tournament's largest audiences.

A title on Sunday would confirm Onosato as the dominant figure of the current era; a challenger's run would make the Aki Basho one to remember.

SPORTS

Eighty-Two Ways to Win: Yorikiri and the Techniques of Sumo

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Onosato's win over Fujinokawa on the eleventh day of the Aki Basho came by yorikiri, the frontal force-out, which is the most common of the 82 winning techniques recognised by the Japan Sumo Association.

The techniques, known as kimarite, are announced after each bout, and they describe how the winner won: by forcing the opponent out, throwing him, pushing him down or, in rarer cases, by a manoeuvre with its own name and history.

Yorikiri means the winner secured a grip on the opponent's belt or body and drove him forward and over the edge of the ring, and it accounts for a large share of all bouts in the top division.

Oshidashi, the frontal push-out, in which the winner pushes the opponent out without gripping the belt, is the second most common, and the two together decide most bouts.

Throws such as uwatenage, the overarm throw, and shitatenage, the underarm throw, come next, followed by dozens of techniques that appear a few times a tournament or a few times a decade.

Some techniques are so rare that their announcement is an event in itself, and sumo followers keep lists of which have and have not been seen in a given era.

A yokozuna of Onosato's build wins most often by yorikiri, since his size and power make the force-out the natural conclusion once he has his grip.

Smaller wrestlers rely on speed, throws and the techniques that use an opponent's momentum against him.

The announcement of the kimarite is made by the ring announcer and recorded in the tournament's results, and it is the vocabulary through which sumo describes itself.

The race for the title continues into the final days, and each bout's technique will be announced as the champion is decided.

SPORTS

The Women's Badminton Team Final Is Today

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The women's team final in badminton is held today at the Asian Games, with a recorded broadcast planned, according to the reports available.

The team competition is contested over five matches, three singles and two doubles, and a nation needs strength across both to win a tie.

Japan's women rose to the top of the sport over the past fifteen years through a national training system and corporate team support, with women's doubles their most consistent strength.

Ayaka Takahashi and Misaki Matsutomo's Olympic doubles gold in Rio in 2016 was the breakthrough, and Japanese pairs have been among the world's best since, with medals at the Paris Olympics two years ago.

Asia dominates world badminton, and the Asian Games team final brings together nations that between them hold most of the sport's world titles.

A team gold at a home Games would be among the finest results in Japanese badminton's history, since the team competition rewards depth that only the strongest programmes possess.

The identity of Japan's opponent in the final was not included in the reports available to this desk, and the semi-final results on Wednesday decided it.

The individual events follow the team competition, giving players a second chance at medals later in the Games.

The recorded broadcast means that viewers in Japan will see the final after it has been played, in the evening's programming.

Table tennis's two finals against China share the evening, making today the Games' biggest night for the racket sports.

SPORTS

Athletics Begins in Earnest at Mizuho, the Games' Main Stadium

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Full-scale athletics competition begins today at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya, the venue that hosted the opening ceremony and now hosts the Games' central sport.

Athletics is the largest sport on the programme by medals, and its days at the main stadium are the ones that fill the Games' evening broadcasts around the world.

The half marathon and race walking events on the roads on Wednesday opened the programme; the track and field events now follow in the stadium.

Japan's strengths on the track are the relays, where the men's 4x100 metres team has won Olympic and world medals through baton technique that compensates for the absence of the fastest individual sprinters, and the distance events that its corporate running culture produces.

In the field, Japan has produced world-class hammer throwers, javelin throwers and pole vaulters in recent years, and the home crowd will expect medals.

Asian athletics is dominated by China across the events, with India, Bahrain, Qatar and Japan among the challengers, and the Asian Games are the one stage on which the continent's athletes compete for a full programme of titles outside the world championships.

Paloma Mizuho Stadium, rebuilt for the Games,

replaces the old Mizuho stadium that hosted athletics and football for decades, and its track will host the sport's Japanese championships in years to come.

Nagoya's weather, at 31 degrees with sun and cloud on today's map, is warm for distance events and favourable for sprints and jumps.

The programme runs over several days, with finals each evening, and the Japanese team's results will shape the medal table's final week.

For the stadium, the athletics is the purpose for which it was built, and today it begins to fulfil it.

SPORTS

Samurai Japan Reach the Knockout Stage After Their Final Group Game

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's baseball team has advanced to the knockout stage of the Asian Games after its final group match, according to the reports available, completing the group stage that began with wins over China and Palestine.

The knockout stage, known as the Super Round, brings together the top two teams from each of the two groups to decide the medals, and it is where South Korea's professionals await.

Japan's squad, drawn from the corporate leagues because the professional season is still running, has done what corporate baseball would hope: reached the medal round without alarm.

South Korea, chasing a fifth consecutive Asian Games gold with a squad of professionals, is the team Japan must beat for a first gold since Hiroshima in 1994.

The tournament is played at Okazaki and Toyohashi in Aichi and runs until September 27, with the medal games at its end.

Corporate-league players rarely get a stage of this size, and a home Games gives them one that their predecessors in Hangzhou and Incheon did not have.

The Philippines, Japan's opponent on Wednesday, brought a history to the group that its current standing does not suggest, having won the first Asian Baseball Championship in 1954.

Japan's recent results at the Games have been bronzes, in 2014 and 2023, and the Super Round is where those campaigns ended short of the final.

The knockout draw and schedule will follow the completion of both groups.

For the players, the medal round is the reason they came, and the corporate teams that employ them will be watching from the stands.

