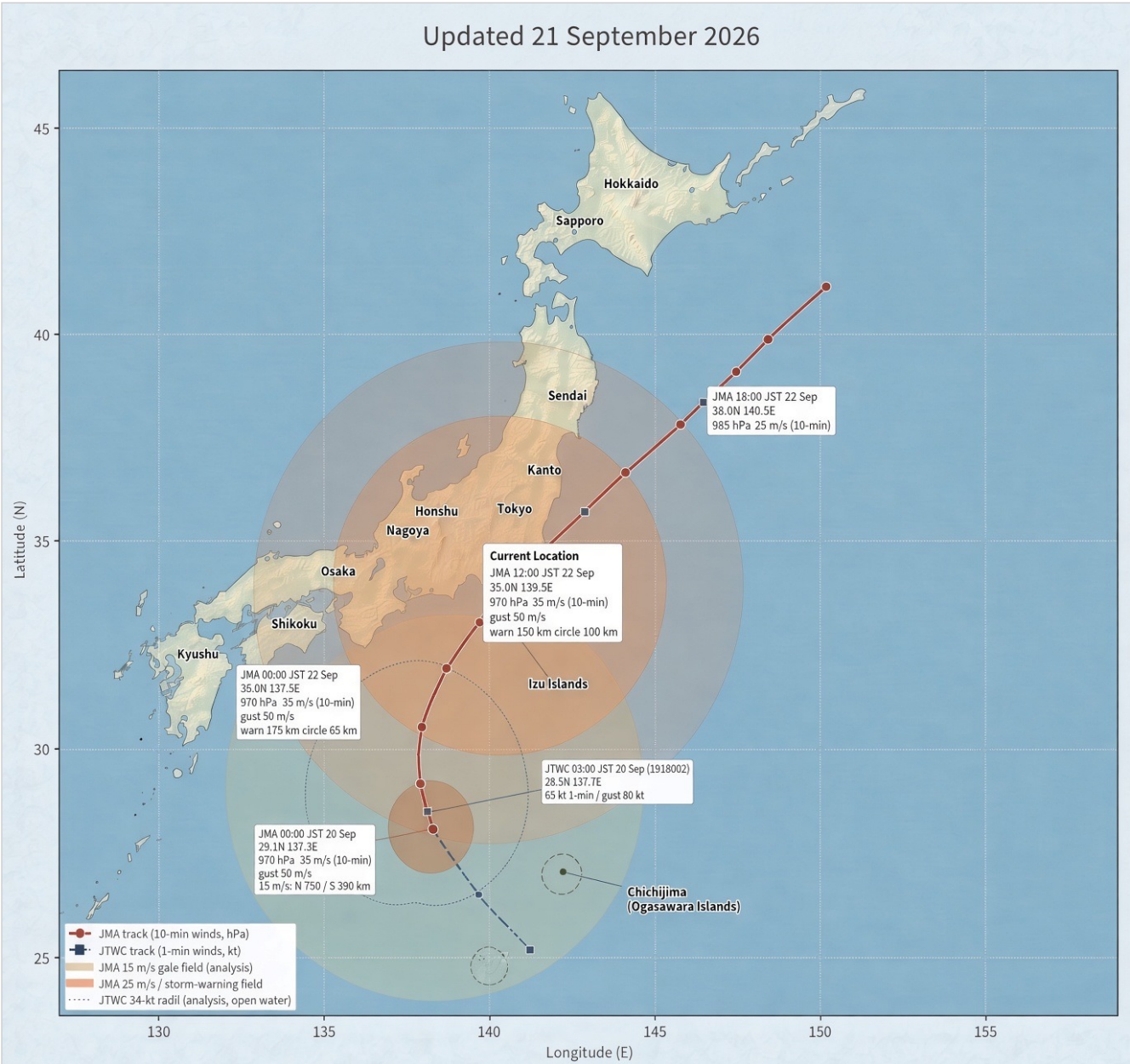


★ TYPHOON 25 AT ITS CLOSEST TO KANTO THIS AFTERNOON ★ LEVEL 4 ON THE ZENPUKUJI RIVER ★ 36.24 MILLION JAPANESE ARE NOW OVER 65 ★ HOJO TAKES THE FIRST GOLD ★

Typhoon No. 25 Reaches Kanto This Afternoon, Large and Powerful, With a Boso Landfall Still Possible

A Level 4 evacuation warning is in force on the Zenpukuji River in Nakano and Suginami, a Level 5 alert was issued briefly in Sakura City, and the agency expects a linear rainband over Kanto, Izu and Shizuoka from midday

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



Typhoon No. 25, plotted from Japan Meteorological Agency and Joint Typhoon Warning Center bulletins. The red track carries the agency's ten-minute sustained winds and central pressures; the blue track carries the American centre's one-minute winds in knots, which read higher for the same storm. The darker shading is the 25-metre-a-second storm-warning field and the lighter shading the 15-metre-a-second gale field. The centre reaches its closest approach to Kanto off the coast near 35.0N 139.5E, at 970 hPa with a warning radius of 150 kilometres, before turning north and weakening to 985 hPa over northern Honshu. Times are JST. Map: WPM Productions

Typhoon No. 25 is expected to make its closest approach to the Kanto region this afternoon, arriving large and powerful, with strict vigilance required for landslides, strong winds and flooding, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and ANN.

At 9 p.m. on Sunday the storm was moving north at 10 kilometres an hour to the south of Japan, with a central pressure of 970 hectopascals, a maximum sustained wind of 35 metres a second and maximum instantaneous winds of 50 metres a second, according to Mainichi Shimbun.

Ten kilometres an hour is a walking pace, and a storm that crosses a region slowly delivers everything it carries to the same ground for longer. That is the single most important number in this morning's bulletin.

The chart on this page places the centre off the Kanto coast at 35.0 degrees north and 139.5 degrees east at its closest approach, still at 970 hectopascals with gusts to 50 metres a second, a storm-warning radius of 150 kilometres and a forecast circle of 100 kilometres.

A warning radius of that size, drawn around a centre in that position, covers the whole of the Kanto plain. Landfall on the Boso Peninsula remains possible, according to Mainichi Shimbun and Weathernews.

The rain has already arrived. In the 24 hours to 6 p.m. today, 350 millimetres is forecast for the Izu Islands, 300 millimetres for Kanto and Tokai and 200 millimetres for Tohoku, with further localised increases possible where rainbands form.

The Japan Meteorological Agency anticipates a linear rainband over the Kanto-Koshinetsu region, Izu and Shizuoka from midday to evening, and has issued half-day advance notice for Tokyo and Shizuoka.

A linear rainband is the formation that has preceded most of Japan's recent rain disasters. Storms regenerate at one end of a line as fast as they decay at the other, and the rain that would normally pass over a district in twenty minutes falls on it for hours.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has issued a Level 4 flood risk warning for the Zenpukuji River, urging residents of Nakano and Suginami wards to evacuate to a second floor, according to Sankei News and Yomiuri Shimbun.

Vertical evacuation of that kind is the instruction given when leaving the building has become more dangerous than staying in it, and it is issued for urban rivers that rise faster than residents can move.

A Level 5 emergency safety alert, the highest on the municipal scale, was issued temporarily in Sakura City, Chiba, according to ANN. Level 5 describes a disaster already occurring rather than one approaching.

The wind is the second hazard and it peaks this afternoon. Izu and Kanto face winds strong enough to topple utility poles, with trees also at risk, and the Izu coast is still expecting waves of up to 7 metres.

The railways have begun to close. Limited express services on the JR Uchibo Line and others have been suspended, and cancellations and delays are possible across the Tokyo metropolitan area until the early morning of Tuesday, according to Sankei News. Roads have flooded.

The holiday's remaining events have gone with them. The Tokyo Game Show's final day is cancelled, the Rockin' On performance scheduled for today is cancelled, and the Japan Racing Association has postponed the Nakayama meeting to Tuesday, while Hanshin proceeds.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's public viewing for the Asian Games swimming has been cancelled, along with the NAGASE Cup athletics meet and the opening day of a para athletics competition.

Tohoku and Tokai are under warning-level rain of their own, with strict vigilance advised for landslides and for flooding in low-lying ground.

Western Japan is in a different weather entirely. Today's map has Nagoya at 33 degrees, Nagasaki,

Miyazaki and Kagoshima at 31, and late summer heat along parts of the Pacific coast, with the typhoon's direct effect there relatively small.

That contrast is the shape of a large storm on a narrow country. The same system that has closed the railways east of the capital is leaving Kyushu warm enough for the season's last shirtsleeves.

After Kanto the forecast carries the system north over land and then out to sea, weakening as it goes. The agency's chart has it at 985 hectopascals and 25 metres a second near 38.0 north and 140.5 east, over northern Honshu, before it moves away to the northeast.

That weakening is not a release. A storm undergoing extratropical transition spreads its wind field over a wider area as its centre fills, and the rain along the fronts that develop can intensify as the peak winds fall.

Small earthquakes have continued sporadically off the coast of Amami, including one with a maximum seismic intensity of 3.

The instruction to households in eastern Japan for the next twelve hours is narrow. Do not go out to look at a river. Do not drive into standing water. If the ward office says move to the second floor, move to the second floor.

Older residents are consistently the majority of those who die in Japanese floods and landslides, which on Respect for the Aged Day gives the alert levels a meaning the holiday did not ask for.

The Level 3 threshold exists for people who need extra time, and the most useful thing a family can do this morning is telephone an elderly relative on the Pacific side and talk them through where they would go.

A Record 36.24 Million Japanese Are Now 65 or Older, and a Record 9.43 Million of Them Are Working

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The number of people aged 65 and over in Japan has reached a record 36.24 million, or 29.6% of the population, according to internal affairs ministry estimates reported by Yomiuri Shimbun for Respect for the Aged Day.

The number of those in employment has also reached a record, at 9.43 million.

Taken together the two figures describe something more complicated than decline. Close to three in ten Japanese are over 65, and more than a quarter of them are still working, which is a participation rate no other large economy approaches.

The employment figure has risen every year for two decades, driven by pension arrangements that reward later retirement, by employers facing labour shortages, and by people who want the work.

Which of those three motives dominates is the question that the statistics do not answer, and it matters, because a job taken willingly at 68 and a job taken from necessity at 68 look identical in the data.

The 29.6% share is the highest in the world, and the pace at which Japan reached it is the part other countries study. The transition from an ageing society to a super-aged one took Japan decades where earlier industrial countries took a century.

The structural consequences are familiar and unresolved. The long-term care insurance system, introduced in 2000, is funded by premiums from those 40 and over and has been adjusted repeatedly, with the health ministry now considering higher premiums for high-income residents aged 65 and over.

TODAY'S INDEX	
Politics	2-3
Analysis	3
International	3-4
Economy	4-6
Business	6-7
Courts	8
Society	8-15
Sports	15-18
Culture	19
Editorial & Opinion	20
Crossword	16
Weather	9

WEATHER — TOKYO

25°C

Low 21°C · Rain, storm-force gusts

Tue

26°

Wed

26°

Thu

27°

Fri

27°

Closest approach to Kanto this afternoon: a linear rainband is expected from midday and 300 mm by 6 p.m. Winds may topple utility poles. Full forecast, Page 9.

- TODAY IN BRIEF
- Typhoon No. 25 reaches Kanto this afternoon, moving north at 10 km/h at 970 hPa with gusts to 50 m/s. A Boso landfall is still possible. 300 mm forecast for Kanto and Tokai by 6 p.m.
 - Level 4 flood warning on the Zenpukuji River: Nakano and Suginami residents told to move to a second floor. A Level 5 alert was issued briefly in Sakura City, Chiba.
 - A record 36.24 million Japanese are 65 or over, 29.6% of the population, and a record 9.43 million of them are in work.
 - Takumi Hojo wins Japan's first Games gold in the men's triathlon. Seven swimming medals on the pool's opening night, including a one-two in the 200 medley.
 - Markets are closed today, tomorrow and Wednesday. The next trading day is Thursday, when the Bank of Japan's 1.25% rate takes effect. Yen at 156.68-156.96.

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MARKETS

Tokyo	closed to Sept. 24
USD/JPY	156.68–156.96
EUR/JPY	179.92–180.34
Nikkei 225	65,018.95 ▲ 882.70
BOJ rate	1.25% from Sept. 24
Deposits	0.5% reported
Dow	51,682.64 ▼ 95.40
US 10-year	about 5%
Rice, 5kg	¥2,000 range
Gasoline	¥169.90/litre

- SPORTS AT A GLANCE
- Asian Games: Takumi Hojo won Japan's first gold in the men's triathlon; Aimi Hayashi third in the women's. Gold also in karate kata.
 - Swimming: seven Japanese medals on the opening day. Matsushita gold and Kojima (17) silver in the 200 medley; Satomi Suzuki (35) silver in a Japanese record.
 - NPB, Sunday: Giants 3-2 Yakult. Nippon-Ham trail Seibu by two games. Nakayama racing postponed to Tuesday; Hanshin proceeds.

- THE HOLIDAY AND THE STORM
- Today: Respect for the Aged Day. The typhoon's closest approach to Kanto this afternoon, with a linear rainband expected from midday. Takaichi departs for New York. Games gymnastics all-around final and baseball v China at Toyohashi.
 - Tuesday: Citizens' holiday; markets closed. Japan-US summit in New York. Nakayama race meeting, postponed from today.
 - Wednesday: Autumnal Equinox; markets closed. Thursday: Tokyo reopens after four days and the new BOJ rate takes effect; US-China summit.
 - Cancelled: the Game Show's final day, Rockin' On today, the metropolitan swimming public viewing, the NAGASE Cup athletics and a para athletics opening day.

- INSIDE
- Japan's gold rush: Hojo takes the triathlon, Page 15.
 - A one-two in the 200 medley and a record at 35, Page 15.
 - Tokyo is shut until Thursday, Page 4.
 - Searching Okinawa for a mother with dementia, Page 8.
 - Editorial: something worth keeping, Page 20.

- ALMANAC
- Sunrise 5:29 a.m. Sunset 5:41 p.m. Day length 12h 12m. Respect for the Aged Day today; citizens' holiday tomorrow; Autumnal Equinox Wednesday. High water, Tokyo Bay, 6:28 a.m. and 7:05 p.m.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

FROM PAGE 1

A Record 36.24 Million Japanese Are Now 65 or Older, and a Record 9.43 Million of Them Are Working

Continued from Page 1

Care staffing is the constraint that money does not lift. Pay in the sector trails the national average, turnover is high, and metropolitan waiting lists persist despite expanded facility capacity.

The centenarian population passed 100,000 this month, against 153 when the count began in 1963, a figure that today's cartoon on the editorial page puts on a signboard in a country street.

Regional variation is severe. Rural prefectures have age profiles a decade ahead of the national figure, and it is in exactly those municipalities that the staff available to check on an elderly resident during a storm are fewest.

That is not an abstraction this morning. A Level 4 evacuation warning is in force on the Zempukuji River in Nakano and Suginami, and older residents are consistently the majority of those who die in Japanese floods.

The holiday began in a Hyogo village in the postwar years and was adopted nationally in 1966, when the population it honoured was a fraction of today's.

POLITICS

Takaichi to Back Middle East Energy Supply at the United Nations, and to Raise AI Misinformation

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

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi plans to express support for strengthening energy supply in the Middle East in her speech to the United Nations General Assembly, and will also address misinformation generated by artificial intelligence and climate change, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The energy passage is the one with the most direct Japanese interest attached to it. Japan imports the overwhelming majority of its crude from the Gulf, and the conflict there has been running for seven months with crude above \$100 a barrel.

A Japanese leader arguing at the General Assembly for the security of Gulf supply is arguing for the security of Japanese electricity, transport and manufacturing, and the domestic subsidy programme holding the pump price down is approaching nine trillion yen.

The artificial intelligence passage is newer. Misinformation produced by generative systems has become a subject of multilateral discussion without producing any multilateral instrument, and Japan has generally argued for co-ordination rather than for prohibition.

That position reflects Japan's own regulatory approach, which has been promotion-first, encouraging development and use without establishing a licensing regime.

Climate change is the third element and the most familiar, and Japanese statements on it are read for the gap between the targets restated and the energy mix that has to deliver them.

The speech is delivered into an Assembly session in which Japan's principal ally is itself under scrutiny, after a United Nations investigation team characterised an attack on an Iranian school as an American war crime.

Security Council reform, which Japan has pressed for since the 1990s without advancing it, is the perennial element of these speeches and is expected to appear again.

The trip's substantive business follows on Tuesday, when the Prime Minister meets President Trump in New York, and the meeting is being read in Tokyo as a prelude to the American summit with China two days later.

Her domestic position is the strongest it has been since the reshuffle, with cabinet approval at 59%, and she leaves the country on the day a typhoon reaches the Kanto plain.

POLITICS

Tokyo's Meeting Comes First, and Washington's Meeting With Beijing Comes Two Days Later

AI and rare earths are expected to dominate both
By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The Japan-United States summit will be held in New York on Tuesday, and the United States-China summit two days later on Thursday, with artificial intelligence and rare earth elements expected to be the focus of both, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Ministerial-level talks between American and Chinese officials are already under way, with the same two subjects likely on their agenda.

That sequence is the whole of Japan's diplomatic interest this week. A meeting that comes before the larger one is an opportunity to put Japanese concerns inside the American position while it is still being assembled.

Rare earths are the more immediate exposure. Chinese export controls on them reach Japanese manufacturing directly, in motors, magnets and the electronics that go into vehicles and machine tools.

Japan learned that lesson earlier than most, after supply was interrupted in 2010, and has since diversified sources and invested in recycling and substitution without escaping the dependence.

Artificial intelligence enters the conversation through export controls on the equipment and chips that train the models, which is an area where Japanese semiconductor equipment makers are directly affected by American decisions.

Japan has aligned with those controls at a commercial cost to its own firms, on the argument that alliance co-ordination is worth more than the sales foregone.

The 15% tariff now applied to most Japanese exports to the American market sits underneath all of it, having cut the bilateral surplus by roughly 80% in August.

American officials have described Tuesday's meeting as undoubtedly an important one, which is unusually plain language for officials preparing a leaders' meeting.

What Tokyo wants from it is not an agreement but a sequence: that whatever Washington and Beijing settle on Thursday, it is settled with Japanese exposure already understood.

POLITICS

North Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles Into the Sea of Japan

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

North Korea launched two ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan, which may have landed outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Launches of this kind follow a well-worn Japanese procedure. Detection is shared between Japanese and American systems, the coast guard warns shipping, and the government assesses whether the splashdown fell inside the exclusive economic zone.

That last question determines the diplomatic response more than the launch itself does. A landing inside the zone draws a formal protest through the embassy in Beijing, which is the channel Japan uses in the absence of relations.

The launch comes days after joint military exercises involving Japan, the United States and South Korea concluded, and the timing of North Korean tests has consistently tracked the exercise calendar.

Two missiles rather than one is the pattern most often used to test a launch sequence rather than a single system, and the analysis that follows concentrates on trajectory, altitude and the interval between the two.

Japan's ballistic missile defence is layered, with ship-based interceptors and ground-based batteries, and the revision of the three security documents now under way is expected to address the capability gaps that repeated tests have exposed.

The J-Alert system, which warns residents in affected areas, is activated only when a projectile is assessed as likely to pass over or land near Japanese territory, and its use is reviewed after each event.

The launch arrives while the Prime Minister is travelling to New York and while a typhoon closes the transport network across the Kanto plain, which is the kind of coincidence that tests a crisis management system's capacity to run two things at once.

South Korea and the United States will conduct their own assessments, and the three governments routinely compare data after each launch.

The Japanese response will be calibrated to where the missiles landed, and that determination is normally made within hours.

POLITICS

Japanese and Indian Air Forces Train Together as F-2s Deploy to Western India

By William | Senior Political Analyst

The Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Indian Air Force have conducted joint training, with Japanese F-2 fighters deployed to western India.

Deploying fighter aircraft to India is a substantial logistical undertaking for Japan, requiring tanker support, ground crews and spares moved several thousand kilometres, and the exercise's value lies as much in that movement as in the flying.

Japan's overseas air deployments were politically difficult for decades and have become routine only recently, as successive governments reinterpreted the constraints on the Self-Defense Forces' activity abroad.

India occupies a particular position in Japanese strategic thinking. It is a member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue with Japan, the United States and Australia, and it is the only one of the four that maintains its own relationship with Russia.

That independence limits what the partnership can be and does not prevent it from being useful, since the two countries share an interest in the Indian Ocean sea lanes through which Japanese energy imports travel.

Interoperability is the exercise's practical objective: common procedures, shared communications and the accumulated familiarity that allows two air forces to operate in the same airspace without confusion.

The F-2 is a Japanese development of the American F-16, built domestically and used in maritime strike and air defence roles, and its deployment abroad demonstrates a reach Japan has rarely exercised.

India's air force operates Russian, French and domestic aircraft, which makes joint training with a Japanese squadron a genuine test of procedure rather than a demonstration of shared equipment.

The exercise takes place as the revision of Japan's three security documents proceeds, with a reported spending target of 3.5% of output and a defence minister who has said the revision will determine the future of the country and the region.

Regional partnerships of this kind are the cheapest element of that revision, and the one that requires no new procurement.

POLITICS

A Government Running a Storm Response and a Summit Departure on the Same Morning

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The cabinet enters its second week with a typhoon reaching the Kanto plain this afternoon, a prime minister departing for New York, two North Korean ballistic missiles in the Sea of Japan and a public holiday.

The machinery for that combination exists and has been assembled over decades of practice. The information liaison office at the Prime Minister's Office Crisis Management Center, opened on Friday, escalates to a full response headquarters as conditions require.

The chief cabinet secretary chairs the crisis arrangements in the Prime Minister's absence, which is the practical argument for the continuity the reshuffle preserved at the centre of the cabinet while changing the ministries around it.

The disaster management minister, Goshi Hosono, has been asking residents to check hazard maps since Friday, and the Level 4 warning now in force on the Zempukuji River is the first test of whether anyone did.

Municipalities issue the evacuation instructions that actually reach households, and the national government's role during the event itself is to supply information, co-ordinate and stand ready to deploy the Self-Defense Forces if a prefecture requests it.

The Self-Defense Forces' disaster role is the most visible one they perform in ordinary Japanese life, and it is conducted under a request procedure from prefectural governors rather than on the national government's own initiative.

A missile launch running concurrently with a weather emergency exercises a different part of the same system, and the two use separate warning channels that reach the same public.

Ministers who expected their first full week to be spent preparing the extraordinary Diet session will spend it instead on a damage assessment.

The session's agenda has not become any lighter for the delay: a food consumption tax cut with an unfunded five trillion yen annual cost, a fuel subsidy approaching nine trillion, a security document revision and electoral reform due by the end of October.

The political test of a storm is never the storm. It is the week afterwards, and whether the transport network, the rivers and the power supply recover at the pace the public has been taught to expect.

POLITICS

The Extraordinary Session Waits Behind a Storm and a Five-Day Holiday

By Michael Hayes | Deputy Editor, Politics & Policy

The extraordinary Diet session resumes its preparation after a holiday week that has delivered a typhoon, a summit and two missile launches, and its agenda is unchanged by any of them.

The food consumption tax measure remains the largest item. The rate falls to 1% in April 2027 and to zero for two years afterward, at an annual cost of roughly five trillion yen with no named funding source.

The gasoline subsidy is second, at a record level with a programme budget approaching nine trillion yen and no announced end, sustained by a Gulf conflict in its seventh month.

The revision of the three security documents is third, carrying a reported target of 3.5% of output that contributed to long-term government bond yields reaching their highest level since 1996.

Electoral reform is fourth, now to be decided by a third-party organisation before the end of October, and it is the item whose outcome changes the composition of the chamber that will settle the other three.

The Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25%, which takes effect on Thursday, sits underneath all of them, since every quarter-point applies to a debt stock accumulated across three decades.

The House of Councillors Budget Committee under Arimura is where those threads meet in public, and the Steering Committee under Fujikawa controls how much time there is to pull them.

Asahi Shimbun's editorial warning about a loss of deliberation following the personnel changes was aimed at exactly that arrangement.

The opposition parties continue to reorganise under a provisional name, which means the parties that would mount the fiscal challenge are themselves unsettled.

Whatever the storm does today will add a supplementary spending question to a session that already has four unfunded ones.

POLITICS

Level 4 on the Zempukuji River Is the Instruction the Whole System Was Built to Deliver

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Level 4 flood risk warning for the Zempukuji River, urging residents of Nakano and Suginami to evacuate to a second floor, is the municipal alert system doing precisely what it was designed for.

Level 4 instructs everyone in the designated area to evacuate. Level 5, which was issued temporarily in Sakura City in Chiba, means a disaster is already occurring, and by the time it is issued the routes are often impassable.

POLITICS

The Zenpukuji is a small urban river running through dense residential western Tokyo, and rivers of that kind rise and fall within an hour rather than over a day.

Vertical evacuation, moving to an upper floor rather than leaving, is the instruction given when the streets have become more dangerous than the buildings, and it is specific to flash flooding in built-up areas.

Tokyo's drainage is designed to a defined rainfall intensity, and the rate forecast under a linear rainband exceeds what many local systems can carry away.

The capital's largest defences, the underground discharge channels and reservoirs north of the city, are built for river flooding rather than for surface water, and they cannot help a flooded street.

Municipal alert levels run from one to five, and disaster officials advise acting at Level 3 for anyone who needs extra time, which on a day when three in ten residents are over 65 is a substantial share of the population.

The transport ministry's expanded list of restricted underpasses, published this month after three deaths in submerged vehicles, identifies the road dips that flood first.

Whether households act on any of it is the question every post-disaster survey in Japan returns to, and the answers have been consistently discouraging.

The instruction this afternoon is narrow enough to be followed: if the ward office says go upstairs, go upstairs, and take a telephone and a torch.

POLITICS

What a Japanese Prime Minister Says at the General Assembly, and What Is New This Year

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

The General Assembly's general debate is the annual sequence of national statements that opens the session, and Japanese prime ministers have used it in a consistent way for decades.

The durable elements are Security Council reform, on which Japan has sought a permanent seat since the 1990s without advancing it, and nuclear disarmament, which Japan advocates as the only country to have suffered atomic attack.

Development assistance, disaster risk reduction and maritime order under international law complete the standard list, and the last of those connects directly to the collisions in the South China Sea this month.

This year's speech adds two subjects that were not on the list a decade ago. Prime Minister Takaichi plans to support strengthening energy supply in the Middle East and to address misinformation generated by artificial intelligence.

The energy passage is a national interest stated plainly. Japan imports the overwhelming majority of its crude from the Gulf and is subsidising the domestic price of fuel at a programme cost approaching nine trillion yen.

The artificial intelligence passage reflects a subject that has been discussed multilaterally without producing any multilateral instrument, and Japan's own framework is promotion-first, with no licensing requirement.

Climate change is the third element, and Japanese statements on it are read for the gap between the targets restated and the energy mix expected to deliver them.

The Assembly this year is meeting while a United Nations investigation team's characterisation of an attack on an Iranian school as an American war crime circulates, and while reports say Washington is preparing sanctions against the International Criminal Court.

Japan is a party to the Rome Statute and one of the court's largest funders, which places it on the opposite side of that question from its principal ally.

The speech is the trip's public face; the summit on Tuesday is its purpose, and the two audiences are entirely different.

POLITICS

What Happens in Tokyo in the Minutes After a Missile Launch

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

North Korea's launch of two ballistic missiles into the Sea of Japan set in motion a Japanese procedure that has been rehearsed to the point of routine.

Detection comes from a combination of American early-warning satellites and Japanese radar, and the data is shared in near real time under arrangements that also include South Korea.

The Prime Minister's Office is notified immediately, an information liaison office convenes, and the first assessment concerns trajectory and likely impact point.

J-Alert, the nationwide warning system that reaches mobile telephones, broadcasters and municipal loudspeakers, is activated only if a projectile is assessed as likely to pass over or land near Japanese territory.

That threshold is deliberately high. A system that warns too often trains people to ignore it, and the alerts that have been issued have themselves been reviewed for accuracy and timing afterward.

The coast guard issues navigational warnings to shipping and aircraft, which is the practical safety measure in most launches, since splashdown areas are at sea.

Whether the missiles landed inside Japan's exclusive economic zone determines the diplomatic response, and a landing inside it draws a formal protest lodged through the embassy in Beijing.

The technical analysis that follows examines altitude, range, flight duration and the interval between the launches, which together indicate what system was being tested and what stage its development has reached.

Two missiles rather than one generally indicates a test of a launch sequence rather than of a single system.

The results are shared with Washington and Seoul, and the three governments' assessments are normally compared before any of them is published.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: The Holiday and the Emergency Are Describing the Same People

By William | Senior Political Analyst

Two sets of numbers arrived this morning and they belong together, though nobody planned it that way.

The first is demographic. The population aged 65 and over has reached a record 36.24 million, or 29.6% of the country, and a record 9.43 million of them are in work, according to internal affairs ministry estimates reported by Yomiuri Shimbun.

The second is meteorological. A Level 4 evacuation warning is in force on an urban river in Tokyo, a Level 5 alert was issued briefly in Chiba, and 300 millimetres of rain is forecast for Kanto by this evening.

The connection between them is one Japanese disaster officials make after every flood: the people who die are overwhelmingly old.

The reason is not mysterious. Older residents live in the older housing stock, which is nearer the slopes and the riverbanks. They move more slowly. They are more likely to be at home when the order comes and less likely to have a car to leave in.

They are also more likely to decide not to go, having seen storms before, which is the judgment that the alert system's Level 3 was designed to interrupt.

A country where three in ten people are over 65 is a country where the evacuation problem is a majority problem, and the municipal systems built for it still assume a working-age population capable of moving itself.

That assumption fails hardest in rural municipalities, where the age profile is oldest, the terrain is steepest and the staff available to knock on doors are fewest.

The 9.43 million still in work cut the other way. An older population in employment is an older population that is mobile, connected and reachable, and welfare systems built around the assumption of frailty miss it.

