

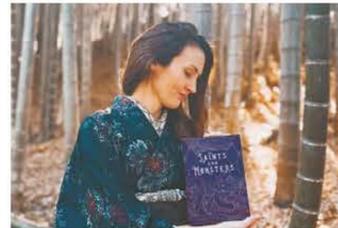
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Climbers pay ¥2,000 amid overtourism concerns

Yamanashi launches fees for Fuji route

YUKANA INOUE
NARUSAWA, YAMANASHI PREF.
STAFF WRITER

Yamanashi Prefecture will begin charging an entrance fee of ¥2,000 to all climbers looking to ascend the most popular route up Mount Fuji as the climbing season starts Monday. The new fee is part of an effort to ease congestion and prevent unsafe climbing.

The overtourism countermeasure, which also includes capping the number of daily climbers at 4,000, marks the first time that climbing one of Japan's most enduring symbols will cost money.

"As more and more climbers visit Mount Fuji, it has long been plagued by the danger of accidents caused by overcrowding near the summit, increased environmental impact due to illegal dumping of trash and poor manners by spontaneous climbers," Yamanashi Gov. Kotaro Nagasaki told

reporters in June during a test run of the new system.

"Overtourism on Mount Fuji is an urgent issue that cannot wait to be addressed and has been a challenge for us since it was registered as a World Heritage Site (in 2013). We are therefore launching a new initiative that will push our country's overtourism prevention measures forward."

The entrance fee will apply to the mountain's most popular and commonly used route, the Yoshida trail, and those who are planning to climb beyond the 5th Station will now be required to pay a fee of ¥2,000 at the booth near its entrance. Both cash and credit cards will be accepted.

Visitors who pay for admission will receive a wristband that must be worn in order to be admitted through a temporary gate set up for this year's climbing season, with a guard stationed nearby at all times. Nagasaki says that a permanent gate will be



Tourists in front of the restaurant and shopping area of Mount Fuji's 5th Station, which leads to the popular Yoshida trail for hikers climbing the mountain, in Narusawa, Yamanashi Prefecture, on June 19. AFP/Jiji

constructed for the 2025 season after the current season ends in September.

The gate will only be open between 3 a.m. to 4 p.m., restricting entry to between those times.

In order to prevent overcrowding on the trail — an issue that the mountain has faced in recent years as tourism in the country has spiked — the prefecture will now limit the number of visitors admitted through the gate

at 4,000 per day and will refuse entry to those who come after.

Updates on how many people have started on the trail each day will be made through the mountain's official X account and staff will keep visitors at the foot of the mountain updated in order to prevent situations where climbers are turned around at the 5th Station.

To secure a spot, the prefectural govern-

ment encourages visitors to utilize the reservation portal on the mountain's official website to book and pay entrance fees in advance for a set day during the climbing season, which lasts from July 1 to Sept. 10.

It has been rare for the number of climbers to exceed 4,000 — it only happened on five days in 2023, and between 10 to 20 days a year prior to the pandemic.

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Japan's stock rally forecast to slow in second half

AYA WAGATSUMA
BLOOMBERG

Investors expect the pace of Japan's stock market rally to slow in the second half, increasing the risk they will shift more money to rival markets.

The benchmark Topix index will climb about 2.9% to 2,890 by the end of the year, while the 225-issue Nikkei average will rise about 4.8% to 41,489, according to the average estimates from asset managers and strategists surveyed by Bloomberg. That's a fraction of the roughly 18% advance by the gauges in the first six months. The broader Topix surpassed its March intraday peak on Friday to a 34-year high, led by financials.

Concern over the yen's continued weakness is weighing on market sentiment. Additionally, consumers and companies have cut back on spending, while a third of Bank of Japan watchers surveyed earlier this month by Bloomberg forecast a rate hike in July. Inflation data for Tokyo released Friday picked up in June, likely keeping a potential interest rate hike on the agenda for discussions at the Bank of Japan's July meeting.

"I don't think we will see out-performance from Japanese stocks from here," said Kyle Rodda, a senior market analyst at Capital.com. "Given the rally we saw at the start of the year, the underlying trends in the economy and policy lend themselves to more downside than upside risks."

The yen weakened to ¥161 to the U.S. dollar Friday and risks sliding to levels last seen in 1986.

While the weak yen benefits exporters, it also contributes to inflation via imports. That in turn holds down real wages, which many market participants see as critical for Japanese equities to gain.

Currency risks and a slowing economy have led some foreign investors to look outside Japan. The Topix is trading at a price-to-earnings ratio of around 17 times while the Shanghai Stock Exchange Composite index trades at 14 times. Foreign investors have been selling Japanese cash equities for five straight weeks.

"We think Japan may lag China, but still do quite well to broader Asia," said Alexander Cousley, an investment strategist at Russell Investments Group. "Valuations are there, with Chinese equities notably cheaper than Japanese and global equities."

SDF marks 70 years as it faces change and challenges

'Complicated' security situation comes amid low recruitment

Focus

KATHLEEN BENOZA
AND **JESSE JOHNSON**
STAFF WRITERS

Japan marks 70 years since the establishment of the Self-Defense Forces on Monday, as the country's defense establishment grapples with dramatic policy shifts and faces down challenges ranging from recruitment to ris-

ing Chinese military assertiveness.

In a statement released on the anniversary of the creation of the SDF and Defense Agency — the precursor to the Defense Ministry — defense chief Minoru Kihara pledged to continue working to build trust in the ostensibly pacifist country's armed forces amid "the most severe and complicated security environment of the postwar era."

"As minister of defense, I am determined to work together with the members of our armed forces so that we can continue to live up to the trust and expectations of the people," Kihara said Monday.

Noting the shift in the SDF's role in recent years, as Japan sheds some of the postwar constraints on its military and security policies,

Kihara said it is now time for the SDF to "create new traditions" as it grows into its new roles.

"Tradition is something that is cultivated through long history. It has been a long time since the Self-Defense Forces were called the 'Self-Defense Forces in action' instead of the 'Self-Defense Forces in existence,'" he said, referring to views of the SDF's transformation in the years after the end of the Cold War. "As our missions increase, we ourselves must also create new traditions."

While Article 9 of Japan's pacifist Constitution says that "land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained," government reinterpretations banned war-making capabilities but did not rule out an inherently defensive force. In the decades

since, a variety of laws and reinterpretations have given the SDF a broader mission set.

Lawmakers from the ruling party, meanwhile, continue to seek a constitutional amendment that would codify the SDF's legal status. Public opinion on the matter remains divided, with an NHK poll from May showing that 31% believe revision is needed — 60% of whom cited the SDF's codification as a reason — and 29% calling an amendment unnecessary.

Nevertheless, from being ridiculed as "tax thieves" in the period following its establishment to its current, much-lauded roles in disaster response and securing the airspace and waters around Japan, views of the SDF have undergone a considerable change, with

a Cabinet Office survey from March last year showing that 90.8% of those queried now view the SDF in a positive light.

These changing views have coincided with dramatic shifts in Japan's defense policies in recent years, but especially since December 2022, when the government passed revisions to three key security documents. Those documents — including a new National Security Strategy — outlined a tougher-than-ever stance in the region, where China's military muscle-flexing near Taiwan, North Korea's increasing nuclear and missile threats and Russia's war in Ukraine have all unnerved Tokyo.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, as well as senior defense officials including Kihara,

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Never too late to bust a move
Japan's breakdancing seniors draw inspiration from sport's Olympic debut | **INSIGHTS, PAGE 3**

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Japan looks farther out to sea for wind boost

ERIC MARGOLIS
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

One would only need to look at a map to understand the potential offshore wind has for a country like Japan. Now, the government is eyeing moves to truly harness it.

Time may have run out in the just-completed session of parliament for a new legislative amendment that promised to provide a major boost for Japan's sputtering wind industry by opening up vast amounts of marine territory for offshore turbines, but the bill's next chance at passage could come as soon as this fall.

That would be no small matter, with wind power advocates saying that the amendment could spur development of an industry that many believe is Japan's best chance at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

Currently, Japan isn't close to being on track to meet its ambitious 2050 goal, or its fiscal 2030 target of a 46% greenhouse gas reduction from 2013 levels. Fossil fuels still consist of 69% of the nation's power mix, with renewables making up just 24%, putting it far behind many European countries.



Slow policymaking and opposition from big power companies have helped delay the transition to renewables.

"Large companies continue to reject renewable energy, even when they are efficient," says Hiroshi Ohta, a researcher working on climate politics and policy at Waseda University. As one example, he refers to Kyushu Electric disconnecting from independent solar producers. "No politicians try

Wind turbines in Suttou, Hokkaido. Japan will need to greatly upscale its renewable energy projects in order to reach its climate goals.
BLOOMBERG

to break down (the current) system."

In fact, an extreme reliance on imported oil and gas have led Third Generation Environmentalism (E3G), a climate change think tank, to rate Japan's energy mix 25 out of 120, the lowest in the Group of Seven.

And while the global offshore wind industry has in recent years suffered from a crowded market and supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19, in Japan, the technology has only just begun to raise its sails — with this bill expected to be just the boost the industry needs.

The construction of offshore wind farms have ramped up around the world over the last decade. The global industry saw new capacity grow by 24% year on year in 2023, and the energy source has been growing at record rates in Europe and China in recent years.

Offshore wind turbines come in a variety of types, ranging from less expensive models fixed to the seafloor in shallower waters, to varieties that can float. They are typically connected to the grid via electrical cables buried below the seabed.

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PM hits milestone as focus shifts to LDP election

Kishida eighth PM to exceed 1,000 days in office after WWII

Jiji

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida marked 1,000 days in office on Saturday, becoming the country's eighth prime minister to reach the milestone since the end of World War II.

To extend his tenure further, Kishida needs to win the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's upcoming leadership election, but there are no clear prospects for his re-election as LDP president as his Cabinet's approval ratings remain sluggish, fueling a sense of crisis within the party over the next general election.

"I have been working on challenges day after day with a sense of urgency," Kishida told reporters at the Prime Minister's Office on Friday. "This accumulation has led to today."

Asked whether he plans to run in the LDP leadership race, Kishida was noncommittal.

"I'm doing my best to produce results, and I'm not thinking about anything beyond that now," he said.

In the history of Japan's constitutional government, Shinzo Abe was the longest-serving prime minister with a total of 3,188 days in office, followed by Eisaku Sato at 2,798 days and Shigeru Yoshida with 2,616 days.

Since taking office, Kishida has shepherded Japan through a series of major policy decisions, including on defense capa-

bilities and nuclear energy, that have been praised by many in the LDP.

However, his handling of the LDP's high-profile political funds scandal has caused discontent among party members and even friction with LDP Vice President Taro Aso, who has backed the Kishida administration so far.

Kishida has signaled his eagerness to stay on, saying that he is halfway to achieving his policy goals, including overcoming deflation and revising the Constitution.

"He will not lose heart," a senior LDP member who recently had dinner with Kishida said. But a mid-ranking party member offered a much cooler assessment.

"Staying in office for 1,000 days is enough," the member said.

To prepare for the LDP's leadership race, Kishida kicked off his nationwide campaign tour on Saturday and visited Yamanashi Prefecture.

Kishida met with officials from the LDP's Yamanashi chapter at a hotel in the prefectural capital of Kofu. During the meeting, Kishida vowed to restore confidence in the LDP following the party's political funds scandal, according to participants. He did not discuss the party's presidential election.

In the city of Hokuto, Kishida visited a company working on smart agriculture using cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence. He also visited a semiconductor component manufacturer in Nirasaki.

As part of the tour on Monday, Kishida is scheduled to visit Ishikawa Prefecture, which was hit hard by a magnitude 7.6 earthquake on Jan. 1.



Yamanashi staff demonstrate how wristbands will be checked, at the temporary gate constructed at the entrance of Mount Fuji's Yoshida trail. YUKANA INOUE

Fees for Mount Fuji route launched

→ Continued from page 1

With the new regulatory measures, Nagasaki says he hopes that Mount Fuji's World Heritage legacy can be conserved by reducing environmental damage and using the money earned from entrance fees to fortify the system and related facilities.

Efforts are also being made to prevent unsafe climbing by "bullet climbers" — visitors who choose to scale Mount Fuji on a whim, arriving unprepared and then experiencing things like altitude sickness and hypothermia on the trail.

That said, for the many foreign tourists who visit the mountain, the additional fee seems to be of little concern.

"Considering (the money) will go into the upkeep of the trail and everything, I think it's worth it," said Bryce Gaul, a traveler from Australia in his 20s who was visiting Mount Fuji for the first time. "I know that tourism

brings a lot of money to the economy, so why not?"

"It would not stop my choice (to climb Mount Fuji)," added Kimberly, who was visiting from Minnesota with her family. She requested that her surname not be published. "In the United States you pay a fee anyways of similar amounts to go to the national parks — it's probably inevitable."

However, to workers doing business in the area, the measure could hit their bottom line.