SPORTS

Japan's Women Reach the Basketball Quarter-Finals

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's women's basketball team has advanced to the quarter-finals of the Asian Games after the group stage, according to the reports available.

The women's team carries the country's strongest basketball record, including the Olympic silver medal won at the Tokyo Games in 2021, the best result by a Japanese basketball team at an Olympics.

Japan's women dominated Asian basketball for much of the past decade, winning five consecutive FIBA Women's Asia Cup titles from 2013 to 2021, before China regained the continental title.

The Emperor and Empress watched a women's game earlier in the Games after their visit to Ghibli Park, one of the imperial couple's sporting appearances in Aichi.

The men's team took silver on Sunday after losing the final to South Korea 67-57, the first men's basketball medal in 64 years, and the women's campaign now carries the sport's remaining hopes.

The quarter-final opponent and schedule were not included in the reports available, and the knockout draw follows the completion of the groups.

Japanese women's basketball is built on speed, three-point shooting and pace, a style developed to counter taller opponents and one that has troubled every team in Asia except, on most occasions, China.

A gold at a home Games would be the women's first Asian Games title in decades and would complete a basketball tournament in which both Japanese teams reached the medal rounds.

The B.League's new season, which opened on Tuesday, gives the sport a domestic stage to which the national teams' players return after the Games.

The quarter-finals are the stage at which the tournament becomes unforgiving, with one defeat ending a campaign.

SPORTS

Volleyball's Silver, Two Days On: What the 0-3 Final Leaves Behind

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's women's volleyball team secured silver after their 0-3 loss to China in Tuesday's final, and two days on, the result has settled into its place in the Games' story.

The team reached the final without dropping a set, beat South Korea 3-0 in the semi-final, and led China in the third set before losing momentum, as Sports Hochi reported.

The silver is Japan's best result in the event since the run of titles that ended in 1978, and it confirms a team that has adapted its game to counter taller opponents through reception, defence and speed.

China's third consecutive title extends a dominance of the continental championship that has run for most of the past half-century, and it shows the gap that remains at the top.

The final's shape, a lead lost in a third set that would have made the match a contest, is the memory the players carry, and the one the table tennis teams will be asked about before their own finals against China tonight.

Volleyball draws some of the largest television audiences in Japanese sport, and the final's audience on the holiday's last evening was among the Games' largest.

The team's next stage is the international calendar and the qualification cycle for the Los Angeles Olympics in 2028, where the same rivals await.

Japan's medal count at the Games has grown steadily, with golds in swimming, gymnastics, karate, triathlon, soft tennis and fencing, and silvers in volleyball, basketball and gymnastics.

The women's tournament ended with the final; the men's competition continues later in the Games.

Two days on, the silver looks less like a defeat and more like a result, which is how the players will eventually see it.

SPORTS

A Week of Finals Against China: Volleyball, Gymnastics and Now the Table

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Tonight's table tennis finals, for both Japan's women and its men, complete a week in which the Games' rivalry has narrowed to one opponent.

On Tuesday the women's volleyball team lost the final to China 0-3 after leading in the third set, and China took a third consecutive title.

On Wednesday the men's gymnastics team lost the final to China by 1.269 points, 253.826 to 255.095, with Daiki Hashimoto's horizontal bar routine not enough to close the gap.

Tonight the women's table tennis team, unbeaten on the way, plays China for a first team gold since 1966, and the men, in their first final since 1982, play China as well.

The pattern is the Games' pattern. In the sports where Japan is strongest, China is the standard, and the finals between them decide the titles that the medal table records.

Japan has won its share. Aiko Sugihara's women's all-around gold, the swimming golds of Kojima, Matsushita, Ohashi and Mitsunaga, and the karate, triathlon, soft tennis and fencing titles are all victories at these Games.

But the team finals against China have gone China's way twice this week, and the table tennis teams carry the weight of both.

The week's results describe two programmes at close quarters, with China ahead by a set, by 1.269 points, and by the margin that tonight will show.

Home crowds, at the Aichi venues and at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, have given Japan an advantage that has not yet been enough in the finals that matter most.

SPORTS

The Games run until October 4, and the finals against China will continue to define them.

SPORTS

Today at the Games: Two Table Tennis Finals, Eight in the Pool, Badminton's Final and Athletics at Mizuho

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Thursday brings the Games' biggest night for table tennis, with both Japanese teams in finals against China, and a full programme elsewhere.

The women's team, having beaten South Korea 3-0, plays for a first team gold since 1966; the men, in their first final since 1982, play for a first team gold in 60 years as well.

In the pool, eight finals are held at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, following Shoto Mitsunaga's Japanese record in the 100 metres butterfly and Rikako Ikee's relay silver on Wednesday.

Badminton's women's team final is held, with a recorded broadcast planned for the evening.

Athletics begins full-scale competition at Paloma Mizuho Stadium in Nagoya, the Games' main venue, with track and field events following Wednesday's road races.

Baseball's knockout stage follows Japan's advance from the group, and the women's basketball team has reached the quarter-finals.

Gymnastics turns to the apparatus finals after the men's team silver, lost to China by 1.269 points on Wednesday, and Aiko Sugihara's women's all-around gold.

Sumo's Aki Basho reaches its twelfth day with Onosato leading after his day-eleven force-out of Fujinokawa, and the race for the title continues.

Professional baseball's pennant races resumed after the holiday, with SoftBank already Pacific League champions for a third consecutive year.

