

I. News of the Week

1. Government Declares State of Emergency in Okinawa

- Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga announced Friday that the government is declaring a state of emergency in Okinawa between May 23-June 20.
- The government will also lift the pre-emergency measures in Ehime following a reduction in the number of daily cases.
- Nationwide numbers dropped to 5,818 cases from over 7,000 last week, while those with severe symptoms reached a high of 1,294 cases.
- Okinawa will shift from pre-emergency measures (*man-en bōshi-tō jūten sochi*). The prefectural government will request eateries and shopping malls to close by 8 p.m., as well as citizens to stay at home after this time.
- Regarding the nine other prefectures, Suga said the government will decide at the end of the month whether to extend the state of emergency once more. The current measures are set to be lifted on May 31.

2. Variant Strain Continues to Spread

- The health ministry's advisory board said Wednesday that it was taking longer for case tallies to subside most likely due to the variant strain. In Osaka, which saw a surge in cases in the week of March 28, the number of people in downtown areas began to decrease that week, but the peak passed in the week of May 1.
- The government said Wednesday that it was considering requiring video calls to ensure compliance with self-isolation measures. Around 30 percent of individuals fail to report their location via app, making it difficult to track viral spreads.
- The Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) announced Wednesday that almost 80 percent of cases between May 13-17 were of the U.K. variant.
- Japan on Tuesday added Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives to the list of countries close to India where stronger border measures will be applied.
- Individuals will be required to reside at a government designated facility for the first six days of their 14-day quarantine period.

3. Vaccine Rollout

- The health ministry approved Friday the Moderna and AstraZeneca vaccines. The Moderna vaccine will be used at the mass vaccination sites in Tokyo and Osaka.

- As for the AstraZeneca vaccine, which the government has a contract for supply to vaccinate 60 million citizens, actual use will require further time due to the extremely rare case of it causing blood clots.
- The government is also considering using university campuses to vaccinate the elderly, and eventually university students and staff.
- Suga met with the president of the Japan Dental Association on Tuesday, and agreed to have dentists fill the shortage in medical staff necessary to administer the vaccine.
- Data published by the University of Oxford shows that, as of Monday, Japan has vaccinated 3.74 percent of its population once.¹ This is less than the world average of 9 percent and puts Japan around 110th in the world when it comes to speed.

4. Reservations for Vaccination at Mass Sites Begin

- Reservations for vaccination at the mass vaccination sites in Tokyo and Osaka began Monday. Osaka's 25,000 reservations filled up within 26 minutes, while as of Tuesday, 90 percent of Tokyo's reservations have been filled.
- Issues emerged almost immediately. Some media outlets reported that although the government said reservations were only open for those who received tickets from their respective municipalities, anyone could hop online and find a spot.
- The Ministry of Defense reacted to these reports by *Asahi* and *Mainichi* with a statement of protest. Minister Nobuo Kishi said Tuesday that reservations through "fraudulent means" would result in wasted vaccines, and urged against making such "fake" reservations.
- A new issue emerged in several Tokyo municipalities on Friday, in which those with the correct ticket numbers failed to reserve a spot. An expert pointed out that every municipality issues a ten-digit number separately, meaning duplicate numbers could exist nationwide.
- Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike said Friday that Tokyo was preparing its own mass vaccination site. She also said Suga had approved a vaccination site at the former Tsukiji fish market site to vaccinate metropolitan police officers and firefighters.

5. Two Multilateral Drills End This Week

- The Self-Defense Force took part in the "Jeanne D'Arc 2021" exercise between May 11-16 with the U.S., France and Australia. This coincided with the Japan-U.S.-France joint exercise held between May 11-17.

¹ Hannah Ritchie et al., "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccinations," University of Oxford, updated May 20, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/covid-vaccinations>

- The ground and maritime exercises bring together the four countries amid growing Chinese assertiveness in the region. It also helps Japan promote its goal of achieving a free and open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).
- French involvement in a Japan-U.S. exercise underscores Europe's increasing engagement in the Indo-Pacific. The trilateral ground exercise was conducted to simulate regaining control of remote islands from enemy forces.
- The trilateral exercise was planned to take place while the French navy fleet Jeanne d'Arc is making a port call at Sasebo Port. The Ministry of Defense plans to routinize the exercise by carrying it out every time the fleet makes a port call.
- China criticized the exercise earlier this month, describing it as an approach that reverses the global trend of peaceful prosperity and collaboration.

