

Section 2 Asia and Oceania

1 Overview

(General Overview)

The Asia-Oceania region is a dynamic region in which countries and regions at various stages of development exist, and where diverse cultures and races intermingle and influence each other. More than half — approximately 4.2 billion people — of the world's population (approximately 8.2 billion) reside in the countries participating in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF),⁽¹⁾ excluding the United States, Canada, and Russia.⁽²⁾ Moreover, the combined nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of these countries accounts for more than 30% of the world total (2024),⁽³⁾ and supported by an abundance of human resources, this region is a center of growth and prosperity for the international community.

The strong growth and sustained stability of this closely interrelated region are directly linked to the peace and prosperity of the international community, including Japan. On the other hand, the security environment in this region is becoming increasingly severe and complex, owing to North Korea's nuclear and missile development; the strengthening and modernization of military forces in a manner that lacks transparency; unilateral attempts to change the status quo that run counter to the rule of law and openness; and the heightening of tensions among relevant countries and regions over maritime issues. There are also factors that impede the stable growth of the region, including economic and financial systems still under development, economic coercion and non-market policies and practices, transnational organized crime, climate

change, instability in the supply and demand of food and resources, frequent natural disasters, terrorism, and aging birthrates coupled with declining populations. Amid these circumstances surrounding the region, and despite growing tensions in Japan-China relations (See 2(1)B on page 40.), Japan has been actively engaging in diplomacy in this region, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, and is maintaining and developing good relations with neighboring countries.

With regard to diplomacy at the summit level, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Malaysia and Indonesia in January as his first bilateral visits after assuming office, and held summit meetings with the respective leaders. He also held a meeting with the Prime Minister of Laos, who visited Japan thereafter, and at these meetings, the two leaders concurred to advance practical cooperation in areas such as maritime security, disaster response, and decarbonization. In February and March, summit meetings were held with Palau, the Marshall Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia.

In April, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Viet Nam and the Philippines, confirming that cooperation, including in the security field, would be strengthened toward the realization of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" based on the rule of law. In May, Prime Minister Ishiba respectively held meetings with the leaders of Laos, Bangladesh, and Cambodia, who visited Japan. In June, at the G7 Kananaskis Summit held in Canada, Prime Minister Ishiba held meetings with the leaders of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Australia, and in July he held a meeting with the Prime Minister

(1) ASEAN member states (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam), Japan, the United States, India, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, China, New Zealand, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Bangladesh, Mongolia, and Russia (25 countries). Additionally, one country and one organization participate (North Korea; the EU).

(2) Source: United Nations Population Fund

(3) Source: World Bank

of Papua New Guinea. In August, he held a meeting with Prime Minister Modi of India, who visited Japan, and announced outcome documents including a Joint Statement. In the same month, Prime Minister Ishiba also held meetings with the leaders of the ROK and Timor-Leste.

In September, Prime Minister Ishiba, visiting the ROK, held a meeting with ROK President Lee Jae-myung, concurring on significantly developing Japan-ROK relations in a stable manner, and affirming that the two countries would continue strategic communication on security and economic security areas. That same month, Prime Minister Ishiba also held a meeting with the leader of Sri Lanka.

In October, Prime Minister Takaichi visited Malaysia to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings as her first overseas visit after assuming office as Prime Minister, confirming strengthened coordination with ASEAN countries, which are a key to the realization of FOIP, and conveying her determination to strengthen collaboration to make Japan and ASEAN stronger and more prosperous together. Furthermore, on the occasion of the same visit, Prime Minister Takaichi held summit meetings with the leaders of Australia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, and also greeted and held informal talks with the leaders of each ASEAN country. That same month, Prime Minister Takaichi, visiting the ROK to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting, held summit meetings with the leaders of China and the ROK.

In November, Prime Minister Takaichi held a meeting with the leader of Fiji, and further that month, when she visited South Africa to attend the G20 Leaders' Summit, she held meetings and brief exchanges of views with the leaders of India, the ROK, Australia, Viet Nam, and Malaysia.

In January 2026, Prime Minister Takaichi held a meeting with President Lee Jae-myung of the ROK, who was visiting Japan, sharing the recognition of the strategic importance of Japan-ROK relations, affirming that both countries should work together to play a role in ensuring the stability of the region, and concurring to continue close communication going forward.