Football's under-21s, having beaten Thailand 3-0, rest before their quarter-final against North Korea on the 27th.

SPORTS

Scoreboard and Fixtures

Compiled by the Sports Desk

ASIAN GAMES, SEPT. 23 — TABLE TENNIS: Women's semi-final: Japan 3-0 South Korea. Men's semi-final: Japan beat South Korea. Both finals v China today.

ASIAN GAMES — MEN'S GYMNASTICS TEAM FINAL: China 255.095, Japan 253.826. Silver for Japan.

ASIAN GAMES — WOMEN'S GYMNASTICS: Individual all-around: Aiko Sugihara gold, a first for Japan; Misa Nishiyama bronze.

ASIAN GAMES — SWIMMING: Men's 100m butterfly: Shoto Mitsunaga gold, Japanese and Games record. Mixed 4x100m medley relay: Japan silver, with Rikako Ikee.

ASIAN GAMES — FOOTBALL (U-21): Japan 3-0 Thailand; Keita Kosugi scored. Quarter-final v North Korea, Sept. 27.

ASIAN GAMES — BASEBALL: Japan advanced to the knockout stage after the final group game. WOMEN'S BASKETBALL: Japan through to the quarter-finals.

ASIAN GAMES TODAY: Table tennis team finals, Japan v China (women and men). Swimming, eight finals. Badminton women's team final. Athletics begins at Paloma Mizuho Stadium.

SUMO, AKI BASHO DAY 11: Onosato beat Fujinokawa by yorikiri; the title race continues. Day 12 today.

NPB: Central and Pacific League games resumed after the holiday. SoftBank are Pacific League champions for a third consecutive year.

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL (Sept. 22 final): China 3-0 Japan. Silver for Japan.

CULTURE

Mari Shiraki, a Star of Japanese Cinema's Post-War Boom, Died Three Years Ago, It Emerges

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The actress Mari Shiraki died three years ago, it has emerged, according to the reports available, in a disclosure of the kind that has become familiar for stars of Japan's mid-century cinema.

She rose to fame in the late 1950s and 1960s, the years in which Japanese studios produced films at a pace never repeated, and her name belonged to the generation that filled cinemas before television emptied them.

Deaths of retired performers are often made public long after the fact in Japan, at the family's discretion, and the announcement that a star died years earlier is a recurring feature of the entertainment pages.

The practice reflects the wishes of families who prefer privacy, and the reticence of an older generation of performers who left the industry and its publicity behind.

For audiences who remember her films, the news arrives as a double loss: of the actress and of the chance to have marked her passing at the time.

The studios of the period produced stars in quantity and gave them roles in dozens of films a year, and many of those films survive only in archives and occasional retrospectives.

Film historians have worked to preserve the output of the era, and the deaths of its performers prompt renewed attention to their work.

Details of her later life and of the circumstances of her death were not included in the reports available.

Her films remain, and the announcement will send some viewers back to them.

An era of Japanese cinema recedes with each such announcement, and this one recedes it a little further.

CULTURE

When Japan Made Five Hundred Films a Year: The Era Mari Shiraki Belonged To

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The news that the actress Mari Shiraki died three years ago, made public this week, recalls an era of Japanese cinema whose scale is hard to imagine now.

In the late 1950s, Japanese studios produced more than five hundred feature films a year, and cinema attendance reached its peak in 1958 at more than a billion admissions.

Six major studios operated production lines that turned out films in weeks, each with its own stable of contracted stars, directors and writers, and each with its own house style.

The stars appeared in dozens of films a year, in roles that audiences expected and studios repeated, and their names sold tickets in every town with a cinema.

Television ended the era within a decade. Attendance fell by two-thirds through the 1960s, studios cut production, and the contract system that had made stars dissolved.

Many of the era's performers left the industry as it shrank, and their later lives were private, which is why their deaths are often announced long after the fact, as Shiraki's has been.

The films survive in archives and in the retrospectives that film centres and broadcasters mount, and the era's directors, from Kurosawa and Ozu to the genre craftsmen of the studios, remain the foundation of Japanese cinema's reputation abroad.

The industry that replaced the studio system, built on anime, on independent production and on television spin-offs, produces fewer films and different stars.

Each announcement of an old star's death recedes the era a little further, and this one recedes it again.

For those who saw the films when they were new, the announcement is a reminder of a cinema that filled every week with a new release and every town with a place to see it.

SPORTS

Japanese Medallists in Today's Pages

Compiled by the Sports Desk

Gold: Shoto Mitsunaga, men's 100m butterfly, Japanese and Games record.

Gold: Aiko Sugihara, women's individual all-around, a first for Japan.

Silver: men's gymnastics team, 253.826 to China's 255.095.

Silver: mixed 4x100m medley relay, with Rikako Ikee.

Silver: women's volleyball team.

Bronze: Misa Nishiyama, women's individual all-around.

Earlier golds: Yuki Kojima, 400m medley; Tomoyuki Matsushita, 200m medley; Shin Ohashi, 100m breaststroke (shared).

Earlier golds: soft tennis, men's team, women's team and mixed doubles; fencing, individual events.

Earlier silvers: Matsushita, 400m medley; men's 4x200m freestyle relay; men's basketball; triathlon mixed relay; Shinnosuke Oka, men's all-around.

Earlier bronzes: Daiki Hashimoto, men's all-around; Aimi Hayashi, women's triathlon.