6. Suga's Actions This Week

- Suga had a 20-minute phone call with President Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines on Wednesday, in which he announced that Japan would be providing a ¥20 billion yen loan for the country's COVID-19 response and ¥1 billion to assist in the development of a "cold chain" for vaccine storage.
- The two also discussed coordination on promoting FOIP and the ASEAN Outlook for the Indo-Pacific, as well as strengthening cooperation in the Sulu and Celebes Seas and surrounding areas.
- Suga had a 30-minute phone call with Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam on Monday, in which the two acknowledged the strong relationship between the two countries and pledged to continue developing ties ahead of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2023.
- The two leaders also discussed China's maritime assertiveness, working together to improve the situation in Myanmar and cooperation to address North Korea.

7. Other Foreign/Defense Policy Developments

- Chief Cabinet Secretary Katsunobu Kato announced Friday that Suga will meet with European Council President Charles Michel and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen online on May 27. The leaders are expected to discuss FOIP and Chinese maritime assertiveness.
- Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi told *Nikkei* in an interview Friday that Japan is considering cutting off all official development assistance to Myanmar if the situation does not improve. Japan provided ¥189.3 billion (\$1.74 billion at current rates) in FY 2019, the most out of any country that has disclosed its figures.

- An *Asahi Shimbun* report published Friday said the government's alternative for the Aegis Ashore missile defense system—two Aegis-equipped destroyers—will cost at least ¥900 billion (≈\$8.3 billion), double the original price tag.
- Defense Minister Kishi told *Nikkei* in an interview on Wednesday that Japan will scrap its one percent GDP cap on defense spending. He said Japan has to increase its capabilities at a radically different pace considering China's increased capabilities and new areas of warfare such as space and cyber.
- *Yomiuri* reported Saturday that the government was planning to introduce a low-interest loan through the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) to promote exports of defense products.

8. Economic Security

- The LDP's Economic Strategy Headquarters presented Thursday the outline of its new growth strategy. The strategy includes policies in 13 areas ranging from decarbonization to digitization to "economic security".
- For semiconductors, the strategy suggests supporting domestic production and joint development with foreign companies from countries such as the U.S. and Taiwan. The strategy will be reflected in the Suga cabinet's first growth strategy set to be unveiled in June.
- *Nikkei* reported Tuesday that the government will introduce new regulations for 14 critical infrastructure sectors such as telecommunications and electricity to bolster cyber defense.
- Reports on Monday said the LDP is forming a new parliamentary federation which will discuss mid- to long-term strategies for strengthening the domestic semiconductor industry. The group positions semiconductors as indispensable to economic security and plans to submit recommendations as early as this fall.
- The group will be chaired by former economic policy minister Akira Amari, and welcome Shinzo Abe and Finance Minister Taro Aso as senior advisers. The group held its first meeting on Friday.

9. Diet Proceedings

- The government and ruling coalition decided this week to shelve a FY 2021 supplementary budget bill due to a lack of time until the end of the Diet session. It will use the rest of the ¥5 trillion reserve funds for the coronavirus response.
- An LDP special committee reviewing the legislation promoting understanding of LGBT and other sexual minorities postponed approval of the bill after some lawmakers voiced concern over the addition of the phrase, "discrimination toward LGBT people is unacceptable," proposed by the opposition.

- Lower House lawmaker Kazuo Yana made the news for apparently referring to LGBT people as “contrary [beings] to the preservation of biological species.”
- The Upper House Commission on the Constitution began deliberations Wednesday on the revised National Referendum Law. The commission will hear expert testimony on June 2.
- The Diet approved Wednesday the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) between the SDF and Indian military. The agreement allows for the exchange of goods such as food and fuel, and services such as communication and transportation. India is the sixth country to sign an ACSA with Japan.

10. State of the Economy

- The finance ministry released Thursday Japan’s April trade statistics.² It showed a trade surplus of ¥255.3 billion, up 38 percent from the same month last year. Shipments of car and auto parts to the U.S. and semiconductor equipment to China increased remarkably.
- The Cabinet Office released Tuesday preliminary GDP figures for the January-March period, which decreased 5.1 percent on an annual basis. Last year’s annual GDP, excluding price fluctuations, was also down 4.6 percent compared to the previous year.
- *Yomiuri* reported Saturday that the government is planning for renewable energy to make up 36-38 percent of the nation’s energy mix in 2030. The original plan was to have renewables make up 22-24 percent of the energy mix. The government’s basic energy plan will be finalized in the summer.

11. Government “Rules Out” Canceling Olympic Games

- The organizing committee said Friday it expects to reduce the number of medical staff at the venues from 10,000 to 7,000. President Seiko Hashimoto revealed that the committee plans to have at most 230 doctors and 310 nurses working a day.
- IOC President Thomas Bach said Wednesday that the organization is prepared to dispatch additional medical staff to assist at the venues. He also expects that over 80 percent of residents at the athletes’ village will be vaccinated.
- Suga reiterated at an Upper House session on Wednesday that the games can go ahead by thoroughly implementing coronavirus countermeasures.
- A government official said Monday a second postponement is off the table.