"It's the first-ever case of its kind so I don't know (the effects of it) until it starts," said an employee working the horse-riding booth at the 5th Station who requested to remain anonymous for privacy reasons. "But I do think it's unfair that they are only doing it here (at the 5th Station) when there are many entrances."

Indeed, the fact that the regulations will be

put in place for only one route in Yamanashi Prefecture has raised concerns that it may just push the climbers to the Shizuoka Prefecture side of the mountain and overcrowd other trails, a scenario that Nagasaki admits may happen.

"Shizuoka Prefecture is also taking action and so each prefecture is implementing measures independently and concurrently," he noted at a news conference in June. "But after the climbing season is finished there will be a pooling of knowledge and information, including a sharing of ideas of how we can improve existing measures and how the two prefectures can best work together in the long term."

The gate at the Yoshida trail will be a test run for this climbing season, Nagasaki said. Depending on its effectiveness, other measures may be implemented along other routes in following years.

SDF marks 70 years as it faces change

→ Continued from page 1

have repeatedly stressed that a situation akin to the war in Ukraine erupting in the Indo-Pacific region was well within the realm of possibility.

Gen. Yoshihide Yoshida, chief of the Defense Ministry's Joint Staff, said in an interview with the Yomiuri daily on Sunday that the possibility of Japan facing a "situation similar to that in Ukraine" could not be dismissed.

"For 70 years, thanks to the efforts of the government, the citizens, and the predecessors of the Self-Defense Forces, our nation has never experienced an armed attack," said Yoshida, the SDF's top uniformed officer. "Our most critical mission is to continue preventing armed attacks on our country."

These concerns have helped push Japan to pour more cash into Defense Ministry outlays — including a five-year budget of

around ¥43 trillion (\$267 billion), with a goal of hitting 2% of gross domestic product by 2027.

Until 2022, Japan had long maintained an informal cap on defense spending of around 1% of GDP as part of its exclusively defense-oriented security policy under its pacifist Constitution.

The pumped-up budgets, the government says, are needed for building advanced destroyers, strengthening rapid deployment capabilities in Japan's far-flung Nansei Islands and introducing both domestically and foreign made longer-range missiles as part of its new "counterstrike capability."

Kihara said in late April that Japan had made progress toward the 2% of GDP goal, with the defense-related budget for fiscal 2024 expanding to 1.6%. However, an expert panel convened by the ministry said in February that the five-year spending plan may

be insufficient, citing recent price surges and the weakening yen.

As if this were not enough, the SDF is also grappling with a number of other challenges, none more vexing than the issue of recruitment.

In graying Japan, the SDF has struggled with the country's falling birth rate and attracting recruits amid heightened competition with the private sector over a diminishing candidate pool. The SDF has deployed a multipronged approach to increase its appeal, with some involving pop culture-related campaigns.

Initiatives to increase recruitment involve improving the living and working conditions to allow women to have careers in the SDF without resigning due to childbirth or child-rearing while also creating a more nurturing work environment that encourages paternity leave for men.



Self-Defense Force troops take part in an amphibious landing exercise on Tokunoshima island in Kagoshima Prefecture last November. CHANG W. LEE / THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Defense Ministry website also features photos of servicewomen smiling, with a caption highlighting "radiant and actively contributing female personnel."

Senior defense officials have said that women make up 8.7% of all SDF personnel, while noting a goal of 12% by 2030.

Meanwhile, the SDF is aiming to craft new ways to raise morale and a heightened sense of duty among personnel, Kihara said, adding that the SDF will hold a ceremony commemorating the 70th anniversary of its

founding in the autumn.

The SDF has been plagued by persistently low morale, with issues ranging from poor pay to harassment and sexual violence.

In December, three ex-soldiers were found guilty of sexual assault in a high-profile case in which former SDF member Rina Gono went public with allegations of abuse against her. Gono's case garnered international attention and cast a spotlight on the issue in a country where abuse victims rarely come forward to speak out.

U.N. voices concern over rights violations in workplaces

Jiji

A United Nations working group has voiced concern over workplace discrimination and harassment experienced by women, non-Japanese people, sexual minorities and others in Japan.

While noting "important advancements" made by Japan on the issue, the group's report expressed concerns about significant difficulties in addressing deeply embedded harmful gender and social norms, such as gender pay gaps and long working hours.

The working group compiled the report after conducting interviews with the government, companies, labor unions and others during a visit to Japan in summer last year. The report was submitted to the ongoing session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The report said systemic human rights challenges in businesses in Japan are not being sufficiently tackled. "There is an urgent need to fully dismantle structures of inequality and discrimination against at-risk groups" such as women, older persons, children and people with disabilities, it said.

It also called on the country to ramp up efforts to tackle the issue in regional areas and in smaller firms, as well as set up an independent human rights institution to better promote access to effective remedies.

The group urged Japanese companies to draw up policies vowing to fulfill their responsibility in protecting human rights. It also suggested that companies implement human rights due diligence to investigate the possibility of their complicity in abuses.

The United States and many countries in Europe have laws and regulations making human rights due diligence mandatory, including for operations related to supply chains.



In a recently released report, a U.N. group has urged Japanese companies to draw up policies vowing to fulfill their responsibility in protecting human rights. REUTERS

In Japan, however, the proportion of companies implementing human rights due diligence was low, at 28% among big firms and 7.8% among smaller firms, according to a survey conducted in fiscal 2022 by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).

JETRO researcher Shiori Mori said that Japanese companies may see their dealings with overseas companies affected due to human rights violations at home.

There are positive economic reasons for Japanese firms to publicly push for improved human rights, including expanding business transactions, Mori said.

"It's important that companies start with what they can under the strong commitment of their top management," Mori said.

Imperial couple wrap up their visit to the U.K.

OXFORD/BRIZE NORTON, ENGLAND
REUTERS, Jiji

Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako returned home on Saturday after a seven-day trip down memory lane that saw them visit the medieval university city of Oxford, where they both studied in the 1980s, on the final day of their trip.

The imperial couple's formal state visit concluded on Thursday with a goodbye from King Charles and Queen Camilla at Buckingham Palace, but they squeezed in a trip to Oxford before flying home.

The 64-year-old emperor attended Oxford's Merton College in 1983-1986, while his wife, Empress Masako, 60, studied international relations in the late 1980s down the road at Balliol College.

Tracing its history back to 1096, the University of Oxford is the oldest in the English-speaking world, famous as a prestigious seat of learning that has educated dozens of British prime ministers, including the current one, Rishi Sunak.

At Balliol, Naruhito and Masako met Oxford University's chancellor, Chris Patten, and the master of the college, Helen Ghosh, as well-wishers waved Japanese and British flags.

Naruhito later planted a cherry tree at Merton College, in what was the final part of a trip that focused on celebrating the cul-



Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako visit Merton College at the University of Oxford in Oxford, England, on Friday. POOL / VIA AFP-JIJI

tural, business and military ties between Japan and Britain.

Before his trip, Naruhito had said he was looking forward to visiting Oxford with his wife as it would be the first time they would spend time there together in the city with its winding lanes and honey-colored gothic spires.

Both had a memorable time at Oxford, the emperor said, with his wife particularly fond of the city's majestic buildings and beautiful gardens.

The emperor has written in his book that the time he spent in the United Kingdom was the most enjoyable period of his life.

Hajime Takata, 65, a former student at the university and now a member of the Bank of Japan's Policy Board, met Naruhito at a pub

News in brief

Chinese woman who tried to stop attack dies

Jiji — A Chinese woman who was left in serious condition after trying to stop a knife attack that injured a Japanese woman and her child in Suzhou, in eastern China's Jiangsu Province on Monday has died, according to local public security authorities.

The woman, Hu Youping, 54, died on Wednesday, according to the country's official Xinhua News Agency.

Hu, a guide for a Japanese school bus, was slashed as she tried to keep a knife-wielding man from boarding the bus, which was carrying many children at the time.

The Suzhou government has decided to recognize her as a righteous and brave person.

On Friday, the Japanese Embassy in China flew its flag at half-mast.

"We deeply respect her courageous act and sincerely express our condolences," Japanese Ambassador to China Kenji Kanasugi said.

Candidates go digital in Tokyo governor race

Jiji — Candidates for the July 7 Tokyo gubernatorial election are tapping digital tools in hopes of boosting awareness of their campaigns and policies.

Yuriko Koike, 71, who is seeking a third term as governor of the capital, posted a video of an AI-generated version of herself, aptly named "AI Yuriko," shortly after she announced her candidacy.

AI Yuriko touted Koike's achievements and promoted her policies, in place of the busy incumbent, attracting attention from social media users.

Hoping to portray a relatable image, Renho, 56, a former member of parliament, held live sessions on her social media account in casual clothing, answering questions from viewers.

Shinji Ishimaru, 41, who garnered social media attention during his days as mayor of Akitakata, Hiroshima Prefecture, has been promptly posting photos of his stump speeches on his account on X, while encouraging attendees to speak up.

Toyota unit violates subcontract law

Jiji — Toyota Customizing & Development (TCD), a unit of the automaker, has forced about 50 subcontractors to store molds used for manufacturing automobile parts free of charge, in violation of the subcontract law, people familiar with the matter said Sunday.

The Fair Trade Commission will shortly recommend that TCD take steps to prevent a recurrence of similar misconduct, the people said.

The TCD's actions, which started at least two years ago, cost these subcontractors tens of millions of yen, the people said. The subcontractors are believed to have been unable to refuse TCD's request out of concern that they would lose contracts with the company.

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Inspired by Olympics, seniors blaze breakdancing trail

Ara Style Senior is currently Japan's only breaking club made up of older citizens

CHANG-RAN KIM
AND KYUNG HOON KIM
REUTERS

A 74-year-old surfer and master of classical Japanese dance may seem an unlikely member of a seniors' breakdancing group, but Kiyoshie Saruwaka said getting her feet wet in the sport was a no-brainer after it was confirmed for the 2024 Paris Games.

As a restless teenager, Saruwaka fell in love with surfing and had wondered why it wasn't an Olympic sport, until it finally got its place at Tokyo 2020.

"And now, breaking is going to be added in Paris, and Japan even has a gold medal candidate," Saruwaka, who once placed second in a local surfing contest and still rides waves for fun, said at her home in Tokyo.

"I used to see kids breakdancing under the railroad tracks and would think to myself, 'I'd probably be one of them if I were young,'" she said, confessing that her parents had started her in *Nihon buyō* — traditional Japanese dance — at the age of 5 to keep their feisty daughter out of trouble. "Of course, I never imagined I'd actually be doing it at this age, but when the opportunity arose, I thought, 'Why not? It sounds fun!'"

Saruwaka is now a member of Ara Style Senior, Japan's only breakdancing club made up of older citizens.

On a recent Friday, eight members gathered in a community center wearing matching orange and green T-shirts to rehearse for a performance at a local festival in two days.

The team is the brainchild of Reiko Maruyama, 71, an elected official in Tokyo's Edogawa Ward who had been looking to energize the community through sports and exercise.

Maruyama had been speaking with Yusuke Arai, the son of a friend and former



national breaking champion, and floated the idea of getting older residents into breakdancing.

"I told him, now that it's going to be an Olympic discipline, this is the breakthrough moment!" she said.

Arai, who has judged breaking competitions — he once gave Japanese medal favorite B-Boy Shigekix an award as a child — agreed, starting with Maruyama as his sole older pupil early last year.

For motivation, Arai suggested that Maruyama join the children he teaches in a performance center last spring.

Not wanting to be the only adult in a sea of schoolchildren, Maruyama enticed Saruwaka to join, betting on her penchant for taking on new challenges.

"I want to spread breaking among seniors in Edogawa Ward, and from Edogawa to the rest of Japan and maybe even the world," the

councilwoman said. Japan is the most rapidly aging advanced society, with roughly 30% of its population 65 or older.

As Soopasoul's funk track "It's Just Begun, Pt. 2" played, the women took their positions and rehearsed their routine peppered with the simplest of freezes, toprock and floor moves — and plenty of smiles.

"You can't help but laugh when you see yourself in these funny poses," said the councilwoman, who was tasked with a chair

Members of Ara Style Senior and their instructor Yusuke Arai (center) after their final rehearsal ahead of a performance at a local festival in Tokyo, on May 24. REUTERS

'I want to spread breaking among seniors in Edogawa Ward, and from Edogawa to the rest of Japan and maybe even the world.'

REIKO MURAYAMA

freeze pose at the end of the routine, balancing herself up on her head, hands and one foot, with one leg held high above her body. "I think it's great that you can laugh, dance, and stay healthy, and that's why I recommend it to people around me."

Ara Style Senior now comprises about 15 members, eight of whom performed to a packed room of Edogawa locals at the festival last month, joined by Arai and his younger students.

The moves they attempt are a far cry from the impossibly acrobatic feats b-boys and b-girls will perform at the Olympics. The point for Ara Style's b-ladies, though, is to have fun and stay fit.

"At first I thought, 'There's no way I can breakdance at my age,'" said 69-year-old Hitomi Oda. "And of course, we can't do anything extreme, but it's fun just to do the easy moves and get the body working."