ECONOMY

Reopening Watchlist

Compiled by the Economics Desk

Yen: depreciation trend strengthening again; rate check effect seen as temporary (Yomiuri).

BOJ: 1.25% in force from today; focus on the timing of the next move.

Wall Street: Dow down 352 to 51,511 on Sept. 23; yields up on Fed expectations.

Summit: rare earths, chips and AI names trade on Washington's outcome.

Typhoon: insurers, railways, utilities, retailers; two rail lines out for months.

Governance: revised guidelines favour growth investment over payouts.

Property: Mitsui Fudosan's 230 billion yen London commitment.

Energy: refineries' rising importance; U.S. diesel export ban under consideration.

Telecoms: Rakuten Mobile under editorial criticism; JCOM outage.

Nikkei 225 last close: 65,018.95 (Sept. 18). TOPIX: 4,091.14.

INTERNATIONAL

Today's U.S.-China Summit at a Glance

Compiled by the International Desk

Where: Washington. When: Sept. 24, local time, during Xi Jinping's state visit.

Xi departed for the United States on Sept. 23 (Yomiuri, Mainichi).

Agenda: trade and Taiwan (Yomiuri, Mainichi); artificial intelligence also expected.

Japan's position, set on Tuesday: co-operation with the U.S. on AI, semiconductors and critical minerals.

Allied statement: Japan, U.S. and South Korea oppose economic coercion.

Beijing this week: objected to the Prime Minister's speech on the former enemy clauses.

What Tokyo watches: rare earths, chip controls, Taiwan language, an AI accident channel.

Briefing: Washington briefs Tokyo through alliance channels after the meeting.

Markets: Tokyo reopens today; the summit's results reach it during or after the session.

Results in tomorrow's edition.

SOCIETY

The First Working Day, in Practical Terms

Compiled by the Society Desk

Uchibo Line, Anegasaki-Kisarazu: suspended, about three months. Substitute buses.

Sobu Line, Enokido-Naruto: suspended, about one month.

Tateyama and Ken-O expressways: landslide sections

restricted.

Tokyo: 40% chance of rain (Asahi pinpoint); carry an umbrella.

Landslide warnings remain in Chiba and Kanagawa; light rain can trigger slopes.

Banks, government offices and markets reopen.

JCOM internet: outage reported; check your connection before relying on it.

Power restoration continues in Chiba; check utility estimates by district.

Sakata, Naha, Shinjuku: local incidents in today's pages.

Leave early, check the trains, and expect the roads to be slow.

SOCIETY

After Kumamoto's Tremors: Check the Kit

Compiled by the Society Desk

Water: three litres per person per day, for at least three days.

Food that needs no cooking, and a portable stove with fuel.

A torch, a radio and spare batteries, or a hand-crank model.

Mobile phone chargers and a portable battery.

Medications, prescriptions and copies of important documents.

A portable toilet and bags, for when water and sewage fail.

Sturdy shoes by the bed, for broken glass.

Cash in small notes; card systems can fail in a blackout.

Secure tall furniture to walls; most earthquake injuries come from falling objects.

Agree a family meeting place and a way to contact each other.

SPORTS

Sumo's Ladder, From Yokozuna Down

Compiled by the Sports Desk

Sumo ranks are published before each tournament on a list called the banzuke.

Yokozuna, the grand champion, is the highest rank and cannot be lost through defeat.

A yokozuna who performs poorly is expected to withdraw or retire instead.

Ozeki is the second rank, followed by sekiwake and komusubi.

Together those three ranks below yokozuna form the sanyaku.

Below them are the maegashira, numbered from the top of the division downward.

The top division, makuuchi, has 42 wrestlers.

A winning record of eight victories generally brings promotion; a losing one, demotion.

Onosato, leading the Aki Basho after eleven days, holds the rank of yokozuna.

The tournament's twelfth day is today.

SOCIETY

Food Safety After the Flood

Compiled by the Society Desk

Discard any food that came into contact with floodwater, including sealed packages.

Discard anything unrefrigerated for more than a few hours after a power cut.

A freezer that stayed shut keeps food safe for about a day; if it thawed, throw it out.

Do not taste food to check it. Contaminated food often looks and smells normal.

Wash hands, utensils and surfaces with clean water before preparing anything.

Boil tap water if the municipality has issued a notice, or use bottled water.

Baby formula should be made with bottled or boiled water only.

Clean and disinfect refrigerators that were flooded before using them again.

Keep medicines that were in floodwater separate and ask a pharmacist about them.

When in doubt, throw it out.

EDITORIAL & OPINION



Editorial cartoon by Taro Suzuki, Staff Cartoonist.

EDITORIAL

The War Ended in 1945. The Clause Did Not. Beijing Has Just Told Us Why.

Taro Suzuki draws the Prime Minister with scissors and a permanent member with a stamp. China's Foreign Ministry says the Charter's former enemy clauses are important for the post-war order. It is right, in a sense it did not intend

By Samantha Ortiz | Editorial Page Editor

A sign hangs over Taro Suzuki's cartoon this morning, and it says the argument in eight words: THE WAR ENDED. THE CLAUSE DID NOT.

Beneath it, at a podium bearing the United Nations emblem and flanked by the flags of the United States and Japan, stands the Prime Minister in a purple suit, holding a pair of scissors marked DELETE. In her other hand is a sheaf of papers headed ENEMY STATE CLAUSES, stamped in red OBSOLETE, and marked in Japanese with the term the diplomats use for them.

The podium carries its own sign: SEVENTY YEARS A MEMBER.