Today the two facts sit on the same front page. The holiday celebrates longevity; the emergency instructions are addressed, in practice, to exactly the same people.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: Two Summits, Two Days Apart, and Japan Is in Only One of Them

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

The week's diplomatic architecture is simple and uncomfortable. Japan meets the United States on Tuesday. The United States meets China on Thursday. The subjects are the same both times.

Artificial intelligence and rare earth elements are expected to dominate both meetings, according to Yomiuri Shimbun, and ministerial-level American and Chinese talks are already under way on the same ground.

Japan's position in that structure is the one it has occupied for decades: the ally that must make its case before the principals meet, because it will not be in the room when they do.

The exposures are concrete rather than theoretical. Chinese rare earth controls reach Japanese motors and magnets. American export controls reach Japanese semiconductor equipment makers. Neither is decided in Tokyo.

That is the structural condition of a country that is the third or fourth largest economy in the world and the junior party in the only alliance that matters to its security.

Tokyo's instrument is preparation. Japanese officials brief exhaustively before leaders' meetings, and the measure of success is how much of the Japanese position turns up in the American one afterward.

The 15% tariff on Japanese exports illustrates both the method's value and its limits, having been negotiated down from a worse starting figure while still cutting the bilateral surplus by roughly 80% in August.

Energy is the subject Japan will raise that neither of the principals would otherwise prioritise, with the Prime Minister planning to support strengthening Middle East supply at the General Assembly.

A sanctions bill allowing American tariffs of up to 100% on large buyers of Russian energy is the other item, and it reaches Japan through the Sakhalin projects it has defended through every previous round.

By Friday the shape of the week will be visible in what each side says about Thursday's meeting, and whether anything in it sounds like it was written in Tokyo.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: The Numbers Behind the Holiday, Set Against Each Other

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Three figures published for Respect for the Aged Day describe Japan's central economic problem more compactly than any forecast: 36.24 million people over 65, 29.6% of the population, and 9.43 million of them in work.

The first two are the cost side. Pension, healthcare and long-term care spending scale with the age structure, and none of the three has a mechanism that reduces automatically as the population ages further.

The third is the offset, and it is larger than most comparable countries manage. More than a quarter of the over-65 population is producing output, earning income and paying contributions rather than only drawing them.

Long-term care insurance, funded by premiums from everyone over 40 plus public money, has been adjusted repeatedly since 2000, and the health ministry is now considering higher premiums for high-income residents over 65.

That addresses the funding of a service whose binding constraint is not money but staff, which is why each funding reform is followed within a year or two by another discussion about recruitment.

The labour market effect runs in both directions. Older workers relieve a shortage; family carers leaving employment deepen it, and the two groups overlap considerably.

Consumption shifts with the age profile, away from housing, education and durables toward healthcare, services and food, which changes what domestic demand supports.

Price sensitivity shifts with it. Households on pensions and savings absorb food and energy inflation with limited capacity to earn through it,

which is the constituency behind the fuel subsidy's political durability.

The interest rate cycle divides the same population, with deposit rates at 0.5% favouring older savers and variable mortgage increases falling on younger borrowers.

Every fiscal projection the extraordinary Diet session will examine, including a five trillion yen tax cut and a nine trillion yen fuel subsidy, is built on top of the figures published this morning.

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: What a Government Can Actually Do Between Now and Tonight

By William | Senior Political Analyst

With the typhoon reaching Kanto this afternoon, the window in which government action changes outcomes is roughly six hours long, and the list of available actions is short.

Warnings have already been issued, including half a day's advance notice of a linear rainband over Tokyo and Shizuoka, which is the newest instrument in the meteorological agency's set and the one with the shortest track record.

Evacuation instructions have been issued where the rivers require them, with Level 4 on the Zenpukuji and a temporary Level 5 in Sakura City, and the decisions belong to municipalities rather than to the national government.

Transport has closed itself, with Uchibo Line express services suspended and the metropolitan network warning of cancellations until Tuesday morning, on thresholds set by operators rather than by ministers.

Events have cancelled, from the Game Show's final day to a race meeting to a public viewing, each decided by an organiser weighing liability rather than by any instruction from above.

What the state does through the afternoon is information, co-ordination and the readiness to deploy the Self-Defense Forces if a prefectural governor requests it.

That request procedure is the structural feature outsiders find strangest about Japanese disaster response, and it exists because the constitutional settlement puts a deliberate distance between the military and domestic authority.

It works when governors ask early. It fails when a prefecture's own assessment lags the event, which is the failure mode every post-disaster review identifies.

The Prime Minister's departure for New York this morning is politically awkward and operationally irrelevant, since the chief cabinet secretary chairs the crisis machinery and the disaster management minister runs the response.

The consequential period is not this afternoon but the week after it, and the measure will be how quickly the trains, the rivers and the power supply return to what the public has been taught to expect.

INTERNATIONAL

Reports Say Washington Is Preparing Broad Sanctions Against the International Criminal Court

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Reports indicate that the United States is preparing broad sanctions against the International Criminal Court, a measure that would place an American administration in direct confrontation with the institution.

The court, established by the Rome Statute and seated in The Hague, prosecutes genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and aggression where national courts are unwilling or unable to act.

The United States is not a party to the statute and has never accepted the court's jurisdiction over its nationals, a position held consistently across administrations of both parties.

Japan is a party, and one of the court's largest financial contributors, which places Tokyo on the opposite side of this question from Washington in a way it is rarely comfortable being.

Japanese governments have treated support for international legal institutions as a core element of foreign policy, partly because a country relying on the law of the sea in its own disputes cannot easily be selective about which courts it respects.

INTERNATIONAL

Sanctions against court officials have been imposed before and were subsequently lifted, and their practical effect was to complicate the court's banking and travel arrangements rather than to halt its work.

The timing places the reports alongside a United Nations investigation team's finding that an attack on an Iranian school amounted to an American war crime, and alongside the General Assembly's general debate.

A Japanese prime minister addressing that Assembly this week must find language that supports an alliance and an international legal commitment simultaneously, which is a narrower space than it sounds.

European governments, most of which are parties to the statute, have previously opposed such measures and would be expected to do so again.

The reports remain reports, and the measure's scope will determine how far the confrontation goes.

INTERNATIONAL

Russia's Parliamentary Election Closes With the Ruling Party Largest, and Drones Over the Capital

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Russia's parliamentary elections reached their final day with the ruling party becoming the largest in the chamber, while Ukrainian drones attacked the area around the capital.

The result was not in question before the voting began. Opposition parties have been dissolved, their leading figures imprisoned, exiled or dead, and independent media closed or driven abroad under laws criminalising accurate description of the war.

An election conducted under those conditions is not a contest but a demonstration, showing that the state can organise a nationwide process and produce the result it intends.

The State Duma has operated as an endorsing body rather than a legislature for years, and the composition announced changes nothing about how decisions are made in Moscow.

The drone attacks around the capital during the vote are the more informative development, indicating that Ukraine retains the reach to strike near the centre of Russian power at a moment of maximum political visibility.

International observation of Russian elections has effectively ceased, which means the count will be reported through official figures and whatever independent monitoring survives inside the country.

For Japan the vote matters as a signal about the war's domestic political base, since a leadership confident enough to stage an election is a leadership that believes the war is survivable at home.

Japan has aligned with Group of Seven sanctions while continuing to take liquefied natural gas from the Sakhalin projects, a position it defends on energy security grounds.

That position is now exposed to an American sanctions bill allowing tariffs of up to 100% on countries importing large volumes of Russian energy, which would reach Japanese procurement costs directly.

The Northern Territories dispute remains frozen, and what limited dialogue existed on it ended with the invasion.

INTERNATIONAL

AfD Expected to Become the Largest Party in German State Elections

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

The far-right Alternative for Germany is likely to become the largest party in German state elections, extending a run of results that has reshaped the country's politics.

Becoming the largest party in a state parliament does not by itself produce a government, because the other parties have maintained a refusal to enter coalitions with the AfD at any level.

That arrangement, discussed in German politics as a firewall, has held so far and becomes progressively harder to sustain as the party's vote share rises.

The party's support is concentrated in the eastern states, where the post-reunification economic transition left durable grievances, and where

established party membership has always been thinner.

Domestic security services in several states have placed the party or its regional branches under formal observation, a designation with legal consequences and considerable political weight.

For Japan, German politics matters through the European Union's trade and regulatory positions, which are shaped substantially by Berlin and which affect Japanese exporters and the standards they build to.

Germany and Japan occupy comparable positions in the world economy as export-oriented manufacturing states with ageing populations and constitutional constraints on military force inherited from the same war.

The two have drawn closer on security co-operation in recent years, with German naval deployments to the Indo-Pacific and expanded defence industrial dialogue.

Political instability in Berlin complicates that co-operation and the European positions that Japanese negotiators rely on when dealing with Washington and Beijing.

Coalition negotiations after the result will determine what practical difference the vote makes.

INTERNATIONAL

Month Seven in the Gulf, and a Japanese Argument at the United Nations

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Prime Minister Takaichi's plan to support strengthening Middle East energy supply at the United Nations places a Japanese national interest at the centre of a conflict now in its seventh month.

Japan imports the overwhelming majority of its crude from the Gulf, which makes the stability of those states a direct national interest rather than a foreign policy preference.

Crude has remained above \$100 a barrel, three pumping stations on Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline have been damaged, and the Strait of Hormuz remains contested.

The domestic consequence is a gasoline subsidy approaching nine trillion yen, holding the pump price near 170 yen a litre while the unsubsidised price would sit well above it.

The Bank of Japan cited high oil prices among its reasons for raising the policy rate to 1.25%, which applies from Thursday, so the conflict reaches Japanese mortgage holders as well as Japanese drivers.

An American decision to sell F-35 aircraft to Saudi Arabia, reported last week, alters a regional balance in which Japan has an interest and no influence.

A United Nations investigation team's characterisation of an attack on an Iranian school as an American war crime sits in the same week's reporting, days before the Prime Minister addresses the Assembly.

Japanese diplomacy in the region has historically traded on not being a party to its conflicts, maintaining relations with states that do not maintain them with each other.

That position has value as a channel and limits as leverage, and it is the position from which the energy argument will be made this week.

Diplomatic contacts in Oman on shipping arrangements through the strait have continued, and any narrow technical agreement there would reach Japanese insurers and shipowners quickly.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan Funds the Court Washington May Sanction

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

Reports that the United States is preparing broad sanctions against the International Criminal Court place Japan in an awkward position, as a party to the Rome Statute and one of the court's largest financial contributors.

Japan acceded to the statute in 2007, later than most of its partners, after a prolonged domestic process that examined the compatibility of the court's jurisdiction with Japanese law.

Since acceding, Japan has been among the court's most substantial funders and has supplied judges to

its bench, which is a level of institutional investment that is not easily set aside.

The reasoning behind that investment is consistent with the rest of Japanese foreign policy. A country whose maritime disputes rest on international law cannot be selective about which international legal institutions it supports.

The United States has never accepted the court's jurisdiction over its nationals, a position held across administrations of both parties, and has previously imposed and then lifted sanctions on court officials.

Those earlier measures complicated the court's banking and travel arrangements rather than halting its work, and their practical effect depends on how broadly any new measures are drawn.

For Japan the difficulty is not principle but management: how to maintain a legal commitment without turning it into a public disagreement with the ally whose security guarantee underwrites Japanese defence.

The standard Japanese approach in such cases is to state the principle in general terms and avoid direct criticism, which satisfies neither side fully and has served for decades.

The timing is uncomfortable, with the Prime Minister addressing the General Assembly this week and meeting President Trump tomorrow.

European governments, most of them parties to the statute, have opposed such measures previously and would be expected to do so again.

INTERNATIONAL

The Officials Meet Before the Principals Do

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

American and Chinese ministerial-level talks are under way ahead of Thursday's summit, with artificial intelligence and rare earth elements likely on the agenda, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

Preparatory talks at that level are where the substance of a leaders' meeting is actually settled, and by the time the principals meet the communiqué is frequently close to final.

That is the convention rather than the rule, and the current American administration has repeatedly departed from it, which is why the preparatory stage is being watched more closely than usual.

The two subjects are linked more tightly than they appear. Artificial intelligence requires chips, chips require manufacturing equipment, and the equipment is subject to export controls.

Rare earths are the Chinese instrument in the same argument, reaching the motors, magnets and electronics that go into everything from vehicles to defence systems.

Each side therefore holds a chokepoint on the other's industrial base, which is a structure that produces negotiation rather than escalation, at least while both sides prefer production to leverage.

Japan sits inside both chokepoints without controlling either. Its semiconductor equipment makers are affected by American controls and its manufacturers by Chinese ones.

That is why the Japan-US summit on Tuesday matters to Tokyo out of proportion to what it will produce: it is the last opportunity to put Japanese exposure into the American position.

Ministerial talks also cover the tariff schedules, agricultural purchases and the technology enforcement measures that make up the working substance of the relationship.

Whatever is agreed on Thursday will be priced in Tokyo on the same morning it reopens after four closed days.

ECONOMY

Tokyo Is Shut Until Thursday, and Four Days of News Will Arrive in One Session

The 22nd is a citizens' holiday and the 23rd is the equinox, leaving the Bank of Japan's new rate to take effect on the same morning the market reopens

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The Tokyo Stock Exchange is closed today for Respect for the Aged Day and tomorrow for the citizens' holiday that falls between two public holidays, according to Kabutan. With Wednesday the Autumnal Equinox, the next normal trading day is Thursday the 24th.

Four consecutive closures is unusual for a market that observes most of its holidays singly, and it is the mechanism that produces Silver Week: a Monday holiday and a Wednesday holiday convert the Tuesday between them into a holiday of its own.

The consequence for investors is that a considerable quantity of news will be priced in a single session rather than absorbed across four.

The Bank of Japan's policy rate of around 1.25%, decided on the 18th, takes effect on Thursday itself, which means the market reopens on the morning the new rate applies.

That is the highest policy rate in approximately 31 years, and the focus has already moved past the decision to the pace of what follows.

The currency will have moved substantially by then. At 6 a.m. today the yen stood at 156.68 to 156.96 against the dollar, having weakened by 0.80 yen from the previous day, and at 179.92 to 180.34 against the euro, according to Kyodo News.

The yen had surged in New York at the end of last week on expectations of Bank of Japan rate checks and of intervention, and one market comment quoted by Kyodo described the effect as a drop in the ocean.

That phrase captures the difficulty precisely. Official action can move the currency by a yen or two for a day, and the interest rate differential that is pushing it the other way has not changed.

The typhoon adds a domestic variable. Insurers, railways, retailers and construction companies all move on storm damage, in different directions, and the assessment will not be complete before Thursday.

The summit in New York on Tuesday and the American meeting with China on Thursday will both have happened by the time Tokyo opens, with artificial intelligence and rare earths on both agendas.

China announces its Loan Prime Rate for September today, which reaches Japanese exporters through the demand outlook rather than through any direct channel.

The Nikkei carries 65,018.95 into that session, after three consecutive gains, and remains roughly 11% below its June high of 72,831.73.

ECONOMY

The Yen Gives Back Most of Its New York Gain, and the Market Calls Official Action a Drop in the Ocean

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

At 6 a.m. today the yen traded at 156.68 to 156.96 against the dollar, weaker by 0.80 yen than the previous day, after surging in New York at the end of last week, according to Kyodo News.

The New York move followed expectations of Bank of Japan rate checks and concern that intervention might follow, and the reversal since is the market testing whether either is actually coming.

A rate check is the step below intervention. Officials telephone dealers at major banks and ask the price at which they would trade, and the call itself carries the message.

No yen are bought in a rate check, which is why the moves it produces are measured in a yen or two and why they rarely last more than a session.

Actual intervention is conducted by the Bank of Japan as the finance ministry's agent, selling dollars from the reserves, and it is confirmed only afterward if at all.

One market comment quoted by Kyodo News described the official effort as a drop in the ocean, which is the standard criticism of unilateral action against a differential.

That differential is the whole of the argument. The Federal Reserve's target range is 3.75% to 4.00% and the American ten-year yield is around 5%, against a Japanese policy rate that becomes 1.25% on Thursday.

Closing a gap of that size with quarter-point increases would take years, which is why the currency responds to the expected path rather than to any single decision.

Coordinated intervention with the United States Treasury, conducted earlier this month, is more effective than unilateral action because it removes any suspicion that the two governments are working at cross purposes.

ECONOMY

The euro rate, at 179.92 to 180.34, is the figure that matters to households importing European goods and to the travel industry, and it has moved less dramatically than the dollar rate.

With Tokyo closed for four days, the yen will be traded in London and New York without a domestic market to anchor it, which is the condition under which sharp moves have historically occurred.

ECONOMY

The New Rate Applies From Thursday, and the Argument Has Moved to What Comes After It

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The Bank of Japan's policy rate of 1.25%, decided on the 18th, applies from Thursday the 24th, the highest level in approximately 31 years, according to Asahi Shimbun and Yomiuri Shimbun. The pace of the next increase is now the focus.

Governor Kazuo Ueda's formulation, that rates will continue to be raised depending on the situation, commits the bank to a direction while withholding a schedule, which is what has turned a quarter-point into a question about a series.

The interval since the June increase was the shortest of his tenure, and that detail is doing more work in the market's expectations than anything said at the press conference.

The situation the bank is weighing has not improved. Crude remains above \$100 a barrel, the yen is in the high 156 range and moved to 158 last week, and inter-company prices have stayed elevated long enough to reach consumers.

Wage growth is the component the bank treats as decisive, because a tightening cycle justified by imported costs alone would be tightening into a shock rather than into an expansion.

On the other side of the ledger, rice has fallen to the 2,000 yen range for a five-kilogram bag for the first time in about two years, and the food consumption tax cut arrives in 2027.

For households the transition's asymmetry is already visible. Megabanks are reported to be taking ordinary deposit interest rates to 0.5%, while estimates of the increased burden on variable-rate mortgage holders continue.

Those two figures describe opposite ends of the same balance sheet, and very few households sit at both ends at the same scale.

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the quieter exposure. They borrow at floating rates, refinance more often than households and hold thinner cash buffers, with no five-year payment adjustment convention to smooth the path.

The bank's next meeting will weigh all of it, and the market's working assumption is that the interval will not lengthen.

ECONOMY

Half a Per Cent on Deposits, and a Rising Bill on Variable-Rate Loans

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Megabanks are reported to be taking ordinary deposit interest rates to 0.5%, while estimates of an increased burden on variable-rate housing loans continue, according to TV Asahi News and Sankei News.

Ordinary deposits in Japan paid effectively nothing for the better part of two decades. A rate of 0.001% was common, which on a million yen produced ten yen a year.

At 0.5%, the same million yen earns 5,000 yen before tax, which does not change a household's circumstances and is the first time in many savers' working lives that a current account has not been a slow loss.

On the other side, variable rates have been estimated to add about 50,000 yen a year for borrowers in their twenties, spread across the reset schedule the loan follows.

Japanese variable mortgages reset their interest twice yearly but adjust the monthly payment only every five years, with a convention capping any increase at 125% of the previous payment.

Between adjustments a higher rate changes the composition of the payment rather than its size, so more of each instalment goes to interest and less to principal, which quietly extends the life of the loan.

That is why the estimated figure and the felt figure differ, and why many borrowers will notice nothing until their loan's end date has moved.

The distribution is generational. Savings are concentrated among older households and mortgage debt among younger ones, so a single policy change produces opposite headlines depending on who is asked.

On a holiday reporting a record 36.24 million people aged 65 or over, the deposit rate is the half of the story with the larger constituency.

The Bank of Japan's flow of funds data this month showed household holdings of stocks and investment trusts overtaking insurance for the first time, a shift that occurred partly because deposits paid nothing.

ECONOMY

Rice in the 2,000-Yen Range for the First Time in About Two Years

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The average price of a five-kilogram bag of rice is in the 2,000-yen range for the first time in about two years, and procedures for buying back stockpiled rice are under way.

The figure represents a fifth consecutive weekly decline and the reversal of a shortage that dominated Japanese food prices through the past two years.

Beneath the headline sits an inversion the market has not seen in living memory: new rice from this year's harvest selling for less than last year's old rice.

The cause is on both sides of the wholesale ledger. Wholesalers are paying low purchase prices for the new crop while agricultural cooperatives hold last year's rice at the elevated prices they paid during the shortage.

The government's buyback absorbs that older inventory into the strategic reserve, which the cooperatives could not otherwise sell without taking a loss.

The reserve was established after the poor harvest of 1993 sent Japan looking abroad for rice, and it is designed to buy in years of plenty and release in years of shortage, which is what it is now doing.

For households the fall is the most tangible piece of good news in a year of price stories, and rice is the commodity Japanese shoppers watch more closely than any other.

For farmers it is the opposite. Low wholesale prices were agreed for a crop already delayed by a month of rain, and a typhoon is now crossing the regions where the remainder of it is standing.

Rice-related bankruptcies have run at a record pace this year, and a harvest damaged after its price has been set arrives at farms with very little cushion.

The agriculture ministry, under a minister appointed less than a week ago, must set the buyback's scale and price, and those two decisions determine who absorbs the loss the inversion has created.

ECONOMY

The Demography Behind Today's Holiday Is Also the Country's Main Economic Constraint

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The statistics published for Respect for the Aged Day, a record 36.24 million people aged 65 and over and a record 9.43 million of them in work, are the background to almost every economic argument Japan is currently having.

A population where close to three in ten people are over 65 has a consumption profile unlike a younger one. Spending shifts from housing, education and durables toward healthcare, services and food.

It also has a different price sensitivity. Households living on pensions and savings feel food and energy inflation immediately and have limited capacity to earn their way through it.

That is the constituency behind the Yomiuri poll finding that 85% of respondents name inflation countermeasures as a policy priority, and behind the political durability of the fuel subsidy.

The interest rate cycle divides the same population. Deposit rates moving to 0.5% benefit older savers; variable mortgage increases fall on younger borrowers.

On the labour side, 9.43 million working over-65s are the reason Japan's workforce has shrunk more slowly than its working-age population, and they are

concentrated in sectors that cannot recruit otherwise.

Public finance carries the other side of the arithmetic. Pension, healthcare and long-term care spending rise with the age structure, and the health ministry is considering higher care insurance premiums for high-income residents over 65.

Against that sit a food consumption tax cut costing roughly five trillion yen a year with no named funding source and a fuel subsidy approaching nine trillion, in a budget whose long-term borrowing costs reached their highest since 1996 this month.

Productivity is the conventional answer and it has been the conventional answer for thirty years, with automation, software and capital deepening all promoted to offset a shrinking workforce.

The demographic figures published today are not a forecast. They are a measurement, and every fiscal projection the extraordinary Diet session will examine is built on top of them.

ECONOMY

China Sets Its September Lending Benchmark While Tokyo Is Closed

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

China announces its Loan Prime Rate for September today, the benchmark that guides lending across the Chinese banking system, with Japanese markets closed and unable to respond until Thursday.

The Loan Prime Rate is set monthly from quotations submitted by a panel of banks and functions as the reference for corporate and mortgage lending, having replaced the older benchmark lending rate in 2019.

Its movements are read as a signal of policy intent, since the People's Bank of China influences the quotations through its own operations rather than setting the rate directly.

For Japan the rate matters through demand. China remains Japan's largest trading partner, and Japanese exporters of machine tools, components, chemicals and capital equipment are exposed to Chinese construction and manufacturing activity.

Chinese property remains the sector where the credit conditions bite hardest, and Japanese suppliers of construction machinery have felt that weakness for several years.

The announcement lands in the same week as American ministerial-level talks with Chinese officials and a summit on Thursday at which artificial intelligence and rare earths are expected to dominate.

Rare earth export controls are the Chinese instrument that reaches Japanese manufacturing most directly, in motors, magnets and the electronics inside vehicles and machine tools.

Japan has diversified sources and invested in recycling and substitution since supply was interrupted in 2010 without escaping the dependence.

A Japanese market closed for four days will price the Chinese rate decision, the two summits and the storm's damage in a single session on Thursday morning.

The Nikkei carries 65,018.95 into it, roughly 11% below its June high.

ECONOMY

The Russia Sanctions Bill Reaches Japan Through Procurement Costs

By Jonathan Mercer | Senior Editor, International Desk

A bill allowing tariffs of up to 100% on countries importing large volumes of Russian energy has passed in the United States, and it will affect Japan's procurement costs, according to Kyodo News.

Japan's exposure runs through the Sakhalin projects in the Russian Far East, from which it has continued to take liquefied natural gas throughout the conflict in Ukraine on energy security grounds.

That position has been accommodated through successive sanctions rounds, with carve-outs negotiated where Japanese participation was judged to matter more than the revenue denied to Moscow.

Sakhalin's advantage is geography. The cargoes travel a short distance to Japanese terminals, which makes them cheaper and more reliable than the alternatives and avoids the Strait of Hormuz entirely.

That last point has gained value with every month of the Gulf conflict, now in its seventh, with crude above \$100 a barrel and the strait contested.

A blanket tariff mechanism aimed at large importers is a blunter instrument than the carve-outs that have

protected the Japanese position, and its effect depends on how the legislation defines a large importer.

Replacing Sakhalin volumes would mean buying in a global liquefied natural gas market that is already tight, at prices set by the same conflict, converted at a yen near 157.

European buyers went through the equivalent adjustment earlier and at considerable cost, restructuring their entire supply picture within about two years.

Japan's utilities hold long-term contracts rather than buying on the spot market, which protects them from price spikes and not at all from a legal prohibition.

The Prime Minister meets President Trump tomorrow, and energy security is exactly the kind of subject raised in a leaders' meeting and absent from the statement afterward.

ECONOMY

Markets, Rates and Prices at a Glance

Compiled by the Economics Desk

MARKETS CLOSED: The Tokyo Stock Exchange is closed today (Respect for the Aged Day) and tomorrow (citizens' holiday). Wednesday is the Autumnal Equinox. The next normal trading day is Thursday, Sept. 24.

CURRENCY (6 a.m., Sept. 21): 1 dollar = 156.68-156.96 yen, weaker by 0.80 yen from the previous day. 1 euro = 179.92-180.34 yen.

YEN: Surged in New York at the end of last week on expectations of Bank of Japan rate checks and intervention. One market comment described official action as a drop in the ocean.

BANK OF JAPAN: Policy rate of around 1.25%, decided Sept. 18, applies from Sept. 24. Highest in approximately 31 years. The next pace is the focus.

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

MORTGAGES: Estimates of increased burden on variable-rate housing loans continue, at about 50,000 yen a year for borrowers in their twenties.

NIKKEI 225 (Sept. 18 close): 65,018.95, up 882.70, a third consecutive gain. Roughly 11% below the June high of 72,831.73.

NEW YORK (Sept. 18): Dow 51,682.64, down 95.40. Ten-year Treasury yield around 5%. Fed target range 3.75%-4.00%.

RICE: Five-kilogram average in the 2,000-yen range for the first time in about two years. Buyback of stockpiled rice under way.

CHINA: The September Loan Prime Rate is announced today.

DEMOGRAPHY: 36.24 million people aged 65 and over, 29.6% of the population, both records. 9.43 million of them in employment, also a record.

WEEK AHEAD: Japan-US summit in New York Tuesday. US-China summit Thursday. New Bank of Japan rate effective Thursday, when Tokyo reopens.

ECONOMY

Why Tuesday Is a Holiday Nobody Legislated

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

Tokyo's markets are closed tomorrow under a provision that creates a holiday without naming one, and the mechanism is worth understanding because it produces Silver Week.

Japanese law provides that a weekday falling between two public holidays becomes a holiday itself, a category described as a citizens' holiday.

This year Respect for the Aged Day falls on Monday the 21st, being the third Monday of September, and the Autumnal Equinox falls on Wednesday the 23rd. The Tuesday between them is therefore a holiday by operation of the rule.

Add the weekend and the result is five consecutive days off, an arrangement that occurs only when the equinox and the third Monday align, which is why it has not happened for eleven years.

The equinox is the variable. Its date is fixed by the National Astronomical Observatory's calculation of the moment the sun crosses the celestial equator, announced by the government the previous February, which makes it the only Japanese public holiday determined by an observatory.

ECONOMY

The third-Monday arrangement for Respect for the Aged Day comes from legislation that moved several holidays to Mondays in order to create long weekends, a policy explicitly intended to encourage domestic travel and leisure spending.

This year that intention has been comprehensively defeated by a typhoon arriving on the holiday's third day.

For markets the consequence is four consecutive closed days, with the next normal trading session on Thursday the 24th, which is also the day the Bank of Japan's new policy rate takes effect.

For anyone holding a position through the break, the currency will be traded in London and New York for four days without a Tokyo session to anchor it.

The same rule will produce the next five-day Silver Week whenever the calendar next allows it, which is not soon.

ECONOMY

Silver Week, and the Policy That Invented Long Weekends

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The five-day break that ends on Wednesday exists because of a deliberate policy decision to move several Japanese public holidays to Mondays.

The legislation, applied from the early 2000s, shifted Coming of Age Day, Marine Day, Respect for the Aged Day and Health and Sports Day to designated Mondays in order to create three-day weekends.

The stated purpose was leisure and domestic tourism. An economy in which employees did not take their annual leave could at least be given long weekends by statute.

Take-up of paid leave in Japan has improved since, helped by a legal requirement that employers ensure a minimum number of days are actually used, and it remains low by international comparison.

Silver Week is the occasional by-product. When Respect for the Aged Day falls early enough in the month, the Tuesday between it and the Autumnal Equinox becomes a citizens' holiday, producing five consecutive days.

It is named by analogy with Golden Week in spring, which is Japan's largest holiday period and the one around which the travel industry plans its year.

The economic effect of a five-day break is concentrated and visible: hotels, transport, restaurants and attractions take a large share of their autumn revenue in a handful of days.

That concentration is also the vulnerability, which this year's typhoon has demonstrated by removing the eastern half of the country from the calculation.

Retail behaves differently from leisure, with households that stay home still spending on groceries and delivery, which cushions the aggregate while leaving specific businesses exposed.