For Saruwaka, breaking is a welcome respite from the heavy responsibility she bears of passing on the art of the elite, 400-year-old Saruwaka school of classical dance in which she earned her professional stage name, or *natori*.

Once she changes into her traditional *yukata* outfit to teach after rehearsing with the b-ladies, Saruwaka's expression is relaxed but serious as she offers her students guidance on the subtle gestures that characterize the craft of *Nihon buyō*.

"I suspect I'll be breakdancing for as long as I live," she said, noting that it helped strengthen her lower body so she could continue with classical dance.

"I bet I can do it until I'm 100, if I'm still alive," she said.

Japan's escargot entrepreneur achieves the 'impossible'

ETIENNE BALMER
AND CAROLINE GARDIN
MATSUSAKA, MIE PREF.
AFP-JJI

Far from Parisian bistros serving up Burgundy snails, one Japanese man has figured out how to farm the slimy species — a feat that has long eluded the French.

Toshihide Takase, 76, says he is "the only person in the world" breeding this specific delicacy, after four decades of trial and error to find the right conditions.

French embassy and industry insiders also believe that Takase, who has invested a small fortune and taught himself everything about the creature, is a unique case.

Stuffed with butter, garlic and parsley then baked, Burgundy snails — or escargots de Bourgogne — have been part of French gastronomy since the 19th century.

But they are notoriously difficult to farm

because they don't take well to crowded conditions and grow slowly, usually taking two or three years to reach adult size.

The mollusk, whose scientific name is *Helix pomatia*, has been a protected species in France since 1979 to save it from extinction.

The vast majority of the several thousand metric tons of snails eaten by the nation each year are foraged from woodlands in central and eastern Europe.

Around 5% are homegrown in France, but these are a different species, *Helix aspersa*, which are easier to farm and do not have the "Burgundy" name.

"My sister gave me tinned escargots as a present after a trip to France" 45 years ago, Takase said.

"But they didn't taste good, and smelled bad," said the retired entrepreneur.

Takase became obsessed with producing them himself, even though "at first, everybody acted like I was stupid."

He stubbornly devoured books on the subject and met French *H. aspersa* breeders to learn more.

It's a niche interest anywhere, but highly unusual in Japan, where sea snails are part of the rich cuisine but land snails are seen as a pest that can harm crops.

After seven years of bureaucratic wrangling, Takase was granted a permit to rear *H. pomatia* and imported 100 specimens from France to start his farm.

The indoor facility in Matsusaka, a town in Mie Prefecture, is called the Mie Escargots Development Laboratory.

Crates of live Burgundy snails are stacked in three layers on custom-built metal racks, with humidity and temperature carefully controlled.

Next door is an active metalwork foundry — the first business set up by Takase, who used to manage several ventures.

He says the farm can produce up to

600,000 snails a year, with growth time reduced to just four months.

To achieve this, he adds a calcium-rich powder made from oyster shells to the humid soil, which helps the gastropods grow big and strong fast.

"They love it," said Takase, who spent 20 years developing his own nutritious snail food from soybeans and corn.

Their feeding containers are washed by hand every three days, because "snails love cleanliness," he added.

Visitors to the "laboratory" get the chance to taste Takase's snails, which cost ¥9,900 (\$60) for a pack of 30. There are different prices for restaurants or bulk sales.

For now, business is small-scale and domestic, but he is keen to pass on his know-how to French snail farmers and has launched talks with the embassy in Japan.

William Blanche, co-president of France's National Federation of Heliculture, said the

Burgundy snails at the Mie Escargots Development Laboratory farm in Matsusaka, Mie Prefecture, on May 16. AFP-JJI



species has a "reputation for being impossible to breed."

It's "ironic" that Burgundy snails eaten in France have been nowhere near the province of the same name, he said, so he is intrigued by Takase's project.

Even so, Blanche questioned how successful it could be.

"Would our consumers, who are used to different snails, be interested — and at what price?"

A French snail industry insider, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also raised an all-important point.

"They must taste good," he said, skeptical that farmed Burgundy snails would be as delicious as wild ones with their "strong woodland taste."

But "I dream of one day seeing escargots de Bourgogne made in France," he added.

"The marketing buzz would be huge."

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our planet

Japan looks farther out to sea for wind boost

→ Continued from page 1

The potential for mass installation and strong energy efficiency are offshore wind's top benefits. Wind conditions are better at sea, and few obstacles on the water allow for rapid and large-scale construction. The intensive manufacturing process required to build the turbines also creates jobs and drives industry.

A hurdle, however, is the high installation and maintenance costs. Japan still has relatively little infrastructure for the manufacturing and installation of turbines, keeping these costs high.

There are also some environmental concerns: Although research shows that most flocks of birds avoid wind farms and marine mammals return to sites after construction has finished, the construction process could have negative effects on avian and marine life.

The fishing industry has also tended to voice concerns about the impacts of offshore wind power, but in fact, turbine pillars can serve as artificial reefs, and examples from around the world show that offshore wind attracts fish and can coexist with fishers.

Overall, the enormous benefits amid the need for an unprecedented energy transition have made offshore wind an appealing option for many nations — and that might be doubly true for resource-poor Japan.

According to the International Energy Agency, Japan could produce over 900% of its energy demand with offshore wind alone. This is possible due to Japan's massive exclusive economic zone, which covers 4.5 million square kilometers, or about 12 times the size of its landmass, creating an essentially endless supply of wind, and water on which to build turbines. And with that potential in mind, the wind power bill would open

up the nation's sizable EEZ to wind power projects.

Tetsuo Saito, senior researcher at the Renewable Energy Institute (REI), explains that Japan's 2023 offshore and semioffshore wind capacity was just 0.03% of its potential.

"The government is making all the right progress toward expanding offshore wind, but the speed is slow, and the scale is small," says Saito. "We should increase the number of projects."

An REI report authored by Saito shows that Japan has bountiful high-speed wind areas, particularly around the northern and southern tip of Hokkaido as well as Kyushu's Sea of Japan coast, where waters feature average wind speeds over 7.5 and up to 10 meters per second, allowing for efficient energy production.

Some of the biggest offshore wind projects in Japan to date have been implemented in Hokkaido and the Tohoku region. These include the recent 13-turbine, 140-megawatt Noshiro and Akita Port project in Akita Prefecture and the eight-turbine, 112-MW Ishikari Bay farm near Sapporo. The developments started supplying Tohoku Denryoku and Hokkaido Denryoku in January of 2023 and 2024, respectively.

Yamagata Prefecture, which also sees favorable wind conditions on its Sea of Japan coastline, currently has multiple offshore wind projects in development. Junichi Sugiyama, from Yamagata's Energy Policy Promotion Division, says the biggest hurdle is negotiating permission with the local municipalities and fishing industry.

"We obtained consent for one of the sites (in Yuza), but we're still discussing with the local bodies for the other (in Sakata), where there are more parties involved," explains



A wind turbine in Iki, Nagasaki Prefecture. Compared with onshore wind projects, offshore wind is costly, but for an island nation like Japan, it represents an enormous opportunity. BLOOMBERG

Sugiyama. "Some fishermen are demonstrating their opposition, so we are trying to explain to them that fisheries and wind power can coexist."

The proposed law has essentially two clauses.

First, it establishes a system to permit businesses to install offshore wind facilities in the EEZ. This allows the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry to choose areas to solicit offshore wind development. Then METI and the land ministry will issue preliminary approval for operators, create a council of relevant stakeholders and grant final permission based on the agreement of the council.

Second, the bill allows for research on the marine environment in EEZ waters in order to designate specific "promotion zones." Currently, operators have to build within Japan's territorial waters, which are managed by prefectural governments. By contrast, the national government controls the EEZ.

Takahiro Ishii, director at METI's Wind Energy Policy Office, says that the agency only began to consider this initiative in the last two years in order to help meet their published goal of 30 to 45 gigawatts of offshore wind power capacity by 2040. "It is going to be difficult to meet our objectives just within the territorial waters, without expanding to the EEZ," he says.

Saito agrees, saying that "The opportunities expand drastically outside of the territorial waters."

"However, since the national government

gives permission for activities in the EEZ, it's difficult to negotiate permission with parties such as fishermen that could be affected by construction," he explains.

That's because when building in prefectural waters, the local government has unhindered access to all affected parties. But outside the territorial waters, sea usage is often not well understood, leading to additional complications when obtaining permissions. Still, the bill is expected to help simplify and streamline the process to build more wind power capacity.

In addition, the border of Japan's territorial waters is relatively close to the shore, so building offshore wind in the EEZ is likely to be more costly due to greater water depth and distance from the coast. Nonetheless, the REI's analysis shows that a substantial amount of Japan's most abundant wind resources lie in the EEZ, especially around Kyushu and Hokkaido.

Japan also isn't ready for a rapid-fire rollout.

"There is still a lot of work to be done to unleash this full potential," says Yoko Mulholland, senior associate at E3G. "To give a few examples, it would be crucial to shorten lead times and (clarify) technical standards, and integrate operation (into) electricity networks on a national scale."

The necessary power transmission lines will need to be constructed to accommodate large-scale offshore development, especially in Hokkaido and Tohoku.

The proposed law also leads to some gray areas for offshore wind development already in progress.

Previously, individual business operators conducted the assessment in areas being considered for development, but with the amendment, that responsibility would be shifted over to the national government — putting a project like Yamagata's prospective Sakata offshore development in an unusual position. Since the project is already in its secondary stage, "it's unclear whether or not the amendment will apply to the Sakata project," says Sugiyama.

Despite these uncertainties, Walter James, lead consultant at Power Japan Consulting, writes that the legislation would bring "a number of indirect but no less important benefits," boosting manufacturing sectors, deterring illegal fishing activities and bringing development to regional communities facing population decline.

Despite passing in the Lower House on May 28, the bill was not passed by the Upper House before the regular parliamentary session ended, delaying its implementation by several months.

"Next, the government should create a roadmap for the large-scale rollout of offshore development projects," Saito says.

Ishii also emphasizes the need for coordination and knowledge-sharing with like-minded countries to find ways to lower rollout costs, promote mass production and advance solutions such as floating technol-

ogy for deeper waters. One example within Japan is the Floating Offshore Wind Technology Research Association, which was established by power companies this March.

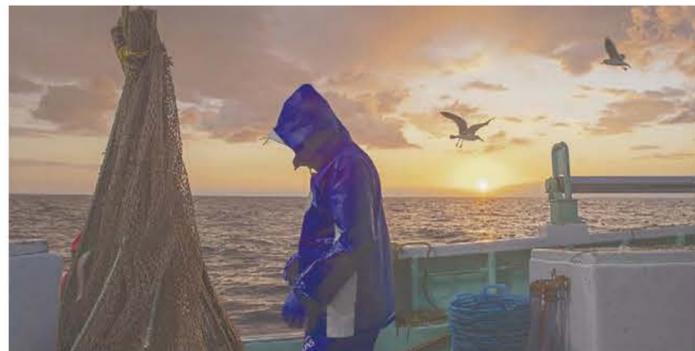
There is a strong financial incentive for the government to put in the necessary work. In Europe, where offshore wind has become mainstream, the cost dropped by 55% from 2011 to 2021, largely due to increased efficiencies as the technology scaled. Once Japan increases its offshore wind capacity, the power source can become an economically tempting offer to go along with its environmental benefits.

In 2022, the cost of 1 megawatt hour generated by coal and natural gas in Japan was \$83 and \$40, respectively, while offshore wind was priced at \$105 per megawatt hour. But if the same trend seen in Europe tracks, offshore wind will quickly become competitive.

"We import so many fossil fuels in Japan," says Saito. "But we don't need to import renewables. Once the cost decreases, they will inevitably become attractive."

Saito adds that Japan is fortunate because it has a reliable climate for renewable energy: High- and low-pressure weather systems typically dictate that when it's cloudy and windy in Kyushu for wind power, it's sunny in Hokkaido for solar power, and vice versa.

"Looking all the way from the southern to northern tip, the wind is always strong somewhere in Japan," he says. "There's a way to raise our renewable energy makeup to 80% or 90% — it's not just a dream."



A fisherman on board a snow crab vessel in the sea west of the Noto Peninsula in November 2021. The fishing industry has tended to voice concerns about the impacts of offshore wind power, but examples from around the world show that offshore wind can coexist with fishers. BLOOMBERG

D.R. Congo National Day Special

Working to ensure sustainable growth

LUKUMWENA NSENDA
AMBASSADOR OF THE DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



2024 began with good omens for the Democratic Republic of Congo: a peaceful democratic exercise that allowed the re-election of His Excellency Felix Tshisekedi as head

of state for a second term, the appointment of Judith Suminwa Tuluka as the first female head of government in Congo's history, and the continuation of major work to achieve the development objectives set during the presidential campaign. 2024 also marks 64 years of independence for my country and I will celebrate them as ambassador for the first time.