To her right, a man in a dark suit and red tie shakes his fist and shouts IT IS NOT FAIR! In his other hand he holds a rubber stamp, and the stamp reads PERMANENT MEMBER. Behind him stands a filing cabinet, draped in cobwebs and netting, labelled KEEP THE INSULT.

To her left, a brass balance weighs a grey warship marked TREATY ALLY against a scrap of parchment marked WARTIME LABEL. On the floor lies a scroll, tangled in a net, reading GENERAL ASSEMBLY AGREED, with a red stamp.

The caption runs along the bottom on a ribbon: They kept the label so they could keep the threat.

The occasion is two events of the same week. On Tuesday, Prime Minister Takaichi told the General Assembly that Japan would seek the prompt removal of the Charter's former enemy clauses. On Wednesday, China's Foreign Ministry objected, insisting that the clauses are important for the post-war order, as Mainichi Shimbun reported.

This page agrees with the cartoon, and it wants to say why with some care, because the argument is easy to make badly.

Begin with what the clauses are. Three articles of the Charter, written in San Francisco in June 1945 while the war against Japan was still being fought, refer to states that were enemies of the signatories during the Second World War. Article 53 exempts action against such states from the requirement of Security Council authorisation. Article 107 preserves action taken against them as a result of the war. Article 77 refers to territories detached from them.

No one has invoked the clauses in earnest for

decades. Japan joined the organisation in 1956, Germany in 1973, and both became among its largest funders and most reliable members. The clauses are, in every practical sense, dead.

The organisation has said so twice. In 1995, on its fiftieth anniversary, the General Assembly adopted a resolution recognising the clauses as obsolete and expressing the intention to delete them. In 2005, the World Summit, the largest gathering of leaders in the organisation's history, resolved to delete the references to enemy states.

That is the scroll on the floor of the cartoon, and the net it is tangled in is Article 108: amendment requires two-thirds of the Assembly and ratification by two-thirds of the members, including all five permanent members of the Security Council.

So the clauses are obsolete by resolution, dead in practice, and alive in the text, because a permanent member can keep them there.

Now to the objection, which is the cartoon's real subject.

China's Foreign Ministry says the clauses are important for the post-war order. Read plainly, the statement is untrue. The post-war order rests on the Charter's operative provisions, on the Council, on the treaties and institutions built since 1945, and on the conduct of states. It does not rest on three articles that the Assembly itself has called obsolete and that no state has invoked in living memory.

Read as Beijing means it, the statement is true, and revealing. The post-war order, in this usage, is the settlement of Japan's defeat: the verdict of 1945, permanently renewed, from which Japan's status is derived and to which Japan can be referred whenever its conduct displeases.

The distinction between the two readings is not a lawyer's quibble. It is the difference between a document that governs the present and a document that is used to govern the present by reference to the past. The Charter was written to be the first. The ministry's statement treats it as the second.

For that purpose the clauses are important. They are the one place in the world's founding document where Japan is still called an enemy, and a government that wishes to remind Japan of its past has found them useful.

They kept the label so they could keep the threat. That is the caption, and it is a fair description of the ministry's position.

The threat is not military. Nobody imagines Article 53 being invoked to authorise force against Japan. The threat is rhetorical and diplomatic, and it is deployed whenever Japan reaches for a larger role.

When Japan and its partners in the G4 proposed new permanent seats in 2005, China opposed them, and the post-war order was among its arguments. When Japan revises its security documents, the same vocabulary appears. When the Prime Minister asks for the clauses to be deleted, the ministry answers within a day that they are important.

The pattern is consistent, and Suzuki's man with the stamp is its portrait: a permanent member using a permanent veto to preserve a permanent insult.

Beijing is not alone in finding the clauses useful, and honesty requires saying so. Moscow has cited Article 107, the provision preserving action taken as a result of the war, in defending its possession of the Northern Territories, the islands off Hokkaido that Soviet forces occupied in 1945 and that Japan has claimed ever since.

Two permanent members, then, have found in three obsolete articles a text that serves a present purpose: for one, the reminder of Japan's defeat; for the other, the legal cover for a seizure of territory. Neither would describe its position that way. Both have acted on it.

That is the strongest argument for deletion and the clearest explanation of why deletion has not happened. The clauses are not kept out of inertia. They are kept because two of the five states whose consent is required have reasons to keep them.

Here is the point at which the argument must be made carefully, because the cartoon's second image, the balance, deserves more than a glance.

On one pan sits a warship marked TREATY ALLY. On the other, a parchment marked WARTIME LABEL. The balance asks which describes Japan, and the answer is obvious to anyone who has read this week's front pages.

Japan is a treaty ally of the United States, whose President met its Prime Minister on Tuesday and confirmed co-operation on the technologies and materials that will decide the next decade. Japan is a member of the United Nations for seventy years this December, its Security Council's most frequent elected member, a funder of its budget and its peacekeeping, and the home country of the president of the International Criminal Court.

The wartime label describes none of this. It describes

the country of June 1945, which no longer exists, in a document that has been amended three times since and never to remove it.

The absurdity is the argument, and this page will not labour it. A founding document that calls one of its most loyal members an enemy is wrong, and everyone knows it is wrong, and the Assembly has said so twice.

What this page wants to add is a warning about what follows from being right.

The first temptation is to treat the clauses as the injury. They are not. They are the symptom of an injury that Japan cannot cure by amending a text: the willingness of one permanent member to define Japan by its past for as long as doing so is useful.