The next five-day Silver Week depends on the equinox and the third Monday aligning again, and it will not be soon.

ECONOMY

The Holiday Ledger: Rice Down, Deposits Up, the Yen Weaker, the Market Shut

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

A household reading the holiday papers can assemble its own arithmetic from the week's figures, and they run in several directions at once.

Rice is down, with a five-kilogram bag in the 2,000-yen range for the first time in about two years after five consecutive weekly declines, and new rice selling below old.

Deposits are up, with megabanks reported to be taking ordinary deposit interest rates to 0.5%, which on two million yen produces about 10,000 yen a year before tax.

Mortgages are up, with variable rates estimated to add about 50,000 yen a year for borrowers in their twenties, spread across the reset schedule the loan follows.

The yen is weaker, at 156.68 to 156.96 against the dollar at six o'clock this morning, having given back most of the gain it made in New York at the end of last week.

Fuel is unchanged, held near 170 yen a litre by a subsidy whose programme cost approaches nine trillion yen, which works out at roughly 70,000 yen

for every person in the country.

Coffee rises from October, with Starbucks citing bean prices that are set in dollars and converted at that same exchange rate.

The food consumption tax falls to 1% in April 2027 and to zero for two years afterward, worth several thousand yen a month to a typical household and five trillion yen a year to a budget with no named source for it.

The market is shut until Thursday, which is also the day the Bank of Japan's new policy rate takes effect, so all of this will be priced in one session.

The largest figure on this week's ledger has not been calculated yet, and it is the damage the storm does between this afternoon and tonight.

ECONOMY

What Intervention Would Actually Involve, and Why the Market Doubts It

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

With the yen at 156.68 to 156.96 this morning and market comment describing official action as a drop in the ocean, it is worth setting out what intervention would actually consist of.

The decision belongs to the finance ministry rather than to the Bank of Japan, which acts as the ministry's agent and executes the transactions.

Yen-buying intervention means selling dollars from Japan's foreign exchange reserves, which are among the largest in the world and are held mostly in American government securities.

That is the opposite of the intervention Japan conducted for decades, when it sold yen to restrain the currency's strength and accumulated the reserves it now holds.

Selling dollars has a hard limit, since the reserves are finite, and the market knows their size, which is the arithmetic behind the drop-in-the-ocean comment.

Daily turnover in the yen runs to hundreds of billions of dollars, and an intervention of tens of billions can move the rate sharply for a day without changing the direction.

What intervention buys is time and uncertainty. A market that has been punished once for a one-way position becomes more cautious about rebuilding it.

Coordinated intervention, of the kind conducted with the United States Treasury earlier this month, is considerably more effective because it removes any suspicion that the two governments disagree.

The underlying driver is the interest rate differential, with the Federal Reserve's target range at 3.75% to 4.00% against a Japanese policy rate that becomes 1.25% on Thursday.

With Tokyo closed for four days, the currency will be traded in London and New York without a domestic session to anchor it, which is the condition under which sharp moves have historically occurred.

BUSINESS

Coffee, a Cab and a Soy Sauce Plant: Three Corporate Decisions Still Working Through the Economy

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Three corporate decisions reported over the past week continue to work through the Japanese economy: Starbucks raising coffee prices from October, Tesla showing the CyberCab in Japan, and Kikkoman opening a third American factory.

The Starbucks increase is the one households will feel. Coffee is an imported commodity priced in dollars, which means a Japanese chain faces the global bean price and the exchange rate that converts it, with the yen near 157.

Global arabica prices have been driven up by weather in the producing countries and by rising demand against constrained supply, and the effect has reached retailers in every importing market.

A cup of coffee is among the most visible prices in a household's week, which is why a single chain's decision is reported as an economic event rather than as a commercial one.

The Tesla CyberCab, shown in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya, is not permitted for use on public roads here, because a vehicle designed without a steering wheel or pedals cannot be registered under Japanese road transport law as it stands.

Manufacturers show vehicles in markets where they cannot operate them in order to shape the conversation that changes the rules, and the gap between the vehicle and the law is the entire content of the event.

Japan's demographics make the argument for autonomy concrete. Rural bus and taxi services are contracting for want of drivers, and the population that most needs them is the one least able to drive itself.

Kikkoman's third American plant, targeting annual revenue growth of 4% to 5% in North America, is the opposite kind of decision: capacity added in the market it serves.

Producing where it sells insulates the company from the 15% tariff now applied to most Japanese exports to the United States, which cut the bilateral surplus by roughly 80% in August.

The weak yen cuts the other way, flattering North American results when they are translated back into yen, which is the arithmetic behind a good deal of Japanese corporate reporting this year.

BUSINESS

The Bill for This Storm Will Be Counted in a Market That Is Closed

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Typhoon No. 25 reaches the Kanto plain this afternoon with the Tokyo Stock Exchange closed and unable to reopen until Thursday, which means the storm's financial consequences will accumulate for three days before any price reflects them.

Non-life insurers are the sector most directly exposed. Japanese typhoon claims run through fire policies with wind and flood cover attached, and the largest events of recent years produced claims in the hundreds of billions of yen.

Reinsurance absorbs the top of that exposure, spreading it internationally, which is why a Japanese storm moves premium expectations in markets that have never heard of the Boso Peninsula.

Flood cover is the variable that determines how much of the damage is actually insured. Households have been dropping it to hold down premiums, a trend reported over the past several weeks.

An uninsured flooded house is a household's loss rather than an insurer's, and it is also a slower repair, because the money has to be found before the work begins.

Railway operators take revenue losses that are immediate and unrecoverable. A suspended holiday service is a journey that is not made later.

Retailers see demand move forward and then collapse, with water, batteries and food bought ahead of the storm and high street traffic disappearing during it.

Construction and building materials move the other way, since repair work follows every major storm, though the sector is already constrained by labour and by the same materials shortages affecting every project.

Agricultural losses fall outside the insurance market's main channels and into a separate mutual relief system, and a rice crop damaged after its wholesale price has been set is the worst version of that exposure.

By Thursday morning the damage will be quantified well enough for the market to price it, along with the Bank of Japan's new rate, two summits and a Chinese rate decision.

BUSINESS

The First Five-Day Silver Week in Eleven Years Has Lost Its Middle

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The first five-day Silver Week in eleven years was expected to deliver a substantial weekend of domestic tourism, and a typhoon arriving on its third day has removed a large part of that from the eastern half of the country.

Hotel cancellations across eastern Japan have already occurred, and accommodation is the least recoverable part of the holiday economy, since an unsold room night cannot be sold later.

Transport revenue follows, with the Tokyo network suspending services from last night through to the early morning of Tuesday, which covers the outbound and return legs of most holiday journeys in the region.

Events carry their own losses. The Tokyo Game Show's final day is cancelled, the Rockin' On performance is cancelled, and the Nakayama race meeting is postponed to Tuesday.

A trade show's public day is revenue for exhibitors, caterers, staffing agencies and the venue, and for smaller developers it is the only occasion in the year to put a product in front of thousands of people.

Retail behaves differently from leisure. Households that stay home still spend, on groceries, delivery and the things people buy when they are indoors, which cushions the aggregate figures while leaving specific businesses exposed.

The regional pattern is uneven in the extreme. Today's map has Kobe and Hiroshima sunny at 29 degrees and Nagasaki, Miyazaki and Kagoshima at 31, with racing proceeding at Hanshin.

Western Japan will capture some of the traffic the east loses, helped by a Kyushu Shinkansen that resumed full services this weekend after 52 days.

Agriculture takes a different kind of loss, with rice still standing in fields across eastern Japan facing 300 millimetres of rain and damaging wind.

The compensating day is Wednesday, the Autumnal Equinox, which falls on the improving side of the forecast and now carries a good deal of the week's rearranged plans.

BUSINESS

A Fuel Subsidy Approaching Nine Trillion Yen, and a Prime Minister About to Argue for Gulf Supply

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Prime Minister Takaichi plans to express support for strengthening energy supply in the Middle East at the United Nations, and the domestic reason sits in a subsidy programme approaching nine trillion yen.

The gasoline subsidy is paid to wholesalers rather than at the pump, holding the national average retail price near 170 yen a litre while the unsubsidised price, with crude above \$100 and the yen near 157, would sit well above it.

It was introduced as a temporary measure and has been extended repeatedly, which is the usual fate of temporary measures whose underlying conditions do not resolve.

The Gulf conflict in its seventh month is that condition. Three pumping stations on Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline have been damaged and the Strait of Hormuz remains contested.

Japan imports the overwhelming majority of its crude from the Gulf, which makes the security of those states a direct national interest rather than a foreign policy preference.

An American decision to sell F-35 aircraft to Saudi Arabia, reported last week, alters a regional balance in which Japan has an interest and very little influence.

For transport and logistics the subsidy functions as a brake on inflation that would otherwise reach the price of every delivered item, which is why withdrawing it is harder than introducing it was.

Nine trillion yen belongs beside the five trillion yen annual cost of the food consumption tax cut, and neither has a named funding source.

The Bank of Japan justified its increase to 1.25% partly by reference to high oil prices, and a subsidy that conceals one visible price does not change the pressure the bank is responding to.

The Budget Committee will examine both programmes during the extraordinary session, which the storm has now pushed back by a week.

BUSINESS

The Firms That Feel a Rate Rise First Employ Most of the Country

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

With the Bank of Japan's new rate applying from Thursday, the transmission that reaches Japanese households over years reaches small and medium-sized enterprises within months.

Those firms employ about seven in ten Japanese workers. They borrow at floating rates tied to short-term benchmarks, refinance more frequently than households and hold thinner cash reserves.

There is no five-year payment adjustment convention to smooth their path, which is the mechanism that disguises the increase for mortgage holders.

BUSINESS

Many have been operating on margins compressed from both ends, with input costs raised by a weak yen and imported energy and selling prices constrained by customers who resist increases.

Labour costs have risen too, which is the outcome the Bank of Japan has been waiting for and which is experienced as a cost rather than as evidence by the firm paying it.

The spring wage negotiations that the bank watches are conducted most visibly at large employers, and the standing question is whether increases reach the smaller firms where most people work.

Government support has tended to arrive as subsidised lending, which addresses a liquidity problem by adding to the debt that is becoming more expensive.

Regional banks, whose books are concentrated in exactly these borrowers, benefit from wider margins and carry the credit risk if the borrowers falter.

Business failures have been rising across several sectors this year, with rice-related bankruptcies at a record pace, and a storm crossing the eastern half of the country adds a fortnight of disrupted trading to firms already close to the line.

An older workforce compounds it. Succession, rather than interest rates, is the constraint that closes most small Japanese firms, and a record 9.43 million working over-65s includes a great many proprietors with nobody to hand the business to.

BUSINESS

Rare Earths: The Dependence Japan Has Spent Fifteen Years Failing to Escape

By Ethan Cole | Technology and Science Editor

Rare earth elements are expected to be among the two principal subjects of both this week's summits, and Japan's interest in them is older and more specific than most countries'.

The elements are not geologically rare. What is concentrated is the processing, which is chemically difficult, environmentally demanding and overwhelmingly located in China.

Japanese manufacturing needs them for permanent magnets, which are in every electric motor, every hard drive, every wind turbine generator and a great deal of the electronics inside a modern vehicle.

The dependence became a public issue in 2010, when supply to Japan was interrupted during a diplomatic dispute, and the shock reshaped Japanese industrial policy toward strategic materials.

What followed was a sustained programme: investment in alternative mines abroad, recycling from end-of-life products, stockpiling, and research into magnets that use less of the scarcest elements or none at all.

Japanese firms achieved genuine results in reducing dysprosium content in high-performance magnets, which is the kind of incremental engineering the country does well and which does not generate headlines.

The dependence nonetheless persists, because reducing consumption per unit is not the same as replacing the supply chain, and processing capacity outside China remains limited.

Export controls have since been applied and adjusted several times, and each adjustment is read in Tokyo as a demonstration that the instrument remains available.

Deep-sea deposits within Japan's exclusive economic zone near Minamitorishima have been surveyed and contain substantial quantities, and extracting them at commercial cost remains unproven.

That is the exposure the Prime Minister carries into Tuesday's meeting, two days before the Americans discuss the same subject with Beijing.

BUSINESS

Why One Derailed Freight Train Stops an Express 200 Kilometres Away

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

A freight train derailling inside a station has suspended the Limited Express Yakumo and affected some 2,700 passengers, which is a disproportion that says something about how Japanese railways are built.

Japanese freight and passenger services share track on almost every conventional line, with the freight operator running trains over infrastructure owned by the regional passenger companies.

That arrangement is efficient, avoiding the duplication of parallel networks, and it means an incident involving either kind of train propagates immediately into the other's timetable.

A derailment inside a station is particularly disruptive because station throats contain the points and crossings that let trains pass one another, and a vehicle sitting across them closes the route entirely.

Recovery means rerailing the vehicles, inspecting the track and pointwork beneath them and certifying the line, which is measured in hours at best and frequently in a day.

The Yakumo links Okayama with Izumoshi, connecting the San-yo corridor to the San-in coast, and it is the principal rail service for a region with limited alternatives.

Rail freight carries a modest share of Japanese domestic goods movement compared with road haulage, and the share it does carry is concentrated in long-distance container traffic that road cannot absorb at short notice.

Driver shortages in road haulage, sharpened by working-hour limits introduced in recent years, have made the rail share more valuable rather than less.

The Transport Safety Board investigates derailments, examining track geometry, vehicle condition, loading and speed, and its findings frequently lead to maintenance changes across the network.

Low-speed freight derailments in station areas most often trace to track or wheel defects rather than to operation, though that determination belongs to the investigation.

BUSINESS

The Cover Households Have Been Dropping Is the One They Need Today

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Japanese household insurance attaches wind and flood cover to fire policies rather than selling it separately, and households have been dropping the flood element to hold down premiums.

Premiums have risen substantially over the past decade, because the reference rate that underpins them has been revised upward repeatedly as storm and flood claims accumulated.

That is the insurance market working correctly: prices rising to reflect a hazard that has genuinely increased. It is also a mechanism that prices out exactly the households least able to absorb a loss.

A household that drops flood cover has made a rational decision about an annual bill and an irrational one about a tail risk, which is the standard failure of insurance decisions everywhere.

The consequence is not only financial. An uninsured flooded house is repaired more slowly, because the money has to be found before the work can begin, and the repair sector is already short of labour.

Hazard maps are the tool that should inform the decision, showing a specific address's exposure to river flooding, storm surge and landslide, and most households have never opened one.

Today's Level 4 warning on the Zenpukuji, and the Level 5 alert issued briefly in Sakura City, are happening in districts where those maps have been published for years.

Insurers have responded with risk-based pricing at finer geographic resolution, which sharpens the incentive and widens the gap between the exposed and the rest.

Public compensation after major disasters has filled part of the gap, and the level of support is decided event by event rather than by any standing rule.

The storm's total bill will not be known before Thursday, when Tokyo's markets reopen after four closed days.

BUSINESS

Restarting a Railway Takes Longer Than Stopping One

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

JR East's warning that metropolitan services may be disrupted until the early morning of Tuesday reflects a recovery process that takes considerably longer

than the suspension did.

Stopping a railway is a decision. Restarting one is an inspection, conducted along the length of every affected line before a train carrying passengers runs on it.

Inspection crews look for washouts beneath the ballast, debris on the track, damage to overhead wires and signalling equipment, and earth movement on the cuttings and embankments that carry the line.

Landslips are the slowest of those to clear, because the material has to be removed, the slope stabilised and the track beneath it checked before any certification is possible.

Coastal and elevated sections are inspected first because they take the most wind, and the lines down the Boso Peninsula are the ones closest to the storm's expected path.

Rolling stock has to be repositioned as well. Trains stabled away from their normal depots during a suspension must be moved before a full timetable can be operated.

Staff availability is the constraint that does not appear in any engineering assessment. Drivers and conductors who could not travel to work during the storm cannot operate the first services after it.

Operators restore services progressively, typically beginning with the trunk lines and the airport connections, and publishing partial timetables as sections are cleared.

The holiday helps. Demand on Tuesday will be lower than a working day, which gives the network a margin it would not otherwise have.

Passengers with Tuesday travel should check before setting out rather than assume the published timetable applies.

BUSINESS

The Repair Work Will Queue Behind Everything Else Japan Is Already Building

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

Whatever damage Typhoon No. 25 leaves in Kanto this evening will be repaired by a construction sector that is already operating at capacity and short of workers.

Japanese construction has faced a labour shortage for years, sharpened by an ageing workforce, by limited recruitment of younger workers and by the working-hour limits applied to the sector in recent years.

Those limits were introduced to address a culture of extreme overtime, and they have had the intended effect on working conditions and the predictable effect on capacity.

Materials have been the other constraint, with cement, steel and timber prices elevated and with imported components affected by a yen near 157.

Storm repair competes for the same crews as everything else: the semiconductor plants in Kumamoto and Hokkaido, the data centres, the earthquake reconstruction in Noto and the routine replacement of ageing infrastructure.

Priority in practice goes to lifelines first, with electricity, water and transport restored before private property, which is the correct sequence and lengthens the wait for householders.

Utility poles are the specific concern in this storm, with winds forecast strong enough to topple them across Izu and Kanto, and each replacement is an individual job for a crew.

The 2019 Boso typhoon demonstrated how long that can take, with restoration in some districts measured in weeks rather than days.

Insurance determines the pace for households, since an uninsured repair waits for the money to be found, and flood cover has been dropped by households holding down premiums.

The Bank of Japan's new rate, applying from Thursday, raises the financing cost of all of it.

BUSINESS

The Shops That Stay Open Longest, and the Decision to Close Them

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Convenience stores are the last retail businesses to close in a Japanese storm and among the first to reopen, and the decisions around that have changed considerably over the past decade.

BUSINESS

A Rice Crop Whose Price Was Already Set Now Faces 300 Millimetres of Rain

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Rice still standing in fields across eastern Japan faces 300 millimetres of rain and damaging winds today, at the end of a season in which its wholesale price was agreed at low levels.

That combination is the worst arrangement possible for a farm. A crop damaged after its price has been set cannot recover the loss through a higher price, because the contract has already been written.

The harvest was already delayed by a month of unusually persistent rain, which pushed cutting later into the typhoon season than growers would choose.

Lodging is the immediate risk, where wind and rain flatten standing rice, making it far harder to harvest mechanically and reducing both yield and grade.

Grade matters as much as quantity. Rice downgraded because of damage or discolouration is sold into processing at a fraction of the table price.

Saltwater spray carried inland by a coastal storm produces its own damage to leaves, and orchards face fruit drop before their own harvests.

Agricultural mutual relief, the sector's insurance arrangement, covers part of this, with participation and coverage levels varying considerably between farms and crops.

Rice-related bankruptcies have run at a record pace this year, and the farms affected are mostly small, family-operated and carrying an ageing proprietor with no successor.

That last point connects the storm to the holiday. A significant share of Japanese farmers are over 65, and a bad harvest at that age is frequently the event that ends the farm.

The agriculture ministry's stockpile buyback, now under way, addresses last year's surplus rather than this year's damage.

The chains have been designated as providers with obligations under disaster arrangements, which places them in a category closer to a utility than to a shop.

That status followed the 2011 disaster, when stores in affected regions became distribution points for food and water and demonstrated a logistics network that public agencies could not match.

The practical consequence is that chains maintain supply to affected areas and reopen quickly, which is valuable and which places the burden on individual franchisees and their staff.

Those franchisees are frequently small operators with thin margins and few employees, and a decision to stay open in a storm is a decision about somebody's safety.

Chains have moved toward pre-emptive closure during major storms, a practice that was uncommon a decade ago and that followed both safety reviews and changed customer expectations.

Demand moves forward before a storm, with water, bread, batteries and food that needs no cooking bought out in a narrow window, and chains adjust deliveries rather than assortments in response.

The collapse afterward is the harder half of the arithmetic, with a day of warning-level rain removing almost all discretionary traffic from a high street.

In ageing districts the convenience store has become the primary food shop for residents who no longer drive, which means a closure has consequences beyond the day it happens.

Deliveries resume when the roads do, and roads have already flooded across eastern Japan.

BUSINESS

A 15% Tariff and an 80% Fall in the Surplus

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

The 15% tariff applied to most Japanese exports to the United States cut Japan's bilateral trade surplus by roughly 80% in August, and it is the economic fact underneath tomorrow's summit.

That figure is both a measure of the tariff's force and a warning about how quickly a trading relationship can be reshaped by a single policy decision.

Japanese negotiators secured the 15% rate from a considerably worse starting point, which was

BUSINESS

presented at the time as a success and looks in the August data like a limited one.

Automobiles are the largest single component of the exposure, and the sector has absorbed the tariff through a combination of price increases, margin compression and shifted production.

Shifting production is the structural response, and Japanese manufacturers have been building in North America for four decades, which limits the damage relative to exporters without that footprint.

Kikkoman's third American plant, reported this month with a North American revenue growth target of 4% to 5%, is a small example of the same logic.

The weak yen works in the opposite direction, flattering the yen value of American earnings and cushioning reported results even where volumes fall.

For suppliers further down the chain, particularly small component makers without overseas plants, there is no such cushion, and they carry the compression directly.

The macroeconomic consequence is a narrowing current account contribution from goods trade, at a time when Japan's external position is supported increasingly by income from overseas investments rather than by exports.

None of that will be settled tomorrow, and the meeting's purpose is to get Japanese exposure understood before Washington sits down with Beijing on Thursday.

COURTS

Boy of Three Found Unconscious After a Drink-Driving Incident in Fukuoka; Man, 68, Arrested

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

A three-year-old boy was found unconscious following a drink-driving incident in Fukuoka, and a 68-year-old man has been arrested on suspicion of dangerous driving causing injury.

Dangerous driving causing injury is a distinct offence in Japanese law, separate from negligent driving, and it carries substantially heavier penalties where intoxication, excessive speed or deliberate obstruction is established.

The distinction was introduced after a series of cases in which families judged that negligence charges did not reflect what had happened, and the drink-driving provisions have been tightened repeatedly since.

Japan's approach to drink-driving is among the strictest in the developed world. The legal threshold is low, penalties are severe, and liability extends to people who supplied the alcohol or the vehicle, or who rode as passengers knowing the driver had drunk.

That framework followed a case in Fukuoka in 2006 in which three children died when a drink-driver pushed a family's car into the water, and the reforms that followed reshaped the offence.

Drink-driving deaths have fallen sharply since, though the figures have plateaued in recent years, and the remaining offences are concentrated among repeat offenders.

The driver's age places the case within a broader discussion about older drivers, though intoxication rather than age is the element charged here.

Investigators will establish the blood alcohol level, the sequence of the collision and whether the driver's condition was apparent to anyone before he got into the vehicle.

Prosecutors then decide on charges, and cases involving serious injury to a young child are pursued with corresponding seriousness.

The child's condition will determine both the charge and the sentence, and no further information has been released.

COURTS

Woman of 83 Killed by a Bicycle in Akashi, and the Rider Left the Scene

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

An 83-year-old woman has been hit and killed by a bicycle in Akashi, and the man riding it fled the scene.

A bicycle is a vehicle in Japanese law, and a rider who leaves the scene of a collision causing injury commits the same offence of failing to render aid that a driver would.

That legal position has been reinforced steadily over the past decade as bicycle injuries rose, culminating in penalty provisions that apply to riders for offences previously associated with motorists.

The changes followed cases in which collisions between cyclists and pedestrians produced severe injuries and compensation claims running to tens of millions of yen, and several municipalities now require riders to carry liability insurance.

The physics are straightforward and frequently underestimated. A rider and machine at twenty kilometres an hour carry enough energy to kill an elderly pedestrian, and the pedestrian in these cases almost never sees it coming.

Japan's pavements are shared between cyclists and pedestrians in ways that would be unusual elsewhere, a legacy of decades in which riding on the footway was tolerated as safer than riding in traffic.

That tolerance is being withdrawn, with enforcement of the rule that bicycles belong on the carriageway increasing, and with penalties introduced for riding while using a telephone.

Elderly pedestrians are the group most exposed. They react more slowly, are more likely to fall badly and are far more likely to die of injuries that a younger person would survive.

Police will pursue the rider through witness accounts and street camera footage, which in urban Japan is generally dense enough to identify a cyclist.

The woman's death falls on the holiday intended to honour her generation.

COURTS

A Bicycle Is a Vehicle, and the Law Has Been Catching Up

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The death of an 83-year-old woman struck by a bicycle in Akashi, with the rider leaving the scene, engages a body of law that has been tightened repeatedly over the past decade.

A bicycle is classified as a light vehicle in Japanese road traffic law, which places riders under obligations that most of them associate with drivers.

Those obligations include stopping at the scene of a collision, rendering aid and reporting to the police. A rider who leaves commits the same offence a driver would.

Riding on the pavement was tolerated for decades as safer than riding in traffic, and generations of Japanese cyclists learned habits that the law never actually permitted except in defined circumstances.

Enforcement has increased as bicycle injuries rose, with penalties introduced for riding while using a telephone, riding under the influence and ignoring signals.

Liability insurance has been made compulsory by ordinance in a growing number of prefectures, after court awards in cases where a cyclist seriously injured a pedestrian reached tens of millions of yen.

One such judgment, involving a child on a bicycle who collided with an elderly woman, is widely credited with changing public understanding of the financial exposure.

Elderly pedestrians are the group most at risk. They react more slowly, fall harder and are far more likely to die of injuries a younger person would survive.

Urban Japan's street cameras are dense enough that identifying a cyclist who leaves the scene is generally possible, and investigations proceed on that basis.

The legal framework is now broadly adequate. What has not caught up is the assumption, widely held, that a bicycle is not really a vehicle.

COURTS

The Offence That Was Written After a Case in Fukuoka

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The arrest of a 68-year-old man in Fukuoka on suspicion of dangerous driving causing injury, after a three-year-old boy was found unconscious, engages a legal category that exists because of an earlier case in the same city.

In 2006 a drink-driver in Fukuoka struck a family's car and pushed it into the water, killing three children, and the prosecution that followed exposed the gap between negligent driving and what had actually happened.

Dangerous driving causing death or injury had been introduced a few years earlier, and the Fukuoka case drove a further tightening of both the offence and the surrounding penalties.

The distinction that matters is between negligence and a deliberate decision. A driver who has been drinking has chosen to get into the vehicle, which the law now treats as categorically different from a lapse of attention.

Japan's drink-driving framework is among the strictest in the developed world, with a low threshold and with liability extending to those who supplied the alcohol or the vehicle, or who rode as passengers knowing the driver had drunk.

That extension is unusual internationally and has been effective, because it turns a driver's colleagues and friends into people with a personal reason to intervene.

Drink-driving deaths fell sharply after the reforms and have plateaued in recent years, with the remaining offences concentrated among repeat offenders.

Penalties include lengthy imprisonment, licence revocation and fines, and the courts have generally applied them without much sympathy.

Investigators in the current case will establish the blood alcohol level, the sequence of the collision and whether the driver's condition was apparent to anybody before he drove.

The child's condition will shape both the charge and the sentence.

SOCIETY

A Man Searching Okinawa for His Missing Mother, and the 500 People Helping Him Look

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

Asahi Shimbun's front page today carries a special report on dementia, built around a man searching for his missing mother in Okinawa with the support of 500 local people.

Wandering is among the most frightening features of dementia for families, because it converts a condition managed at home into an emergency conducted across a prefecture.

Japanese police handle a large number of missing person reports involving people with dementia each year, and the great majority are found, most of them within the first day.

The ones who are not found quickly are the cases that define the problem. A person who has walked beyond the area being searched, who cannot say where they live and who has no telephone becomes very hard to locate.

Municipalities have built networks in response, enrolling convenience stores, taxi firms, delivery drivers and bus operators in alert systems that circulate a description within minutes.

Five hundred local supporters is what that infrastructure looks like when it works, and it is a community response rather than a state one.

Okinawa's geography adds its own difficulty, with a main island long and narrow, an interior of dense subtropical vegetation and a coastline that is never far away.

Japan's dementia population is projected to continue rising with the age structure, and the national plan adopted in recent years emphasises living with the condition in the community rather than in institutions.

That emphasis is humane and it transfers a great deal of the work to families, who are themselves ageing, and to neighbours, who in many districts are fewer every year.

Newspapers have generally treated dementia as a policy subject. A front page built around one family searching for one person is a different editorial decision, and a more useful one.

SOCIETY

More Than 240,000 Reached Fuji's Summit This Summer, and the Environment Ministry Will Investigate the Crowding

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

More than 240,000 people reached the summit of Mount Fuji this summer, leaving the mountain crowded even after entry restrictions were introduced, with a risk of chain-reaction falls, according to

Yomiuri Shimbun. The Ministry of the Environment will investigate.

A chain-reaction fall is the specific hazard that crowding creates on Fuji's upper slopes. The final ascent is steep, loose volcanic scree on a narrow path, and a person who slips takes the people below them.

The restrictions introduced in recent seasons include entry fees, daily caps on climbers on the most-used routes and gates that close overnight to discourage the practice of climbing through the night without rest.

That practice, known locally as bullet climbing, produces exhausted climbers arriving at altitude before dawn, and it has been the source of a disproportionate share of rescues.

The figures suggest the measures have shaped behaviour without reducing the total. Visitors have shifted between routes and hours rather than staying away.

Fuji is a cultural property as well as a mountain, inscribed by UNESCO in 2013 as a site of religious and artistic significance rather than as a natural one, and the crowding has been raised repeatedly in that context.

The mountain is climbed by people who are not mountaineers, which is both its appeal and the root of the problem, and rescue statistics have consistently featured inadequate clothing and footwear.

An environment ministry investigation would examine the path's physical capacity, the distribution of climbers across the four principal routes and whether the caps are set at the right numbers.

Any tightening runs into the interests of the prefectures, the mountain hut operators and an inbound tourism industry that the government has spent a decade encouraging.

The climbing season has closed for the year, which gives the ministry the winter to reach a conclusion before the next one opens in July.