Relations between our countries are old and lasting — Japan has always supported the Congo in its desire for independence and sovereignty. Its constant friendship is felt in

its positions throughout the security crisis we are experiencing in the east of the country that is bloodying this region so essential to technological progress and energy transition.

Despite the numerous obstacles that still stand in its way, including foreign interference and the predation of unscrupulous multinationals, the DRC is getting back up and following the example of its African brothers in the Sahel who are positioning themselves against imperialism.

Today, there is not much left of the precursor pan-Africanist movement Presence Africaine, which launched the great decolonization and independence movements of the '50s and '60s and the end of the Cold War that precipitated the polarization of the world with the West as the only mirror. But the Asian boom, made possible by Japan's economic support, particularly toward members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is leading to a new relationship with the world. South-south cooperation is now a tangible reality and African states are forming new types of partnerships.

In this repositioning, Japan holds a very special place since it was the first country,

through the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, to organize one of the rare postcolonial groupings of the 20th century and put Africa back at the center of history. African heads of state will meet in Yokohama in 2025 for TICAD 9, thus marking the great longevity of Japanese-African cooperation.

These 64 years of independence have seen many achievements, but just as many lessons must be learned from the insufficiency of good governance and from the economic policies in disharmony with the most deprived populations. To alleviate the endemic problems in the heart of Africa, we must move toward a decolonized horizon, with the right partners to ensure inclusive and sustainable development. Japan has a big role to play in this matter and I also appeal to Japanese society to participate in the African awakening through the rise of the Congo.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



President-elect of the Democratic Republic of the Congo Felix Tshisekedi attends his swearing-in ceremony in Kinshasa on Jan. 20. EMBASSY OF D.R. CONGO

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As ice melts, Everest gives up its ghosts

Bodies of climbers who died are exposed as climate change hits

PAAVAN MATHEMA
KATHMANDU
 AFP-JJJI

On Mount Everest's sacred slopes, climate change is thinning snow and ice, increasingly exposing the bodies of hundreds of mountaineers who died chasing their dream to summit the world's highest mountain.

Among those scaling the soaring Himalayan mountain this year was a team not aiming for the 8,849-meter peak, but risking their own lives to bring some of the corpses down.

Five as yet unnamed frozen bodies were retrieved — including one that was just skeletal remains — as part of Nepal's mountain clean-up campaign on Everest and adjoining peaks Lhotse and Nuptse.

It is a grim, tough and dangerous task. Rescuers took hours to chip away the ice with axes, with the team sometimes using boiling water to release its frozen grip.

"Because of the effects of global warming, (the bodies and trash) are becoming more visible as the snow cover thins," said Aditya Karki, a major in Nepal's army, who led the team of 12 military personnel and 18 climbers.

More than 300 people have perished on the mountain since expeditions started in the 1920s, including eight this season alone.

Many bodies remain. Some are hidden by snow or swallowed down deep crevasses.

Others, still in their colorful climbing gear, have become landmarks en route to the summit.

Nicknames include "Green Boots" and "Sleeping Beauty."

"There is a psychological effect," said Karki. "People believe that they are entering a divine space when they climb mountains, but if they see dead bodies on the way up, it can have a negative effect."

Many are inside the "death zone," where thin air and low oxygen levels raise the risk of altitude sickness.

Climbers must have insurance, but any rescue or recovery mission is fraught with danger.

One body, encased in ice up to its torso, took the climbers 11 hours to free. The team had to use hot water to loosen it, prizing it out with their axes.

"It is extremely difficult," said Tshiring Jangbu Sherpa, who led the body retrieval



expedition. "Getting the body out is one part, bringing it down is another challenge."

Tshiring Jangbu said some of the bodies still appeared almost as they had at the moment of death — dressed in full gear, along with their crampons and harnesses.

One seemed untouched, only missing a glove.

The retrieval of corpses at high altitudes is a controversial topic for the climbing community.

It costs thousands of dollars, and up to eight rescuers are needed for each body.

A body can weigh over 100 kilograms, and at high altitudes, a person's ability to carry heavy loads is severely affected.

But Karki said the rescue effort was necessary.

"We have to bring them back as much as possible," he said. "If we keep leaving them behind, our mountains will turn into a graveyard."

Bodies are often wrapped in a bag then put on a plastic sled to drag down.

Tshiring Jangbu said that bringing one body down from close to Lhotse's 8,516 meter peak — the world's fourth-highest mountain — had been among the hardest challenges so far.

"The body was frozen with hands and legs spread," he said.

"We had to carry it down to Camp Three as it was, and only then could it be moved to be put in a sled to be dragged."

Rakesh Gurung, from Nepal's tourism department, said two bodies had been preliminarily identified and authorities were awaiting "detailed tests" for the final confirmation.

The retrieved bodies are now in Kathmandu, with those not identified likely to be eventually cremated.

Despite the recovery efforts, the mountain still holds its secrets.

The body of George Mallory, the British climber who went missing during a 1924 attempt on the summit, was only found in 1999.

His climbing partner, Andrew Irvine, has

never been found — nor has their camera, which could provide evidence of a successful summit that would rewrite mountaineering history.

The clean-up campaign, with a budget of over \$600,000, also employed 171 Nepali guides and porters to bring back 11 metric tons of rubbish.

Fluorescent tents, discarded climbing equipment, empty gas canisters and even human excreta litter the well-trodden route to the summit.

"The mountains have given us mountaineers so many opportunities," Tshiring Jangbu said.

"I feel that we have to give back to them, we have to remove the trash and bodies to clean the mountains."

Today, expeditions are under pressure to remove the waste that they create, but historic rubbish remains.

"This year's trash might be brought back by the mountaineers," said Karki. "But who will bring the old ones?"

Expedition tents at Everest Base Camp, 140 kilometers northeast of Kathmandu, in May 2021 AFP-JJJI

Javan rhino clings to survival after poaching wave in Indonesia

JACK MOORE AND SARA HUSSEIN
JAKARTA
 AFP-JJJI

In 2023, a newborn Javan rhino in Indonesia raised hopes for the highly endangered species. Now, conservationists fear poachers have killed up to a third of the surviving population, possibly with inside help.

Since last year, authorities have arrested six alleged poachers. But eight remain on the run, including one who managed to flee his home hours before police arrived.

The fugitive reportedly had recent data on rhinos in Java's Ujung Kulon national park, the only place in the world the species is still found, sparking fears he had inside assistance.

The poachers claim two gangs have killed 26 rhinos since 2018 — between a third and a quarter of the species' estimated population.

"It's a huge number," said Nina Fascione, director of the International Rhino Foundation, adding that she was "shocked and devastated."

The suspects reportedly said they killed the rhinos for their horns, which command huge sums from black-market buyers in China.

Though horns are made of keratin — the same substance found in hair and nails — they are prized for medicinal purposes.

Indonesian police have arrested a collector who bought rhino horns from the gang for 500 million rupiah (\$30,500).

While rhino-poaching for horns is common elsewhere, the Indonesian case has taken some conservationists by surprise.

"The poaching of the Javan rhino is really a new topic," said Timer Manurung, director of local environmental NGO Auriga Nusantara, which tracks the species.

Poaching of the animal had rarely been

reported in recent decades on Java, Indonesia's most populated island.

But last year, Auriga Nusantara reported worrying signs that poachers were encroaching into Ujung Kulon: snares had been discovered and a dead rhino was found with a hole in its head.

Still, the scale of the problem exceeds the worst fears of conservationists, and has raised questions about how the poachers tracked the protected animals.

"There were several indications of insider help," including the apparent tip-off of the fugitive poacher and claims he had recent data on rhino locations, said Timer.

Muhammad Ali Imron, head of WWF Indonesia's forest and wildlife program, said there should be a "full assessment" of all involved in the rhino's conservation over potential collusion.

Indonesian law enforcement has not yet confirmed any insider help, but Fascione said poachers elsewhere have often operated with assistance from those meant to protect the species.

"All it takes is somebody with financial problems ... who needs money quickly, urgently, and they're susceptible," said Fascione. "This is a problem everywhere."

Local reports of the poaching claims began to emerge in April, but it was not until early June that police and the park head paraded suspects before media and released details of their alleged crimes.

And the poachers' claims "need further verification by checking the remains of bones and other signs on the ground," Satyawan Pudyatmoko, Indonesia's directorate general of Nature Resources and Ecosystem Conservation, said.

He said officials had "not seen any such



indication" of inside help and said suspects were tipped off by residents of a nearby village.

Last month, one of the arrested poachers was handed a 12-year prison sentence, the most severe ever given for an Indonesian wildlife crime, after a trial that lasted weeks.

The national park has also beefed up security with round-the-clock patrols and experts say rangers are working hard to improve protection.

Now the question is just how many Javan rhinos remain.

Even before the poaching was revealed, doubts had been cast on the government's estimate of the wild population.

Satyawan said there were an estimated 76 in 2021 and 80 in 2022, based on track monitoring and camera traps.

They now believe 82 remain despite the poaching, with new births expanding the population. But Auriga Nusantara said last year that only 63 had been confirmed by sightings in 2018.

That could mean the true figure for Javan rhinos in the wild is now closer to just 50.

An immediate, "transparent and credible"

assessment of the species is now needed, said Timer.

"The current number of the population really needs to be reassessed."

He called for respected experts to be given full access to park data to do the count of the rhinos, which can live between 30 and 45 years.

"Without those, the number will be doubtful," he added.

The species has been threatened for decades. It disappeared from its last refuge outside Indonesia, in Vietnam, in 2010, due to poaching.

But conservationists say they are not giving up hope yet for the species in Indonesia, where the population has previously rebounded after nearly dying out.

"The Indonesian government has brought Javan rhinos back from the brink of extinction previously, and can do so again," said Fascione.

In March, another Javan rhino calf, estimated to be 3 months old, was spotted on camera at Ujung Kulon, showing the species is still breeding properly.

"Javan rhinos know what to do," Fascione said. "They just need to be protected to do it."

Two Javan rhinos in Ujung Kulon national park in Indonesia's Banten province. In 2023, a newborn Javan rhino in Indonesia raised hopes for the highly endangered species. INDONESIA ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTRY MINISTRY / VIA AFP-JJJI

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Unilateral change unlikely despite worries after poor debate showing

Here's what it would take to replace Biden as nominee

Focus

GREGORY KORTE
BLOOMBERG

Democrats have ways to replace Joe Biden at the top of their U.S. presidential ticket after a harrowing debate against Republican Donald Trump — but doing so without their standard-bearer's acquiescence would be a daunting task.

Party members once united behind Biden are now scouring candidate resumes and researching rules for a contingency plan to present voters with a different nominee after a universally panned performance Thursday night cemented worries about the president's ability to serve a second term.

"The easiest one is, Biden takes himself out of the race," said Elaine Kamarck, a Democratic National Committee member and author of a book about the presidential nominating process. "Then yes, there's rules and procedures and the party would replace him."

While pushing Biden off the ticket is possible, the lack of an obvious candidate to replace him makes such a gambit all the more unlikely, Kamarck said.

The debate saw months of Democratic anxiety over Biden, already the oldest U.S. president in history at 81, and his prospects

for defeating Trump, boil over. The president on Friday acknowledged the limitations of his debate showing but dismissed calls to exit the race.

Delegate revolt

If Biden doesn't step aside, forcing him out would be a herculean undertaking for Democrats.

Any rival would first have to collect 600 delegate signatures on a petition to place his or her name in nomination at the Democratic convention — with no more than 50 signatures from any one state. That's about 13% of the delegates. But with Biden controlling 99% of the pledged delegates, that would require challengers convincing Biden loyalists to flip their support.

"The odds are not insurmountable, but they're very high for any scenario that involves a delegate revolt," said Josh Putnam of FHQ Strategies, a nonpartisan consulting firm specializing in delegate selection rules. "More often than not these are pretty fervent Biden supporters," Putnam said of the delegates.

The Biden campaign has vetted his convention delegates for their loyalty, but they do have room to change their minds. Unlike Republican delegates, who are often legally bound to cast their vote for a particular candidate, Democratic rules say only that pledged delegates "shall in all good con-

science reflect the sentiments of those who elected them."

Still it's the kind of move most politicians wouldn't attempt unless success were guaranteed. Challengers who fail to oust an incumbent president from the ticket risk becoming party pariahs.

"This is not something that a lot of people could pull off," said Kamarck.

Open convention

A move to change the ticket — whether Biden agrees to go willingly or is pushed out — would bring a convention free-for-all not seen for decades.

In an "open" or "brokered" convention, no candidate comes into the roll-call vote with enough delegates to be guaranteed the nomination. Voting could last any number of rounds until a candidate wins.

Such a convention would also put so-called superdelegates in the spotlight. Those delegates — leaders and elected officials who get to the convention by virtue of their position — have been stripped of some powers in recent years as the party worried their influence in the process was undemocratic. But if a nomination goes into a second ballot, those automatic delegates, who number more than 700, could sway the convention.

Another wild card is that the party is free to change its rules at any time before the



Patrons react during a watch party for the first debate of the 2024 presidential elections between U.S. President Joe Biden and his predecessor and Republican rival, Donald Trump, at a pub in San Francisco on Thursday. AFP/JJJ

nomination, potentially lowering or raising the bar for a Biden challenger.