Delete the clauses tomorrow, and that willingness would find another text. The verdict of 1945 is invoked against Japan in statements, in museums, in anniversaries and in the education of a billion people, and none of those requires Article 53.

The second temptation is the opposite one: to conclude that since the clauses are dead in practice and protected by a veto, they are not worth the effort, and that a prime minister who mentions them is wasting the Assembly's time.

That conclusion mistakes the audience. The Prime Minister was not speaking to Beijing, which will not ratify an amendment whatever she says. She was speaking to the 190-odd members who voted the clauses obsolete in 1995 and resolved to delete them in 2005, and reminding them that their own decisions remain unexecuted.

That is not a wasted speech. It is the only kind of speech that keeps a dead letter from becoming an accepted one.

The third temptation is to make the clauses a grievance in the way Beijing has made 1945 one, and to build a politics of resentment around a text.

Japanese governments have avoided that, and they should continue to. The clauses are raised each September in a paragraph, with the Assembly's resolutions cited and no vote demanded, and that is the right proportion. A country that has spent seventy years earning the standing the label denies should not spend its eighth decade shouting about the label.

There is a domestic version of the temptation too. The clauses are a gift to anyone in Japan who wishes to argue that the post-war order was built against the country and that its institutions are hostile. That argument is wrong. The order was built with Japan in it from 1956, and Japan has prospered inside it as few countries have. The clauses are an anomaly of the order, not its nature, and a government that treated

EDITORIAL & OPINION

them as proof of hostility would be conceding Beijing's framing from the other side.

So what should Japan do?

It should keep asking. The Prime Minister's pledge of prompt removal was stronger than her predecessors' language, and Beijing's speed in objecting suggests it noticed. A request repeated is a request that cannot be said to have been dropped.

It should ask with company. Germany shares the label and the interest. The 2005 outcome was adopted by the whole membership. A proposal to delete the clauses, introduced formally rather than mentioned in speeches, would force each permanent member to say whether it will ratify, and would place Beijing's answer on the record in a form the Assembly could see.

That is a risk. A formal proposal that failed on ratification would be a defeat, and the diplomats who have avoided one for thirty years had reasons. But a request that is never formalised is a request that can be objected to at no cost, as it was on Wednesday.

Consider what a formal proposal would require and what it would reveal. A draft amendment deleting the references in Articles 53, 77 and 107 would need two-thirds of the Assembly, which the votes of 1995 and 2005 suggest it would have comfortably. It would then go to the member states for ratification, and the world would watch which of the five permanent members ratified and which did not.

Washington, London and Paris have no interest in the clauses and no reason to refuse. Moscow and Beijing would have to choose between ratifying a deletion they have resisted and being seen, by name, to preserve a wartime label against the recorded will of the membership.

They might choose the latter. Vetoes are cheap for those who hold them. But the choice would be public in a way that Wednesday's ministry statement was not, and the two governments that have used the clauses would have to defend keeping them before the Assembly that voted them obsolete.

Japanese diplomacy has preferred not to force that choice, judging that a visible failure would cost more than an invisible stalemate. The judgment was defensible in 1995. Thirty years on, with the stalemate now used against Japan in public, it deserves to be revisited.

It should separate the clauses from the Council. The permanent members have every interest in linking the two, because the Council's composition is the question they will never open. Deleting three obsolete articles is not Council reform, and Japan should say so, and should be willing to pursue the smaller change without the larger.

And it should keep being what the label denies. Every year of reliable membership, every contribution paid on time, every peacekeeper and every judge, makes the clauses more absurd and the objection to deleting them more revealing.

That last is the real answer to the man with the stamp. He can keep the insult in the filing cabinet. He cannot make it describe the country at the podium.

There is one more thing to say about the balance, and it concerns the warship on it.

The cartoon's choice of a warship for TREATY ALLY is exact. Japan's alliance with the United States is what makes the wartime label most absurd and what makes Beijing's insistence on it most understandable.

An ally of the United States, integrated into its planning and its technology controls, hosting its fleet and confirming co-operation against Chinese export restrictions in the same week, is not a former enemy in any sense that 1945 would recognise. It is a present partner in a present contest.

That is why the clauses matter to Beijing now, when they did not matter in the decades of Japanese quiescence. A Japan that reaches for a permanent seat, revises its security documents and stands at the rostrum to ask for the deletion of its wartime label is a Japan that Beijing would prefer to describe in the vocabulary of 1945.

Germany offers the comparison. It shares the label, sits in the G4, and has asked for deletion as Japan has. But no permanent member has found it useful to remind Germany of 1945 in the way Beijing reminds Japan, because no permanent member is Germany's neighbour and rival. The clauses are dormant for Germany and active for Japan, and the difference is

not in the text. It is in the geography.

That geography is not going to change, and neither, in all likelihood, is the veto. What can change is the cost to those who use the label. Every time the ministry objects, the objection can be reported, as Mainichi reported it, and readers can be told what it means. That is the modest work of a newspaper on a question that diplomacy cannot settle.

The label is kept, in other words, because the country it describes has changed, and the ministry's statement on Wednesday was an admission of that change.

Japan should take the admission for what it is. The clauses will not be deleted this year, or perhaps this decade. The objection to deleting them tells Japan that its standing has grown to the point where a permanent member finds it worth restraining, and that is not nothing.

Seventy years a member, the podium says. The clause is older than the membership, and it may outlast this government. But the war ended, and the country that fought it ended with it, and the man with the stamp knows both.