SOCIETY

Two Years After the Oku-Noto Rains, a Boy of Eight Moves Out of Temporary Housing

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Two years after the heavy rains that struck the Oku-Noto region, an eight-year-old boy has moved from temporary housing into a new home, telling his grandmother in heaven to watch over him.

The Noto peninsula has had an exceptionally hard three years, struck by a major earthquake on New Year's Day 2024 and then, that September, by rainfall that flooded communities still living in temporary accommodation from the first disaster.

That sequence is the part of the Noto story that distinguishes it. Recovery from an earthquake assumes stable ground and dry weather, and the rains removed both from a reconstruction that had barely started.

Temporary housing in Japan is built quickly and is meant to be occupied for about two years, an assumption that has been exceeded in almost every major disaster of the past three decades.

Two years is also long enough for a child to spend a quarter of their life in a prefabricated unit, and for the disruption to reach schooling, friendships and the ordinary stability that recovery statistics do not record.

Permanent reconstruction housing is built by municipalities with national support, and its pace is limited by land acquisition, construction labour and the same materials shortages affecting every Japanese building project.

Depopulation complicates every decision. Rebuilding a village whose population was falling before the disaster raises questions that no official wants to put to residents who have just lost their homes.

The Noto peninsula's age profile is among the oldest in the country, which means the people deciding whether to return are frequently in their seventies and eighties.

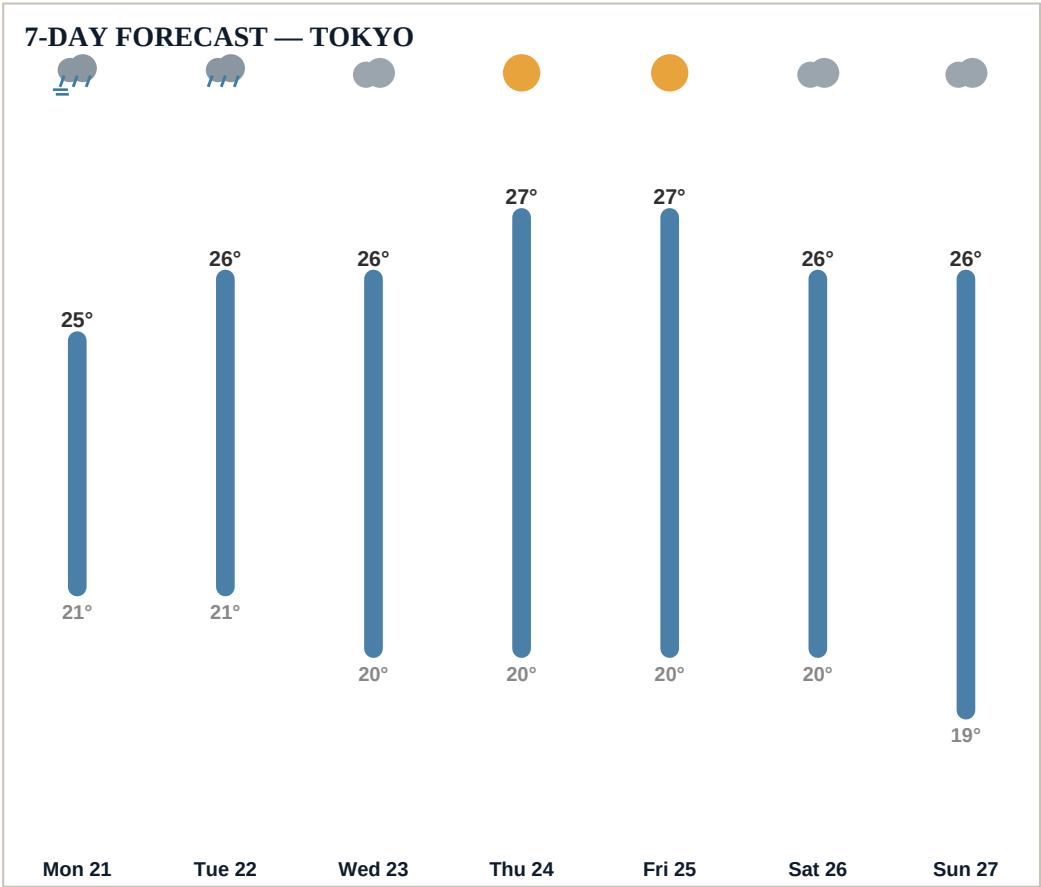
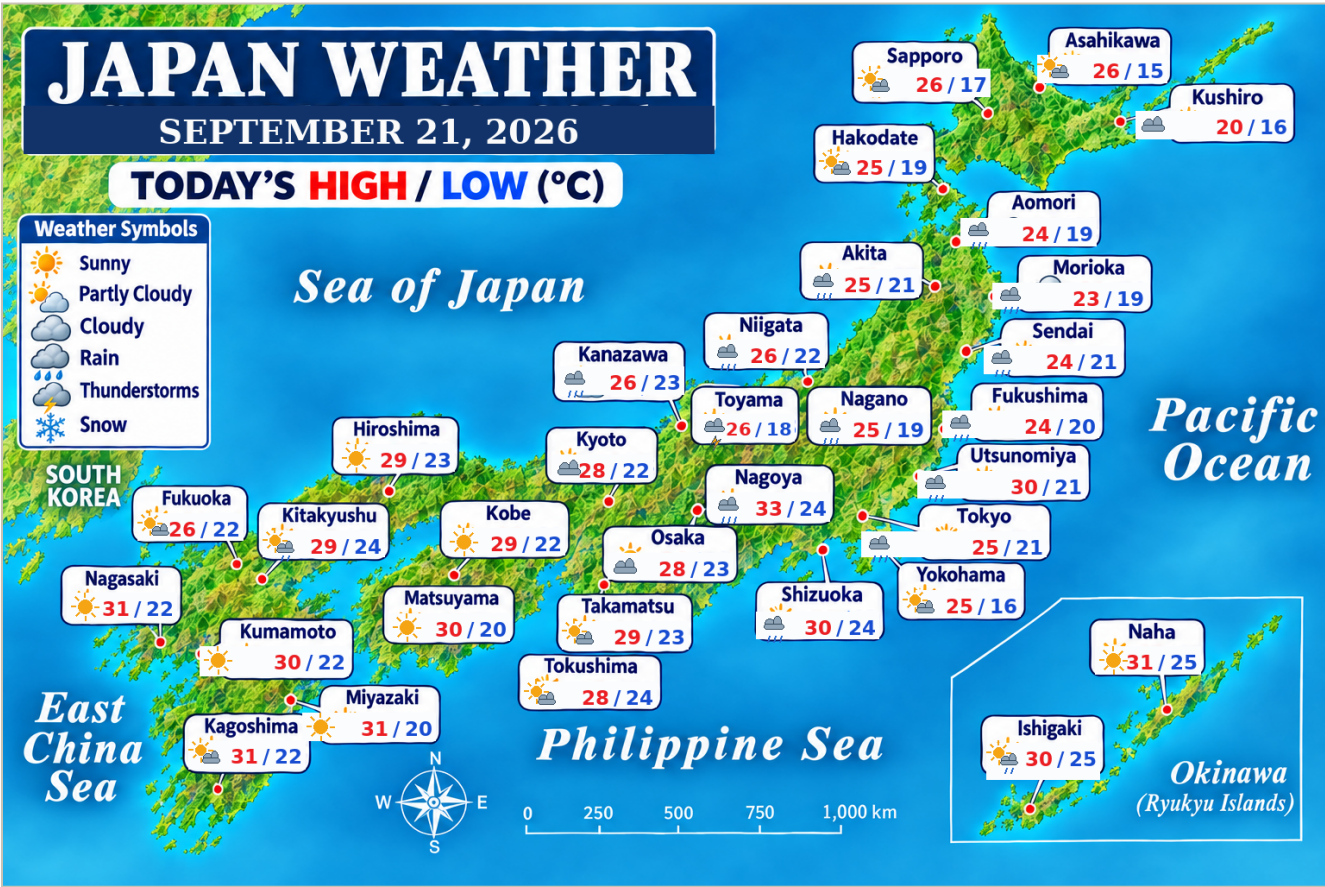
A child moving into a permanent home is the kind of small event that recovery is actually made of, and it is reported because the larger figures are harder to feel.

A typhoon is crossing the country as the anniversary passes, and the Sea of Japan coast is expected to escape the worst of it.

WEATHER & SOCIETY

25°C

Tokyo — Rain, high 25°C; the typhoon at its closest this afternoon, storm-force gusts tonight



TOKYO METROPOLITAN AREA — Monday, September 21, 2026

Morning: Cloudy and humid with rain arriving, around 22°C at 7 a.m. Sunrise 5:29 a.m. The wind builds through the morning.

Afternoon: Rain, heavy at times, with the typhoon making its closest approach to Kanto. A linear rainband is expected over the region from midday. High 25°C.

Evening: Rain and storm-force winds, with extremely strong gusts possible. Around 23°C by 9 p.m. Sunset 5:41 p.m. Train suspensions and delays continue across the metropolitan area.

Overnight: Rain easing from the west as the centre moves north, low 21°C. Rivers remain high.

NATIONAL OVERVIEW

Monday's map divides the country along the storm's track. Rain covers the Pacific side of eastern Japan from Tohoku through Kanto to Tokai, with cloud over the Sea of Japan coast and the central mountains. Western Japan escapes the worst, and parts of the Pacific coast there are in late summer heat, with Nagoya the warmest reading on the chart at 33°C.

Hokkaido sits furthest from the track and keeps a mild, mostly bright day, with Sapporo at 26°C and Kushiro the coolest station in the country at 20°C. Okinawa is summer-like and outside the storm's reach.

TYPHOON NO. 25

Typhoon No. 25 is expected to make its closest approach to the Kanto region this afternoon, arriving large and powerful, with strict vigilance required for landslides, strong winds and flooding. At 9 p.m. on Sunday it was moving north at 10 kilometres an hour to the south of Japan, with a central pressure of 970 hectopascals, a maximum sustained wind of 35 metres a second and maximum instantaneous winds of 50 metres a second.

The forecast places the centre off the Kanto coast near 35.0 degrees north and 139.5 degrees east at its closest approach, with a storm-warning radius of 150 kilometres and a forecast circle of 100 kilometres. Landfall on the Boso Peninsula remains possible. The system then moves north and northeast over land, weakening to 985 hectopascals and 25 metres a second near 38.0 north and 140.5 east before moving out to sea.

RAIN, WIND AND WAVES

In the 24 hours to 6 p.m. today, 350 millimetres of rain is forecast for the Izu Islands, 300 millimetres for Kanto and Tokai and 200 millimetres for Tohoku, with further localised increases possible where rainbands form.

The Japan Meteorological Agency expects a linear rainband over the Kanto-Koshinetsu region, Izu and Shizuoka from midday to evening, and has issued half-day advance notice for Tokyo and Shizuoka.

Izu and Kanto face winds strong enough to topple utility poles, with trees also at risk. High waves continue around Ogasawara, and waves of up to 7 metres are still expected along the Izu coast. Tohoku

and Tokai are under warning-level rain of their own, with strict vigilance advised for landslides and for flooding in low-lying ground.

WARNINGS AND TRANSPORT

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has issued a Level 4 flood risk warning for the Zenpukuji River, urging residents of Nakano and Suginami wards to evacuate to a second floor. A Level 5 emergency safety alert was issued temporarily in Sakura City, Chiba.

Limited express services on the JR Uchibo Line and others have been suspended, and cancellations and delays are possible across the Tokyo metropolitan area until the early morning of Tuesday. Roads have flooded.

The Tokyo Game Show's final day is cancelled, the Rockin' On performance scheduled for today is cancelled, and the Nakayama race meeting is postponed to Tuesday while Hanshin proceeds. The metropolitan government's Asian Games swimming public viewing is cancelled, along with the NAGASE Cup athletics meet and the opening day of a para athletics competition.

TODAY'S HIGH / LOW BY REGION (°C)

Hokkaido — Sapporo 26/17 partly cloudy, Asahikawa 26/15 cloudy, Kushiro 20/16 partly cloudy, Hakodate 25/19 partly cloudy: mild and mostly bright, furthest from the storm's track and least affected by it.

Tohoku — Aomori 24/19 rain, Akita 25/21 rain, Morioka 23/19 cloudy, Sendai 24/21 rain, Fukushima 24/20 rain: warning-level rain across the region, with 200 millimetres forecast by this evening.

Chubu & Hokuriku — Niigata 26/22 rain, Toyama 26/18 rain, Kanazawa 26/23 cloudy, Nagano 25/19 rain, Nagoya 33/24 cloudy: rain through the central mountains and the Sea of Japan side, and the country's warmest reading at Nagoya.

Kanto — Utsunomiya 30/21 cloudy, Tokyo 25/21 cloudy, Yokohama 25/16 partly cloudy, Shizuoka 30/24 rain: the storm's closest approach this afternoon, with a linear rainband expected from midday and 300 millimetres forecast by 6 p.m.

Kansai — Kyoto 28/22 cloudy, Kobe 29/22 sunny, Osaka 28/23 partly cloudy: warm and largely dry, west of the worst of the weather.

Chugoku — Hiroshima 29/23 sunny: sunny and warm.

Shikoku — Takamatsu 29/23 sunny, Tokushima 28/24 cloudy, Matsuyama 30/20 sunny: bright across most of the region.

Kyushu — Fukuoka 26/22 cloudy, Kitakyushu 29/24 cloudy, Nagasaki 31/22 sunny, Kumamoto 30/22 sunny, Miyazaki 31/20 sunny, Kagoshima 31/22 cloudy: late summer warmth, with three stations at 31 degrees.

Okinawa — Naha 31/25 sunny, Ishigaki 30/25 partly cloudy: clear and summer-like, outside the storm's track.

SEVEN-DAY OUTLOOK, TOKYO

Monday: Rain and storm-force winds as the typhoon makes its closest approach, high 25°C, low 21°C. Tuesday (citizens' holiday): Rain easing as the storm moves away to the northeast and begins its extratropical transition, high 26°C, low 21°C. Wednesday (Autumnal Equinox): Cloudy and brighter, high 26°C, low 20°C. Thursday: Sunny, high 27°C, low 20°C. Friday: Sunny, high 27°C, low 20°C. Saturday: Partly cloudy, high 26°C, low 20°C. Sunday: Cloudy, high 26°C, low 19°C.

SUNRISE AND SUNSET

Tokyo: sunrise 5:29 a.m., sunset 5:41 p.m. Osaka: sunrise 5:46 a.m., sunset 5:58 p.m. Sapporo: sunrise 5:23 a.m., sunset 5:29 p.m. Naha: sunrise 6:21 a.m., sunset 6:26 p.m. The Autumnal Equinox falls on Wednesday the 23rd. Higan runs through Saturday.

TIDES, TOKYO BAY

High water 6:28 a.m. and 7:05 p.m.; low water 12:43 p.m. and 1:14 a.m. With the storm passing to the east of the bay, storm surge is possible in low-lying districts along the shore, and this evening's high water coincides with the forecast period of strongest wind.

SOCIETY

Boy of 16 Swept Away and Killed in the Itabitsu River While Retrieving His Glasses

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

A 16-year-old boy was swept away and killed in the Itabitsu River in Kitakyushu while attempting to retrieve his glasses.

River deaths of this kind recur in Japan every year, and the circumstances are almost always the same: a small, ordinary object, shallow-looking water, and a current stronger than it appears from the bank.

Moving water exerts force that rises with the square of its speed, which means a flow that looks gentle at the surface can be impossible to stand against once it reaches the knees.

Japanese rivers are short and steep by international standards, falling from mountains to the sea across a narrow country, and they accelerate far more quickly after rain than rivers elsewhere.

River levels can rise without any rain falling locally, when the weather has been over the upper catchment, and people at the water's edge have no way of seeing what is coming toward them.

Water safety education in Japanese schools concentrates on the sea, where the drowning statistics are larger, and rivers receive proportionally less attention despite being the setting for a steady share of deaths.

The standard advice is unglamorous and absolute: never enter moving water to retrieve an object, whatever it is worth.

Kitakyushu's rivers run through a dense industrial and residential landscape where access to the water is easy and the banks are frequently engineered and steep.

The death occurred as a typhoon approached the country, and rivers across the eastern half of Japan are rising this morning under rain forecast to reach 300 millimetres in Kanto by evening.

Police will confirm the circumstances, and the Itabitsu will be higher today than it was yesterday.

SOCIETY

One Dead in an Apartment Building Fire in Toyonaka

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

One person has died in a fire at an apartment building in Toyonaka, Osaka Prefecture.

Residential fires remain the largest single cause of fire deaths in Japan, and the great majority occur in ordinary dwellings rather than in the large buildings that draw public attention.

The victims are disproportionately elderly. Older residents are less able to leave quickly, more likely to live alone and more likely to be asleep when a fire starts at night.

Smoke detectors have been mandatory in Japanese homes since the latter half of the 2000s, and fire services consistently find that the deaths occur in the dwellings where they were absent, disconnected or fitted with dead batteries.

Japanese apartment buildings are generally built of reinforced concrete with compartmentalisation intended to contain a fire within the unit where it starts, which limits spread and concentrates the danger on the occupants of that unit.

The common causes are unchanged across decades: cooking left unattended, heating appliances, electrical faults in ageing wiring and discarded smoking materials.

Autumn is when heating appliances return to use after months in storage, and fire services issue seasonal warnings about the first weeks of their operation.

Fire investigators will establish the origin and cause, work that takes days and involves the police where any suspicion arises.

Municipal fire services run home safety visits for elderly residents living alone, and take-up of those visits is a persistent difficulty for the services that offer them.

The building's other residents were evacuated, and the cause has not been determined.

SOCIETY

Saitama Man Dies After a Fall in the Happo Kiretto

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

A man from Saitama Prefecture has died after falling in the Happo Kiretto area of the Northern Alps.

A kiretto is a deep notch in a mountain ridge, and the ones in the Northern Alps are among the most serious terrain in Japan reachable by a marked route rather than by technical climbing.

The rock is exposed, the drops on both sides are substantial, and the chains and ladders fixed to the

SOCIETY

route make it passable for competent walkers while giving no protection against a slip.

The Northern Alps carry more climbers than any other Japanese range, being closer to the population centres and better served by huts and transport, which is why the accident statistics are concentrated there.

Autumn is the range's most attractive season and among its most dangerous. The air is clear, the colours are turning, and the daylight is shortening while the first frosts make the rock treacherous in the early morning.

Japanese mountain accident figures are consistently dominated by climbers in their sixties and seventies, which reflects who is on the mountains rather than any particular recklessness.

Mountaineering plans, submitted before setting out, turn a search across a massif into a search along a known route, and the system has repeatedly shortened response times.

Rescue in the Northern Alps is conducted by prefectural police teams with helicopter support, and weather is the binding constraint on how fast they can operate.

That constraint is tightening this morning, with a typhoon crossing central Honshu and rain forecast across the mountains through the day.

Police will confirm the circumstances once recovery operations are complete.

SOCIETY

Freight Train Derails Inside a Station, Suspending the Yakumo and Affecting 2,700 Passengers

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

A freight train has derailed inside a JR station, suspending the Limited Express Yakumo service and affecting some 2,700 passengers.

A derailment within a station is disruptive out of proportion to its severity, because the points and crossings there are what allow trains to pass one another, and a vehicle sitting across them closes the route entirely.

Recovery involves rerailing the vehicles, inspecting the track and the pointwork beneath them, and certifying the line before any service resumes, which is measured in hours at best.

The Yakumo runs between Okayama and Izumoshi, linking the San-yo corridor with the San-in coast, and it is the principal rail connection for a region with limited alternatives.

For 2,700 passengers on a holiday, the practical consequence is a diversion onto buses or a long detour, on a day when much of the national network east of there is dealing with a typhoon.

Japanese freight shares track with passenger services on most routes, which makes the network efficient and means a freight incident propagates immediately into passenger timetables.

Rail freight carries a small share of Japanese domestic goods movement compared with road, but the share it does carry is concentrated in long-distance container traffic that road cannot easily absorb at short notice.

The Transport Safety Board investigates derailments, examining track geometry, vehicle condition, loading and speed, and publishes findings that frequently lead to maintenance changes across the network.

Derailments of freight vehicles at low speed in station areas most often trace to track or wheel defects rather than to operation, though that determination belongs to the investigation.

Services will resume once the vehicles are recovered and the track is cleared for use.

SOCIETY

Monday's Map: Rain Down the Pacific Side, and 33 Degrees in Nagoya

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Monday's map divides the country along the storm's track, with rain and cloud over the eastern half and late summer warmth over the west.

Hokkaido is mild and mostly bright, with Sapporo partly cloudy at 26 degrees, Asahikawa cloudy at 26, Hakodate partly cloudy at 25 and Kushiro the coolest station in the country at 20.

Tohoku is wet, with rain at Aomori 24, Akita 25, Sendai 24 and Fukushima 24, and cloud at Morioka 23, under warning-level rain and a forecast total of 200 millimetres by this evening.

The Sea of Japan side and the central mountains are also in the rain, with Niigata 26, Toyama 26 and Nagano 25 all wet, and Kanazawa cloudy at 26.

Kanto sits under the storm. Tokyo is cloudy at 25 with a low of 21, Utsunomiya cloudy at 30, and Yokohama partly cloudy at 25 with a low of 16, the largest daily range on the chart.

Those figures describe the temperatures rather than the day. The agency expects a linear rainband over Kanto-Koshinetsu, Izu and Shizuoka from midday to evening, and 300 millimetres of rain in Kanto and Tokai by six o'clock.

Tokai has the day's extremes, with Nagoya cloudy at 33 degrees, the warmest reading in the country, and Shizuoka in the rain at 30 with a low of 24.

Thirty-three degrees in Nagoya in the third week of September is the late summer heat that the forecasters have noted along parts of the Pacific coast, drawn north ahead of the storm.

Kansai and western Japan escape the worst, with Osaka partly cloudy at 28, Kyoto cloudy at 28, Kobe sunny at 29 and Hiroshima sunny at 29.

Kyushu is warm and largely bright, with Nagasaki, Miyazaki and Kagoshima at 31, Kumamoto at 30 and cloud at Fukuoka 26 and Kitakyushu 29. Shikoku has Matsuyama sunny at 30, Takamatsu sunny at 29 and Tokushima cloudy at 28.

Okinawa is summer-like and outside the storm's reach, with Naha sunny at 31 and Ishigaki partly cloudy at 30.

The Izu coast is still expecting waves of up to 7 metres, and high waves continue around Ogasawara.

SOCIETY

The Agency Has Given Half a Day's Notice of a Linear Rainband Over Tokyo and Shizuoka

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The Japan Meteorological Agency expects a linear rainband to form over the Kanto-Koshinetsu region, Izu and Shizuoka from midday to evening today, and has issued half-day advance notice for Tokyo and Shizuoka, according to ANN.

That advance notice is a relatively new instrument, introduced after a decade in which almost every serious rain disaster in Japan was produced by a band of this kind and almost none was forecast in time.

A linear rainband is a line of thunderstorms that regenerates at one end as fast as it decays at the other, which holds it in place while individual storms move through it.

The result is that rain which would normally cross a district in twenty minutes falls on the same ground for hours, producing totals of 200 to 300 millimetres in a few hours.

No drainage system or river channel in an urban area is designed for that rate, which is why bands of this kind produce flooding in places that have never flooded before.

The ingredients are warm, extremely moist air from the sea, a mechanism to lift it and steady winds aloft that organise the storms into a line rather than scattering them. A slow northward-moving typhoon supplies all three.

The agency is explicit that this forecasting is difficult. The bands form on scales smaller than the models resolve well, and the notice is issued for broad regions rather than for districts.

That imprecision is the price of any warning at all. A band forecast for Kanto-Koshinetsu may deliver its worst hours over one valley and leave the next one dry.

The Level 4 warning already in force on the Zenukuji River in Nakano and Suginami, and the Level 5 alert issued temporarily in Sakura City, are what the system looks like before the band has formed.

Households in the notified areas should treat the afternoon as the dangerous part of the day and complete anything that requires leaving the house before midday.

SOCIETY

Uchibo Line Express Services Suspended as the Network East of Tokyo Closes

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Limited express services on the JR Uchibo Line and others have been suspended, with cancellations and delays possible across the Tokyo metropolitan area until the early morning of Tuesday, according to Sankei News. Roads have flooded.

The Uchibo Line runs down the western side of the Boso Peninsula, which is the coast the storm is expected to reach first and the one where landfall remains possible.

Coastal lines are suspended before inland ones because wind thresholds are reached earliest on exposed track, and a crosswind on a seafront embankment is a derailment risk rather than a comfort problem.

Planned suspension, announced in advance, has been standard practice for Japanese operators since storms in which trains halted mid-route and left passengers in stations overnight.

The thirty-six-hour window JR East described on Sunday covers the whole of the holiday and the return journeys that would normally follow it.

Restarting a network is slower than stopping it. Track has to be inspected along its length before the first train runs, and debris, flooding and landslips each add their own delay.

Road flooding is the hazard that has already killed this month, with three deaths in submerged vehicles in Chiba and Fukushima and an expanded list of restricted underpasses published in response.

Airports publish cancellations on their own cycle, generally the evening before, and travellers with Tuesday flights should expect decisions today.

The Japan Racing Association has postponed the Nakayama meeting to Tuesday while Hanshin proceeds, which is the clearest illustration of how sharply the country is divided by this storm.

Anyone whose Tuesday depends on a train out of Tokyo should assume today that it will not run on time.

SOCIETY

Seven-Metre Waves Continue Around Izu, and 350 Millimetres Is Forecast for the Islands

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The Izu Islands are forecast to receive 350 millimetres of rain in the 24 hours to six o'clock this evening, the highest figure anywhere in the country, with waves of up to 7 metres continuing.

The islands lie directly on the storm's path, in the eastern semicircle where the winds are strongest, and they take the full weather before the mainland does.

Rain of that quantity on small volcanic islands runs off almost immediately. The catchments are tiny, the slopes are steep, and there is no floodplain to absorb anything.

Waves of 7 metres close every port in the chain, and the ferry is how most of what the islands consume arrives, which is why island households prepare for storms in ways mainland ones do not.

Air services to Hachijojima and Oshima are equally weather-dependent, and a storm of this size suspends both routes for its passage and for some hours afterward.

Swells outlast the wind, arriving at a coast long after the system that generated them has moved on, which is why high waves are expected to continue around Ogasawara as well.

Ogasawara, a thousand kilometres south, took the storm's closest approach on Saturday and is reached only by a ferry from Tokyo that takes about twenty-four hours and sails roughly weekly.

The islands belong administratively to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, which means the capital's disaster machinery covers territory well out into the Pacific.

Damage assessment on the islands will begin before the mainland has finished experiencing the same storm, and it will be conducted by residents rather than by anyone sent to help them.

Restoration of ferry services is the measure that matters to the islands, and it depends on the sea rather

than on the wind.

SOCIETY

Small Earthquakes Continue Off Amami, One at Intensity 3

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Small earthquakes have been occurring sporadically off the coast of Amami, including one that registered a maximum seismic intensity of 3.

Intensity 3 on Japan's ten-step scale describes shaking felt by most people indoors, with hanging objects swinging and dishes rattling, and it very rarely causes damage.

The scale measures shaking experienced at a location rather than energy released at the source, which is why a single earthquake produces different readings across a region.

The waters around Amami and the Ryukyu chain are seismically active, lying along the boundary where the Philippine Sea plate meets the Eurasian plate, the same system that produces the Nankai Trough.

Sequences of small earthquakes in one area are common and are monitored rather than interpreted, since no reliable method exists for distinguishing a sequence that will fade from one that will not.

The meteorological agency publishes intensity readings within minutes of each event and issues tsunami assessments immediately for offshore earthquakes. None has accompanied this sequence.

Amami's islands are remote, with limited hospital capacity and a dependence on sea and air links that a storm or an earthquake can sever simultaneously.

They sit well west of the typhoon's track and have escaped this week's weather, with the storm's effects concentrated on the Pacific side of Honshu.

Japanese disaster response is built on the assumption that earthquakes arrive without warning and that weather does not, which is why the two are managed through separate systems.

Residents are advised after any felt earthquake to check for new damage, particularly in buildings that have been repaired following earlier shaking.

SOCIETY

Roads Have Already Flooded, and the Underpass List Is Today's Most Practical Document

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Roads have flooded across eastern Japan as the rain intensifies, and the transport ministry's expanded list of restricted underpasses is the most useful thing a driver in the region can read this morning.

The list was published this month after three people died in submerged vehicles in Chiba and Fukushima, and it identifies the road dips that fill first and close soonest.

Underpasses fill faster than any other part of a road network because they are the low point by design, and water reaching them has nowhere else to go.

A driver approaching one in rain cannot judge the depth. Water that looks like a puddle across the carriageway can be deep enough to float a vehicle.

Thirty centimetres of moving water will lift a car. Sixty will carry it. Both are depths that a driver would afterward describe as having looked shallow.

Once water reaches the door sill the external pressure makes the door effectively impossible to open, which is the mechanism by which vehicles become traps.

Electric windows fail when the electrical system floods, which is why safety guidance includes carrying a tool capable of breaking side glass and knowing where it is kept.

The instruction that matters comes earlier than any of that: do not enter standing water of unknown depth, and turn around rather than attempt to judge it.

Municipalities close listed underpasses once rainfall passes defined thresholds, though closure depends on staff reaching the barriers in the same weather that made them necessary.

With a linear rainband forecast over Kanto from midday, the road a driver used this morning may not be usable this afternoon.

SOCIETY

SOCIETY

The Pan Marked Care Given Is the One Japan Cannot Fill

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

With 36.24 million Japanese now aged 65 or over, the constraint on the country's care system is not money and not buildings. It is people.

Long-term care insurance, introduced in 2000, is funded by premiums from everyone aged 40 and over and by public money, and it entitles assessed users to services delivered by a workforce that has never been large enough.

Pay in the sector trails the national average by a substantial margin, the work is physically demanding, and turnover is correspondingly high, which means facilities compete for staff they cannot afford to keep.

