



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

JAPAN

Digest

October 2025

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Sanae Takaichi elected Japan's first female prime minister

After party elections following the resignation of Prime Minister and Liberal Democratic Party President Shigeru Ishiba, Sanae Takaichi was elected as Japan's first female prime minister on 4 October. Takaichi replaced former Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba after the long-ruling LDP suffered disastrous losses in the July elections for the Upper House of the Japanese Diet, following an earlier defeat in the Lower House last year, which saw them reduced to a minority.

Takaichi's election triggered significant political changes, as the LDP's long-running coalition partner, the Komeito, announced its departure from a 26-year coalition after it failed to receive assurances from Takaichi for consideration of its policy platforms. The resulting scramble for new allies for the LDP saw the Nippon Ishin no Kai (also known as the Japan Innovation Party) emerge as a promising new contender. After negotiations between the two parties, the JIP agreed to provide outside support to the LDP in exchange for action on a 12-point agenda. With the JIP's support, she was sworn in as the 104th Prime Minister of Japan after winning a simple majority in the country's lower and upper houses on 21 October. Takaichi won 237 votes in the lower house, over Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP) leader Yoshihiko Noda's 149 votes.

During her first policy address on October 24th to Japan's Diet parliament, Takaichi pledged to enhance Japan's defence spending to 2 per cent of GDP by March, two years ahead of the current 2027 target. She underscored that her government plans to strengthen engagement with India, South Korea, the Philippines, and Australia to advance a "free and open Indo-Pacific." She also reiterated that Japan's alliance with the United States is the cornerstone of its diplomatic and security policy and said China remains an "important neighbour," with whom Japan seeks to maintain "constructive and stable" relations

President Trump's Visit to Japan

President Donald Trump visited Japan from October 27 to 29 as part of his three-nation tour of Asia. Trump previously visited Japan in June 2019 during his first term as president, and this was his fourth visit to Japan as president of the United States. The visit came at a critical moment, considering Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's recent assumption of power and the completion of negotiations on a US-Japan tariff deal. During his visit, he met Japanese Emperor Naruhito before the bilateral summit.

Trump also met the newly elected PM Sanae Takaichi in Tokyo on 28 October, signing an agreement on a framework to secure the mining and processing of rare earth minerals. The US and Japan plan to cooperate through the use of economic

policy and coordinated investment to accelerate the development of diversified, liquid, and fair markets for critical minerals and rare earths, thereby enhancing both countries' resilience and security in their critical minerals and rare earths supply chains.

During the meeting, PM Takaichi reportedly [said](#) that she would nominate President Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize and also congratulated him on his role in securing ceasefires in Gaza and Southeast Asia. Takaichi also [visited](#) the aircraft carrier USS *George Washington*, which is docked at the Yokosuka Naval Base near Tokyo, along with Trump and thanked the US Forces in Japan for their assistance in defending Japan. She also pledged to realise a “golden age” in relation to the United States and reiterated her commitment to “fundamentally reinforce” Japan’s defence posture.

India-Japan summit telephone meeting

The Indian and Japanese prime ministers [held](#) a summit-level phone call on 29 October, lasting 25 minutes. On the call, the newly elected Japanese PM Sanae Takaichi shared that Japan and India share fundamental values and strategic interests. She also added that Japan intends to continue working together with India toward realising a ‘free and open Indo-Pacific’, including through the Quad framework of Japan, India, the United States, and Australia. Takaichi also stated that Japan aims to enhance cooperation

with India in various fields, including security, economy, and people-to-people exchanges, based on a vision for bilateral cooperation presented during Modi's visit to Japan in August. She proposed raising Japan-India relations to a new level. In response, Modi [congratulated](#) Takaichi on becoming prime minister. He also said he looked forward to further strengthening bilateral ties through advancing concrete cooperation in various areas.

India-Japan foreign ministers' meeting

External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar [met](#) his newly-appointed Japanese counterpart, Toshimitsu Motegi, on the sidelines of the 47th ASEAN Summit and the 20th East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 27 October, and discussed bilateral ties between India and Japan. Both leaders agreed to intensify the efforts to implement the Joint Vision for the Next Decade of India-Japan Cooperation while discussing their views on global and Indo-Pacific developments. They emphasised the shared perspectives of both countries on regional security and strategic alignment. Motegi highlighted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Japan in August this year helped define the roadmap for bilateral cooperation over the next decade. Both sides aim to [strengthen](#) collaboration in three major domains: defence and security, investment and innovation, and human exchanges in order to elevate the partnership to a new level.