With regard to diplomacy at the foreign ministerial level, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited the ROK, the Philippines, and Palau in January 2025, holding Foreign

Ministers' Meetings in each country. That same month, he attended the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) Foreign Ministers' Meeting held in Washington, D.C., U.S., reaffirming the commitment to the realization of FOIP, and also held Foreign Ministers' Meetings with Australia and India respectively. In February, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Germany, where Foreign Minister Iwaya visited to attend the Munich Security Conference. That same month, he also held a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Palau.

In March, Foreign Minister Iwaya held meetings with the respective Foreign Ministers of Mongolia and the Federated States of Micronesia, who visited Japan. That same month, at the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting hosted by Japan as chair, it was confirmed that the three countries, which have significant influence and responsibility for the peace and prosperity of the international community, would jointly promote future-oriented exchanges and cooperation. On this occasion, bilateral Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held separately with China and the ROK, and a Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue was also convened, where candid discussions were held not only on cooperation items but also on resolving issues and concerns.

In April, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Belgium to attend the Meeting of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Ministers of Foreign Affairs, where a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting was also held. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a meeting with the Foreign Minister of Tonga, who was visiting Japan. In May, Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held with Nepal, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand. In July, Foreign Minister Iwaya held meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Australia and India. That same month, at the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings held in Malaysia, Japan confirmed its continued commitment to strengthening relations as a "Trusted Partner" of ASEAN. During the visit to Malaysia, Japan co-hosted the Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, held a Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meeting and a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, and further held meetings and informal talks with Viet Nam, New Zealand, China, Laos, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, among others.

In September, Foreign Minister Iwaya held the Japan-Australia Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations (“2+2”) and the Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Tokyo. At the “2+2,” Japan and Australia shared a deep understanding of the increasingly severe strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region and concurred on further developing cooperation to strengthen collective deterrence. Furthermore, that month, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was held in New York, U.S., where Foreign Minister Iwaya was visiting to attend the United Nations General Assembly and other meetings, and Foreign Ministers’ Meetings were also held with the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia and Thailand. That month, a Japan-Sri Lanka Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was also held, and in October, a Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Solomon Islands was also conducted.

In October, Foreign Minister Motegi held a Foreign Ministers’ Meeting with Palau. That same month, as his first overseas trip since taking office as Foreign Minister, he visited Malaysia and attended the ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, China, ROK) Summit, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Summit, and the East Asia Summit (EAS) as the Prime Minister’s representative, and also held meetings with the Foreign Ministers of Viet Nam and India. Furthermore, at the APEC Ministerial Meeting held in the ROK, in addition to meetings and informal talks with the Foreign Ministers of Australia, the ROK, and Singapore, a Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was also held.

In November, Foreign Minister Motegi hosted the Japan-Indonesia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting (“2+2”) and a bilateral Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in Tokyo. At the “2+2,” the four ministers, sharing their recognition of the current increasingly severe security environment, confirmed their commitment to further reinforcing the cooperative relationship to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law. In December, Foreign Minister Motegi held a meeting with the Thai Foreign Minister, who visited Japan.

In January 2026, Foreign Minister Motegi visited the Philippines and India, and through Foreign Ministers’ Meetings and other engagements in both countries, shared recognition of the current severe regional and

international situation toward the realization of FOIP, and concurred on cooperating including within the Japan-U.S.-Philippines and Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad) frameworks.

(Japan-U.S. Alliance and Indo-Pacific Region)

The Japan-U.S. Alliance is the cornerstone of Japan’s diplomacy and security, and the foundation for peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region and the international community. In the midst of an increasingly severe regional security environment, the importance of the Japan-U.S. Alliance has never been greater. Under the unprecedentedly strong cooperative relationship between Japan and the U.S., since the inauguration of President Trump in January, Japan and the U.S. have held 10 Summit Meetings and six Foreign Ministers’ Meetings, including telephone calls (as of January 2026). The two countries have been striving to maintain peace and stability in the region and the international community by constantly communicating and collaborating at all levels, including at the summit level and at the foreign minister level. Both Japan and the U.S. are promoting cooperation toward realizing FOIP, and are also deepening their cooperation to address regional issues, including the situations in China, North Korea, Russia and Ukraine, and the Middle East.

