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JAPAN

Digest

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Japan's Upper House elections 2025

Voters in Japan headed to the polls on 20 July to elect legislators to the House of Councillors, the Upper House of the Japanese Diet. In results [unveiled](#) the next day, the administration of Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba was dealt another setback after their previous defeat in the House of Representatives in October 2024. The ruling coalition (comprised of Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior ally the Komeito fell short of a majority in the upper house as well, implying that his administration is now at grave risk of being unseated by no-confidence motions mooted by the many opposition parties which have secured a foothold in parliament. Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that sections of his own party have started to make efforts to oust him.

Election results announced on Monday, 21 July, showed that the LDP-Komeito combine found itself limited to 122 out of the 248 seats being contested in the election, a loss of three seats necessary to retain its majority. On the other hand, opposition parties gained 27 seats in total since the last round of elections, weighing in at 126 seats. The most prominent gainers were the right-of-centre party Democratic Party for the People (DPFP) and the far-right populist Sanseito party, which gained 17 and 14 seats respectively. Established centre-left parties such as the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), Reiwa Shinsengumi and the far-

left Japanese Communist Party (JCP) each lost seats. A more positive development was that a record 42 women were [elected](#), the highest number ever in Japan's parliamentary history.

In terms of voter profiles, older voters largely voted for established parties such as the LDP and the left-leaning parties, while younger voters largely veered right and voted for Sanseito and the Conservative Party of Japan (CPJ), another hard-right formation that made some gains. A major factor for their success has been attributed to social media, with [allegations](#) of possible boosting by Russian state-sponsored actors surfacing at a late stage in the election campaign. More worrying, though, has been the content of the two far-right parties' campaigns and manifestos, with the Sanseito in particular [engaging](#) in disinformation-laden statements against Japan's fledgling community of foreign residents.

In the wake of the announcement of the election results, calls for Ishiba to demit office continued to grow from within as well as without his party. Surprisingly, however, public opinion polls [indicated](#) that most Japanese voters did not want Ishiba to step down, indicating the prime minister's continued popularity despite gaffes committed by his government. Ishiba [himself denied](#) speculation that he would resign several times, even as he [acknowledged](#) that voters had delivered a 'harsh' verdict on his administration.

Japan reaches 'trade deal' with US

On 23 July, US President Donald Trump [announced](#) via social media that the US had concluded a 'historic trade deal' with Japan after several rounds of bilateral negotiations led by Japanese Economic Revitalisation Minister Ryosei Akazawa. The specific terms of the deal remained murky, but in broad terms Japan was able to reduce the proposed 25 percent tariff announced by Trump on 2 April to 15 percent in exchange for a \$550 billion investment in American industries and a promise to allot a greater share to American rice within existing 'minimum access' import quotas. Trump claimed on social media that the investment amount would be disbursed 'at [his] direction,' though what that means in practice remained unclear.

After the 'deal' was revealed, Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba told reporters that his administration has achieved its goal of protecting 'what must be protected' and touted the reduction as the largest such decline among the key trading partners currently negotiating with Washington DC. He also stressed that the agreement will not require Japan to remove existing agricultural subsidies or tariffs. However, Yoshinobu Tsutsui, chairperson of the Keidanren (the largest business federation in Japan), [sounded](#) a more cautious note during a press conference on 23 July, calling the 15 percent levy 'by no means low'.

Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting in Washington DC

The foreign ministers of India, Japan, Australia and the United States of America [met](#) in Washington DC on 1 July for a scheduled meeting of the Quad grouping. The 90-minute meeting saw discussions on the situation in the Indo-Pacific as well as ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and West Asia. Reiterating the four priority areas for Quad cooperation (maritime and transnational security, economic prosperity and security, critical and emerging technologies and humanitarian assistance and emergency response), the four ministers welcomed the launch of the Quad-at-Sea Observer Mission and progress in cooperation on the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network. As a new initiative, the four countries announced that a Quad Critical Minerals Initiative would be mooted in order to reduce dependencies on certain geographies for critical mineral and to counter economic coercion by certain countries. The joint statement released after the meeting [called](#) it an 'ambitious expansion of our partnership to strengthen economic security and collective resilience by collaborating to secure and diversify critical minerals supply chains'. Foreign Affairs Minister Takeshi Iwaya also held a bilateral meeting with his US counterpart, Marco Rubio, on the sidelines of the meeting.