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JAPAN

Digest

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- Japan hosts Central Asia summit in Tokyo
- Japan releases cybersecurity strategy
- Japan's defence budget balloons to 9 trillion yen



Japan hosts Central Asia Summit in Tokyo

Japan hosted the leaders of five Central Asian states on 20 December for the first summit-level dialogue to be held under the Central Asia plus Japan Dialogue (CA+JAD). The dialogue mechanism, the first of its kind, was launched by Tokyo in 2004 to engage the critical post-Soviet Central Asian space.

During the 80-minute dialogue, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi laid out the criticality of the region in the current geopolitical environment and lauded the greater profile enjoyed by regional voices in the current situation. Expressing Japan's intention to "support the industrial advancement and diversification of the five Central Asian countries and strengthen the mutually beneficial relationship between Japan and Central Asia", the Prime Minister outlined key sectors for cooperation between Central Asia and Japan across three priority areas: Green and Resilience, Connectivity and Human Resource Development. The dialogue also saw Japan commit to investing 3 trillion Japanese yen (JPY) in business initiatives across the next five years. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a 'Tokyo Declaration' and the signing of more than 150 agreements between public and private concerns on both sides.

After the meeting, Prime Minister Takaichi held summit talks with each of the visiting leaders. She and President of

the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a Joint Statement on Expanded Strategic Partnership, while with the leaders of the Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan she reviewed the progress of several key projects funded by Japan as part of the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route. This latter route, when completed, is expected to reduce Japan's dependence on Russian energy and other resources while improving direct connectivity to Europe without passing through Russian territory. Notably, though international issues were discussed between the leaders during all the meetings, only the leaders of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were engaged on the issue of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) missile and nuclear programme as well as the issue of abductions by DPRK agents of Japanese citizens.

Japan releases new cybersecurity strategy

The Cabinet of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi adopted a new cybersecurity strategy on 23 December. The strategy focuses primarily on pre-emptive 'active cyber defence' as a key component of government response to a cyberattack. The objective of this strategy is to 'continuously impose costs' on an attacker even if there is no active assault on protected systems. The strategy thus empowers defenders within Japan to find and hunt down attackers before they are able to launch attacks on Japanese cyber infrastructure.

The new strategy tasks the National Cybersecurity Office established in July 2025 with analysing the nature of the incoming threat and coordinating the response to it. This response would be coordinated with the police and the Self-Defence Forces in accordance with a prior law passed in May 2025 which authorised such measures. In response to concerns regarding the violation of the right to privacy, Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara stated during the press conference announcing the new strategy that the government was setting ‘strict protocols and conditions’ for the storage and use of personal information collected during the counterattack. Kihara stated that the government’s aim is to achieve “the highest level of vigilance in the world” against cyber-attacks.

The new strategy comes at a time when Japanese businesses and local governments have been hit by a wave of cyber-attacks, often originating from hostile geographies. In September 2025, beverage maker Asahi Group was [hit](#) by a massive cyberattack which the firm later revealed had led to the leakage of private data of around 2 million customers and employees. In October 2025, stationery retailer Askul [announced](#) that its servers had been hit by ransomware which caused the private information of customers to be leaked, though the quantum of damage was not revealed. As a result, the government [conducted](#) a first-of-its-kind public-private sector table-top exercise simulating a

cyberattack on the Tokyo metropolitan region and its infrastructure.

Japan’s defence budget balloons to 9 trillion yen

The Japanese Cabinet on 26 December [approved](#) a massive 122.3 trillion Japanese yen (JPY) budget for fiscal 2026, of which a record 9.04 trillion JPY (approximately 58 billion US dollars) was allocated to national defence. This supersedes the 8.7 trillion JPY allocated for defence in the current budget, itself a record and marking the fourth straight year of increases in the defence budget in line with the government’s stated goal of achieving a spending target of 43 trillion yen in defence spending by 2027.

Key items earmarked for acquisition within the budget include a layered coastal defence system which will coordinate manned and unmanned platforms in the event of an incursion into Japanese territory (100.1 billion JPY), long-endurance drones capable of thwarting sustained airspace incursions (1.1 billion JPY), anti-jammers for detecting interference and/or jamming of satellite communications (1.1 billion JPY) and hypersonic glide vehicles to intercept incoming missile systems (30.1 billion JPY). Coupled with a 1.7 trillion JPY allocation for security and diplomacy in the current supplementary budget, Japan has technically achieved the 2022 Defence Buildup Plan’s 2 percent spending mark two years ahead of schedule.