Successive governments have raised care wages through the fee schedule, and each increase has been absorbed without changing the sector's relative position, because every other sector has been raising wages too.

Foreign workers have been recruited under several visa categories, and the numbers remain small against the requirement, constrained by language standards and by the housing and support that recruitment needs.

Technology has been promoted as an answer, with lifting aids, monitoring systems and communication robots trialled widely. The evidence is that these reduce specific burdens rather than the headcount required.

Family care fills the gap, as it always has, and the people providing it are themselves ageing, with a substantial share of carers now over 65 caring for someone older still.

Working carers are the group the labour market feels. Employees leaving work to care for a parent are a measurable drain on an economy that is already short of workers.

The health ministry is considering raising long-term care insurance premiums for high-income residents aged 65 and over, which addresses funding without addressing staffing.

Today's cartoon puts a scale in a country street with one pan marked years lived and the other marked care given. The second pan is the harder one to fill.

SOCIETY

Nine and a Half Million Working Over-65s: Dignity, Necessity, or Both

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

A record 9.43 million Japanese aged 65 and over are in employment, a figure that has risen every year for two decades and that now represents more than a quarter of that age group.

No other large economy has a comparable participation rate among the over-65s, and the reasons are a mixture of policy, labour shortage and preference that the statistics cannot separate.

Policy has pushed in one direction consistently. Pension arrangements reward deferral, the age at which benefits begin has moved, and employers have been obliged to offer continued employment to those who want it.

Labour shortage has pulled in the same direction. An economy that cannot find workers does not discard experienced ones at 65, and sectors from retail to logistics to construction now depend on older employees.

Preference accounts for a genuine share. Surveys consistently find substantial numbers of older Japanese who want to keep working for the structure, the company and the sense of contribution that work provides.

Necessity accounts for another share, and it is the one that is politically uncomfortable. The public pension replaces a modest proportion of previous income, and households without corporate pensions or savings rely on continued earnings.

The jobs themselves are frequently not the jobs people held before. Continued employment often means a new contract at reduced pay doing similar work, which is a system that keeps people in employment while cutting what it pays them.

That arrangement is being questioned as the cohort grows, since an economy short of workers has a weak case for paying experienced ones less to do the same job.

The macroeconomic effect is substantial. Older workers add to output, spend their earnings and pay contributions, which moderates the arithmetic of a shrinking working-age population.

Whether that constitutes a success depends on which share of the 9.43 million is working by choice, and no statistic published today answers it.

SOCIETY

Why Japan's Floods Kill Old People, and What Level 3 Was Designed to Change

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

In almost every Japanese flood and landslide disaster of the past decade, the majority of the dead have been over 65, and the pattern has been consistent enough to shape the warning system itself.

Level 3 on the municipal alert scale exists solely for that reason. It calls for older residents, people with disabilities and anyone needing extra time to leave, ahead of the general order at Level 4.

The intention is to move the slowest people first, while the roads are passable and while there is still daylight, and the design assumes that somebody will act on their behalf.

That assumption frequently fails. Post-event surveys find older residents who received the information, understood it, and decided that their own street looked manageable.

The reasoning behind that decision is not irrational. A person who has lived in the same house for fifty years has watched many storms pass without consequence, and the evidence of their own experience is powerful.

What has changed is the rainfall. Events that were once rare have become regular, and the local knowledge accumulated over decades is a guide to a climate that no longer exists.

Evacuation itself is harder for the people most at risk. A designated shelter may be a school gymnasium with a hard floor, no privacy and limited facilities, which is a serious proposition for someone frail.

Municipalities have responded by promoting alternatives: a relative's house on higher ground, a hotel, or the upper floor of a solid building, which is what Nakano and Suginami residents were told to use this morning.

Individual evacuation plans for residents needing assistance are now required of municipalities, and completing them depends on staff numbers that rural authorities do not have.

On a holiday honouring the old, with a Level 4 warning in force in two Tokyo wards, the most useful family observance available is a telephone call about where to go.

SOCIETY

How to Read the Track Chart on Today's Front Page

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The chart on today's front page plots Typhoon No. 25 from two forecasting centres at once, and the differences between them are a matter of measurement rather than disagreement.

The red line is the Japan Meteorological Agency's, whose wind figures are averaged over ten minutes. The blue line is the American Joint Typhoon Warning Center's, whose figures are averaged over one minute and are therefore always higher for the same storm.

When the agency reports 35 metres a second and the American centre reports 65 knots, which is about 33 metres a second, the two are describing the same storm with different instruments.

The shaded areas are not rain. The darker inner shading is the agency's storm-warning field, where winds of 25 metres a second or more are analysed or forecast, and the lighter outer shading is the gale field at 15 metres a second.

The dotted circles are the American centre's 34-knot radii, its equivalent measure over open water.

The position marked as the current location, at 35.0 north and 139.5 east, sits off the Kanto coast, with a storm-warning radius of 150 kilometres and a forecast circle of 100 kilometres around it.

A forecast circle is the area within which the centre is expected to lie at that time, and a 100-kilometre circle is a relatively tight one, which indicates confidence among the forecasters who drew it.

The earlier analysis position, at 29.1 north and 137.3 east on Sunday, carried a gale field reaching 750 kilometres to the north and 390 to the south, and that asymmetry is why the rain reached Kanto a day before the centre.

The later positions carry the storm north and then northeast over land and out to sea, weakening to 985 hectopascals and 25 metres a second near 38.0 north and 140.5 east, over northern Honshu.

The centre need not follow the line joining the circles, which is the caution the agency prints on its own products. A track is a forecast of positions rather than a road.

SOCIETY

Level 4 and Level 5: What This Morning's Warnings Actually Instruct

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Two numbers from the municipal alert scale are in the news this morning, and they mean very different things.

Level 4, in force on the Zempukuji River for parts of Nakano and Suginami, instructs everyone in the designated area to evacuate. It is the last rung at which movement is expected to be safe.

Level 5, issued temporarily in Sakura City in Chiba, means a disaster is already occurring or is imminent. It is not an instruction to leave; by the time it is issued, leaving has often become impossible.

That distinction is the entire design of the system. Levels 3 and 4 are where the decisions are supposed to be taken, and Level 5 exists to describe a situation rather than to trigger a movement.

Level 3 calls for older residents, people with disabilities and anyone who needs extra time, which in a country where three in ten people are over 65 is a substantial share of any neighbourhood.

Level 2 advises residents to check evacuation procedures and routes; Level 1 is preparatory information from the meteorological agency.

Evacuation does not necessarily mean a shelter. Municipalities increasingly promote a relative's house on higher ground, a hotel, or the upper floor of a solid building.

That last option is what Nakano and Suginami residents were told to use, and it is specific to flash flooding on small urban rivers where the streets become more dangerous than the buildings.

The levels are issued for municipalities rather than prefectures, which is why two neighbouring wards can be under different instructions during the same storm.

Post-event surveys in Japan consistently find that residents received the information, understood it and decided their own street looked manageable, which is the behaviour the numbering was designed to interrupt.

SOCIETY

Why a Small River Like the Zempukuji Is More Dangerous Than a Big One

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The Zempukuji is a modest river running through dense residential western Tokyo, and the Level 4 warning issued on it this morning reflects a hazard that small urban rivers present more acutely than large ones.

A large river has a big catchment and a long response time. Rain falling in its headwaters takes many hours to reach the lower reaches, which gives warning systems and residents a usable margin.

A small urban river has almost none. Its catchment is a few square kilometres of roofs, roads and car parks, and every drop that falls on them arrives in the channel within minutes.

Urbanisation made that worse deliberately. Drainage is designed to remove water from streets quickly, and everything it removes goes into the nearest river.

The result is a channel that can rise metres in under an hour, fall just as fast, and leave residents describing a flood that came from nowhere.

Tokyo has spent decades on the problem, widening and lining channels, building regulating reservoirs and constructing the vast underground storage tunnels that take flood peaks off several rivers in the north of the region.

Those defences are built to a design rainfall intensity, and the rate forecast under a linear rainband exceeds what many of them were sized for.

Vertical evacuation is the answer for the residual risk. Moving to an upper floor avoids the streets, which flood first and which carry the current that makes urban flooding lethal.

Basement dwellings, underground car parks and semi-basement shops are the most exposed structures, and they are common in the wards where this morning's warning applies.

The ward offices will lift the instruction when the level falls, which on a river of this size may happen within hours of the rain stopping.

SOCIETY

What Counts as a Landfall, and Why Boso Keeps Coming Up

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Forecasters have kept the possibility of a landfall on the Boso Peninsula open all weekend, and the word carries a technical meaning in Japan that differs from ordinary use.

The Japan Meteorological Agency defines a landfall as the centre of a typhoon reaching the coast of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu or Shikoku. A centre crossing a smaller island is recorded as a passage rather than a landfall.

That distinction matters for the statistics rather than for the damage. A storm that passes 30 kilometres offshore delivers most of what it carries to the coast it passed.

Boso, the peninsula forming the eastern side of Tokyo Bay, is exposed on three sides and sits precisely where a storm curving northeast off the Pacific coast tends to make contact.

Its recent history is why the name produces a reaction. A typhoon in 2019 crossed the peninsula and caused an extended power failure, with restoration taking weeks in some districts.

That event reshaped Japanese utility planning, producing changes to pole standards, tree clearance around lines and the arrangements for bringing crews in from other regions.

The hazard this time is described in the same terms: winds strong enough to topple utility poles across Izu and Kanto, with trees also at risk.

A toppled pole is a longer outage than a fallen line, because each one has to be replaced individually by a crew working in whatever conditions the storm has left behind.

Uchibo Line express services, which run down the western side of the peninsula, have already been suspended.

Whether the agency records a landfall will be determined afterward from the analysis, and it will make very little difference to anybody living there.

SOCIETY

How Japan's Long-Term Care Insurance Works, and What It Cannot Do

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Japan's long-term care insurance system, introduced in 2000, was one of the most significant social policy reforms of the postwar period, and it was built on a recognition that family care had reached its limit.

Everybody aged 40 and over pays premiums. Those 65 and over, and younger people with specified conditions, may apply for an assessment that places them on a scale of care need.

The assessment determines a monthly benefit ceiling, within which the user chooses services: home visits, day care, short stays, equipment, or residential care, arranged through a care manager.

Users pay a portion of the cost themselves, with the share varying by income, and the rest comes from premiums and public money in roughly equal parts.

The design was deliberately consumer-facing. Users select providers rather than being allocated to them, which introduced competition into a sector that had previously been administered by municipalities.

SOCIETY

It worked. Coverage expanded rapidly, the market grew and the assumption that a daughter-in-law would provide unpaid care was formally abandoned as the basis of national policy.

What it cannot do is produce staff. An entitlement to services is worth the hours somebody is available to deliver, and the workforce has been short since the system began.

Each fee schedule revision raises care wages and each revision is overtaken, because every other sector has been raising wages too in a labour market this tight.

Premiums have risen repeatedly, and the health ministry is now considering higher contributions from high-income residents aged 65 and over, which addresses funding rather than staffing.

With 36.24 million people now over 65, the system is being asked to serve a population roughly a third larger than the one it was designed for.

SOCIETY

From 153 to 100,000: The Number on the Cartoon's Signboard

By Kenta Sakamoto | Data & Visualization Reporter

The signboard in today's editorial page cartoon reads one hundred thousand lives past one hundred, from 153 in 1963, and both figures are real.

The count began in 1963, the year the Welfare Law for the Elderly was enacted, and the government has published it every September since, ahead of Respect for the Aged Day.

One hundred fifty-three centenarians in a country of roughly 96 million people meant that living past one hundred was, in 1963, genuinely exceptional.

The figure passed 1,000 in the early 1980s, 10,000 in the late 1990s, and 100,000 this month, which is a roughly six-hundred-fold increase across a period in which the population grew by about a third.

Women account for close to nine in ten centenarians, a ratio that has held steady for decades and that reflects a life expectancy gap present in almost every country.

The drivers are unglamorous and cumulative: universal health insurance from 1961, near-universal childhood vaccination, low cardiovascular mortality, sanitation and a postwar diet that was low in fat by industrial-country standards.

That diet has changed considerably, and the effects of the change are working their way through the cohorts now, with obesity and diabetes rates rising from a very low base.

The government presents a silver sake cup to new centenarians each year, a practice that has been adjusted as the numbers rose and the cost with them.

Regional distribution is uneven, with Okinawa historically leading the per-capita tables and its advantage narrowing in recent decades as the younger cohorts' health has diverged from their parents'.

A hundred thousand people past a hundred is a public health achievement measured across three generations, and it is also a hundred thousand people who will require care.

SOCIETY

When the Last Shop Closes, an Old Person's Week Changes Entirely

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The greengrocer in today's cartoon is doing more work in the picture than it appears, because in a great many Japanese districts that shop has closed.

Food access has become a recognised policy problem here, affecting older residents who no longer drive and who live beyond walking distance of any shop selling fresh food.

The causes stack. Small retailers close as their owners age with no successor, supermarkets consolidate into larger stores on roads rather than in streets, and rural bus services contract for want of drivers.

The consequence is a diet that shifts toward what keeps, which is a nutritional problem before it is a social one, and a week that shrinks to whatever is within a few hundred metres.

Responses have been local and varied. Mobile shops visit on fixed schedules, cooperatives deliver, and some municipalities subsidise community transport to a supermarket once or twice a week.

Convenience store chains have moved into the gap, adding fresh produce and delivery in areas where general shops have gone, which changes what a convenience store is for.

Online grocery delivery works for households that can operate it, and the age group most affected is the one least likely to.

The same infrastructure that delivers food delivers contact. A shopkeeper who notices that somebody has not been in for three days is an early warning system that no municipal budget could replicate.

That function disappears with the shop, and the isolation which follows is now a documented feature of Japanese urban and rural life alike.

A street with a clinic, a temple and a vegetable shop within a few hundred metres, of the kind the cartoon draws, is functioning infrastructure rather than nostalgia.

SOCIETY

The Networks That Find People Who Have Wandered

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

The 500 people helping a man search Okinawa for his mother are an example of an infrastructure that Japanese municipalities have spent two decades building, largely without funding.

Wandering is among the most common emergencies in dementia care, and the response has to be fast, because a person who has walked beyond the search area becomes very hard to find.

Municipal networks enrol businesses that are out and about anyway: convenience stores, taxi firms, bus operators, delivery drivers, post offices and newspaper deliverers.

When a person is reported missing, a description circulates to those networks within minutes, which puts thousands of eyes on the street without deploying a single additional official.

Some municipalities supplement this with identification stickers, wearable transmitters or registration schemes that let a found person be matched to a family quickly.

Those technical measures raise questions of consent and dignity that Japanese local authorities have generally handled by making them voluntary and by involving families in the design.

The great majority of missing people with dementia are found, most within a day, and the cases that end badly are concentrated in the ones where the alert went out late.

National policy in recent years has emphasised living with dementia in the community rather than in institutions, which is humane and which transfers a great deal of the work to neighbours.

In districts where the population has aged and thinned, there are fewer neighbours each year to carry it, and the networks depend entirely on people being present.

Five hundred local supporters is what the system looks like where it still works.

SOCIETY

Managing a Mountain That Is Also a Shrine and a Tourist Attraction

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The Environment Ministry's decision to investigate crowding on Mount Fuji, after more than 240,000 people reached the summit this summer, enters a policy area with an unusual number of competing authorities.

The mountain straddles Shizuoka and Yamanashi prefectures, which have historically managed their routes separately and introduced fees and caps at different times and different levels.

Above the eighth station much of the land belongs to a Shinto shrine, a position confirmed through litigation, which adds a religious property owner to the list of parties with standing.

UNESCO inscribed Fuji in 2013 as a cultural site rather than a natural one, recognising its place in religion and art, and the inscription came with recommendations about visitor management that have been revisited since.

The climbing itself is unusually accessible for a mountain of 3,776 metres, with a road reaching the fifth station and huts along the routes, which is why people who are not mountaineers attempt it.

That accessibility is the source of the hazard the ministry is examining. Chain-reaction falls occur where a crowded queue moves on steep, loose ground and one person's slip takes those below.

Overnight climbing without rest, which produces exhausted climbers arriving at altitude before dawn, has been discouraged through gates that close overnight, and the practice has proved difficult to eliminate.

Rescue statistics consistently feature inadequate footwear, insufficient clothing and altitude sickness, and the huts and prefectural patrols absorb a great deal of that.

Any tightening of the caps runs into the interests of hut operators, the prefectures and a tourism industry the government has spent a decade encouraging.

The season is closed until July, which gives the ministry a winter to reach a conclusion.

SOCIETY

The Storm Will Weaken and Widen at the Same Time

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

After its closest approach to Kanto this afternoon, Typhoon No. 25 is forecast to move north and then northeast, weakening to 985 hectopascals and 25 metres a second over northern Honshu before moving out to sea.

That weakening will be accompanied by a change in the storm's structure known as extratropical transition, and the two happen together in a way that is regularly misunderstood.

A typhoon runs on heat released as water vapour condenses over warm ocean, which is why these systems weaken over cold water and over land.

An extratropical cyclone runs on the temperature contrast between air masses, the same mechanism that drives the ordinary low-pressure systems crossing Japan all winter.

During the transition the wind field typically expands. Peak winds near the centre fall while damaging winds spread over a much larger area, so a weakening storm can affect more people than it did at its strongest.

Rainfall frequently continues or intensifies along the fronts that develop during the transition, which is why forecasters warn that an extratropical cyclone is not a safe one.

Tohoku's forecast total of 200 millimetres by this evening reflects that expansion rather than any close approach by the centre.

Hokkaido, further from the track than anywhere else on the storm's path, is expected to see little of it, with today's map showing Sapporo partly cloudy at 26 degrees.

Swells outlast the wind and will keep arriving on the Izu and Ogasawara coasts after the system has gone, with waves of up to 7 metres still expected around Izu.

The Autumnal Equinox on Wednesday should fall on the improving side of the system.

SOCIETY

The Three Ways to Fill a Care Shortage, and Why Japan Has Chosen None of Them

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

With a record 36.24 million Japanese over 65, the shortage of care workers has only three conceivable solutions, and the country has been ambivalent about all three.

The first is pay. Raising care wages to compete with retail, logistics and construction would draw workers in, and it requires money that the budget has not identified while carrying a five trillion yen tax cut and a nine trillion yen fuel subsidy.

Each fee schedule revision has raised care wages and each has been overtaken, because wages have been rising everywhere in a labour market this tight.

The second is immigration. Several visa categories now admit care workers, with training and language requirements attached, and the numbers remain small relative to the need.

The constraints are practical as well as political: language standards appropriate to intimate care work, housing, and the supervision that recruitment at scale would require.

The third is technology. Lifting aids, monitoring systems, communication robots and scheduling software have all been trialled extensively, with public funding behind them.

The evidence is that these reduce particular burdens, especially physical strain and night-time observation, rather than the headcount a facility needs.

What remains is family care, which is not a solution but a default, and it is the one currently in operation.

A substantial share of family carers are themselves over 65, and employees leaving work to care for a parent are a measurable drain on an economy short of workers.

The choice among the three has never been made explicitly, which means it is being made by omission every year the shortage persists.

SOCIETY

Municipal Ceremonies for the Holiday Meet a Typhoon Warning

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Respect for the Aged Day is marked in most Japanese municipalities by ceremonies, home visits and the presentation of gifts to residents reaching landmark ages, and in eastern Japan much of that has run into a storm warning.

The observances are organised at ward and town level rather than nationally, which means several thousand separate decisions were taken over the weekend about whether to proceed.

Home visits to residents in their late nineties and beyond are the element that municipalities try hardest to preserve, since for some recipients the visit is the day's only contact.

Those visits are also the element most affected by a Level 4 evacuation warning in two Tokyo wards and by a rail network suspending services.

Care homes hold their own events, and facilities in the affected regions have spent the weekend on storm preparation instead: checking generators, securing outdoor areas and confirming which residents would need help to move.

Evacuating a residential care facility is among the hardest operations in disaster response, requiring transport, receiving facilities and staff to accompany residents who cannot travel alone.

Facilities in flood-prone locations are required to hold evacuation plans and to drill them, a requirement introduced after a series of disasters in which care home residents died in floods.

The compliance rate with that requirement has improved without reaching completeness, and the plans depend on staff numbers that many facilities do not have on a holiday.

Western Japan's ceremonies proceed in clear weather, with today's map showing Kobe and Hiroshima sunny at 29 degrees.

The ceremonies that have been postponed will mostly be held later in the week, after the Autumnal Equinox.

SOCIETY

The Problem in the Cities Is Not Frailty but Absence

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The image of Japanese ageing is rural, and the arithmetic is not. Most older Japanese live in cities and suburbs, in housing without the neighbourly infrastructure that villages still have.

Single-person households among the over-65s have risen steadily for decades, driven by longer lives, smaller families and children who moved to where the work was.

A village notices when somebody has not come out today. A block of flats does not, and the consequence is a category of death that goes undiscovered for days or weeks.

Municipalities and housing corporations have responded with welfare checks, community centres and arrangements under which utility meter readers, postal workers and newspaper deliverers report anything unusual.

Those arrangements work well where somebody is looking. They fail where a resident has no delivery, no regular visitor and no reason for anybody to knock.

Technology has been deployed at the margins, with electricity usage monitoring, sensor-equipped kettles

SOCIETY

and daily check-in calls, all of which require the resident to accept being monitored.

Consent is not a technicality. Independence is precisely what older residents living alone are trying to preserve, and a monitoring system reads as a loss of it.

Public housing estates built during the high-growth decades have aged with their original tenants, producing blocks where a large majority of residents are over 65 and the lifts were not designed for them.

Disaster response is where the isolation becomes acute. A resident with nobody to telephone them about a Level 4 warning is a resident who may not act on it.

Today's warnings apply to wards of exactly that kind, in western Tokyo, where the housing is dense and the neighbours are frequently strangers.

SOCIETY

A Health System Built for Acute Illness Is Treating Chronic Old Age

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Japan's health system delivers outcomes among the best in the world at a cost below what several comparable countries spend, and it was designed for a population that no longer exists.

Universal insurance, introduced in 1961, gives patients free choice of provider and low co-payments, which produces high consultation rates and a strong record on early detection.

The system's structure rests on clinics, many of them single-doctor practices, which handle primary care and refer onward, and on a hospital sector with a high bed count by international standards.

That configuration suits acute illness. It handles a broken hip, a pneumonia or a cancer diagnosis efficiently and at reasonable cost.

What it handles less well is chronic multi-morbidity, the condition of most patients over 80, where several long-term problems interact and no single specialist owns the whole case.

Long hospital stays have historically filled part of the gap, with patients remaining in beds for social rather than medical reasons because no appropriate place existed to discharge them to.

Long-term care insurance was introduced in 2000 partly to address that, separating care from medicine and giving discharge planners somewhere to send people.

The reform worked and did not close the gap, because the care sector it created has never had enough staff to absorb everyone the hospitals would like to discharge.

Clinic succession is the quieter problem. Many single-doctor practices have owners in their seventies with no successor, and when they close, a district loses its primary care.

The clinic in today's editorial page cartoon, advertising health consultations on a country street, is the piece of infrastructure that disappears first.

SOCIETY

What the Public Pension Actually Replaces

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

The record 9.43 million Japanese over 65 in employment raises a question about the pension system that the employment figure itself partly answers.

Japan's public pension has two tiers: a flat-rate basic pension for all residents and an earnings-related component for employees, funded on a pay-as-you-go basis with a reserve fund behind it.

The system is reviewed every five years, and the reviews model its finances across decades under varying assumptions about wages, prices, fertility and returns on the reserve.

A mechanism introduced in 2004 adjusts benefits downward relative to wages as the population ages, which preserves solvency by reducing what each pensioner receives in real terms.

That mechanism is doing its work now, and the effect is a replacement rate that declines gradually across the coming decades rather than a crisis at any identifiable moment.

For households with corporate pensions, savings and a paid-off house, the public pension is one income among several and the decline is manageable.

For households without those, it is the income, and a declining replacement rate means working longer or spending less.

That is the constituency inside the employment statistic that the holiday's coverage tends not to examine, because it complicates a positive number.

Inflation has sharpened it. Pension indexation lags prices, which means a period of rising food and energy costs reduces real incomes before any adjustment arrives.

Rice falling to the 2,000-yen range for a five-kilogram bag, and deposit rates moving to 0.5%, are both improvements for exactly this group.

SOCIETY

Temporary Housing Is Designed for Two Years and Almost Never Lasts Two Years

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

The eight-year-old boy moving from temporary housing into a new home two years after the Oku-Noto rains is leaving a category of accommodation that Japan builds well and occupies for too long.

Emergency temporary housing is erected within weeks of a major disaster, in prefabricated units on public land, and the statutory assumption is occupancy of about two years.

That assumption has been exceeded after almost every major Japanese disaster of the past three decades, with extensions granted repeatedly as permanent reconstruction has run behind schedule.

The delays are structural rather than administrative. Land has to be acquired, sometimes from owners who cannot be traced, and construction competes for labour and materials with everything else being built. Depopulation complicates each decision. Rebuilding a settlement whose population was falling before the disaster raises questions that nobody wants to put to residents who have just lost their homes.

Noto's case is harder than most, having been struck by an earthquake on New Year's Day 2024 and then by rainfall that September which flooded communities still in temporary accommodation from the first event.

The peninsula's age profile is among the oldest in the country, which means the people deciding whether to return are frequently in their seventies and eighties.

For a child, two years in a prefabricated unit is a substantial share of a life, and the disruption reaches schooling, friendships and the ordinary stability that recovery statistics do not record.

Public reconstruction housing, built by municipalities with national support, is the destination for households that cannot rebuild privately, and it has its own waiting lists.

A typhoon crossing the country on the anniversary is a reminder that the next disaster does not wait for the last one's recovery.

SOCIETY

Autumn Is When the Bears Come Down, and the Rain Will Not Stop Them

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

The bear that stopped a Joban Line train over the weekend belongs to a seasonal pattern that peaks now, and a storm does not interrupt it.

Bear encounters in Japan have risen sharply across the past decade, with sightings, property damage and attacks all increasing and several prefectures issuing bear warnings as routinely as weather advisories.

The cause is a change in the land between forest and town. Rural depopulation has emptied the villages, fields and managed woodland that formed a buffer, and that buffer is now scrub the animals move through.

Food supply drives the annual variation. In poor mast years, when acorns and beech nuts fail, bears range far further in search of calories before hibernation, and autumn is when that search peaks.

The consequences have included fatal attacks in several prefectures, school closures and, at an Iwate junior high school last week, thirteen people injured when a student discharged bear spray indoors.

That last incident says something about how ordinary carrying repellent has become in districts where it would have been unthinkable a generation ago.

Management is constrained by the people available to carry it out. The hunting population is ageing and shrinking, and municipalities that relied on local hunters' associations increasingly cannot.

Culls are contested, with urban opinion generally less supportive than rural, leaving prefectural governments between residents who want the animals removed and correspondents who object.

Heavy rain moves animals rather than confining them, and flooded valley floors can push wildlife toward roads and railway lines.

Drivers on rural roads in the affected regions this week have two reasons to slow down.

SOCIETY

Who Will Clear the Mud: Japan's Volunteer System and Its Own Ageing Problem

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

If this storm floods houses in Kanto this evening, the mud will be cleared over the following weeks largely by volunteers, through a system built after the Kobe earthquake of 1995.

That disaster is remembered in Japan as the origin of organised civilian volunteering, and the year is sometimes described as the first year of the volunteer era.

The structure that emerged is run through social welfare councils, which open disaster volunteer centres in affected municipalities, register arrivals, assess household requests and match the two.

The work is unglamorous and physically hard: removing furniture, shovelling silt from floors, washing walls and disposing of possessions that cannot be saved.

Volunteer numbers have declined at recent disasters compared with the peaks of the 2010s, and the reasons include an ageing volunteer base and the travel cost of reaching increasingly remote affected areas.

Coordination has improved considerably, with registration systems that prevent the disorganised arrivals that hampered early efforts, and with better matching of skills to requests.

Households have to ask for help, which sounds procedural and is a genuine barrier, because older residents are frequently reluctant to impose.

That reluctance is one reason the requests that reach a volunteer centre understate the need in any affected district.

Municipal staff are themselves disaster victims in a flooded town, working from damaged offices while their own homes wait, which is a constraint no plan removes.

Whether volunteers will be needed in Kanto this week will be known by tomorrow.

SOCIETY

A Holiday Has Spared the Schools, and Tuesday Is a Holiday Too

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

One piece of luck in this storm's timing is that it has arrived on a public holiday, followed by another, which removes the school closure decision from thousands of head teachers.

Japanese schools close on warning criteria set by municipal boards of education, typically tied to the issuance of specific meteorological warnings by a defined hour of the morning.

Those criteria exist to remove discretion, because a head teacher deciding individually at six in the morning produces inconsistency between neighbouring schools and confusion for families.

The decision is genuinely difficult. Children travelling to school in a storm are at risk; children left at home alone while parents work are at a different risk.

Commuting is the specific hazard. Japanese children walk to primary school in groups without adult accompaniment, which is a system that works on ordinary days and not in flood conditions.

School buildings are designated evacuation sites in most municipalities, which means a closed school may be simultaneously receiving residents from the surrounding district.

Staff report to open and manage those facilities, and the arrangements for doing so on a holiday depend on rotas that vary considerably between municipalities.

With Wednesday's Autumnal Equinox also a holiday, schools in the affected regions will not need to make the decision until Thursday, by which time the storm will be well out to sea.

That gives the network three days to clear roads and check buildings before children move through them again.

Any structural damage to school buildings will be assessed during the same period.

SOCIETY

What to Watch This Afternoon, and What to Keep Charged

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

With the storm reaching Kanto this afternoon, the practical question for households in the affected regions is which sources to follow and what to do if the power fails.

The meteorological agency publishes warnings, rainfall observations, river levels and landslide alert information continuously, and it is the origin of nearly everything that appears elsewhere.