The most obvious heir apparent is Vice President Kamala Harris — but Democrats don't have to pick Biden's running mate. Some of the most discussed alternatives include Govs. Gavin Newsom of California, JB Pritzker of Illinois and Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, all of whom say they still support Biden.

The nomination vote was scheduled for Aug. 21, but the DNC has raised the possibility of a virtual roll call before Aug. 7 to accommodate early ballot deadlines.

Eleventh hour

If Biden steps aside after the convention, the decision on how to replace him would be up to a smaller group: The more than 400 members of the DNC. By party rules, the DNC chairman would consult with Democratic congressional leaders and governors and make a recommendation.

Democrats last used that process in 1972 to replace Thomas Eagleton, the vice presidential nominee forced off the ballot after acknowledging that he had received electroshock therapy for depression, with Sargent Shriver.

But a late switch could present Democrats with another problem: Ballot deadlines. Some states, including battlegrounds Pennsylvania and North Carolina, allow ballots to be mailed out as early as two months before Election Day, meaning Biden's name would continue to appear even if he's not the candidate.

One advantage of the Electoral College system is those votes would still count, Kamarck said.

"We don't really vote for president. We vote for electors to president," she said. "It's the same electors no matter who's at the top of the ballot."

Reformist to face ultraconservative in Iran presidency runoff

TEHRAN
AFP/JJJ

The sole reformist in Iran's presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian, will face the ultraconservative Saeed Jalili in a runoff, authorities said on Saturday, following a vote marred by historically low turnout.

Pezeshkian secured 42.4% of the vote, while Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator, came second with 38.6%, according to figures from Iran's elections authority.

Conservative parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf was next with 13.8%, while the only other candidate, conservative cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi, got less than 1%.

"None of the candidates could garner the absolute majority of the votes," electoral authority spokesman Mohsen Eslami said.

In his first post-election remarks, Pezeshkian thanked his supporters and urged them to vote again next Friday "to save the country from poverty, lies, discrimination and injustice."



Iranian presidential candidate Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist, during a campaign event at a stadium in Tehran on June 23. ARASH KHAMOOSHI / THE NEW YORK TIMES

"I hope your presence will be the basis of a new voice for change in attitude, behavior, conversation and in the distribution and allocation of resources," he added in a video published on the website of the reformist newspaper Etemad.

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called for a high turnout ahead of Friday's vote.

Only slightly more than 40% of the 61 million electorate took part — a record low turnout for the Islamic Republic — and more than 1 million ballots were spoiled.

The poll had been scheduled to take place in 2025 but was brought forward by the death of ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash in May.

The Guardian Council, which vets candidates, had originally approved six contenders.

But a day ahead of the election, two of them — the ultraconservative mayor of Tehran Alireza Zakani and Raisi's Vice President Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi — dropped out.

After the final results were released, they both asked their supporters to vote for Jalili in the July 5 runoff.

Ghalibaf followed suit, asking "all revolutionary forces and supporters" to get behind Jalili's bid for the presidency.

In the 2021 election that brought Raisi to

power, the Guardian Council disqualified many reformists and moderates, prompting many voters to shun the election.

The turnout then was just under 49%, which at the time was the lowest in any presidential election in Iran.

Friday's vote took place amid heightened regional tensions over the Gaza war, a dispute with the West over Iran's nuclear program and domestic discontent over the state of Iran's sanctions-hit economy.

Opposition groups, especially in the diaspora, meanwhile, called for a boycott, questioning the credibility of elections.

Pezeshkian, 69, is a heart surgeon who has represented the northwestern city of Tabriz in parliament since 2008.

He served as health minister under Iran's last reformist president, Mohammad Khatami, who held office from 1997 to 2005 and has endorsed Pezeshkian's bid in the current elections.

Pezeshkian criticized Raisi's government for a lack of transparency during nationwide

protests triggered by the September 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, had been arrested for allegedly violating the Islamic Republic's strict dress code for women.

In recent campaigning, Pezeshkian called for "constructive relations" with Washington and European countries in order to "get Iran out of its isolation."

People, however, are not optimistic, with 32-year-old trader Sina saying, "there will not be much change" even if Pezeshkian is elected president.

"If he wins, he will have to work with a parliament whose head is Ghalibaf and the Supreme National Security Council whose head is Jalili," he added.

Jalili is widely recognized for his uncompromising anti-West stance.

The 58-year-old has held several senior positions in the Islamic Republic, including in Khamenei's office in the early 2000s.

He is currently one of Khamenei's representatives in the Supreme National Security

Council, Iran's highest security body.

"I would like Mr. Jalili to become the president and lead Iran to progress with religious rationality based on resistance," said Shima, a 43-year-old filmmaker in Tehran.

On Saturday, the reformist newspaper Sazandegi ran the headline "Long live hope" on its front page, while the state-run Iran daily hailed what it called a "strong" turnout.

Regardless of the result, Iran's next president will be in charge of applying state policy outlined by the supreme leader, who wields ultimate authority in the country.

Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi said Friday's vote went smoothly.

"The presidential election was conducted in complete security, in perfect health, with very serious competition and with the valuable presence of people at the ballot boxes," he said.

The Tasnim news agency said, however, that militants attacked a vehicle carrying ballot boxes in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, leaving two policemen dead and others wounded.

Canada Day Special

A strong, forward-looking relationship

IAN MCKAY

AMBASSADOR OF CANADA



This Canada Day marks an important milestone. While our ties go back much further, it was in 1929, 95 years ago, that Canada opened its official mission in Japan, formalizing full bilateral diplomatic relations between our countries.

Today our relationship thrives in multiple fields, including politics, defense, trade and investment, science and technology, the environment and people-to-people ties.

In the 95 years since Canada-Japan diplomatic ties were initiated, the relationship is more important than ever. The Canada-Japan Action Plan commits our countries to cooperate on initiatives that promote the rule of law, economic growth, energy security, biodiversity and climate change action, and Japan stands at the core of Canada's broader Indo-Pacific Strategy.

Canada's increased defense presence in the Indo-Pacific is creating new opportunities to work alongside Japan, including with the visit of three Royal Canadian Navy frigates to Japan last year. Ship deployments and port visits in 2024 mean additional opportunities for our respective navies to exercise together, along with other partners and allies. There is also more collaboration for the Royal Canadian Air Force, Army and Special Operations Forces Command with their respective counterparts. Cooperation and information sharing in areas such as women's rights, peace and security, cybersecurity and space continue to grow. Canada has also expanded its efforts to uphold international fisheries agreements and to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing in the North Pacific.

Thanks to our complementary economies, the Canada-Japan commercial relationship is flourishing. As founding members, Canada and Japan work together under the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which Canada chairs in 2024. Canada is partnering with Japan to establish resilient, secure and sus-

tainable supply chains, including in critical technologies and minerals, supported by a well-functioning rules-based multilateral trading system.

As we celebrate Canada-Japan at 95 and look forward, the relationship is rapidly expanding. Science and technology partnerships between our countries are robust, with researchers and companies teaming up on some of the world's leading challenges, from the pursuit of cleaner and more sustainable energy to the development of more efficient semiconductors to support the artificial intelligence revolution. Numerous Canadian delegations visit Japan to discuss new opportunities for collaboration on security, trade, the environment, education and culture, and we are preparing to showcase the very best of Canada as we work with Japan to deliver an unforgettable Canada Pavilion for the 2025 World Expo in Osaka.

Strengthened Canada-Japan cooperation is taking place in an increasingly difficult geopolitical, economic and environmental context but our solid foundation is a source of strength. In several meetings last year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Prime Minister



The Parliament Buildings in Ottawa EMBASSY OF CANADA

Fumio Kishida reaffirmed their determination to address global challenges together, notably by cooperating in the context of Canada's 2025 presidency of the Group of Seven leading industrialized nations and beyond — pledging to protect our democracies, promote human rights and maintain the rules-based international order.

Canada and Japan are natural partners. Our frameworks for cooperation underscore our common values and priorities, as well as our shared vision for the future. As we celebrate everything we have achieved together since 1929, I am excited by the enormous potential of the Canada-Japan relationship and all we can accomplish in the next 95 years. Happy Canada Day!

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

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CDP holds global online event on climate disclosures

Media partner

HIROKO NAKATA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

CDP, a London-based nonprofit organization promoting disclosures crucial for assessing companies' environmental impacts, held a first-time online event on June 4 that highlighted the latest disclosure trends and marked the launch of its new disclosure platform.

As the world struggles to mitigate global warming, companies are under more pressure than ever to make further contributions to the transition to net-zero emissions.

CDP runs the world's largest environmental disclosure system for companies, cities, states and investors. Based on data obtained through its questionnaires, it scored a record 23,000 companies in 2023 to help them manage their environmental impacts. Out of these, about 2,000 are based in Japan. Established as the Carbon Disclosure Project in 2000, CDP has expanded its target areas from climate alone to biodiversity, plastics and the ocean, deforestation and water security.

The online event, "The Global Disclosure Dialogue," linked its branches in major cities from Tokyo and Shanghai to London and New York.

Last year was the first in which the limit of a 1.5-degree temperature increase was breached for the entire year. "So it is becoming really important for us to understand as a global society what actions we should be taking in order to be able to bring back climate crisis into sharp relief," CDP CEO Sherry Madera said in the opening speech, and "We believe at CDP, what you can measure, you can manage."

It is increasingly important for the private and public sectors to produce sustainable outcomes so they can attract more capital from institutional investors, who are keener on sustainability than ever before.

Madera stressed that this year is significant for CDP. When the nonprofit was founded,

it created the entire ecosystem for climate-related data disclosures. "That's a huge point of pride," she said in a recent interview with The Japan Times. "But it's also our history. So, what we need to invest in is our future going forward. And that's what this year is all about. I call it one of the most important years of CDP's life cycle."

Madera said efficiency in CDP's disclosure system is important for driving corporate action for a sustainable future. "We want to drive down the cost-of-reporting burden by creating efficiency, and that's why this new system (launched) this year is going to be able to allow us to do more."

Achieving efficiency is not only for the sake of companies' own internal use, but also for helping them to secure sales, as their ability to meet sustainability disclosure and compliance criteria makes it possible for institutional investors to invest in them and for buyers in their supply chains to make business decisions. Currently, CDP represents more than 340 of the owners of large companies in global supply chains, which together have a buying power of over \$6.4 trillion, she said.

Also, more than 23,000 companies worth a total of more than two-thirds of the world's market capitalization report to CDP. In Japan, almost two-thirds of the Tokyo Stock Exchange's Prime market members report to the organization, she added.

During the online event, Madera said CDP is making three major changes in its disclosure platform to enhance efficiency. The first is about the three areas on CDP questionnaires of climate, water security and forests. "This year, we're bringing them all together. I think it's a real symbol of the fact that nature and biodiversity are part of climate, and that one efficient disclosure mechanism is going to help us all."

The second update to CDP's disclosure platform is to align it with the latest global disclosure standards. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) issued its first two sustainability reporting standards in



From left: Sherry Madera, Hiroshi Ozeki and Satoshi Ikeda THE JAPAN TIMES

June last year. ISSB is an independent body whose standards are viewed as the benchmark in many countries.

"That means that as you are reporting to CDP, you will be aligned with ISSB—and that helps in terms of compliance going forward, and also checking where you're at today," she said. Based on the international standards, the Sustainability Standards Board of Japan (SSBJ), established in 2022, plans to finalize the Japanese version by the end of next March.

The last element is to improve practicality. "We're aware of the fact that reporting climate data is not easy. It's not free. It takes effort from both the corporate and the public-sector community," Madera continued. "At CDP, we're driving efficiency in order to be able to write it to us once and be able

to use it for all your different applications, including access to capital, including your own business efficiencies to be able to service your customer requests—and, finally, that element of compliance as it grows."

In the online event NTT Data explained the strategy and motivations for its sustainability data disclosure. The Japanese provider of IT services has received CDP's A score, the highest, for two years in a row.

NTT Data is increasingly required to be responsive to global standards on climate and other factors to protect the planet and nature, particularly since 2005, when it started to develop global business. "The CDP questionnaire is in line with global standards and provides us with an opportunity to review our own efforts," NTT Data's then-President and Chief Executive Officer

Yo Honma said in a dialogue with Madera. Honma became an adviser on June 18.

Honma said, for example, that the process of responding to CDP questionnaires helped the company to realize the significance of science-based data, which prompted it to decide to obtain validation from the Science Based Targets (SBT) initiative, established in 2015 by CDP, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and other organizations to help corporations set emission-reduction targets based on climate science. In 2020, NTT Data's targets received SBT approval as 1.5-degree targets, he said.

In a following dialogue with Madera, Satoshi Ikeda, the chief sustainable finance officer at Japan's Financial Services Agency, talked about the role of CDP in corporate sustainability disclosure. "The sustainability issue has become an integral part of enhancing the enterprise part. So, in that respect, many top-tier Japanese corporations have adopted CDP as a kind of the standard benchmark to assess how they have progressed in terms of disclosure around climate-related issues," Ikeda said, adding that the trend was enhanced by the advent of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).