That is why he is shouting.

There is a further matter that the cartoon leaves for this page to raise, and it concerns the alliance flag beside the podium.

The United States was among the signatories in 1945, and its ratification is as necessary as China's for any amendment. Washington has never opposed deleting the clauses, and it has never spent capital on deleting them either. The subject did not arise, in any account available to this desk, at Tuesday's summit.

Japan should ask its ally to help. Not in the form of a demand, which would be out of proportion, but as an item on the list of things a treaty ally can do at no cost: co-sponsor a proposal, state that it will ratify, and let the record show which permanent member will not.

An alliance that can confirm co-operation on semiconductors can co-sponsor the deletion of three dead articles. If it cannot, that too is worth knowing.

There is precedent for allies acting together on the Charter's text. The enlargement of the Council in 1963 was carried by a membership that had grown beyond the document's design, over the initial objections of two permanent members who later ratified. Numbers and persistence changed the text then. They are the only things that have ever changed it.

Japan has the numbers, on the evidence of 1995 and 2005. It has shown persistence for thirty years in speeches. What it has not yet shown is the willingness to convert the one into a vote and the other into a proposal, and that is the step this page is asking its government to consider. The scissors in the Prime Minister's hand are the right instrument. The clauses should be cut, cleanly, by the members who agreed twice to cut them. Until they are, this page will note each September who is holding the stamp, and what he is keeping in the cabinet.

They kept the label so they could keep the threat. The threat is the label's only remaining use, and this week Beijing confirmed it.

A final word on proportion, because this page has argued for it and should practise it.

The clauses are three articles in a document of 111. Japan's standing in the world does not depend on them, and its security depends on the warship on the balance, not on the parchment. The Prime Minister spent a paragraph on them and a week on the alliance, the court, Ukraine, the Gulf and the Diet, which is the right order.

The argument is worth making because it is true and because Beijing has made it necessary, not because it is urgent. Seventy years have passed. The country can wait a little longer for the text to catch up with the fact.

What it should not do is let the waiting become acceptance. The difference between an obsolete clause and an accepted one is whether anyone still asks for its removal, and the Prime Minister asked. The next government should ask again, in the same paragraph, with the same citations, until the members who agreed to cut the clause find the will to hold the scissors themselves.

But it should not pretend the text does not matter, and it should not let the man with the stamp pretend that his objection is about order rather than about Japan.

He kept the label. This page has said what it is for.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Five Days of News, One Session to Price It

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The Tokyo market reopens this morning with more to absorb in one session than in any since the spring.

The list runs from the Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25%, in force from today, through a yen that Yomiuri Shimbun reports weakening again, to Wednesday's 352-point fall on Wall Street and the rise in American yields behind it.

It includes a typhoon whose toll has reached ten, whose flooding has breached a levee that had never failed, and whose rail damage will take months to repair, all of which carry costs for insurers, railways, utilities and retailers.

It includes a Japan-United States summit that confirmed co-operation on artificial intelligence, semiconductors and critical minerals, and an American-Chinese summit today whose outcome on the same subjects will reach the market during or after the session.

And it includes governance guidelines revised to favour growth investment, a Mitsui Fudosan commitment of 230 billion yen in London, and the return to work of a country whose consumers have spent five days on holiday.

Markets that reopen after long closures tend to overshoot in the first hour, as orders accumulated over the break are executed at once, and today's opening will be no exception.

The direction will depend on which force dominates: the earnings support of a weak yen for exporters, or the valuation pressure of higher yields and a domestic rate that is no longer near zero.

The summit's signals will arrive as a second wave, and the companies exposed to rare earths, chips and artificial intelligence will trade on them into Friday.

For households, the session's importance lies less in the index than in the yen, whose level sets the price of imported food and fuel, and in the rate, whose effect on loans and deposits begins today.

By this evening the market will have rendered a first verdict on the holiday's news. Its second, on Washington, comes tomorrow.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: A Levee That Had Never Failed, and a Recovery That Now Has a Symbol

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Every disaster acquires an image, and this one's arrived on Wednesday: the embankment of Inbanuma, breached for the first time since the lake's management began, with water two kilometres inland and a railway station district under it.

Ten people are dead and four missing. Two rail lines will take a month and three months to restore. Landslide warnings remain on slopes that could fail with light rain. And the drainage that would end the flooding waits on a river fed by rain that fell days ago in the mountains.

For the government, the breach turns a weather event into an infrastructure question, which is the kind of question that outlasts the news cycle.

Why did an embankment that held through decades of storms fail now? The answer will involve the three storms since August that saturated the ground, the design standards of levees built for a different climate, and the maintenance of a system managed by several authorities.

Chiba's municipalities have requested drainage and river works for years, and a breach without precedent gives those requests a force they lacked.

The Prime Minister returns from New York to a Diet session built around a consumption tax cut, and the recovery will compete with it for money and attention.

Disaster spending has one political advantage: it is visible, and a government that funds levee repairs and rail restoration can point to them. Tax debates are abstract; a breached embankment is on television.

The government's handling of the response has so far run through the ordinary machinery, which has worked, and which insulates the cabinet from both credit and blame.

The slower questions will decide the judgment: how

quickly households in Sakura receive damage certificates and support, whether the levee is rebuilt to a higher standard, and whether the deaths of ten people, most of them old and most of them on hillsides, change how evacuation reaches those least able to move.

The alliance was affirmed in New York and tested in Washington today. The government's competence is being tested in Sakura, and the water there has not yet receded.