² Ministry of Finance 財務省, “*Reiwa San-nen Shigatsubun Bōeki Tōkei (Sokuhō) no Gaiyō* 令和3年4月分貿易統計(速報)の概要” [Outline of Trade statistics (Flash Report) for April 3, 2021], May 20, 2021, https://www.customs.go.jp/toukei/shinbun/trade-st/gaiyo2021_04.pdf

- Rakuten's CEO Hiroshi Mikitani said last Friday that it is a "suicide mission" to be hosting the games in the summer.

12. Other Noteworthy News

- **Top LDP Officials Deny Involvement in Vote-Buying Scandal:** A finger-pointing game has ensued within the LDP over the 2019 vote-buying scandal. Anri Kawai was found guilty of vote-buying through cash payments given to local politicians before she won an Upper House seat. She resigned as a lawmaker in early February. The party provided ¥150 million (\$1.38 million), an obscene amount, to the Kawai campaign. There are questions as to whether the party's funds were used to bribe local politicians, which could mean the party can be held accountable for the scandal. This week, Secretary-General Nikai pointed out that the election bureau chief, Akira Amari, was in charge of the Hiroshima election, while Amari denied any involvement in disbursing the money. There are reports this is the start of a factional conflict between Nikai and Aso (Amari is a member), and that Nikai fears this is a plot by others to drag him down from the powerful secretary-general (in charge of elections) position.

II. Public Opinion Polls

- An *Asahi Shimbun* poll released Monday showed a 33 percent approval rating for the Suga cabinet, down 7 percent from April, and a disapproval rating of 47 percent, up 8 percent from April.³
 - 60 percent of respondents cited policies for not supporting the cabinet; 18 percent cited their dislike for the LDP-led government; and 9 percent said they didn't want Suga as prime minister.
 - 35 percent of respondents said they would vote for the LDP in the proportional representation vote for the upcoming snap election; 17 percent said the CDP; 9 percent said the Japan Innovation Party; 5 percent each said Komeito and the JCP.
 - 23 percent of respondents approved of the government's coronavirus response, down 6 percent from April, while 67 percent said they disapproved, up 6 percent.
 - 27 percent of respondents said they trust Prime Minister Suga's attitude toward tackling the coronavirus situation, while 61 percent said they did not.
 - 41 percent of respondents said the COVID-19 state of emergency is "somewhat" or "very" effective in mitigating the spread of the virus, while 59 percent said it will have "little" to "no" effect in mitigating the spread.
 - 54 percent of respondents approve of the government's measures requesting eateries serving alcohol to remain closed, while 36 percent said they did not approve of such measures.

³ "Asahi Shimbun Yoron Chōsa — Shitsumon to Kaitō (Gogatsu Jūgonichi, Jūrokunichi) 朝日新聞世論調査—質問と回答(5月15、16日)" [Asahi Shimbun Opinion Poll — Questions and Answers <May 15th and 16th>], *Asahi Shimbun*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.asahi.com/articles/ASP5J7H1RP5JUZPS003.html>

- 47 percent of respondents said they “somewhat” or “strongly” approve of the government’s vaccination approach, while 52 percent disapprove.
 - 47 percent of respondents said they want to get vaccinated now; 40 percent said they will wait and see; 6 percent said they don’t want to get vaccinated; and 5 percent said they had already been vaccinated.
 - 66 percent of respondents said the government is largely responsible for the slow pace of vaccinations, while 28 percent said it is not.
 - 43 percent of respondents said the Olympic Games should be cancelled; 40 percent said it should be postponed again; and 14 percent said it should be held as scheduled.
 - 59 percent of respondents said the Olympics should be held with no spectators; 33 percent said with limited attendance; and 3 percent said as scheduled.
 - 44 percent of respondents approved of the government’s decision to release treated wastewater from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, while 43 percent disapproved of the decision.
- The survey also collected data on the latest approval ratings of political parties.

Party Name	Approval Rate (%)
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	30 (-5)
Komeito (coalition partner of the LDP)	3 (+1)
Constitutional Democratic Party (CDP)	7 (+1)
Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation Party)	2 (± 0)
Democratic Party for the People (DPP)	1 (± 0)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP)	2 (-1)
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	0 (± 0)
The NHK Party	0 (± 0)
Reiwa Shinsengumi	0 (± 0)
Independents	47 (+4)