



CONCERNING QUAKE. Fallen rocks block a road after an earthquake in Otaki village, central Japan. The strong earthquake shook residents in a mountainous region of Japan, injuring at least two people and knocking roof tiles off homes. (Koji Harada/Kyodo News via AP)

Strong earthquake injures two, knocks off roof tiles in Japan

TOKYO (AP) — A strong earthquake shook residents in a mountainous region of central Japan, injuring at least two people and knocking roof tiles off homes.

The magnitude 5.6 quake struck about 7:00am at a shallow depth of four miles in Nagano prefecture, the Japan Meteorological Agency said. The epicenter was about 120 miles west of Tokyo.

Authorities said two people had minor injuries. Japan’s NHK television said an 83-year-old woman in Otaki village was struck on the head by a falling object in her house, and a 60-year-old woman in Kiso town was hit in the leg by a chest of drawers that fell over.

The Fire and Disaster Management Agency reported multiple incidents of fallen roof tiles and broken glass. NHK showed a worker in Kiso picking up glass from a shattered show window at a Nissan car dealer.

There was no danger of tsunami from the inland earthquake.

The area is no stranger to disaster. A nearby volcano, Mount Ontake, erupted in 2014, killing about 60 people. Several people died when a stronger earthquake triggered landslides in the same area in 1984.

14-year-old excites country with record Japanese chess debut

By Ken Moritsugu
The Associated Press

TOKYO — A 14-year-old boy is taking his country by storm with a record-breaking start to his pro career in the Japanese version of chess.

Ninth-grader Sota Fujii broke a 30-year-old record last month with his 29th win in a row in the game of shogi. His face was plastered across front pages of major newspapers, getting bigger display than the bankruptcy filing of Japanese air bag maker Takata.

Shogi is similar to chess, though players can reuse captured pieces as their own, making it more complex. In competitions, they kneel on the floor of a traditional tatami-mat room and play on a thick wooden block that is the board.

Fujii defeated 19-year-old opponent Yasuhiro Masuda after a more than 11-hour battle — with lunch and dinner breaks.

Kneeling with his eyes cast downward, the teenage phenom told dozens of reporters, photographers, and video journalists crowded around him that he was both happy and surprised to win 29 consecutive matches.

His accomplishment is all the more



PHENOMENAL FUJII. Sota Fujii, right, replays a move against Yasuhiro Masuda in front of media after Fujii defeated Masuda to break a 30-year-old record with his 29th win in a row, in the qualifying round of a major tournament in Tokyo. The 14-year-old boy is taking his country by storm with a record-breaking debut in Japanese chess, known as shogi. (Muneyoshi Someya/Kyodo News via AP)

impressive because the matches are the first 29 he has played since becoming pro.

Fujii became the youngest ever to qualify to enter the professional ranks last October. In his first match in December, he defeated Hifumi Kato, a then-76-year-old master who had set the previous record for the youngest-ever pro in the 1950s.

Japan’s Kyodo News agency says

public interest in the game has not been as high since 1996, when a player won all seven major championships in the same year.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters Fujii had made history with a victory he thinks will inspire the hopes and dreams of other Japanese.

Fans wonder just how good Fujii is, and how far he will go in this year’s tournaments.

Ride-hailing services transform Vietnam’s transport culture

Continued from page 4

Vietnam, a communist-ruled country of 93 million, has about 45 million motorbikes, the highest rate of motorcycle ownership per capita in Southeast Asia. Some 3.1 million new motorbikes were sold last year.

Practically everyone has mobile phones, and cheap internet access has enabled most Vietnamese city dwellers to get online.

Nguyen Tuan Anh, chairman of Grab Vietnam, said the number of GrabBike drivers has jumped from 100 when they first launched in late 2014 to more than 50,000, with hundreds joining every day.



TRANSPORTATION TRANSFORMATION. Nguyen Kim Lan reads a newspaper while waiting for customers at an intersection in Hanoi, Vietnam. Lan, a 62-year-old traditional motorbike taxi driver (or Xe Om), used to make a decent living shuttling customers, but his clientele has dwindled as young and tech-savvy Vietnamese increasingly use ride-hailing apps like Uber and Grab to summon cheaper, safer motorbike taxis. (AP Photo/Tran Van Minh)

The growth of passengers is “explosive,” he said.

Many Vietnamese now prefer to use ride hailing apps, viewing their services as safer and cheaper, Tuan Anh said. “GrabBike brings transparency and that’s why customers love it. They know that they will not be cheated by the drivers.”

But Tuan Anh said he knows of more than 100 cases where GrabBike drivers were attacked in the past year, often by Xe Om drivers worried about losing business.

Bus stations, hospitals, and schools are hotspots for conflict. In one case, a GrabBike driver was stabbed in the lung. In another, police fired warning shots to disperse crowds of Xe Om and GrabBike drivers who were battling near a bus station in Ho Chi Minh City.

Similar problems have been reported in Thailand and Indonesia.

Tuan Anh said GrabBike tells its drivers to be cautious

and to seek help from police.

Many Vietnamese seem keen to use such services despite the potential for conflict.

Tran Thuc Anh, a 21-year-old videogame designer, said she switched to using GrabBike to commute from bus stations to and from her office about six months ago.

It costs her half as much as using Xe Om did, she says.

“I just need to be online to book a bike without going around to look for a traditional Xe Om, so it’s very convenient,” Thuc Anh said.

Many GrabBike drivers originally worked as Xe Om, but not all are willing to sign up. Older motorbike taxi drivers say they don’t know how to use online apps or lack the cash to buy smartphones. Others are put off by the cheaper fares GrabBike charges.

But Nguyen Quang Trung, a 30-year-old salesman who began moonlighting for GrabBike six months ago, said Xe Om drivers who try to overcharge their customers are finished.

“Uber and Grab are safe and their fares are reasonable and customers see this,” Trung said. “Only elder people or those who are in a hurry use traditional Xe Om. Young people and people who are not short on time never use Xe Om.”

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Difficulty level: Easy

#26798

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that the digits 1 through 9 appear one time each in every row, column, and 3x3 box.

Solution to last issue’s puzzle

Puzzle #21387 (Hard)

All solutions available at <www.sudoku.com>.

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| 8 | 5 | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 7 |
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