NHK's disaster prevention application and its broadcast output carry the same information with municipal evacuation instructions attached, which is the combination most households need.

Municipal websites and registered alert emails carry the instructions that actually apply to a specific address, and registration takes a few minutes and is worth doing before it is needed.

River camera feeds, published by prefectures and by the transport ministry, let residents see a watercourse without going to look at it, which is the behaviour that kills people in every storm.

Radio is the medium that survives a power failure, and a battery radio remains the most reliable receiver in a disaster despite looking obsolete in every other circumstance.

Mobile networks generally survive storms but not extended power failures, since base stations run on batteries that last hours rather than days.

A charged power bank, a torch that can be found in the dark and a filled bath for sanitation water cover the most likely disruption, which is a power cut rather than an evacuation.

For households with older relatives on the Pacific side, a telephone call this morning about where they would go is worth more than any application.

The dangerous part of the day begins at midday, when the agency expects a linear rainband to form over Kanto, Izu and Shizuoka.

SOCIETY

A Storm Passing East of Tokyo Bay Is the Configuration That Raises the Water

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

With Typhoon No. 25 reaching the Kanto coast this afternoon and a Boso landfall still possible, storm surge is among the hazards the metropolitan government is watching along the bay's low-lying shore.

Storm surge is a rise in sea level caused by the storm rather than by the tide, produced by low atmospheric pressure lifting the sea surface and by wind driving water toward a coast.

The pressure component is roughly a centimetre for each hectopascal below normal, which at 970 hectopascals is about half a metre before the wind contributes anything.

The wind component is larger and more variable, depending on the angle at which the wind meets the coast and on how long it blows in that direction.

Tokyo Bay's geometry makes it sensitive. It is broad at the mouth and narrows toward its head, so water driven into it has progressively less room and the level rises at the northern shore.

That northern shore is where the low-lying wards are, much of it built on reclaimed land and some of it below the level of high water, protected by seawalls, locks and pumping stations.

A storm passing to the east of the bay drives southerly winds along its length, which is precisely the configuration that produces the largest surges here.

Timing relative to the tide decides the outcome, since a surge arriving at low water is absorbed while the same surge at high water is what overtops defences.

SOCIETY

Japan's worst storm surge disaster was at Ise Bay in 1959, which killed more than 5,000 people and produced the disaster countermeasures legislation the country still works under.

The bay's defences have been built and rebuilt since to a design standard derived from that event, and they have not been tested at their limit.

SOCIETY

Why a Toppled Pole Means a Longer Blackout Than a Fallen Wire

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

Forecasters have warned that winds across Izu and Kanto today may be strong enough to topple utility poles, which is a specific prediction with specific consequences.

Japan distributes most of its electricity overhead. Undergrounding rates are low by international standards outside a few central districts, a legacy of postwar reconstruction speed and of the cost of retrofitting dense cities.

Overhead distribution is cheap, quick to build and quick to repair when a wire comes down. It is also exposed to exactly the conditions forecast for this afternoon.

A fallen wire is a comparatively fast repair. A crew reconnects or replaces the span and restores supply to everyone downstream of it.

A toppled pole is a different job. The pole has to be extracted, a new one set, and the wires, transformers and communications cables it carried reinstated, each individually.

Poles carry more than power. Telecommunications and cable services share them, so a pole failure takes out the telephone and internet connections alongside the electricity.

Trees are the usual mechanism. A tree brought down onto a line pulls the pole with it, which is why clearance programmes around distribution lines are a standing utility expense.

The 2019 typhoon that crossed the Boso Peninsula demonstrated the arithmetic, with extended outages in some districts measured in weeks and pole damage running into the thousands.

That event reshaped Japanese utility planning, producing changes to pole standards, clearance practice and the arrangements for bringing crews in from other regions.

Households in the forecast area should assume a possible outage this evening and locate a torch before the light goes.

SOCIETY

Ten Kilometres an Hour Is the Most Dangerous Number in the Bulletin

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

At 9 p.m. on Sunday, Typhoon No. 25 was moving north at 10 kilometres an hour, and that figure matters more to the damage it does than its central pressure.

Ten kilometres an hour is roughly a brisk walking pace. A storm travelling at that speed takes many hours to pass a given region, and everything it carries is delivered to the same ground throughout.

Rainfall totals are the direct consequence. The same rain rate applied for twelve hours rather than four produces three times the accumulation, and the forecast totals for today reflect exactly that.

Saturation is the mechanism that converts accumulation into disaster. Ground that has absorbed water for hours sends a far larger share of subsequent rainfall straight into streams and down slopes.

Wind duration matters too. Structures, trees and poles fail through repeated loading as much as through a single peak gust, and a long exposure finds weaknesses a brief one misses.

Storm surge builds with duration as well, since the wind has to blow in a consistent direction long enough to pile water against a coast.

Fast-moving typhoons do their damage differently, concentrating wind damage in a narrow corridor and passing before rainfall accumulates, which is why two storms of identical intensity produce different disasters.

Speed is governed by the larger atmospheric flow steering the system, and a weak steering pattern in autumn is what leaves a storm to drift.

The forecast has this one accelerating as it turns northeast after Kanto, which is the usual pattern once a storm is picked up by the mid-latitude westerlies.

Until then, the region underneath it gets everything it has, slowly.

SOCIETY

Sixteen Public Holidays, and Why They Keep Landing on Mondays

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Japan has sixteen public holidays a year, among the most of any industrial country, and the arrangement is the product of a deliberate policy rather than of accumulated tradition.

The number is high partly because Japanese workers have historically taken little of their annual leave, and the legislature responded by providing days off that did not require anybody to ask for them.

A subsequent reform moved several holidays to designated Mondays, creating three-day weekends in place of mid-week days, explicitly to encourage domestic leisure spending.

Respect for the Aged Day, now the third Monday of September, was among them, along with Coming of Age Day, Marine Day and Health and Sports Day.

Two further rules generate extra days. A holiday falling on a Sunday transfers to the following Monday, and a weekday between two holidays becomes a citizens' holiday of its own.

That second rule is what makes tomorrow a holiday and produces the five-day Silver Week, which has not occurred for eleven years and depends on the equinox aligning with the third Monday.

The equinox holidays are the only ones set by astronomical calculation, determined by the National Astronomical Observatory and announced by the government the previous February.

The concentration of holidays into blocks produces its own problems, with transport and accommodation demand spiking and prices rising accordingly.

Efforts to stagger school holidays regionally have been discussed repeatedly to spread the load, without producing much change.

This year the policy's intention has been comprehensively defeated by a typhoon arriving on the holiday's third day.

SOCIETY

The Carers Who Are Themselves Over 65

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

A substantial share of family carers in Japan are now over 65 themselves, caring for a spouse or a parent who is older still, an arrangement that has a name in Japanese social policy and no solution in it.

The arithmetic is unavoidable in a country where life expectancy is long. A person of 90 requiring care frequently has a child of 65 and a spouse of 88.

Spousal care is the most common version and the most fragile, because the carer's own health is the single point of failure and there is no second person in the household.

Adult children providing care do so while managing their own retirement, their own health and, in a growing number of cases, grandchildren.

Employees who leave work to care for a parent are the version the economy measures, and they represent a loss of experienced workers that a labour-short economy cannot replace.

Care leave entitlements exist in Japanese law, providing paid leave and the right to shorter hours, and take-up has been persistently low because of workplace culture and career consequences.

The long-term care insurance system was introduced in 2000 specifically to relieve this burden, and it succeeded partially, constrained throughout by a workforce shortage.

The services most valued by family carers are the ones that provide respite: day care and short stays that give a carer a few hours or a few days.

Those are also the services most affected by staffing shortages, because they require staff present at specific times rather than spread across a schedule.

On a holiday honouring the old, a considerable share of the people doing the honouring are old themselves and are working at it every other day of the year.

SOCIETY

Why Japan Calls It Number 25 and Almost Nobody Else Does

By Maya Suzuki | Science & Innovation Desk

The storm reaching Kanto this afternoon is Typhoon No. 25 in Japanese usage, and the numbering is a system rather than a convenience.

The Japan Meteorological Agency numbers typhoons in the order they form within its area of responsibility each calendar year, beginning again at one every January.

Number 25 therefore means the twenty-fifth tropical cyclone to reach typhoon strength in the western North Pacific this year, which in itself says something about the season.

The same storms also carry names, assigned from a list contributed by the fourteen members of the regional typhoon committee, and those names are used internationally.

That list is unusual in drawing on the languages and cultures of the whole region, so it includes plants, animals, constellations and words that have no equivalent in English.

Japanese broadcasters and newspapers use the number because it is unambiguous to a domestic audience and because a sequence conveys the season's intensity at a glance.

The American Joint Typhoon Warning Center runs its own numbering for operational purposes, which is why a single storm can appear under three different identifiers on the same chart.

Names are retired when a storm causes exceptional damage, and the committee replaces them with a new contribution from the member that supplied the original.

Japan's own contributions to the list are constellation names, chosen deliberately to avoid any suggestion of blame attaching to a person or a place.

An average season produces around 25 named storms in the basin, of which a handful reach Japan, which puts today's number roughly where the calendar would predict.

SOCIETY

The Licence Question Japan Keeps Returning To

By Daisuke Ito | Investigations & Longform

A 68-year-old man has been arrested in Fukuoka on suspicion of dangerous driving causing injury after a three-year-old boy was found unconscious, and the case is about intoxication rather than age.

The wider question of older drivers nonetheless recurs in Japan more than in most countries, because the proportion of licence holders over 70 has risen with the population.

Drivers aged 75 and over must take a cognitive assessment when renewing a licence, with results that can trigger a medical examination and, where a condition is identified, revocation.

Those with records of certain traffic violations face an additional practical driving test, a requirement introduced after a series of collisions involving older drivers attracted sustained coverage.

Voluntary surrender of a licence is encouraged through discounts on taxis, buses and deliveries offered by local authorities and businesses, and the numbers surrendering each year run into the hundreds of thousands.

The counter-argument is mobility. In rural Japan, where bus services have contracted and shops have closed, a licence is the difference between independence and dependence.

That is the same geography in which food access has become a policy problem, and the two questions cannot sensibly be separated.

Vehicle technology has been promoted as the bridge, with automatic braking, pedal misapplication suppression and subsidies for fitting safety devices to existing cars.

Autonomous vehicles are the longer answer, and a Tesla shown in Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya this month cannot be registered for road use under Japanese law as it stands.

The policy has therefore settled into a compromise: assess more rigorously, encourage surrender, and improve the vehicles that remain on the road.

SOCIETY

The Document Every Japanese Household Has and Almost Nobody Reads

By Emi Kondo | Society & Local News Reporter

Disaster management minister Goshi Hosono has been asking residents to check their hazard maps since Friday, and this afternoon is when that advice either paid off or did not.

A hazard map shows a specific address's exposure to river flooding, storm surge, landslide and, in many municipalities, tsunami, with expected depths and the routes to designated evacuation sites.

They are produced by municipalities using national methodology, distributed to households, posted online and available through a national portal that overlays several hazards at once.

The maps were substantially revised after the flood disasters of the late 2010s, in most cases to show the consequences of the largest conceivable rainfall rather than a design storm.

That revision widened the shaded areas considerably, and a great many households discovered that a property previously outside a flood zone was inside one.

Post-disaster surveys consistently find that the map existed, was delivered and had not been looked at, which is the failure the whole system runs on.

The reasons are ordinary rather than negligent. A document arrives, is filed, and nothing happens for years, by which time nobody remembers where it was put.

Estate agents are required to explain flood risk to buyers and tenants, a disclosure obligation introduced to put the information in front of people at a moment when they are paying attention.

The useful version of the advice is narrow: find the map, find your address, note the expected depth and the nearest site above it, and tell everybody in the house.

With a Level 4 warning in force on the Zenpukuji River this morning, that is a ten-minute task with a deadline of midday.

SOCIETY

Announcing a Suspension a Day Early Is a Recent Japanese Invention

By Kenji Fukuda | Real Estate & Urban Development

JR East's warning that metropolitan services may be disrupted from Sunday night to early Tuesday is an example of planned suspension, a practice that is younger than most passengers assume.

For decades Japanese operators ran until conditions forced them to stop, which produced trains halted between stations, passengers stranded overnight and station concourses full of people with nowhere to go.

The change came after storms in which exactly that happened, and operators concluded that an announced suspension was safer and more manageable than an unannounced one.

The practice now involves publishing an intention the day before, confirming it during the morning and identifying the lines and the hours affected.

The benefit is distributed rather than concentrated. Passengers alter plans, employers release staff early, and the network empties before the weather arrives rather than during it.

The cost is that suspensions sometimes prove unnecessary, and an operator that stops trains for a storm that misses is criticised for it.

That asymmetry is understood and accepted, because the alternative failure is far worse and considerably more dangerous.

Coastal and elevated lines suspend first, because wind thresholds are reached earliest on exposed track, which is why Uchibo Line express services went before anything else.

Restarting is slower than stopping, requiring inspection along the length of every affected line before a passenger train runs, which is why the warning extends to Tuesday morning.

Passengers with travel plans tomorrow should check before setting out rather than assume the published timetable applies.

SOCIETY

SOCIETY

Every Record in Today's Figures Is Also a Bill

By Yuki Saito | Economics & Finance Reporter

Three records were published this morning: 36.24 million people aged 65 and over, 29.6% of the population, and 9.43 million of them in employment.

A record is reported as an achievement, and each of these is one. Long life is the outcome of a public health system that worked, and continued employment is the outcome of a labour market that has room.

Each is also a commitment. Pension, healthcare and long-term care obligations all scale with the first two figures, and they scale automatically, without any decision being taken.

That automatic quality is what makes demographic spending different from everything else in a budget. It does not require a vote, and it cannot be reduced by declining to appropriate it.

Against that, the extraordinary Diet session carries a food consumption tax cut costing roughly five trillion yen a year and a fuel subsidy approaching nine trillion, with no funding named for either.

Long-term government bond yields reached their highest level since 1996 this month, which is the market pricing the combination, and the Bank of Japan's rate rises the cost of every yen already borrowed.

The third record cuts the other way. Working over-65s produce output, spend earnings and pay contributions, which moderates the arithmetic rather than reversing it.

Whether that share can be increased depends on health, on the quality of the jobs available and on an employment system that frequently rehires people at reduced pay to do the same work.

None of this is a forecast. It is a measurement of a country that already exists, and the projections built on top of it have been consistent for twenty years.

What has been inconsistent is the willingness to act on them, which is the quieter subject of a holiday that has now been running for sixty years.

SPORTS

Japan's Gold Rush: Hojo Takes the Country's First Triathlon Title, and Seven Medals Come From the Pool

Karate kata delivers another gold on the first full day of competition, and Aimi Hayashi takes bronze in the women's triathlon

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japanese athletes produced a rush of gold medals on the opening full day of the Asian Games, led by Takumi Hojo, who won the country's first gold of the competition in the men's triathlon, according to Yomiuri Shimbun and Jiji Press.

Aimi Hayashi took third place in the women's triathlon on the same course at Gamagori, and Japan also won gold in karate kata.

Hojo's win carries more than a medal. The triathlon at these Games serves as a continental qualifying event for the Los Angeles Olympics, which means the result reaches two years forward rather than closing on the podium.

A triathlon is won by the athlete who loses least across three disciplines rather than by the best swimmer, cyclist or runner, and Japan's recent strength in the event has come from consistency rather than from any single strength.

Gamagori sits on Mikawa Bay on Aichi's Pacific coast, west of the storm's track, and the race was held in conditions that the eastern half of the country would not have permitted.

Karate's gold came in kata, the form discipline judged on precision, power and the quality of movement rather than on contact, and it is the event in which Japanese competitors carry the deepest expectation of any martial art on the programme.

That expectation is a burden as much as an advantage. Karate originated here, the judging standard was largely set here, and a Japanese defeat in kata is treated at home as a failure rather than as a result.

The swimming delivered the day's largest haul, with seven medals from the opening session at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Yomiuri Shimbun's front page carried the results under the heading of a gold rush, which is the

framing a host nation hopes for on the first full day and rarely receives.

The delegation's stated target is to surpass the 78 gold medals won at the 1966 Bangkok Games, a mark set when the field was smaller and China did not compete.

Competition continues today with the men's individual all-around final in gymnastics, baseball against China at Toyohashi, the Nadeshiko against Chinese Taipei and another seven swimming finals in the evening.

The weather is the variable nobody can plan around. Aichi's venues are clear this morning; Tokyo's pool is indoors but reached by a rail network that has been suspending services since last night.

SPORTS

A One-Two in the 200 Medley and a Japanese Record at 35: Seven Medals on the Pool's First Night

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan won seven medals on the first day of swimming at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, according to Sports Hochi, in a session that produced both a one-two finish and a national record.

Tomoyuki Matsushita took gold in the men's 200 metres individual medley, with 17-year-old Yuki Kojima second, giving Japan the top two places in one of the most demanding events on the programme.

The individual medley asks a swimmer to be competent in all four strokes and excellent in at least two, and it is the event that most reliably identifies a complete swimmer rather than a specialist.

A one-two finish in it says something specific about a national programme: that the development system is producing swimmers of similar quality rather than depending on one exceptional athlete.

Kojima's age is the detail that will be examined hardest at home. A silver medal at 17 in a senior continental final places a swimmer on a trajectory toward the Los Angeles cycle with three years of physical development still ahead.

Satomi Suzuki, at 35, set a new Japanese record in taking silver in the women's 50 metres breaststroke, which is a remarkable thing to do in a sprint event at that age.

Sprint swimming is unforgiving to age. The events are decided in fractions of a second, the power requirement is absolute, and careers in them are conventionally short.

A national record set in one's mid-thirties, in a stroke that rewards explosive strength, is evidence of training methods and career management as much as of talent.

Suzuki has been a fixture of Japanese swimming across multiple Games cycles, and her presence in a final beside a 17-year-old is the clearest picture of the programme's range.

Seven medals in an opening session sets a pace that the rest of the competition will be measured against, and the pool has another seven finals tonight.

Shin Ohashi, the Japanese record holder, competes today in the men's 100 metres breaststroke.

SPORTS

Men's Table Tennis Opens With a 3-0 Win and a 60-Year Wait Behind It

Tomokazu Harimoto was not selected for the team event
By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's men's table tennis team defeated the Maldives 3-0 to open a campaign for the country's first gold in the event in 60 years, according to Sports Hochi. The women's team also began with a comfortable win.

Tomokazu Harimoto was not selected for the team event. Teruaki Matsushima is among those included.

Harimoto's absence from the squad is the story attached to the result, since he has been the most prominent figure in Japanese men's table tennis for the better part of a decade.

Selection decisions in team events turn on match-up planning as much as on ranking, because the format is a sequence of singles and doubles rubbers in which a coach must anticipate the opposing order.

A sixty-year wait for gold locates Japan's last men's team title in an era when the country dominated the sport and before China's programme took the position it has held ever since.

That programme remains the standard against which everything in this sport is measured. China has won the overwhelming majority of major team titles in the past three decades, and the semi-final draw matters more than any group result.

Japan's answer has been a development system that identifies players extremely young and puts them into senior international competition while they are still in their teens.

A 3-0 win over the Maldives establishes nothing beyond the group stage, and the preliminary rounds exist to set the seeding that determines the path to the medal matches.

The competition is being held at Sky Hall Toyota, in Aichi, well clear of the weather affecting the eastern half of the country.

The women's team, which includes Hina Hayata, Miwa Harimoto and Mima Ito, opened with a win of its own.

Individual events follow the team competition later in the Games.

SPORTS

Today at the Games: Gymnastics All-Around, Baseball Against China, and the Nadeshiko

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Asian Games continue today with the men's individual all-around final in gymnastics, Japan's baseball opener against China at Toyohashi and the Nadeshiko against Chinese Taipei.

The all-around is the discipline in which Japanese men's gymnastics has its deepest history, demanding a competitor to perform on all six apparatus with no weakness that the scoring can find.

Japan has produced a succession of all-around champions across Olympic and world competition, and the event's requirement for completeness has suited a coaching culture built on technical precision.

Baseball brings the Samurai Japan amateur squad against China at Toyohashi in an evening fixture, the team's first game of the tournament.

The Asian Games baseball competition is contested by amateur and corporate-league players rather than by professionals, which makes it a different proposition from the international tournaments that draw NPB squads.

For the players involved it is the highest level many will reach, and corporate-league baseball in Japan retains a following and a standard that most countries' amateur systems cannot match.

The Nadeshiko meet Chinese Taipei having opened with an 8-0 win over Thailand, and the women's tournament progresses toward knockout rounds where the margins narrow sharply.

Japan's women's programme carries a pedigree few in Asia can match, built on the 2011 World Cup title and sustained by a domestic league and a youth structure that keeps producing.

Men's handball continues its qualifying matches, including a fixture against Hong Kong, and the women's volleyball semi-finals are scheduled.

The under-16 football tournament has been cancelled from its second day onward because of the typhoon, the clearest instance so far of the weather reaching the competition itself.

Seven swimming finals are scheduled for this evening in Tokyo, where the pool is indoors and the transport to it is not.

SPORTS

A Reunion Seven Years in the Making at the Games

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The Emperor and Empress were reunited at the Asian Games with a girl in a wheelchair whom they had last met seven years ago, according to Asahi Shimbun.

Encounters of this kind are a deliberate and long-established element of how the current imperial couple conduct their public role, and the continuity across years is the part that distinguishes them.

An imperial visit generates a photograph and a paragraph. A return to the same person seven years later generates something else, because it

demonstrates that the first meeting was recorded and remembered.

The imperial household maintains detailed records of such encounters, and the practice of returning to them has been characteristic of the Emperor's public engagements since before his accession.

Disability in Japanese public life has been reshaped substantially since the Tokyo Paralympics, with accessibility requirements, broadcast coverage and school programmes all advancing from a low base.

Progress has been uneven. Older stations, small commercial buildings and much of the country's rural infrastructure remain difficult, and the gap between new construction and the existing stock is wide.

The Games themselves are a test of the host region's accessibility, with venues, transport and accommodation all under scrutiny from visitors who experience them directly.

The imperial couple are in Aichi for the Games, having opened them on Saturday evening at Paloma Mizuho Stadium, and also visited Ghibli Park during their stay.

On Respect for the Aged Day, in a country where three in ten people are over 65, the question of who public space is built for has an audience beyond the Paralympic movement.

The Games run through October 4 across the host region and the Tokyo venues.

SPORTS

Giants Edge Yakult 3-2, Nippon-Ham Fall Two Games Behind Seibu

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Giants beat the Yakult Swallows 3-2 on Sunday, with reports indicating that Eito Tanaka has secured his first title, according to Asahi Shimbun and Sponichi.

Nippon-Ham lost again and now trail Seibu by two games, while the Hanshin Tigers' magic number situation continues to hang over the Central League.

A 3-2 win is the kind of result that a club chasing a pennant needs more than a rout, because it demonstrates that the bullpen can hold a one-run lead in September.

The Giants' position has improved through a run of results that coincided with Hanshin's difficulties, and the Central League race that looked settled a fortnight ago is genuinely contested again.

Hanshin's magic number, which stood at a comfortable figure earlier in the month, has been under threat since Saturday's defeat to Hiroshima combined with a Giants win.

A magic number disappears when the pursuing club can still mathematically overtake the leader, and it can reappear as quickly as it went, which is the part the countdown obscures.

In the Pacific League the pennant is settled, SoftBank having clinched a third consecutive title on Thursday, and the remaining fixtures are about the Climax Series places below them.

Nippon-Ham's two-game deficit to Seibu is the live question there, with the postseason format rewarding second place with home advantage in the First Stage.

That First Stage is a best-of-three at the second-placed club's ground, and its winner advances to face the champions in a Final Stage that begins one game down.

The remaining weeks of the regular season will settle both questions, with the postseason beginning in October.

SPORTS

Seiya Suzuki's 25th Home Run Ends an 18-Game Drought

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

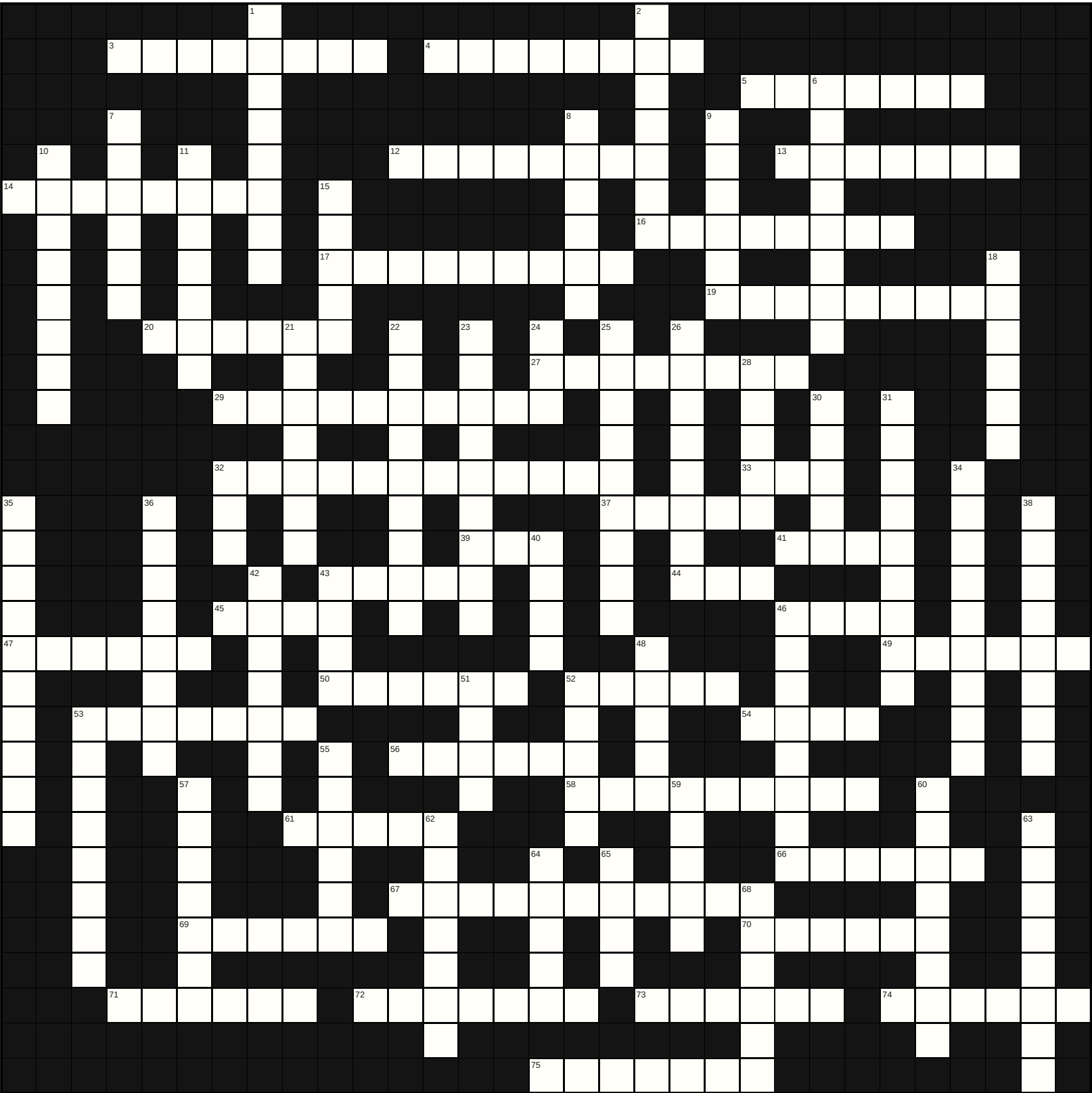
Seiya Suzuki hit his 25th home run of the season, a solo shot and his first in 18 games, according to Yomiuri Shimbun. Kazuma Okamoto contributed a timely hit, and Kodai Senga gave up three runs.

Eighteen games without a home run is a long stretch for a hitter whose value is built substantially on power, and it is the kind of drought that produces adjustments in a swing that then have to be undone.

Twenty-five home runs across a major league season places a hitter in the solid middle of the power rankings rather than among the leaders, and consistency across a 162-game schedule is what the

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Today's Professional Puzzle — Constructed by James O'Neill — 80 Words



Solution will appear in tomorrow's edition. Puzzle difficulty: Professional / Sunday-level.

ACROSS

- Least affected by the storm (8)
- Osaka city with a fatal flat fire (8)
- ___ poles, at risk of toppling (7)
- Under half-day rainband notice with Tokyo (8)
- Partly cloudy at 26 today (7)
- Racecourse postponed to Tuesday (8)
- Tokyo ___ Centre, the pool in use (8)
- Women's side meeting Chinese Taipei (9)
- Islands where high waves continue (9)
- Chiba city that briefly saw Level 5 (6)
- What Level 4 instructs (8)
- What JR East has warned of (10)
- Ohashi's event this evening (12)
- Party set to lead German state polls (3)
- Coast with sporadic small earthquakes (5)
- China's lending benchmark, out today (3)
- ___ given, the cartoon's second pan (4)
- Region the storm reaches this afternoon (5)
- Islands forecast 350 millimetres (3)
- Chamber Russia has just elected (4)
- Summit reached by 240,000 this summer (4)
- JR line with express services suspended (6)
- Ward told to move to a second floor (6)
- Where a cyclist struck an elderly woman (6)
- Two games clear of Nippon-Ham (5)
- Racecourse that went ahead (7)
- Peninsula where landfall is still possible (4)
- Silver at 17 behind him (6)
- Third of the three warnings today (9)
- Tuesday's summit partner (5)
- Park visited in Aichi (6)
- One of more than 100,000 in Japan (11)
- ___ Week, the five-day break (6)
- In the 100 breaststroke tonight (6)
- Northern Alps area of a fatal fall (6)
- Wednesday's holiday (7)
- ___ map, the standing advice (6)
- All four strokes in one race (6)
- Two were fired into the Sea of Japan (7)

DOWN

- Men's qualifying, including Hong Kong (8)
- Where 500 people joined a search (7)
- Kitakyushu river where a boy drowned (8)
- 3-2 winners over Yakult (6)
- Region forecast 200 millimetres (6)
- Limited express halted by a derailment (6)
- Prime minister bound for the Assembly (8)
- Source on the four-day market closure (7)
- Conceded three runs overnight (5)
- Warmest on the map at 33 (6)
- ___ for the Aged Day (7)
- What Washington may aim at the ICC (9)
- Swim, bike and run, and a gold today (9)
- At 156 to the dollar this morning (3)
- Element group on both summit agendas (9)
- The other ward under the river warning (8)
- Region sharing Kanto's 300 millimetres (5)
- Where F-2s deployed for joint training (5)
- The emergency in dementia care (9)
- Honour is a ___, per the signboard (3)
- River under a Level 4 warning (9)
- Gold in the 200 individual medley (10)
- Linear ___, forecast from midday (8)
- Subject of Asahi's front-page special (8)
- Back in the 2,000-yen range (4)
- Coolest on the map at 20 (7)
- Judged form, not sparring (4)
- Hazard alongside wind and landslides (8)
- Observance running through Saturday (5)
- Won Japan's first gold, in triathlon (4)
- Instrument in the cartoon's foreground (5)
- Not selected for the team event (8)
- Kata delivered another gold (6)
- Megabank rate reported at 0.5% (7)
- ___ Cup, where Japan beat New Zealand (5)
- Beaten 3-0 by the men's table tennis team (8)
- Care insurance ___, under review (7)
- ___ holiday, tomorrow's kind (8)
- Japanese name of today's holiday (5)
- Sunny at 31, outside the track (4)
- Character photographed with the Emperor (6)

number actually measures.