"I think CDP has become a yardstick" against which Japanese corporations measure their development on climate-related issues, Ikeda said.

Hiroshi Ozeki, the president and chief executive officer for Nissay Asset Management Corp., echoed this and said, "Sustainability was in the past a better-to-have item, but now is a must-have item." He said the world needs to tackle this problem for the next generation, especially as climate change has sped up. Ozeki also said the asset management firm uses corporate data disclosed through the CDP platform when it holds dialogues with companies in its portfolio. "When it comes to our engagement with our investee companies, we present strong emphasis on the long-term stance in our investment," he said.



CDP CEO Sherry Madera THE JAPAN TIMES

Nissay Asset invests in companies that recognize "megatrends" such as the aging of society, climate change, digital transformation, geopolitical risks and global fragmentation. "Among those, climate change is the most critical theme for our investment, especially for the long term," Ozeki said.

The asset manager encourages companies to disclose more environment-related data, make a commitment to a net-zero goal and draft a concrete plan that can be checked. In the process, both qualitative and quantitative data are used, Ozeki said.

FSA's Ikeda also emphasized the importance of the kind of megatrends that could affect sustainability because they influence enterprises' value in the medium and long terms. That is why the Japanese financial watchdog is currently working on the Japanese version of the global standard requirements for domestic companies and financial institutions, he said. The FSA is likely to start mandating in 2027 that the largest companies listed on the Prime market disclose data based on the standards. "I think corporate behavior is going to change for the better to achieve a business model that would be relevant and effective with a sustainable economic and social system," Ikeda said.



Times Gallery



Jamaican Ambassador Shorna-Kay Richards joins Ziggy Marley (left), the director of the movie "Bob Marley: One Love" and its lead actor, and Japanese celebrities at its Japanese premiere. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA



Ambassador Harold Burgos of Honduras and Jun Nakahara visit Rainbow Bridge with the Honduran Inter-oceanic Railway Commission, discussing strategic collaboration in global logistics. EMBASSY OF HONDURAS



Cuban Ambassador Gisela Garcia receives a delegation of Cubans who participated in the World Para Athletics Championships in Kobe. EMBASSY OF CUBA



The Serbian ministers of domestic and foreign trade, economy and science, technological development and innovation meet with Ken Saito, Japan's minister of economy, trade and industry. EMBASSY OF SERBIA



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoshifumi Tsuge attends a reception marking the visit to Japan of Mexican Tourism Minister Miguel Torruco, held at the residence of Mexican Ambassador Melba Prida. EMBASSY OF MEXICO



Panamanian Ambassador Carlos Pere visits the Wind Challenger ship, developed by Oshima Shipbuilding and ClassNK, showcasing Panama's commitment to sustainable maritime technology. EMBASSY OF PANAMA



The opening ceremony of the 33rd annual Chubu Walkathon International Charity Festival was held on May 19 at Meijo Park in Nagoya by the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan's Chubu chapter and the Nagoya International School. ACCJ - CHUBU CHAPTER



Jorge Viana, president of the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency, unveils the concept of the Brazilian Pavilion for the Osaka 2025 expo during a news conference at the Embassy of Brazil. EMBASSY OF BRAZIL

World's top homebuilder Sekisui acts on its responsibility

Mission: Sustainability

OSAMU INOUE
RENEWS

Having built 2.66 million houses by this January, Sekisui House Ltd. is the world's largest homebuilder. The company also leads the industry in efforts for sustainability. In 2008, Sekisui House became the first homebuilder to be certified as an "eco-first company" by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment.

In February 2024, CDP released its ratings for 2023. Sekisui received the highest rating in all three areas of climate change, forests and water security, making it a triple-A company. Of the 23,000 companies surveyed around the world, only 10 achieved triple A's—and of those, Sekisui was the only homebuilder.

"It's not like we made a big change recently. Our perception is that the things we have worked on over the past 25 years have finally been recognized," Sekisui's executive officer in charge of environmental promotion, Toshiya Chikada, said.

The Carbon Neutral House

Sekisui's efforts to generate environmental value began in 1999 with the announcement of its Environmental Future Plan. After that, Sekisui took a series of actions. In 2001, it launched the Gohon no Ki ("five trees") project to protect native trees and biodiversity. In 2002, it achieved zero emissions at its factories. In 2003, it standardized a next-generation energy-saving specification for detached homes. In 2005, it announced a "Declaration of Sustainability," in which it pledged to make all new homes compliant with CO2 emissions reduction targets under the Kyoto Protocol. In 2007, it introduced guidelines to promote the sourcing of sustainable Fairwood products.

Chikada said these efforts had a lot to do with the company's ability to quickly take action to become certified as an eco-first company soon after the Environment Ministry launched the eco-first program in April 2008.

80,000 zero-energy homes

This April, Sekisui announced it had sold 83,541 homes compliant with the standard for net-zero-energy houses (ZEH) up to March 31. That makes Sekisui the company that has sold the largest number of them in

the world. Such houses have an energy balance of zero or lower.

In fiscal 2022, which ended in March 2023, zero-energy homes represented 93% of the new homes that the company built in all areas excluding Hokkaido, and the figure rose to 95% in fiscal 2023.

In recent years, rival homebuilders have grown aggressive in introducing ZEH, intensifying competition. But Sekisui remains the leader, and also leads in introducing ZEH techniques in apartments and rental properties, an area where the adoption of ZEH has not generally advanced.

No compromise in comfort

What has enabled Sekisui to lead in introducing ZEH? One major factor is the fact that it was already working on the development and sale of eco-friendly homes before the term "ZEH" was introduced. In addition, consumers like Sekisui's policy of not compromising on the design or comfort of homes, which has helped increase the acceptance of its products.

Sekisui's rooftop solar power system symbolizes this policy. In place of the ceramic tiles typically used for Japanese roofs, the system uses solar panels shaped like such tiles, generating power without compromising on building design. "You can place our tile-shaped panels on roofs of any shape. They don't jar with the existing townscape, and you can give homes a neat appearance with them. On top of that, they generate power and help cut power bills. That's why our customers are satisfied with them," Chikada said.

Sekisui also worked on the adoption of double-paned windows that have high insulating performance. By 2000, high-performance double-paned windows and insulated aluminum sliding window frames came standard with all of Sekisui's homes. "At the time, there was a belief that double panes were too expensive for general use, but after we introduced them as a standard feature, their mass production became viable and their costs dropped, leading to their greater use," Chikada said.

"The systems have proved popular with younger generations because they are economically beneficial even while contributing to conserving the environment and reducing CO2 emissions at the same time," Chikada added.



This roof uses Sekisui's unique solar panels that resemble classic roof tiles. SEKISUI HOUSE LTD.

True resource recycling

Increasing the use of electric vehicles as well is a natural part of Sekisui's future plans. Nearly all of its newly built detached homes already have chargers for electric vehicles. Last December, it announced that it had established a system for providing EV chargers for its Sha Maison rental housing across the nation.

"The International Energy Agency had this report that estimated that more than half of the sales of new vehicles around the world will be EVs by 2035. So if that's the case, a homebuilder like us needs to think more about ways to design homes that have features like using power generated by home solar panels to charge electric vehicles, for example," Chikada said.

Sekisui has also been working on improved recycling of waste from construction projects for more than two decades. After building a recycling center at a plant in the Kanto area in 2003, the company set up similar facilities in a total of 23 locations nationwide. These facilities collect all of the waste from construction sites across Japan and recycle it.

Not all waste is turned into new construction materials through recycling. There is also thermal recycling, which burns waste to generate energy. Chikada is not yet satisfied with Sekisui's endeavors in this area. "A true circular economy, for us, means leaving behind the system in which we take from nature, make things and discard them. To make our economy circular requires all industry players to work together," Chikada said. "It will take time, for sure, but we must do it."



Strong Europe-Japan relations are a legacy of Shinzo Abe

The late former leader was a strong proponent of close Tokyo-Brussels ties

JAGANNATH PANDA AND KEI HAKATA
 CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

"In order to make the connectivity linking Japan and Europe something rock-solid, the Indo-Pacific, the sea route that leads to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, must be free and open."

Speaking in Brussels in September 2019, then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed his sentiments about Europe and its role in securing the future of the Indo-Pacific — a region vital for Europe's economic survival.

Abe saw Europe's involvement as crucial to balance economic and political forces at a global level, especially at a time when the trade rivalry between the United States and China was heating up and Washington was waving its "America First" policy. In an international setting where shared values and interests bolster solidarity, it is no wonder that the European Union and Japan became "natural" partners.

Three years later, Abe reiterated his view of Europe's crucial role. In the last text he wrote before his assassination on July 8, 2022, he alluded to European nations as value-based partners and the need to deepen ties with them even as the four original Indo-Pacific partners — Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. — forged a key framework in the face of threats. This was in line with Abe's long-standing belief in expanding the "circle of free societies."

Known for his strong Indo-Pacific vision, throughout his second term, Abe also exhibited a penchant for Europe. He launched his Europe-centered policy at the 2013 Group of Eight summit in Northern Ireland, calling for accelerated negotiations on the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) and Japan-EU Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA).

Later, in March 2017, soon after U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration, Abe was in Germany defending free trade and emphasizing a "free and open international order" to German Chancellor Angela Merkel.



Then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at an EU-Japan trade summit in Brussels in 2019. Abe was an early believer in the need for Japan to strengthen relations with Europe based on shared values and interests. BLOOMBERG

A little over a year later, in July 2018, the EPA and SPA were finalized, probably propelled by the consolidation of Japan and the EU's mutual interests in the face of the Trump administration's policies.

On the strategic front, as Europe has taken a geopolitical turn under EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the 27-member EU body has assumed a direction consistent with a "free and open Indo-Pacific" — a strategy known as FOIP — first presented by Abe in August 2016.

Furthermore, the EU's own Indo-Pacific strategy, formulated in 2021, echoes the tenets of the late former prime minister's strategy, which was focused on maritime security, the rule of law and regional security

and stability. Abe's "Confluence of the Two Seas" vision, announced in a speech to the Indian parliament in 2007, also proved critical to Europe due to the bloc's dependence on Indo-Pacific trade routes and the direct connection between the respective regions' stability, security and prosperity.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has continued applying Abe's strategic thinking, going beyond it, however, in dealing with Russia — taking a tougher stance on President Vladimir Putin than Abe ever did. Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, widely considered an existential threat to international security, prompted Kishida to initiate a drastic change in Japan's foreign and defense policy.

Given Beijing's support for a belligerent Moscow, Europe's previously rose-tinted view of China as a manageable economic partner has faded. With Tokyo looming as a trusted values-based partner for European capitals, Kishida has successfully capitalized on the momentum to strengthen Japan's standing, work on pressing security issues and to be on Europe's side.

Japan was one of the only countries in Asia to impose sanctions on Russia from the get-go while providing financial, humanitarian and nonlethal military aid to Ukraine. Kishida's efforts to link European and East Asian security are based on realism and promoting Japan's national interests — Japan's assistance is, in part, a

strategic investment to induce European support for Tokyo's own concerns.

Calculus aside, due to its positioning vis-a-vis the West and its support for crucial agendas, Japan now enjoys a privileged status among European policymakers — a fact almost unthinkable a decade ago, when their attention was fully on China.

Not many know that Abe had long been sowing the seeds on the European front. In 2007, he became the first Japanese prime minister to visit NATO headquarters, which he visited a second time seven years later. On the latter occasion, he made a speech titled "Japan and NATO as 'Natural Partners'."

Even as Europe debated the merits of

cooperative security versus collective defense, Abe worked throughout 2015 to enable Japan to exercise collective defense, albeit in a limited way — paving the way for Kishida to bring this vision to fruition. Tokyo's current defense trajectory — from increasing the defense budget to the coproduction of military equipment — should thus be seen through an evolutionary, rather than a revolutionary, lens.

Europe is in great turmoil as Russia attempts to reassert its imperial ambitions. NATO and what it stands for have found greater resonance even in traditionally neutral European states, such as Finland and Sweden. In today's age of complex global challenges, enhanced ties between NATO and Japan are vital in addressing mutual concerns.

Abe was a firm proponent of strengthening a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific. Not only was he steering Japan away from total dependence on the U.S. for its security, but was actively pursuing the creation of a coalition of like-minded democracies.

The Euro-Indo-Pacific alignment is his prime legacy standing guard against Beijing-sponsored coercion and a belligerent North Korea. A Taiwan contingency — which Abe famously likened to a contingency for Japan — is where such a coalition would prove itself most relevant.

That Japan and a generally nonconfrontational bloc like the EU are discussing wider strategic cooperation today is largely due to the ramifications of authoritarian states' assertiveness. Such new linkages would not have been possible without Abe's foreign policy foresight. His role in stimulating Europe's vigilant outlook toward the power of authoritarian states, primarily in the Indo-Pacific, must be duly remembered.