SPORTS

Tonight's Table Tennis Finals, in Brief

Compiled by the Sports Desk

Women's final: Japan v China. Semi-final: Japan 3-0 South Korea.

Men's final: Japan v China. Semi-final: Japan beat South Korea.

Women's last team gold: 1966, Bangkok. Sixty years ago.

Men's last final: 1982, New Delhi. Forty-four years ago.

Men's line-up named by Sponichi: Harimoto, Matsushima, Togami.

Format: first team to three matches wins the tie.

China: the sport's dominant nation for six decades.

Japan's best recent result v China: Olympic mixed doubles gold, Tokyo 2021.

Tuesday's volleyball final v China: lost 0-3 after leading in the third set.

Results in tomorrow's edition.

POLITICS

New York, in Numbers

Compiled by the Politics Desk

35: minutes the Prime Minister and the President met.

4: hours her departure from Haneda was delayed by the typhoon.

3: subjects confirmed for co-operation: AI, semiconductors, critical minerals.

0: specific figures requested on defence spending.

3: articles of the UN Charter that still refer to former enemies.

1995 and 2005: the years the membership agreed those clauses should go.

3: times the Charter has been amended since 1945.

70: years since Japan joined the UN, this December.

58.3%: cabinet approval in the ANN poll the President said he watches.

1: day between Beijing's objection and today's summit.

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.

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CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

The Japan Morning Post corrects errors of fact as soon as they are identified. Correction requests may be sent to corrections@japanmorningpost.com, giving the date, page and headline of the article concerned.

Wednesday's edition identified the winner of the women's individual all-around in gymnastics by surname only, as the reports then available did. Her full name is Aiko Sugihara. The swimmer profiled by Yomiuri Shimbun as a two-way talent is Shoto Mitsunaga, who won the men's 100m butterfly on Wednesday in a Japanese record.

Monday's edition reported that Tomokazu Harimoto had not been selected for the men's table tennis team event. Sponichi's report of Wednesday's semi-final named Harimoto, Teruaki Matsushima and Shunsuke Togami in the men's line-up. The Japan Morning Post is seeking to reconcile the two reports and will publish a clarification once the team's composition is confirmed.

Wednesday's edition reported the typhoon's toll as seven dead and five missing, the figures available at publication. The toll had risen to ten dead and four missing by Thursday morning, as reported on today's front page. This is an update, not a correction.

THE WEEK AHEAD

THURSDAY, SEPT. 24: First working day after the holiday. Tokyo Stock Exchange reopens; the Bank of Japan's 1.25% policy rate applies. U.S.-China summit in Washington, local time. Asian Games: table tennis team finals, Japan v China (women and men); eight swimming finals; badminton women's team final; athletics begins at Paloma Mizuho Stadium. Aki Basho day 12.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 25: The U.S.-China summit's outcome reaches Tokyo's second session. Asian Games athletics and apparatus gymnastics finals continue.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 26: Higan week ends. Aki Basho day 14.

SUNDAY, SEPT. 27: Final day of the Aki Basho at the Ryogoku Kokugikan. Asian Games baseball tournament concludes at Okazaki and Toyohashi. Under-21 football quarter-final, Japan v North Korea.

SUNDAY, OCT. 4: Closing ceremony of the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games.

TYPHOON ADVISORIES

Landslide warnings remain in force on saturated slopes in Chiba and Kanagawa, which could collapse even with light rain. Residents in designated hazard zones should stay evacuated until municipalities lift the warnings. Report cracks in the ground, springs on hillsides or falling stones to the municipality or to emergency services.

The Uchibo Line between Anegasaki and Kisarazu is expected to take about three months to restore, and the Sobu Line between Enokido and Naruto about one month; substitute buses will run. Landslide-prone sections of the Tateyama and Ken-O expressways remain restricted. Check operators' announcements before travelling.

The district around JR Sakura Station remains flooded after the failure of the Inbanuma embankment, and drainage is waiting on the Tone River. Residents should photograph damage before cleaning up, discard food that has been in contact with floodwater, and not start vehicles that have been submerged.

A tropical depression south of Japan continues to show typhoon-like conditions. The Sakishima Islands should follow the meteorological agency's information. Swells on the Pacific side are expected to subside gradually.

MARKET REFERENCE

Tokyo markets reopen today after four closed days. The Bank of Japan's 1.25% policy rate applies from today. The Nikkei 225 last closed at 65,018.95 on September 18; the TOPIX at 4,091.14. The yen's depreciation trend is strengthening again, according to Yomiuri Shimbun. On September 23 the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 352 points to 51,511 as U.S. long-term rates rose on expectations of further Fed increases.

ABOUT TODAY'S PHOTOGRAPHS

The front-page photograph shows President Trump welcoming President Xi Jinping at the start of the Chinese leader's state visit to the United States. Inside, Prime Minister Takaichi is shown addressing

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MULTIMEDIA & VIDEO: Akira Watanabe | **RESEARCH & ARCHIVE:** Hana Ito
PAGE DESIGN & PRODUCTION: Daniel Foster

1-2-3 Otemachi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0004 | www.japanmorningpost.com | newsdesk@japanmorningpost.com

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the United Nations General Assembly; President Trump before the flags of the United States and China; and President Trump speaking during his visit to China in May. All photographs: WPM Productions. The editorial cartoon is by Taro Suzuki.

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Today's crossword solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Wednesday's solution is published separately with this edition.

IN TOMORROW'S EDITION

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