Suzuki's transition from NPB has followed the pattern of most Japanese position players: an adjustment to velocity, then to the quality of breaking pitches thrown in counts where Japanese pitchers would throw a fastball.

Okamoto is earlier in that same process, and a timely hit is the contribution that does not appear in a highlight package and decides a substantial share of games.

Senga's three runs is an ordinary outing for a starting pitcher and a reminder that a Japanese pitcher in the major leagues works on four days' rest rather than the six a Japanese rotation provides.

That difference in recovery has been the most consistently cited challenge for Japanese starters moving to the American game, and it shapes how clubs manage them across a season.

The postseason begins in early October, and clubs already assured of their positions are managing health rather than results.

Shohei Ohtani remains on the injured list and has resumed batting, the first stage of a hitter's return progression.

Japanese interest in the major leagues is now sufficient that overnight results run alongside NPB's own races as a matter of routine.

SPORTS

Japan Beat New Zealand 3-1 to Reach the Davis Cup Final Qualifying Round

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan defeated New Zealand 3-1 to advance to the Davis Cup final qualifying round, according to Jiji Press.

The Davis Cup is contested over a tie of singles and doubles rubbers, which rewards a country with two reliable singles players and a competent doubles pairing rather than one outstanding individual.

That format has historically suited Japan, whose depth in the men's game has fluctuated while its doubles tradition has remained consistent.

Japanese men's tennis reached its modern high point during Kei Nishikori's peak years, when a single player carried the country's ranking and its ties, and the programme has been rebuilding since.

Reaching the final qualifying round places Japan one tie away from the competition's finals stage, which is the level at which the strongest nations enter.

The competition's format has been revised repeatedly in the past decade, moving away from the home-and-away ties that gave the event its character, a change that remains contested among players and federations.

Home ties in Japan have historically drawn substantial crowds, and the domestic tennis audience is larger than the men's game's international results would suggest.

The women's programme has been the stronger of the two in recent years, with Japanese players competing regularly at the latter stages of major tournaments.

Scheduling in tennis is relentless, and Davis Cup ties compete for players' availability against a tour calendar that runs almost the whole year.

The final qualifying round will determine whether Japan reaches the finals stage of the competition.

SPORTS

Nakayama Racing Postponed to Tuesday; Hanshin Goes Ahead

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Japan Racing Association has postponed the Nakayama meeting to Tuesday because of the typhoon, while racing at Hanshin proceeds, according to the JRA and Nikkan Sports.

Nakayama sits in Funabashi in Chiba Prefecture, close to the coast the storm is expected to reach first, and a racecourse is among the least usable venues in high wind and heavy rain.

The turf itself is the first consideration. Racing on saturated ground risks injury to horses and riders, and a surface damaged by a meeting held in the wrong conditions takes weeks to recover.

Crowd safety is the second. A racecourse is an open site with temporary structures, signage and grandstands, and moving tens of thousands of people through it in a storm is a decision nobody wants to defend afterward.

Japanese racing is a substantial industry with a betting turnover among the largest in the world, and a postponed meeting carries financial consequences that extend well beyond the gate.

Postponement rather than cancellation preserves the card and the prize money, and Tuesday is available because it is a holiday under the citizens' holiday provision that falls between two public holidays.

Hanshin, in Hyogo Prefecture, is in the half of the country the storm is not reaching, where today's map shows Kobe sunny at 29 degrees.

That split is the clearest single illustration of how sharply this weather has divided the country, with one racecourse closed by a storm and another running in late summer sunshine.

Horses entered at Nakayama will have their preparation disrupted by a day, which matters more in racing than the equivalent delay would in most sports.

The JRA will confirm the revised card before Tuesday's meeting.

SPORTS

South Korea's Basketball Team Arrive Without a Practice After a Bus Failure

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

South Korea's men's basketball team were unable to practise before their final after their team bus failed to arrive, an operational failure at a Games otherwise proceeding smoothly.

Transport is the least visible and most consequential part of running a multi-sport event. Dozens of squads move between villages, training halls and venues on schedules that have no slack in them.

A missed practice before a final is a genuine competitive disadvantage. Teams use the session to rehearse set plays on the actual court, check shooting backgrounds and complete the preparation their routine depends on.

Organising committees maintain dedicated fleets with accredited drivers and reserved lanes, and failures of this kind usually trace to communication between the transport desk and the team's liaison rather than to vehicles.

Complaints about transport are a fixture of every Games, and they are taken seriously because a competitor who cannot reach a venue has been deprived of the competition itself.

For the host, an incident involving a neighbouring country's delegation carries diplomatic weight

beyond the sporting one, given the history the two programmes share in basketball and everything else.

The Aichi-Nagoya Games are distributed across a wide area, with venues from Toyota and Ichinomiya to Gamagori and Shinshiro and competition in Tokyo as well, which multiplies the transport requirement.

This weekend's weather has added a complication that no transport plan anticipates, with the Tokyo venues reached through a rail network suspending services.

Organisers will review the incident, and the practical response is usually a redundancy added to the schedule rather than an explanation.

The team played without the session.

SPORTS

Scoreboard and Fixtures

Compiled by the Sports Desk

ASIAN GAMES, SEPT. 20 — TRIATHLON: Takumi Hojo won Japan's first gold of the Games in the men's event at Gamagori. Aimi Hayashi took third in the women's event. The competition also serves as a Los Angeles continental qualifier.

ASIAN GAMES — KARATE: Japan won gold in kata.

ASIAN GAMES — SWIMMING: Japan took seven medals on the opening day at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre. Men's 200m individual medley: Tomoyuki Matsushita gold, Yuki Kojima (17) silver. Women's 50m breaststroke: Satomi Suzuki (35) silver in a Japanese record.

ASIAN GAMES — TABLE TENNIS: Japan's men beat the Maldives 3-0, opening a bid for a first team gold in 60 years. Tomokazu Harimoto was not selected; Teruaki Matsushima is in the squad. The women's team also opened with a win.

ASIAN GAMES TODAY: Men's individual all-around final, gymnastics. Baseball, Japan v China, Toyohashi, 6:30 p.m. Women's football, Japan v Chinese Taipei. Men's handball qualifying, including Hong Kong. Women's volleyball semi-finals. Swimming, seven finals this evening; Shin Ohashi in the men's 100m breaststroke.

ASIAN GAMES — CANCELLED: The under-16 football tournament is cancelled from its second day because of the typhoon. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government's swimming public viewing is cancelled.

SPORTS

NPB, SEPT. 20: Giants 3-2 Yakult. Reports indicate Eito Tanaka has secured his first title. Nippon-Ham lost again and trail Seibu by two games. Hanshin's magic number situation continues.

MLB: Seiya Suzuki hit his 25th home run, a solo shot and his first in 18 games. Okamoto had a timely hit. Senga conceded three runs.

TENNIS: Japan beat New Zealand 3-1 to reach the Davis Cup final qualifying round.

RUGBY: Japan defeated Fiji on Sept. 19 to win the Pacific Nations Cup, their first title since 2019.

HORSE RACING: The Nakayama meeting is postponed to Tuesday because of the typhoon. Hanshin proceeds as scheduled.

ALSO CANCELLED: The NAGASE Cup athletics meet scheduled for today, and the opening day of a para athletics competition.

SPORTS

Seventeen Years Old and Second in a Continental Final

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Yuki Kojima's silver medal in the men's 200 metres individual medley, behind Tomoyuki Matsushita, was won at 17, which places him among the youngest medallists of the Games' opening session.

Japanese swimming has a long record of bringing athletes into senior international competition very young, and the individual medley in particular has produced teenage finalists here before.

The event is unusually demanding of a young swimmer because it requires technical competence in all four strokes, and technique in butterfly and breaststroke takes years of specific work to build.

A medley swimmer therefore cannot be produced quickly by physical development alone, which is what makes a 17-year-old on a continental podium a statement about coaching rather than about growth.

The Los Angeles cycle is the frame within which this result will be read at home, since a swimmer of that age has three more years of physical maturation before it arrives.

That timeline is also a risk. Swimmers who peak in their teens are a recognised pattern, and Japanese programmes have become more careful about training loads on developing athletes.

A one-two finish with an established senior swimmer taking gold is close to the ideal outcome for a national federation, delivering the title and the succession in the same race.

The Tokyo Aquatics Centre, built for the 2020 Olympics, is a venue Japanese swimmers know well, and host advantage in the pool is measurable if modest.

Seven further finals are scheduled there this evening, with Shin Ohashi competing in the men's 100 metres breaststroke.

The meet runs across the Games' first week, with the relay events that test a programme's depth still to come.

SPORTS

A National Record in a Sprint Event, Set at 35

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Satomi Suzuki set a new Japanese record at the age of 35 in taking silver in the women's 50 metres breaststroke on the opening night of swimming at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre.

Sprint swimming is the least forgiving discipline in the sport for an ageing athlete. The 50-metre events are decided in fractions of a second and reward explosive power above everything else.

Conventional career arcs in those events peak in the early to middle twenties, and the great majority of swimmers have retired by their early thirties.

A national record set at 35 therefore represents something beyond persistence. It means an athlete is faster now than she or anyone else in the country has been.

The explanation, where swimmers have managed it, has generally been in training design rather than in any single intervention: reduced volume, greater specificity, longer recovery and strength work maintained year-round.

Breaststroke is also the most technical of the four strokes, and technical refinement is one of the few

components of swimming that can still improve when raw power has plateaued.

Suzuki has competed across multiple Games cycles and is among the most experienced members of the Japanese squad, which gives her presence in a final a value the results do not capture.

A home Games at the end of a long career is a rare piece of scheduling luck, and the Tokyo pool is one she has raced in many times.

Japan's seven medals on the opening day came from a squad spanning nearly two decades of age, from a 17-year-old silver medallist to a 35-year-old record holder.

The remaining swimming programme runs through the Games' first week.

SPORTS

What Hojo's Gold Buys Japan Beyond the Medal

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Takumi Hojo's gold in the men's triathlon at Gamagori was Japan's first of these Games, and it was won in a race that also functioned as a continental qualifying event for the Los Angeles Olympics.

Qualification secured through a continental event is worth considerably more than a medal, because it removes the need to chase points through two years of world series racing.

That chase is expensive and physically costly. Athletes pursuing ranking points travel continuously, race when they would rather train, and arrive at an Olympic year already worn.

A berth banked now allows a programme to plan backwards from Los Angeles instead of forwards from the next ranking cut, which changes how the intervening seasons are used.

Aimi Hayashi's third place in the women's race adds to a Japanese record in the event that has been building steadily across individual and mixed relay competition.

The mixed relay, in which two men and two women each complete a shortened course in sequence, is the event that rewards national depth rather than a single outstanding athlete, and it is where Japan has been strongest.

Triathlon is the most weather-exposed discipline on the early Games programme, with an open-water swim, a bike leg and a run all conducted outdoors.

Gamagori's position on Mikawa Bay, west of the storm's track, made today's racing possible in conditions that Kanto could not have offered.

Open-water swims are shortened or cancelled where conditions or water quality require it, and organisers of continental qualifiers plan contingencies precisely because the stakes make cancellation costly.

Hojo's win is the first entry on a medal table that Japan has said it wants to fill past 78 golds by October 4.

SPORTS

The All-Around Is the Event Japan Has Always Measured Itself By

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The men's individual all-around final is held today at the Asian Games, in the discipline where Japanese gymnastics has its deepest history and its highest expectations.

The all-around requires a competitor to perform on all six apparatus, with the scores added, which means a weakness anywhere is fatal and no strength can compensate for it.

Japan has produced a succession of all-around champions across Olympic and world competition, and the event's demand for completeness has suited a coaching culture built on technical precision above spectacle.

The scoring system separates difficulty from execution, and Japanese gymnasts have historically been rewarded most heavily on the execution component, which measures how cleanly a skill is performed.

That emphasis is a deliberate strategic choice. Difficulty can be added by any programme willing to accept the risk; execution takes years and is harder for rivals to replicate quickly.

The six apparatus are floor, pommel horse, rings, vault, parallel bars and horizontal bar, and pommel

horse is conventionally where all-around titles are lost.

China is the region's other historic power in the discipline, and Asian Games gymnastics has frequently been a closer contest than the world championships because both programmes are in the same field.

Japan's domestic structure, running from school clubs through university teams to corporate sides, produces depth that few countries match and that has survived the decline in youth numbers.

An all-around title on home soil carries a weight beyond the medal table, given the event's place in the country's sporting self-image.

The apparatus finals follow later in the Games, where specialists who cannot contend across six pieces get their own competition.

SPORTS

The Baseball at These Games Is Not the Baseball on Television

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's baseball team meets China at Toyohashi this evening in the country's opening fixture of the Asian Games tournament, with a squad drawn from amateur and corporate-league players rather than from NPB.

That is the standard arrangement for this competition, and it reflects a professional season that runs to October and clubs that will not release players in September.

Corporate-league baseball in Japan is a serious structure with a long history, in which companies field teams of employees who train and play at a standard most countries' amateur systems cannot approach.

The Intercity Baseball Tournament at Tokyo Dome each summer draws substantial crowds, and several NPB players each year are drafted out of the corporate leagues rather than from universities or high schools.

For many of these players the Asian Games is the highest level they will reach, and a national jersey is the recognition their careers offer instead of a professional contract.

China's programme is younger and smaller, developed with assistance from Japanese and American coaching, and the gap between the two remains wide.

South Korea and Chinese Taipei are the competitive opponents in this tournament, both fielding squads that in some years include professionals depending on their own league calendars.

Baseball's relationship with multi-sport games has been unstable, having entered and left the Olympic programme repeatedly, which leaves the Asian Games as one of the few multi-sport settings where it is reliably contested.

Toyohashi sits in eastern Aichi, well clear of the weather affecting the Pacific coast further east, and the fixture is scheduled for the evening.

A tournament win would be a good deal less celebrated in Japan than a swimming gold, which is itself a statement about how the country ranks its own sports.

SPORTS

The Rules That Decide Whether a Race Meeting Runs

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Japan Racing Association's decision to postpone Nakayama to Tuesday while Hanshin proceeds follows criteria that are more specific than they appear from outside.

Track condition is the first consideration and is graded formally, from firm through good and yielding to soft, with the grading published before each race and influencing both form and betting.

Beyond a certain saturation the surface stops being merely slow and becomes a risk of injury, to horses whose legs carry enormous loads at speed and to riders who fall at forty miles an hour.

Wind is the second. A racecourse is an open site with temporary structures, advertising hoardings and grandstands, and debris on a track during a race is a danger nobody can manage once the field is running.

Crowd movement is the third, and it is the one that decides most cancellations. Moving tens of thousands of people to and from a course in a storm, on a rail

network that is suspending services, is the exposure an operator cannot accept.

Postponement rather than cancellation preserves the card, the prize money and the betting turnover, which for Japanese racing is among the largest in the world.

Tuesday is available precisely because it is a citizens' holiday, falling between two public holidays, which is a scheduling convenience nobody planned for this purpose.

Nakayama, in Funabashi in Chiba, sits close to the coast the storm reaches first, and is served by lines that are already suspending express services.

Hanshin, in Hyogo, is in the half of the country where today's map shows Kobe sunny at 29 degrees.

Trainers with horses entered at Nakayama now have a day's disruption to a preparation that is measured in weeks, which matters more in racing than the equivalent delay in most sports.

SPORTS

The Individual Medley Is the Event That Cannot Be Faked

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's one-two finish in the men's 200 metres individual medley, with Tomoyuki Matsushita ahead of 17-year-old Yuki Kojima, came in the event that examines a swimmer most completely.

The medley is swum butterfly, backstroke, breaststroke and freestyle in that order, fifty metres of each over the 200-metre distance, with no opportunity to hide a weak stroke.

Each transition is a technical problem of its own. A swimmer arrives at the wall in one stroke's rhythm and must leave it in another's, and the turns are where races of this kind are decided.

Breaststroke is conventionally the hardest leg to develop, being the least intuitive of the four and the one in which technique contributes most relative to strength.

That is why a medley specialist takes years to produce and cannot be created by physical development alone, and why a 17-year-old on a continental podium in the event says something specific about coaching.

Pacing is the other discipline. A swimmer who attacks the butterfly leg arrives at the freestyle with nothing, and the most common error among young medley swimmers is going out too fast.

Japan has a long tradition in the event, and the domestic programme's emphasis on technical work across all four strokes from a young age suits it.

A one-two finish delivers the title and the succession in the same race, which is close to the ideal outcome for a national federation.

The 400-metre version of the event, twice the distance with the same sequence, tests endurance alongside the technical range and is contested later in the programme.

Seven more finals are scheduled at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre this evening.

SPORTS

Kata Is Judged, Which Makes a Japanese Gold Complicated

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Japan's gold in karate kata came in a discipline judged rather than scored, which places a particular kind of pressure on competitors from the country where the sport originated.

Kata is a set sequence of movements performed alone, representing a fight against imagined opponents, and it is evaluated on technical performance and athletic performance rather than on contact.

The technical component covers stances, transitions, timing, breathing and the correctness of each movement against the recognised form. The athletic component covers strength, speed and balance.

Competitors select from an approved list of kata, and the choice is strategic: a more demanding form offers more to reward and more to lose.

Judging panels compare performances directly in the modern format, with competitors performing in pairs and judges indicating a preference, which was introduced to make the process more transparent to spectators.

SPORTS

Karate's origins in Okinawa and its development through mainland Japanese schools mean the standard being judged is one the country largely defined, which is an advantage and a burden.

An advantage because Japanese competitors train within that standard from childhood. A burden because a Japanese defeat in kata is received at home as a failure rather than as a result.

Spain, Italy, Turkey and several Middle Eastern countries have developed kata programmes of genuine strength over the past two decades, and the discipline is no longer a Japanese preserve.

Karate's Olympic appearance in Tokyo in 2020 was not repeated at subsequent Games, which has left continental competition carrying more weight for its athletes.

The kumite disciplines, contested as sparring matches in weight categories, follow later in the Games programme.

SPORTS

Volleyball Semi-Finals and Handball Qualifying Fill the Games' Middle Distance

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The women's volleyball semi-finals are scheduled today at the Asian Games, and the men's handball qualifying rounds continue with a fixture against Hong Kong.

Japanese women's volleyball carries a history that predates most of the country's other team-sport achievements, with an Olympic title in Tokyo in 1964 that remains part of the national sporting memory.

The modern programme competes against Chinese and South Korean sides with height advantages, and it has built a style around reception, speed and a fast offence that a taller team struggles to track.

That approach depends on receiving serve cleanly, which is the discipline Japanese volleyball coaches spend the most time on and which decides most matches at this level.

A semi-final is where a continental tournament becomes serious, since the medal is decided by two matches rather than by a group campaign.

Handball occupies a different position. The sport has a smaller domestic base in Japan, and improvement has come from players gaining professional experience in European leagues.

A qualifying fixture against Hong Kong is a result the squad is expected to achieve, and the group's shape will determine whether it faces the region's stronger sides in the knockout rounds.

Both sports are indoors, which places them among the events least affected by the weather on the Pacific coast.

The Games' venues are spread across the Aichi region from Toyota and Ichinomiya to Gamagori and Shinshiro, with swimming in Tokyo.

Results will run in tomorrow's editions alongside tonight's seven swimming finals.

SPORTS

The Under-16 Tournament Is Cancelled From Its Second Day

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

The Asian Games under-16 football tournament has been cancelled from its second day onward because of the typhoon, the clearest instance so far of the weather reaching the competition itself.

Age-group tournaments are the events organisers cancel first, because the participants are children, the matches are outdoors and the competitive consequence of abandoning them is smallest.

That calculation is correct and it is a loss nonetheless. For most of the players involved this was the largest tournament they will enter, and there is no rescheduled date.

Youth football in Japan runs through school clubs and through the academies operated by J-League clubs, and the two systems have converged over the past two decades.

Players identified at 16 are typically already inside one of those structures, and an international tournament is where they are seen by selectors for the age-group national teams above them.

Cancellation removes that exposure for a cohort, and the players affected will have to find it through

domestic competition instead.

The senior men's tournament, contested at under-21 level, continues, as does the women's competition, with Japan meeting Chinese Taipei today.

Outdoor events on the Pacific side have been the ones under review all weekend, and the Games' geographic spread has protected most of the programme.

Aichi's venues are clear this morning, with Nagoya at 33 degrees, while the storm's effects are concentrated to the east.

Organisers will publish revised schedules for any further events affected.

SPORTS

Seven More Finals Tonight, With Ohashi in the 100 Breaststroke

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Seven final events are scheduled this evening at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, with Shin Ohashi, the Japanese record holder, competing in the men's 100 metres breaststroke.

The 100 breaststroke is the middle distance of the stroke, demanding both the explosive power of the 50 and enough capacity to hold technique through a second length.

Breaststroke is the most technical of the four competitive strokes and the one where a small error in timing costs the most, because the glide phase either carries a swimmer or stops them.

Japan has a long tradition in the stroke, with Olympic champions across several generations, and the domestic development system devotes proportionally more attention to it than most countries do.

A national record holder entering a continental final carries the expectation that comes with the title, and the Asian field in breaststroke is among the strongest in the world.

Last night's session produced seven Japanese medals, a one-two in the men's 200 individual medley and a national record from a 35-year-old in the women's 50 breaststroke.

Sustaining that across a second evening is the question, since opening-day hauls at multi-sport games frequently reflect a schedule that front-loads a host nation's strongest events.

The venue was built for the 2020 Olympics and has hosted national and international meets since, which makes it familiar water for the Japanese squad.

Getting to it is the day's complication, with the metropolitan rail network suspending services and a public viewing event cancelled by the metropolitan government.

The relay events, which test a national programme's depth rather than any individual's speed, come later in the week.

SPORTS

Two Games Between Nippon-Ham and Seibu, and a Postseason Place at Stake

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Nippon-Ham lost again on Sunday and now trail Seibu by two games, in a race for second place in the Pacific League that carries more consequence than the margin suggests.

Second place hosts the Climax Series First Stage, a best-of-three at its own ground against the third-placed club, and home advantage in a three-game series is worth a great deal.

The winner advances to the Final Stage against SoftBank, who clinched the pennant on Thursday, and begins that series one game down under the format's advantage for the champions.

That structure means a club finishing second has a realistic path to the Japan Series and a club finishing third has a considerably harder one, which is why two games in September matter.

Seibu's position has been built on pitching, with Sumida reaching double-digit wins for a second consecutive season in Saturday's win over Lotte.

Nippon-Ham's difficulty has been consistency, and a run of defeats at this stage of a season is the hardest kind to arrest, because every remaining fixture carries more weight than the last.

In the Central League the picture is the reverse, with the pennant unsettled and Hanshin's magic number under threat after results over the weekend.

The Giants' 3-2 win over Yakult on Sunday continued a run that has turned a settled race into a contested one.

Reports indicate that Eito Tanaka has secured his first title, which for a player is the kind of individual recognition that survives whatever the club does in October.

The regular season runs into October, followed by the Climax Series and the Japan Series.

SPORTS

The Medal Table Starts Filling, and the Target Is 78

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's opening full day of competition produced a gold in the men's triathlon, a gold in karate kata and seven swimming medals including a gold in the men's 200 metres individual medley.

The delegation's stated target is to surpass the 78 gold medals won at the 1966 Bangkok Games, which remains the country's high-water mark at this competition.

That figure was set in a very different field. The 1966 Games were smaller, China did not compete, and Japanese dominance of Asian sport across the disciplines then contested was close to total.

Surpassing it against a Chinese programme that leads the region by a wide margin, and a South Korean one that matches Japan across many sports, would be a considerably greater achievement than the original.

Japan has entered a record 932 athletes across a 43-sport programme of 469 events, with Kosei Inoue, an Olympic judo champion and former national men's coach, as team leader.

Host advantage is measurable at multi-sport games, through familiar venues, the absence of travel and crowd support in disciplines where momentum matters.

Swimming, judo, gymnastics, wrestling and athletics are where the expectations are concentrated, and two of those have now begun.

The Games' breadth beyond the Olympic programme, including regional martial arts and disciplines with deep local followings, favours the country with the deepest programme across the most sports.

Several events carry Olympic qualification, including the triathlon that delivered Japan's first gold, which gives individual results a consequence the medal table does not capture.

The Games run through October 4, and the counting has three weeks to go.

SPORTS

Why the Games Are Being Held in Two Regions at Once

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

The Asian Games are centred on Aichi and Nagoya, and the swimming is being held at the Tokyo Aquatics Centre, some 350 kilometres away, which this weekend turned out to be an unplanned advantage.

Distributing a multi-sport event across existing venues rather than building new ones has become the standard approach after a generation of host cities left with facilities they could not use.

Aichi's venues run from Toyota and Ichinomiya to Gamagori on the coast and Shinshiro in the eastern hills, which spreads the economic benefit across the prefecture and multiplies the transport requirement.

Using Tokyo's Olympic pool avoids building a competition-standard aquatics venue for a three-week event, which is among the most expensive single facilities at any Games.

The trade-off is logistical. Athletes, officials and media split between two metropolitan regions, and the two operate on separate transport and accommodation systems.

This weekend the split has functioned as a weather hedge nobody planned, with Aichi's programme proceeding in clear conditions while Kanto shut down.

The triathlon at Gamagori, the table tennis at Toyota and the time trial at Shinshiro all took place on the Pacific coast of a prefecture the storm did not reach.

The swimming in Tokyo continued because the pool is indoors, though the metropolitan government cancelled its public viewing and the rail network has been suspending services.

The under-16 football tournament has been cancelled from its second day, which is the only part of the programme lost so far.

Whether the distribution looks clever or awkward will depend on how the rest of the fortnight's weather behaves.

SPORTS

A Pacific Nations Cup Won on Saturday, and the Autumn That Follows It

By Oliver Brooks | Japan Sports Desk Editor

Japan's defeat of Fiji on Saturday the 19th delivered the Pacific Nations Cup, the country's first title in the competition since 2019, and the win has been somewhat overtaken by a typhoon and an Asian Games.

The result matters beyond the trophy because it came against Fiji, whose players are established across the strongest European and Japanese club competitions and whose physical game has historically troubled Japan.

The 2019 title was won in the year of the home World Cup, when Japan reached the quarter-finals and produced the most successful period in the country's rugby history.

The years since have been harder, with squad turnover, coaching changes and a domestic competition restructured into a league that has drawn substantial international talent without producing consistent national results.

The Pacific Nations Cup is the principal regional competition outside the established southern and northern hemisphere championships, and it functions as the main competitive outlet for Japan, Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and the United States.

Japan's position in the world game remains anomalous. It has a professional domestic league with genuine financial resources and a national team that struggles for fixtures against the strongest sides.

The autumn international window is where that is tested, and results there against European opposition will determine how the title is read.

The domestic league's foreign players, many of them internationals, raise the standard of week-to-week rugby while occupying places that would otherwise develop Japanese-qualified players.

That trade-off is the standing argument in Japanese rugby administration, and no version of it has yet produced a settled answer.

The next World Cup cycle is the frame within which the title will eventually be judged.

SPORTS

What a Magic Number Is, and Why Hanshin's Keeps Coming Back

By Haruto Yamamoto | Sports Reporter

Reports on the Central League race refer to Hanshin's magic number situation continuing, and the term describes a specific piece of arithmetic rather than a general mood.

A magic number is the combined total of wins by the leading club and losses by its nearest challenger required to make the leader's position mathematically unassailable.

It is issued only when the second-placed club can no longer be caught by the third, because until then more than one challenger remains and the calculation has no single subject.

That is why a magic number can disappear after it has been issued: if the third-placed club closes on the second, the condition for publishing it lapses and the countdown is withdrawn.

Japanese baseball follows the practice closely, and the moment a magic number is issued is itself reported as an event in the season.

Ties complicate it. NPB games can end drawn, which means a fixture may produce neither a win for one side nor a loss for the other, and the arithmetic has to account for games that decide nothing.

The Giants' 3-2 win over Yakult on Sunday is the kind of result that keeps a challenger's position alive, and their recent run has turned a settled race into a contested one.

In the Pacific League the question is closed, SoftBank having clinched a third consecutive pennant on Thursday.

SPORTS

What remains there is second place, which hosts the Climax Series First Stage, with Nippon-Ham two games behind Seibu.

The pennant winner still has to come through a postseason, which is why a magic number in Japanese baseball settles less than it does elsewhere.