Jagannath Panda is head of the Stockholm Center for South Asian and Indo-Pacific Affairs at the Institute for Security and Development Policy in Sweden and a professor at the University of Warsaw. Kei Hakata is a professor at Seikei University in Tokyo.

India's scorching heat waves are making it unlivable

DAVID FICKLING
 BLOOMBERG

It can often seem a triumph that India exists at all.

By some miracle of human ingenuity and industry, a land area barely bigger than Argentina with less water than Colombia is able to support nearly a fifth of the world's population. The recent scorching temperatures in the capital New Delhi are a warning sign, however. The magic spell that has sustained this achievement is coming close to breaking.

That is an issue not just for those sweltering on the streets of the world's second-biggest city, but for the path to wealth that 1.4 billion people hope to follow.

India has a far poorer natural endowment of land than Europe, North America and China, the continental economies that preceded it on the road to riches. Even the fragile benefits that its citizens have managed to eke out of this unpromising soil might now be slipping further away, as climate change exposes the country's deep fragility and washes away the foundations of growth.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pitch in the recent general election was that his Bharatiya Janata Party has made the country the fastest-growing Group of 20 economy. "India is on the path to becoming a developed nation," he told a rally in West Bengal, a region where the BJP has historically performed poorly.

Even as he spoke those words, the country was struggling with the most basic tasks of survival. Delhi recorded its first heatstroke death amid temperatures recorded

by one (erroneous) sensor as high as 52.9 degrees Celsius.

Nine died from the heat in the northwestern state of Rajasthan in one week and 10 suspected heat-related deaths happened in just six hours at a single hospital in Odisha state in the country's east. Even Bollywood star Shah Rukh Khan was hospitalized with dehydration in the city of Ahmedabad.

The problem with Modi's promise is that much of the work needed to reach developed country status is at the mercy of this weather. India has the world's biggest farm sector after China and economic growth is at the mercy of the southwest monsoon rains that drench the country from June to September.

You can now add the effect of pre-monsoon heat waves to that. Scorching temperatures from March to May blight crops, such as during a 2022 hot spell which reduced wheat output by about 4.5%. Produce that has been farmed can end up spoiled as heat and humidity and the lack of refrigeration leave it rotting before it can reach households. The price of vegetables has increased at double-digit rates in eight out of the past 10 months, piling pressure on living costs and forcing consumers to depend on cheaper, less healthy nutrition.

The rains that mark the breaking of the heat waves can bring their own problems. Warmer air holds more moisture, raising the risk of downpours so severe that they flood fields and wash away crops. Hailstorms, which can destroy entire fields in a matter of minutes, appear to be growing more frequent. One recent study in Kashmir found 27 such disasters in 2022, compared to two in 2007.

It is not just plant life that suffers. While factory and office workers can go through the day in air-conditioned comfort regardless of the temperature outside, about 95% of India's labor force is in less organized jobs where no employer guarantees decent working conditions. When the mercury heads above 40 C, farmers and urban laborers have little option but to put down tools or face potentially catastrophic heatstroke.

That hampers the vast amount of construction work that development will require. Upper middle-income nations (the club that India would like to join) typically derive about a third of economic growth from fixed-capital formation — building things, in simple terms. India trails Vietnam and Bangladesh on this measure and is light years behind China.

As of late 2022, India was reckoned to have only about 30% of the urban infrastructure it will need by the end of the decade. The sodden monsoon is already a soft period for construction work, since cement needs dry air to set properly. Three consecutive years of record heat waves mean that the hot summer months from March to June are increasingly affected, too, further squeezing the period when building sites can operate effectively.

India is responsible for very little of the carbon emissions that are rapidly making its climate unbearable — but it must take responsibility for the future.

Cheap solar power has only recently started showing signs of being installed at the rates needed to hit the government's renewable power targets. Despite higher costs, China connected about 4.5 gigawatts of panels for every gigawatt India did in this year's first quarter.



Public charging stations for the electric vehicles that could help clean up the choking pollution of India's cities and reduce its dependence on imported oil are too few and far between. The 12,146 in operation to date are equivalent to less than 1% of what the country will need by 2030.

Every side of politics wants India to become the affluent nation its people aspire to. The bridge to that destination, however, is weakened with every scorching

summer and exceptional monsoon.

For a country that hopes over the coming decade to industrialize without carbonizing, the risk is that it may end up in the worst of both worlds — trapped in a carbon-intensive past, prevented by its own scorching heat from building the economy of the future.

David Fickling is a Bloomberg Opinion columnist covering climate change and energy.

Delhi recorded its first death from heatstroke recently, with scorching temperatures wreaking havoc in the capital and other Indian cities.

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If only there was that special someone who could show Cauliflower the same love he gives to everyone he meets.

NAOMI MOCHIZUKI

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Tokyo: Shared interests

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Play Quidditch: Muggles and potterheads welcome, every other Sunday, 3-5 p.m. Friendly bilingual group Edo Quidditch invites the international community to play sports outdoors. Free, open to any gender, age, nationality, etc. We play in tournaments at national and internationally level (World cup, APQC). No broom flying license required! Where: Haru-no-Ogawa Community Park, 5-68-1 Yoyogi, Shibuya-ku 153-0053, Free. Edo Quidditch: edoquidditch@gmail.com or call 080-4006-8970

Nationwide: Causes

Tokyo Canadian Club: For Canadians and friends of Canada. Join the club for events with Canadian nostalgia and a monthly pub night. For more information, please visit www.facebook.com/TokyoCanadianClub.
For Empowering Women: Women in Tokyo, we welcome you to join our network. For Empowering Women (FEW), and to begin building your professional and social network. We offer monthly events incorporating many different topics from lectures to social outings and volunteering. For more information, please visit www.fewjapan.com.

How English-language authors make it from Japan

How-Tos

KAT JOPLIN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Travelers, adventurers, academics and dreamers — attend any Japan Writers Conference and you'll know that the expatriate community is alive with writers of every stripe, but breaking into the industry can be a tricky business.

All too many of my friends and acquaintances in Japan fall under the self-described "aspiring writers" label: people who write in private, but have yet to successfully pitch and publish an article, short story or — most formidable — a full-blown book. And yet, from fiction novelist Karen Hill Anton to memoirist Florentyna Leow (both previous contributors to The Japan Times), it is clear that non-Japanese writers can thrive in Japan. Some find career stability in teaching, translation or corporate work that frees up time for writing, while others find that the culture and vibrance of this country inspires their imaginations and world-building.

I sat down with three authors with books coming out in 2024 — Ellen McGinty, Ambika Nagino and Kristin Osani — to discuss the ups and downs of the publishing industry and the long (and very different) roads each of them took to seeing their books in print.

Nurturing a love for writing

McGinty moved with her family to Yokohama in 2017; her husband is a pastor from Sapporo who had lived much of his life in Japan. She recalls that she has been writing since early childhood: "In elementary school, I sold homemade graphic novels on the street corner while other kids had lemonade stands." McGinty, 36, says she is drawn to the history and culture of Japan, and many of her story ideas begin with a question she has based on something she's read in a history book or autobiography. Her first self-published novel, "The Water Child," was a eulogy for the people who suffered or lost their lives to the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, an event that deeply affected McGinty and her family.

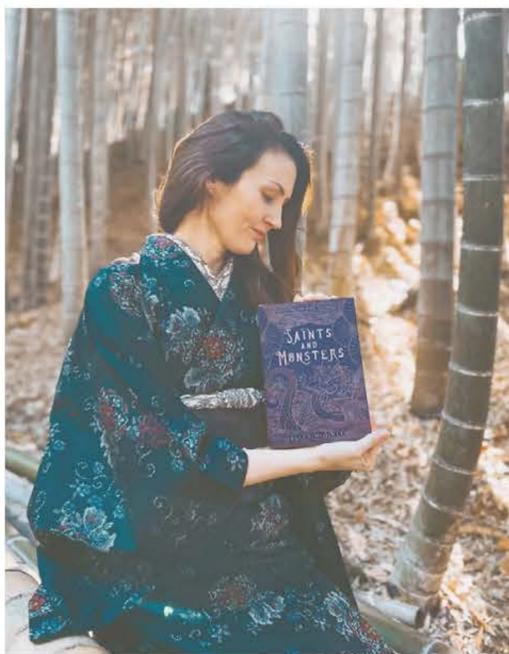
Meanwhile, though they grew up continents apart, Indian Japanese writer Nagino (who publishes under the pseudonym A.A. Vora) and American-born Osani each cite anime and manga as the start of their love for both writing and Japan.

"I've been a writer ever since I first became obsessed with anime in Japan, especially 'Sailor Moon,' around age 8," says Osani, now 34. "The first story I remember writing was about a girl who rescues a horse, and then there's magic. I wrote tons of stories as a kid."

Nagino, 31, was also inspired by the Japanese pop culture she consumed in her teens as well as her complex life spanning India, England, the United States and Japan. "Having a pretty mixed background — ethnically Indian but nationally Japanese, with experiences living in four countries — I knew early on that (my writing) would be a mix, just like me," she says.

As each woman found herself in Japan with career and life unfolding in front of them, writing began to be less of a hobby and more of a calling. For Nagino, the switch happened as she began pursuing a career as a management consultant and needed a creative outlet.

"I started writing in 2015, back when I was working a fairly stressful corporate job with long hours in a 100% Japanese-language



environment," Nagino says. "After finishing my tasks, I was often told to wait a couple hours before my boss or other colleagues finished." Nagino began to spend these daily waiting periods pouring herself into world building: "I had this desire to escape and to have some semblance of control in my life."

By contrast, Osani began writing professionally as she pursued a freelance translation career from her home in Yamagata. "In 2017, I was having so much fun in a translation project for a major video game company," Osani says. "Being so involved in creative work made me want to pursue writing myself."

Knowing her writing skills were still underbaked at this time, Osani began studying the craft of writing more intensely and attending online writer conferences through Writer's Digest and the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Association. Osani's freelance translation career thrived thanks to the community and network she'd built, so she took the same approach to her writing career: building connections with the fellow writers she met at these online conferences and organizing writing dates, peer workshops and beta readers.

Indies and the Big Five

Of the three, Nagino has pursued the most traditional agent-to-publisher route with her novel "Spin of Fate." She describes the experience as punishing, if ultimately rewarding.

After completing her manuscript, Nagino spent around five or six years seeking an agent, querying around 200 potentials she found through online searches. Throughout this time, she continued revising and improving her manuscript and query letter (a one-page summary and pitch of an unpublished work), confident that with enough polish her pitch would land.

"I could see the improvement (in my writing) and the growing interest over time — initially, agents ghosted me," Nagino says. "Then I started getting form rejections. Then I got personalized rejections. Then I had back-and-forths with them before they told me no."



Clockwise from top left: Ellen McGinty says that when she secured a traditional agent, she felt pressured to write according to industry preferences; Ambika Nagino believes that being based in Japan may have made her more attractive to agents looking to market authors with unique backgrounds; For her novella "Extravaganza Eterna," Kristin Osani acted as her own agent when she partnered with a small publisher.

COURTESY OF ELLEN MCGINTY; COURTESY OF AMBIKA NAGINO; COURTESY OF KRISTIN OSANI

Nagino's journey paid off when she finally secured a New York-based literary agent who shared a similar appreciation for anime and high fantasy. Not long after, this agent helped broker her a deal with Penguin Random House, one of the so-called Big Five English-language publishers.

Both McGinty and Osani, meanwhile, went with independent publishers. McGinty, somewhat miraculously, got a traditional agent soon after moving to Japan and sending queries. However, she eventually parted ways with her agent and found that freedom from industry pressure reignited her enthusiasm to write. As of now, with her novel "Saints and Monsters" freshly published, McGinty has chosen to remain agentless.

"It's a mixed bag," McGinty says of her chosen path. "With the agent route, you have better odds of landing a big publisher, but you split more royalties and might feel constrained to write for certain trends. An agent could move to another agency or retire, or projects don't sell and it adds pressure. But agents know contracts, the market and how to potentially secure great deals."

"With an indie route you get freedom. You choose your own path and projects. You don't have to split extra royalties. Publishing is faster with more flexibility. There are lots of small- and medium-sized presses open to submission, (but) you need to know contract jargon and advocate for yourself."

This is what Osani did when she secured a publishing deal with Ghost Orchid, a small press that had previously published one

of her short stories and with whom she'd enjoyed working.

"It was all a very fast process," she says, explaining that her novella, "Extravaganza Eterna" took only three years from Osani putting pen to paper until the print release.

Writing for far-away readers

One of the most striking aspects of being a non-Japanese author is the vast distance between you and your market, which, for these three writers, is mainly English-speaking countries. Being based in Japan can be a double-edged sword.

"Since (all querying and negotiations are) done online and via email, I don't think my location affected the process much," Nagino says. "If anything, living in Japan probably made me 'unique' from the perspective of agents looking to represent authors from diverse backgrounds."

However, McGinty found that living here posed hurdles she didn't expect.