CULTURE

The Emperor and Empress Visit Ghibli Park, and Pose With No-Face

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress visited Ghibli Park and took a commemorative photograph with No-Face, according to Yomiuri Shimbun.

The visit falls during the imperial couple's presence in Aichi for the Asian Games, which the Emperor opened at Paloma Mizuho Stadium on Saturday evening.

Ghibli Park opened in Aichi in 2022 on the site of the 2005 world exposition, and it presents the studio's films through built environments rather than through rides, which is an unusual choice for a park of its scale.

No-Face is the masked figure from Spirited Away, a character who is silent, ambiguous and, in the film, dangerous before he is pitiable, and who has become one of the most recognised images in contemporary Japanese culture.

An imperial photograph beside him is the kind of image that circulates instantly and that would have been unthinkable a generation ago, when the imperial household's public presentation was considerably more formal.

That informality has been a deliberate development. The current Emperor and Empress have consistently chosen settings that place them in ordinary Japanese life rather than above it.

The couple also met a girl in a wheelchair at the Asian Games whom they had last seen seven years ago, according to Asahi Shimbun, a reunion of the kind that the imperial schedule now makes room for.

Their presence in Aichi links the Games, the park and the region's manufacturing economy in a week when the Games are competing for attention with a typhoon.

Hayao Miyazaki's studio has been Japan's most successful cultural export of the past forty years, and the park's role is partly to convert that reach into visitors to a prefecture better known for car factories.

The park continues to operate through the holiday week, in a part of the country the storm is not reaching directly.

CULTURE

A Park Built From Films, on the Site of a World Exposition

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

Ghibli Park, which the Emperor and Empress visited during their stay in Aichi, opened in 2022 on the grounds of the 2005 world exposition near Nagoya.

It is unusual among parks built around a film studio in that it has almost no rides. Visitors walk through built environments drawn from the films and encounter them as places rather than as attractions.

That choice reflects the studio's own preferences, and Hayao Miyazaki's stated scepticism about commercial exploitation of the work has shaped the project throughout.

The park expanded in stages, adding areas based on individual films, and the phased approach allowed the design to be adjusted as the visitor pattern became clear.

Reusing an exposition site is itself notable. Large event sites frequently become difficult legacies, and Aichi's has now had two distinct uses across two decades.

Studio Ghibli's films have been Japan's most successful cultural export of the past forty years, recognised in markets where very little other Japanese cinema circulates.

No-Face, the masked figure from Spirited Away with whom the imperial couple were photographed, is among the most widely recognised images the studio has produced.

The park's role for the prefecture is partly economic: converting cultural reach into visitors to a region better known internationally for car manufacturing.

The Asian Games have brought a different kind of visitor to the same prefecture this month, and the two are being promoted together.

Visitor numbers are capped and tickets are sold in advance for timed entry, which is how the park has managed demand since it opened.

CULTURE

Higan, the Week That Turns on Wednesday

By Naomi Kato | Culture & Society Editor

The autumn Higan runs through Saturday, centred on Wednesday's equinox, and it is the observance that fills Japanese cemeteries twice a year.

Higan is a Buddhist period of seven days, three before the equinox, the day itself and three after, observed in both spring and autumn.

The word refers to the far shore, the state of enlightenment, as distinct from the near shore of ordinary existence, and the equinox is chosen because day and night are balanced.

The practical observance is a visit to the family grave, where the stone is washed, weeds are cleared, flowers and incense are offered and the family stands briefly together.

Ohagi, rice cakes covered in sweet bean paste, are the food associated with the season, made with the same ingredients as the spring version and given a different name for the autumn flowers.

The custom is Japanese rather than pan-Buddhist. Higan as a fixed observance is not found in the same form elsewhere in the Buddhist world, and its association with the equinox is particular to Japan.

The equinox itself became a public holiday under a postwar renaming of an imperial rite, and it is the only Japanese holiday whose date is fixed by an astronomical observatory's calculation.

Grave visiting has been made harder by the same demography the holiday before it celebrates. Families have moved to cities, graves remain in the ancestral district, and the relatives able to travel are ageing.

Grave relocation services, urban columbaria and arrangements under which temples take over the care of graves with no surviving family have all grown in response.

This year's storm has taken the first half of the week out of the eastern half of the country, and cemetery traffic in Kanto is expected to concentrate at the week's end.

IN TODAY'S EDITION

POLITICS

A Government Running a Storm Response and a Summit Departure on the Same Morning — Page 2

Japanese and Indian Air Forces Train Together as F-2s Deploy to Western India — Page 2

Level 4 on the Zenpukuji River Is the Instruction the Whole System Was Built to Deliver — Page 2

North Korea Fires Two Ballistic Missiles Into the Sea of Japan — Page 2

Takaichi to Back Middle East Energy Supply at the United Nations, and to Raise AI Misinformation — Page 2

The Extraordinary Session Waits Behind a Storm and a Five-Day Holiday — Page 2

Tokyo's Meeting Comes First, and Washington's Meeting With Beijing Comes Two Days Later — Page 2

What Happens in Tokyo in the Minutes After a Missile Launch — Page 3

What a Japanese Prime Minister Says at the General Assembly, and What Is New This Year — Page 3

ANALYSIS

ANALYSIS: The Holiday and the Emergency Are Describing the Same People — Page 3

ANALYSIS: The Numbers Behind the Holiday, Set Against Each Other — Page 3

ANALYSIS: Two Summits, Two Days Apart, and Japan Is in Only One of Them — Page 3

ANALYSIS: What a Government Can Actually Do Between Now and Tonight — Page 3

INTERNATIONAL

Reports Say Washington Is Preparing Broad Sanctions Against the International Criminal Court — Page 3

AfD Expected to Become the Largest Party in German State Elections — Page 4

Japan Funds the Court Washington May Sanction — Page 4

Month Seven in the Gulf, and a Japanese Argument at the United Nations — Page 4

Russia's Parliamentary Election Closes With the Ruling Party Largest, and Drones Over the Capital — Page 4

The Officials Meet Before the Principals Do — Page 4

ECONOMY

The Yen Gives Back Most of Its New York Gain, and the Market Calls Official Action a Drop in the Ocean — Page 4

Tokyo Is Shut Until Thursday, and Four Days of News Will Arrive in One Session — Page 4

China Sets Its September Lending Benchmark While Tokyo Is Closed — Page 5

Half a Per Cent on Deposits, and a Rising Bill on Variable-Rate Loans — Page 5

Markets, Rates and Prices at a Glance — Page 5

Rice in the 2,000-Yen Range for the First Time in About Two Years — Page 5

The Demography Behind Today's Holiday Is Also the Country's Main Economic Constraint — Page 5

The New Rate Applies From Thursday, and the Argument Has Moved to What Comes After It — Page 5

The Russia Sanctions Bill Reaches Japan Through Procurement Costs — Page 5

Why Tuesday Is a Holiday Nobody Legislated — Page 5

Silver Week, and the Policy That Invented Long Weekends — Page 6

The Holiday Ledger: Rice Down, Deposits Up, the Yen Weaker, the Market Shut — Page 6

What Intervention Would Actually Involve, and Why the Market Doubts It — Page 6

BUSINESS

A Fuel Subsidy Approaching Nine Trillion Yen, and a Prime Minister About to Argue for Gulf Supply — Page 6

Coffee, a Cab and a Soy Sauce Plant: Three Corporate Decisions Still Working Through the Economy — Page 6

The Bill for This Storm Will Be Counted in a Market That Is Closed — Page 6

The Firms That Feel a Rate Rise First Employ Most of the Country — Page 6

The First Five-Day Silver Week in Eleven Years Has Lost Its Middle — Page 6

A 15% Tariff and an 80% Fall in the Surplus — Page 7

A Rice Crop Whose Price Was Already Set Now Faces 300 Millimetres of Rain — Page 7

Rare Earths: The Dependence Japan Has Spent Fifteen Years Failing to Escape — Page 7

Restarting a Railway Takes Longer Than Stopping One — Page 7

The Cover Households Have Been Dropping Is the One They Need Today — Page 7

The Repair Work Will Queue Behind Everything Else Japan Is Already Building — Page 7

The Shops That Stay Open Longest, and the Decision to Close Them — Page 7

Why One Derailed Freight Train Stops an Express 200 Kilometres Away — Page 7

COURTS

A Bicycle Is a Vehicle, and the Law Has Been Catching Up — Page 8

Boy of Three Found Unconscious After a Drink-Driving Incident in Fukuoka; Man, 68, Arrested — Page 8

The Offence That Was Written After a Case in Fukuoka — Page 8

Woman of 83 Killed by a Bicycle in Akashi, and the Rider Left the Scene — Page 8

SOCIETY

A Man Searching Okinawa for His Missing Mother, and the 500 People Helping Him Look — Page 8

More Than 240,000 Reached Fuji's Summit This Summer, and the Environment Ministry Will Investigate the Crowding — Page 8

Two Years After the Oku-Noto Rains, a Boy of Eight Moves Out of Temporary Housing — Page 8

Boy of 16 Swept Away and Killed in the Itabitsu River While Retrieving His Glasses — Page 9

One Dead in an Apartment Building Fire in Toyonaka — Page 9

Saitama Man Dies After a Fall in the Happo Kiretto — Page 9

Freight Train Derails Inside a Station, Suspending the Yakumo and Affecting 2,700 Passengers — Page 10

Monday's Map: Rain Down the Pacific Side, and 33 Degrees in Nagoya — Page 10

Roads Have Already Flooded, and the Underpass List Is Today's Most Practical Document — Page 10

Seven-Metre Waves Continue Around Izu, and 350 Millimetres Is Forecast for the Islands — Page 10

Small Earthquakes Continue Off Amami, One at Intensity 3 — Page 10

The Agency Has Given Half a Day's Notice of a Linear Rainband Over Tokyo and Shizuoka — Page 10

Uchibo Line Express Services Suspended as the Network East of Tokyo Closes — Page 10

How Japan's Long-Term Care Insurance Works, and What It Cannot Do — Page 11

How to Read the Track Chart on Today's Front Page — Page 11

Level 4 and Level 5: What This Morning's Warnings Actually Instruct — Page 11

Nine and a Half Million Working Over-65s: Dignity, Necessity, or Both — Page 11

The Pan Marked Care Given Is the One Japan Cannot Fill — Page 11

What Counts as a Landfall, and Why Boso Keeps Coming Up — Page 11

Why Japan's Floods Kill Old People, and What Level 3 Was Designed to Change — Page 11

Why a Small River Like the Zenpukuji Is More Dangerous Than a Big One — Page 11

From 153 to 100,000: The Number on the Cartoon's Signboard — Page 12

Managing a Mountain That Is Also a Shrine and a Tourist Attraction — Page 12

Municipal Ceremonies for the Holiday Meet a Typhoon Warning — Page 12

The Networks That Find People Who Have Wandered — Page 12

The Problem in the Cities Is Not Frailty but Absence — Page 12

The Storm Will Weaken and Widen at the Same Time — Page 12

The Three Ways to Fill a Care Shortage, and Why Japan Has Chosen None of Them — Page 12

When the Last Shop Closes, an Old Person's Week Changes Entirely — Page 12

A Health System Built for Acute Illness Is Treating Chronic Old Age — Page 13

A Holiday Has Spared the Schools, and Tuesday Is a Holiday Too — Page 13

A Storm Passing East of Tokyo Bay Is the Configuration That Raises the Water — Page 13

Autumn Is When the Bears Come Down, and the Rain Will Not Stop Them — Page 13

Temporary Housing Is Designed for Two Years and Almost Never Lasts Two Years — Page 13

What the Public Pension Actually Replaces — Page 13

What to Watch This Afternoon, and What to Keep Charged — Page 13

Who Will Clear the Mud: Japan's Volunteer System and Its Own Ageing Problem — Page 13

Announcing a Suspension a Day Early Is a Recent Japanese Invention — Page 14

Sixteen Public Holidays, and Why They Keep Landing on Mondays — Page 14

Ten Kilometres an Hour Is the Most Dangerous Number in the Bulletin — Page 14

The Carers Who Are Themselves Over 65 — Page 14

The Document Every Japanese Household Has and Almost Nobody Reads — Page 14

The Licence Question Japan Keeps Returning To — Page 14

Why Japan Calls It Number 25 and Almost Nobody Else Does — Page 14

Why a Toppled Pole Means a Longer Blackout Than a Fallen Wire — Page 14

Every Record in Today's Figures Is Also a Bill — Page 15



"A nation that can keep its elders has kept something worth keeping."
Cartoon by Taro Suzuki

EDITORIAL

A Nation That Can Keep Its Elders Has Kept Something Worth Keeping

Taro Suzuki draws a scale with years lived in one pan and care given in the other. This morning's figures say the first pan is full. The second is the one the country cannot fill, and today's evacuation orders say so too

By Samantha Ortiz | Editorial Page Editor

Taro Suzuki's cartoon this morning is the gentlest thing he has drawn for this page in months, and it is not a compliment.

The scene is a country street under a banner reading Respect for the Aged Day. Maple leaves are turning. Paper lanterns hang from the poles. A temple gate stands at the end of the road, a clinic advertises health consultations on the left, a greengrocer's shop occupies the right.

In the middle of the street an elderly woman in a lilac kimono is handed a cup by a younger woman. Beside them an older man holds a sheaf of papers while a boy, a man in a suit and a woman bow to him.

Two wooden signboards stand at the roadside. The first reads: one hundred thousand lives past one hundred, from 153 in 1963. The second reads: honour is a bow.

And in the foreground, on a heavy brass stand, there is a balance. The left pan is labelled YEARS LIVED. The right pan is labelled CARE GIVEN. The beam sits level.

The caption: a nation that can keep its elders has kept something worth keeping.

It is a warm drawing with a hard instrument at the centre of it, and the instrument is what the cartoon is actually about. A balance is not a celebration. It is a measurement, and measurements can go either way.

So let us take the two pans in turn, because this morning we have the figures for both.

The pan marked years lived is full and getting fuller. The internal affairs ministry's estimate, published for the holiday, puts the population aged 65 and over at a record 36.24 million, or 29.6% of the country. The centenarian count passed 100,000 this month, against 153 when the survey began in 1963.

That signboard is doing something specific. A rise from 153 to 100,000 in sixty-odd years is not a demographic curve; it is an achievement, and it belongs to public health, universal insurance, diet, sanitation and a postwar settlement that decided old age should not be a private problem.

Japan did not stumble into the longest lives in the world. It built them, deliberately, over two generations, and it is entitled to the banner across the street.

The 1963 on the signboard is not arbitrary either. That was the year the Welfare Law for the Elderly was enacted and the year the count of centenarians began, and the two things happened together because a country that decides to look after its old people first has to find out how many it has.

The holiday itself is older and humbler. It started in a Hyogo village in the years just after the war, when a mayor decided to set aside a day for the community's elderly, and it spread from there before the state adopted it in 1966. It was a local idea about neighbours before it was a national idea about demography.

Now the other pan.

Care given is not a sentiment. It is a quantity of hours delivered by human beings, and Japan does not have the human beings.

Pay in the care sector trails the national average by a substantial margin. Turnover is high. Successive governments have raised care wages through the fee schedule, and every increase has been absorbed without changing the sector's relative position, because everybody else has been raising wages too.

Foreign recruitment has been tried under several visa categories and the numbers remain small against the requirement. Technology has been trialled extensively and reduces particular burdens rather than the headcount.

So the work falls, as it always has, on families. A substantial share of carers in Japan are now themselves over 65, caring for somebody older still. Employees leave work to look after a parent, in an economy that cannot spare them.

That is the honest reading of Suzuki's scale. The left pan fills automatically, because people keep living. The right pan has to be filled by hand, and there are fewer hands every year.

The arithmetic is not subtle. Every year the number of people needing care rises with the age structure, and every year the cohort that would provide it is smaller, because it was born in a smaller year. No policy reverses that; policy only decides who absorbs it.

There are three candidates, and Japan has been reluctant about all of them. Pay care workers enough to compete, which costs money the budget has not identified. Recruit abroad at scale, which is a political

argument the country has repeatedly declined to have in the open. Or leave it to families, which is what happens by default whenever the other two are deferred.

Default has been the policy for twenty years. It is not stated anywhere, and it is the one operating this morning.

Which brings us to the second signboard, the one that reads honour is a bow.

It is the sharpest line in the picture and the easiest to walk past. In the drawing, three people are bowing. The bow is sincere, it is free, and it is, on its own, worth nothing.

A country can bow on the third Monday of September and spend the other 364 days failing to staff a care home. The holiday is not a substitute for the schedule, and the cartoonist has quietly said so by putting the bow on a signboard next to a scale.

Here is where we part company with the drawing, in two places.

The first is that the picture is too rural. The street Suzuki has drawn, with its greengrocer, its clinic and its temple, is the Japan where this problem is most visible and least soluble, and it is not where most old people live.

Most live in cities and suburbs, in blocks without a neighbour who knows their name, and the isolation that produces is a different problem from the one the cartoon depicts. A village can notice that somebody has not come out today. A tower cannot.

Japan has a word for what follows from that, and the fact that it needed one is the indictment. Deaths that go unnoticed for days or weeks are reported often enough that they have stopped being surprising, and they happen in buildings full of people.

The greengrocer in Suzuki's drawing is doing quiet work too. In a great many Japanese districts that shop has closed, and with it the last place within walking distance where an eighty-year-old without a car could buy vegetables. The country has a term for those residents as well.

A street with a clinic, a temple and a vegetable shop within a few hundred metres is not a nostalgic setting. It is a piece of functioning infrastructure, and where it survives, people manage. Where it has gone, the care that replaces it has to be driven in.

The second omission is the one the news pages have been full of all morning. There are 9.43 million Japanese over 65 in employment, a record, and Suzuki's street does not have any of them in it.

That figure complicates the scale considerably. A quarter of the over-65 population is not receiving care at all; it is producing, earning, paying contributions and, in a great many small firms, holding the business open because nobody younger will take it.

Whether that is dignity or necessity is the question the statistic refuses to answer. Pension arrangements reward deferral, employers cannot find workers, and a public pension that replaces a modest share of previous income leaves some households with no real choice.

A country that is proud of its working pensioners should be able to say which of those three is doing the work, and it cannot.

There is a further thing the statistic hides. A significant share of those 9.43 million are not employees at all but proprietors: the owner of the vegetable shop, the man running a two-lathe workshop, the farmer. They are working because the business closes the day they stop, and no successor has appeared.

That is a different economic fact from a healthy older workforce. It is the slow shutting of the small-firm sector, counted in the employment column as a success.

There is a third reading of the drawing that only today makes available, and it is not the one Suzuki intended.

As this page goes out, a Level 4 evacuation warning is in force on the Zenpukuji River, and residents of Nakano and Suginami have been told to move to a second floor. A Level 5 alert was issued briefly in Sakura City. Three hundred millimetres of rain is forecast for Kanto by this evening.

In almost every Japanese flood of the past decade, the majority of the dead have been over 65. The alert system has a rung, Level 3, that exists for no other purpose than to move slower people first.

So on the morning the country honours its elders, the state's most urgent message to them is an instruction about stairs. The pan marked care given is being weighed this afternoon, in two Tokyo wards, by whoever telephones whom.

Asahi Shimbun's front page this morning offers the other answer, and it is worth setting beside the cartoon. A man is searching Okinawa for his mother, who has dementia, and 500 local people are helping him look.

Five hundred neighbours is not a policy. It is the thing that happens where the street in Suzuki's drawing still exists, and it is the most effective care system Japan has ever had, for the simple reason that

EDITORIAL & OPINION

it scales with community rather than with budget.

It is also the system the country has been dismantling for fifty years, without deciding to, through depopulation, through the closure of the shop and the school and the clinic, and through the entirely rational decisions of young people to live where the work is.

None of this makes the cartoon wrong. It makes it a claim rather than a description, and claims can be tested.

A nation that can keep its elders has kept something worth keeping: true, and the verb is the load-bearing word. Keeping is not a state. It is an activity, and it is performed by staff who are paid too little, by families who are themselves ageing, and today by a ward office ringing round the houses beside a swollen river.

One more observation about the instrument in the foreground, because cartoonists choose their props.

A balance does not measure value. It compares two quantities and tells you which is heavier, and it gives the same answer whether the pans hold gold or gravel. Suzuki could have drawn a memorial, a family photograph or an empty chair. He drew a device for weighing, in a country that is about to spend a decade arguing about exactly that.

The arguments are already scheduled. The health ministry is considering higher long-term care premiums for wealthier people over 65. The extraordinary Diet session carries a five trillion yen tax cut and a nine trillion yen fuel subsidy with no funding named for either. The Bank of Japan has begun raising the cost of every yen the state has borrowed to pay for all of it.

Somewhere inside those arguments is a decision about how much of the national income goes to the pan on the right, and it will be taken by people who will describe it as fiscal consolidation rather than as an answer to a cartoon.

What the drawing does, and what makes it better than its own caption, is refuse to let the question be sentimental. Nobody in the picture is being thanked in the abstract. A cup is being handed over. Papers are being read out. A bow is being performed, and a scale is sitting in the road where everybody has to walk past it.

Respect, as the holiday is named, costs nothing. Care costs money and hours and people, and the country now knows exactly how many of each it has.

The banner goes up once a year. The scale is there every day, and it does not stay level on its own.

SPORTS

A One-Two in the 200 Medley and a Japanese Record at 35: Seven Medals on the Pool's First Night — Page 15

A Reunion Seven Years in the Making at the Games — Page 15

Giants Edge Yakult 3-2, Nippon-Ham Fall Two Games Behind Seibu — Page 15

Japan's Gold Rush: Hojo Takes the Country's First Triathlon Title, and Seven Medals Come From the Pool — Page 15

Men's Table Tennis Opens With a 3-0 Win and a 60-Year Wait Behind It — Page 15

Seiya Suzuki's 25th Home Run Ends an 18-Game Drought — Page 15

Today at the Games: Gymnastics All-Around, Baseball Against China, and the Nadeshiko — Page 15

Japan Beat New Zealand 3-1 to Reach the Davis Cup Final Qualifying Round — Page 16

Nakayama Racing Postponed to Tuesday; Hanshin Goes Ahead — Page 16

Scoreboard and Fixtures — Page 16

South Korea's Basketball Team Arrive Without a Practice After a Bus Failure — Page 16

A National Record in a Sprint Event, Set at 35 — Page 17

Kata Is Judged, Which Makes a Japanese Gold Complicated — Page 17

Seventeen Years Old and Second in a Continental Final — Page 17

The All-Around Is the Event Japan Has Always Measured Itself By — Page 17

The Baseball at These Games Is Not the Baseball on Television — Page 17

The Individual Medley Is the Event That Cannot Be Faked — Page 17

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The Rules That Decide Whether a Race Meeting Runs — Page 17

What Hojo's Gold Buys Japan Beyond the Medal — Page 17

A Pacific Nations Cup Won on Saturday, and the Autumn That Follows It — Page 18

Seven More Finals Tonight, With Ohashi in the 100 Breaststroke — Page 18

The Medal Table Starts Filling, and the Target Is 78 — Page 18

The Under-16 Tournament Is Cancelled From Its Second Day — Page 18

Two Games Between Nippon-Ham and Seibu, and a Postseason Place at Stake — Page 18

Volleyball Semi-Finals and Handball Qualifying Fill the Games' Middle Distance — Page 18

What a Magic Number Is, and Why Hanshin's Keeps Coming Back — Page 18

Why the Games Are Being Held in Two Regions at Once — Page 18

CULTURE

A Park Built From Films, on the Site of a World Exposition — Page 19

Higan, the Week That Turns on Wednesday — Page 19

The Emperor and Empress Visit Ghibli Park, and Pose With No-Face — Page 19

FRONT PAGE

Typhoon No. 25 Reaches Kanto This Afternoon, Large and Powerful, With a Boso Landfall Still Possible — Page 1

A Record 36.24 Million Japanese Are Now 65 or Older, and a Record 9.43 Million of Them Are Working — Page 1

ADDITIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

MARKETS CLOSED FOUR DAYS: The Tokyo Stock Exchange is shut today and tomorrow and again on Wednesday for the Autumnal Equinox. The next normal trading day is Thursday the 24th, which is also the day the Bank of Japan's new policy rate takes effect.

CURRENCY: At 6 a.m. today the yen stood at 156.68-156.96 to the dollar, weaker by 0.80 yen, and at 179.92-180.34 to the euro. The currency surged in New York at the end of last week on expectations of rate checks and intervention.

RICE: The average price of a five-kilogram bag is in the 2,000-yen range for the first time in about two years. Buyback procedures for stockpiled rice continue.

CHINA: The September Loan Prime Rate is announced today.

MORE SPORTS AND SOCIETY NOTES

GAMES: Takumi Hojo won Japan's first gold of the competition in the men's triathlon, with Aimi Hayashi third in the women's race. Japan also took gold in karate kata and seven medals on the opening day of swimming.

TODAY AT THE GAMES: Men's individual all-around final in gymnastics. Baseball, Japan v China at Toyohashi. Women's football, Japan v Chinese Taipei. Women's volleyball semi-finals. Seven swimming finals this evening.

MOUNT FUJI: More than 240,000 people reached the summit this summer. The Environment Ministry will investigate crowding and the risk of chain-reaction falls.

THIS WEEK'S CALENDAR

MONDAY, SEPT. 21: Respect for the Aged Day; markets closed. Typhoon No. 25 at its closest to Kanto this afternoon, with a linear rainband expected from midday. Prime Minister Takaichi departs for New York. Asian Games: men's gymnastics all-around final, baseball v China at Toyohashi, women's football v Chinese Taipei, women's volleyball semi-finals, seven swimming finals this evening. China announces its September Loan Prime Rate.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22: Citizens' holiday; markets closed. Japan-US summit in New York. Nakayama race meeting, postponed from today. JR East's suspension window closes in the early morning.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 23: Autumnal Equinox Day; markets closed. Asian Games athletics continues at Paloma Mizuho Stadium.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 24: Tokyo markets reopen after four closed days. The Bank of Japan's new policy rate of around 1.25% takes effect. US-China summit, with artificial intelligence and rare earths expected to dominate.

THROUGH SEPT. 26: Higan continues; grave visits in Kanto expected to concentrate at the week's end.

THROUGH SEPT. 27: Aki Basho grand sumo tournament continues daily at Ryogoku Kokugikan.

THROUGH OCT. 4: Asian Games competition continues across the Aichi-Nagoya host region and at the Tokyo venues.

THROUGH OCT. 31: NPB regular season continues, followed by the Climax Series and the Japan Series.

MARKET REFERENCE

MARKET STATUS: Tokyo closed Sept. 21, 22 and 23. Next normal trading day Sept. 24.

CURRENCY (6 a.m., Sept. 21): 1 dollar = 156.68-156.96 yen, weaker by 0.80 yen. 1 euro = 179.92-180.34 yen.

NIKKEI 225 (Sept. 18 close): 65,018.95, up 882.70, a third consecutive gain.

TOPIX (Sept. 18 close): 4,091.14, down 3.05.

NY DOW (Sept. 18 close): 51,682.64, down 95.40. US 10-year Treasury yield around 5%.

BOJ POLICY RATE: around 1.25% from Sept. 24, raised from around 1.00% on Sept. 18. Highest in approximately 31 years.

ORDINARY DEPOSIT RATES: megabanks reported moving to 0.5%.

FED TARGET RANGE: 3.75%-4.00%.

52-WEEK NIKKEI HIGH: 72,831.73, set June 22, 2026.

RICE, 5KG AVERAGE: in the 2,000-yen range, the first time in about two years.

DEMOGRAPHY: 36.24 million aged 65 and over (29.6% of the population); 9.43 million of them in employment. Both records.

TRANSPORT AND PUBLIC ADVISORIES

TOKYO METROPOLITAN AREA: JR Uchibo Line express services suspended. Cancellations and delays possible across the metropolitan network until the early morning of Tuesday. Roads have flooded.

RIVERS: Level 4 flood risk warning on the Zenpukuji River; Nakano and Suginami residents urged to evacuate to a second floor. A Level 5 emergency safety alert was issued temporarily in Sakura City, Chiba.

IZU ISLANDS AND OGASAWARA: 350 millimetres of rain forecast for the Izu Islands by 6 p.m. Waves of up to 7 metres continue along the Izu coast; high waves persist around Ogasawara.

TOHOKU AND TOKAI: Warning-level heavy rain. Strict vigilance for landslides and for flooding in low-lying areas.

MOUNT TOKACHI, HOKKAIDO: Eruption alert remains at Level 3, with mountain entry restricted.

NORTHERN ALPS: Recovery operations in the Happo Kiretto area are subject to the weather.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

TYPHOON ADVISORY: Typhoon No. 25 makes its closest approach to the Kanto region this afternoon. Strict vigilance is required for landslides, strong winds and flooding. In the 24 hours to 6 p.m. today, 350 millimetres of rain is forecast for the Izu Islands, 300 millimetres for Kanto and Tokai and 200 millimetres for Tohoku. The Japan Meteorological Agency expects a linear rainband over Kanto-Koshinetsu, Izu and Shizuoka from midday to evening, with half-day advance notice issued for Tokyo and Shizuoka. Winds strong enough to topple utility poles are possible across Izu and Kanto.

EVACUATION WARNINGS: The Tokyo Metropolitan Government has issued a Level 4 flood risk warning for the Zenpukuji River. Residents of Nakano and Suginami wards are urged to evacuate to a second floor. A Level 5 emergency safety alert was issued temporarily in Sakura City, Chiba. Residents elsewhere on the Pacific side should check municipal hazard maps, act at Level 3 if movement will take time, and treat restricted underpasses as closed.

TRANSPORT ADVISORY: Limited express services on the JR Uchibo Line and others are suspended. Cancellations and delays are possible across the Tokyo metropolitan area until the early morning of Tuesday. Roads have flooded. Ferry and air services to the Izu Islands and Ogasawara are suspended, with waves of up to 7 metres continuing.

EVENT NOTICES: The Tokyo Game Show's final day is cancelled. The Rockin' On performance scheduled for

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