"The difficulty comes in marketing," McGinty says. "Many publishers nowadays, both indie and traditional, expect the author to do most of the marketing. But there simply isn't a large audience for English-language fiction in Japan." McGinty recommends using newsletters and social media platforms to counteract this issue.

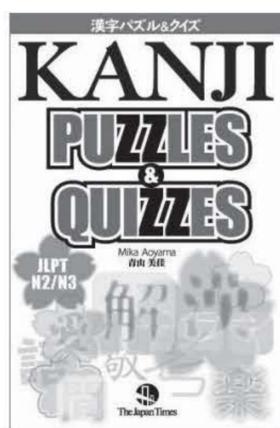
Nagino faced similar difficulties leading up to her book release and found few opportunities Stateside to promote her book through interviews, launch events or signings without a local community to fall back on.

"My one savior has been 'BookTube,'" Nagino says, referring to the community of writers and book reviewers on YouTube who have boosted "Spin of Fate."

Ultimately, in spite of the difficulties, all three authors agree it is more than possible to succeed and flourish as a non-Japanese writer in this country.

"Being an English fiction author in Japan might be a solitary road as there aren't many of us and the international community tends to have high turnover, but it's also a rewarding journey," says McGinty.

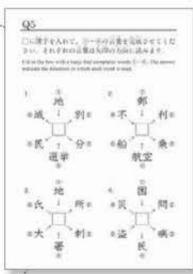
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7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES	SOLUTIONS
1 portion (9)	_____
2 female on the force (11)	_____
3 lost vigor (10)	_____
4 topple the king, perhaps (8)	_____
5 evaded duties (7)	_____
6 like a candle-jumping Jack (6)	_____
7 kidney and wax (5)	_____

OTM	ALL	POLI	UIS	MAN
CEWO	HED	RK	NIM	RO
BE	BLE	ENT	DE	NE
ANS	SHI	ED	TH	LANG

Friday's Answers: 1. REPHRASE 2. SOLID 3. CATHERINE 4. HALIBUT 5. SOCIALIZE 6. LEVELING 7. MELBOURNE

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Italy's Andrea Cambiaso (left), Davide Frattesi (center, standing) and Alessandro Bastoni look dejected after their team's loss to Switzerland on Saturday in Berlin. REUTERS

Italy at crossroads after Euro disaster

Coach Spalletti in the hot seat after Swiss oust defending champs

Euro 2024

BERLIN
AFP-Jiji

Italy is once again staring into the soccer abyss after Saturday's humbling exit from Euro 2024 at the hands of Switzerland, with the defense of their continental title ending in embarrassing fashion.

A shockingly one-sided match in Berlin, where Italy won the 2006 World Cup, led to a dismal last-16 exit after Luciano Spalletti's side had scraped through the group stage by the skin of its teeth.

Saturday's limp defeat was one of the lowest points in the history of the four-time world champions and reigning kings of Europe, and the latest in a worryingly large number of recent humiliations, including

missing out on the last two World Cups.

Italy was pinned back by the Swiss in the first half and after Ruben Vargas' brilliant strike seconds after halftime, the Italians were easily held at arm's length as they limped out of the tournament.

On Italy's national broadcaster RAI, the verdict was swift and brutal: "unacceptable" and "slow and predictable," said disconsolate commentators.

After the match, Spalletti lamented to RAI how Vargas' goal "took our legs out from under us" and said that his players didn't come into the tournament in the right physical condition to compete.

He also suggested that Italy was affected by the heat in Berlin's Olympiastadion, even though it didn't stop the Swiss from performing at their best.

"Unfortunately, sharpness and tempo makes the difference," said Spalletti.

"Right now, for too many reasons, we are unable to do anything more than this."

It was not a convincing explanation for such disjointed performances over four matches and those comments followed a

series of bizarre outbursts from Spalletti, who took the Italy job last summer with a huge amount of credit accrued after leading Napoli to a historic Serie A title.

Italian media are already questioning Spalletti's position after less than a year in charge, so bad was his team's showing in Germany and so confusing his constant chopping and changing of lineups and formations.

World Cup 2026 qualifiers begin in September, and after Saturday's postmatch news conference journalists were informed that Spalletti would have discussions with Italy's soccer federation on Sunday to "take stock" before another conference with reporters.

But Spalletti refused to directly address his future, only saying vaguely that "we need to change things" and taking it in turns to take responsibility and then blame outside factors.

"I take responsibility for what happened, the players are mine, I chose them. I'm not happy with how we played today nor am I happy with how we played against Spain," said Spalletti.

He added: "All of the other coaches had 20 games in charge, some had 50, before the

Euros, I only had 10. ... We also had a number of players who sustained injuries, players I was counting on."

Spalletti's new-look side had come into the tournament as a work in progress and there were promising signs from its opening 2-1 win over Albania.

However, things rapidly went downhill with a single-goal thumping at the hands of Spain, in which goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma kept the score respectable. Then it took a 98th-minute equalizer against Croatia to send Italy through.

Captain Donnarumma was Italy's only real bright spot at what was otherwise a miserable tournament and he was visibly upset at the nature of Italy's elimination.

"It hurts, it really hurts. We can only say sorry to everyone. We were disappointing today and they deserved to win," said Donnarumma.

"It's difficult to digest but that's how it went, we can't do anything about it."

His apologies fell on deaf ears, however, as angry fans in the stands unloaded their frustration on a team that enters yet another period of transition and soul-searching.

The Germans are back after a rare lean spell

Euro 2024

ANDREW CAWTHORNE
HAMBURG
REUTERS

With mosquitoes plaguing their preparations, lightning flashing over the match and an early goal disallowed, the Germans must have wondered halfway into their Euro 2024 last-16 game against Denmark if the gods were against them.

But as the storm clouds passed, so their fortunes changed and Germany deservedly ran out as a 2-0 winner in Dortmund to reach a first major tournament quarterfinal in eight years.

That is a long time by the standards of a nation whose name became synonymous in soccer with serial winning.

The Germans' disappointing run has included first-round exits at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and a last-16 elimination in the 2021 Euros.

Saturday's triumph has belatedly ignited Germany's fans, who were notably downbeat about their team's prospects in the run-up to the tournament and had not created an atmosphere to match the famous summer party of 2006 when they hosted the World Cup.

That may change, as fans poured onto the streets after Saturday's games, tooting horns and waving flags.

The victory was vindication for Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann. First and foremost of his decision to stick with Kai

Havertz alone up front and keep big Niclas Füllkrug on the bench despite his two goals in the tournament from substitute appearances.

Havertz, goalless in the group stage, looked the part, tormenting Denmark with his runs and clever movement and netting the first goal from the penalty spot with a pinpoint shot beyond goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel's reach.

His fortune contrasted with Rasmus Hojlund at the other end, who looked shorn of confidence as his goal drought with Denmark continued to eight games.

Germany is starting to look very good at the Euros, where in the group stage they humiliated Scotland, controlled Hungary and showed fighting spirit against a strong Swiss team.

Versus the Danes, the Germans had an impressive 55% possession, 58 attacks and 14 attempts on goal, with Jamal Musiala curling home their second and match-winning goal.

They had the video assistant referee (VAR) to thank, however, for two game-changing decisions that will be a recurring nightmare for Danish defender Joachim Andersen.

He thought he had scored, only to see it chalked off for a narrow offside by a teammate, then shortly afterward committed the handball for Germany's penalty.

With Spain, Portugal, France and Belgium still in its side of the draw, however, Germany's newfound confidence may soon be put to a severe test.



German midfielder Jamal Musiala celebrates scoring his team's second goal during Germany's win over Denmark on Saturday in Dortmund. AFP-Jiji

Alcaraz and Sinner primed as Wimbledon nears new era

Wimbledon

REUTERS

Defending champion Carlos Alcaraz and world No. 1 Jannik Sinner will take their simmering rivalry to the top of the men's game to Wimbledon, where the two young guns will look to prolong seven-time winner Novak Djokovic's trophy drought in 2024.

Even before the tournament begins, however, Djokovic's quest for a record 25th Grand Slam title is under a cloud, with the Serb building match fitness after undergoing knee surgery three weeks ago for an injury that prematurely ended his French Open.

Fellow 37-year-old and former champion Andy Murray is also in a race to be ready for what is likely his Wimbledon swansong after the injury-plagued Briton went under the knife last week for a back issue that was exacerbated during his Queen's Club run.

With Roger Federer retired and Rafael Nadal skipping Wimbledon to focus on the Paris Olympics, Djokovic is the only member of the Big Three in the draw. Wimbledon hasn't been held without one of the three legends in the draw since 1998.

If Djokovic struggles in his return from injury, all eyes would then be on Alcaraz and Sinner as they usher in a new era.

"I'm just focusing on myself," Alcaraz said last month. "For me, I'm going to play the same level or I'm going to feel the same pressure being with the Big Three in the tournament or having none of those three."

"It's going to be the same tournament. Of course, as a fan of tennis or to people who are going to watch, it's not going to be the same, not being able to watch those players."

Three-time Grand Slam champion Alcaraz overcame Djokovic in five sets to win the title 12 months ago and will look to defend a major trophy for the first time despite a minor blip that cut short the 21-year-old's Queen's Club title defense.

The Spaniard will join Rod Laver, Bjorn Borg, Nadal, Federer and Djokovic if he claims back-to-back French Open and Wimbledon titles, a rare feat dubbed the "Channel Slam" in reference to the English Channel separating France and Britain.

Hoping to thwart him is Italian 22-year-old Sinner, who won his first major after dethroning Djokovic at the Australian Open and is red-hot heading to the All England Club after his maiden crown on grass courts in Halle.

"I'm looking forward to it. Last year I made the (Wimbledon) semifinals, I played some good tennis," said Sinner.

"So let's see what's coming this year. I'm more confident, for sure."

Kohli leads India to T20 World Cup triumph

T20 World Cup

SIMON EVANS
BRIDGETOWN, BARBADOS
AFP-Jiji

India won the T20 World Cup title in dramatic and emotional fashion Saturday, with Virat Kohli starring in a thrilling seven-run victory over South Africa at Kensington Oval in Barbados.

Kohli, who later announced his retirement from T20 internationals, steadied the India innings with his fine 76 taking the team to a strong 176-7.

When Heinrich Klaasen blasted a superb 52 from 27 balls, it looked as though South Africa, appearing in its first final, was closing in on victory but it was halted by some outstanding Indian bowling and catching at the end.

South Africa ended on 169-8, with Hardik Pandya taking 3-20 for India to offer another reminder of his outstanding ability, particularly in "death bowling."

The win is the second T20 World Cup title for India following its triumph in the first edition in 2007 and it also ends an 11-year wait for a major title going back to the 2013 Champions Trophy.

But while the team and its huge traveling army of fans celebrated in Barbados, the win also marked the end of an era, with skipper Rohit Sharma also calling it a day *



India's Virat Kohli celebrates after his side won the T20 World Cup in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Saturday. REUTERS

for the shortest format of the international game and coach Rahul Dravid having already announced his departure.

It was a sweet farewell for veteran Kohli, who had struggled in the tournament, coming into the final with an average of just 10.7, but he delivered his best innings at the perfect moment with his balanced batting, ensuring India won the title after an unbeaten tournament.

"I am so proud to get the runs for the team the day it mattered most," said Kohli.

"The occasion prompted that change for me, I felt like it was now or never. We have wanted to lift a trophy for a long time.

"I wasn't feeling myself before today. I wasn't confident. So I am very grateful and humble right now. It has been difficult, so there are a lot of emotions," he added.

Kohli's assured display was just what was needed for India, which had slipped to 34 for three after Sharma won the toss and opted to bat.

In what has been a low-scoring tournament, the total looked to be a daunting one for South Africa, but then Quinton de Kock (39) and Tristan Stubbs (31) set the Proteas on their way before Klaasen turned the game in their direction in the 15th over, smashing Axar Patel for 24, including two fours and two sixes.

When Klaasen was finally removed, caught behind off Hardik Pandya, the Proteas needed just 26 off the last 23 balls.

Knowing they had to take the initiative, Rohit turned early for Jasprit Bumrah's final over and he answered the skipper's call perfectly, bowling Marco Jansen and conceding just two runs in the 18th over.

That meant South Africa needed 20 from the final two overs and Arshdeep Singh bowled a masterful length to allow just four.

With 16 to win off the last over, Pandya bowled a full-toss at Miller who smashed it high straight down the ground but Suryakumar Yadav produced a breathtaking catch on the boundary, throwing the ball back into play before he crossed the ropes and then returning to complete the catch.

Kagiso Rabada edged a four and Pandya showed some nerves with a wide but the seamer kept his cool to ensure silverware for India after it lost in last year's 50 Over World Cup on home soil.

For Rohit, the victory was the culmination of strong efforts and near-misses in recent years.

"We've played a lot of high-pressure games that we've been on the wrong side of. We now understand what needs to be done when the pressure is on. Today is the perfect example of what we can do with our backs against the wall. It was going South Africa's way but we wanted it so badly," he said.