In February, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Washington, D.C. and held a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting with President Trump, the first in-person meeting between the two leaders. The two leaders shared their views on the severe and complex security environment and concurred to work closely to realize FOIP and to elevate the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights. The two leaders also concurred to strengthen the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Prime Minister Ishiba reiterated Japan’s unwavering commitment to fundamentally reinforcing its defense capabilities and President Trump welcomed such commitment. President Trump underscored the unwavering commitment by the U.S. to the defense of Japan, using its full range of capabilities, including nuclear. The two leaders reaffirmed that Article V of the Japan-U.S. Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security applies to the Senkaku Islands, and confirmed their commitment to the steady implementation of

the realignment of U.S. Forces in Japan in accordance with the Okinawa Consolidation Plan, including the construction of the Futenma Replacement Facility at Henoko and the return of Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Futenma. Furthermore, the two leaders exchanged views on regional situations, such as issues related to China and dealing with North Korea including on the nuclear and missile issues as well as the abductions issue.

Finally, the two leaders concurred on the importance of further developing coordination among like-minded countries, including Japan-Australia-India-U.S., Japan-U.S.-ROK, and Japan-U.S.-Philippines, shared their intention to maintain close partnership to further uphold and bolster Japan-U.S. relations, which have become stronger than ever, and they issued a United States-Japan Joint Leaders' Statement.

Between April and June, Prime Minister Ishiba held a total of four telephone calls with President Trump (on April 7, May 23, May 29, and June 13), and the two leaders exchanged views on a wide range of fields spanning foreign policy and security, and the economy, building on the outcomes of the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in February, in order to further advance Japan-U.S. cooperation.

In June, when Prime Minister Ishiba visited Canada to attend the G7 Kananaskis Summit, he held a Summit Meeting with President Trump. The two leaders concurred that both countries would further strengthen the Japan-U.S. Alliance to promote FOIP and to further contribute to the peace and prosperity of the world. They also had candid discussions on the series of tariff measures by the U.S. and concurred that they would instruct the ministers in charge to further advance their consultations.

Under the Takaichi administration, which took office in October, strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance also remains the top priority of its foreign and security policy. On October 25, shortly after the formation of the administration, Prime Minister Takaichi held her first telephone call with President Trump, and the two leaders confirmed that they will cooperate to continue elevating the Japan-U.S. Alliance to new heights. Furthermore, when President Trump visited Japan at the end of October, Prime Minister Takaichi met with him for a series of engagements,

including a Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting and a signing ceremony, and achieved significant outcomes through candid discussions across a wide range of fields. The two leaders concurred to advance a broad range of security cooperation in order to further enhance the deterrence and response capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance. Prime Minister Takaichi also expressed her determination to continue strongly promoting FOIP as a pillar of Japan's diplomacy and to update it to align with the times. Additionally, the two leaders affirmed their commitment to work closely together to strongly advance FOIP. Under this vision, the two leaders also confirmed the importance of strengthening regional networks among like-minded countries, including Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-U.S.-Philippines, and Japan-Australia-India-U.S.

In October, Foreign Minister Motegi also held a Japan-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Secretary of State Marco Rubio, where the two ministers concurred on advancing concrete security cooperation to further strengthen Japan-U.S. Alliance deterrence and response capabilities, and confirmed that they would further develop networks of like-minded countries, including Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-U.S.-Philippines, and Japan-Australia-India-U.S. to realize FOIP. Prime Minister Takaichi also held a summit telephone call with President Trump at the end of November, and the two leaders exchanged views on strengthening the Japan-U.S. Alliance and on the situation and various challenges facing the Indo-Pacific region.

The two leaders also held a summit telephone call on January 2, 2026, during which Prime Minister Takaichi offered her congratulations on the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, and affirmed that they will make this momentous anniversary a year in which they carve out a new chapter in the history of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, and that they will further deepen both the friendly relations between Japan and the U.S., as well as the broad range of Japan-U.S. cooperation, including in economy and security.

(Japan's Efforts on the Issue of Comfort Women)
(See 3(2)B(C) regarding the comfort women issue between Japan and the ROK on page 65.)

The Government of Japan has sincerely dealt with the issues of reparations, property and claims

pertaining to World War II, including the comfort women issue, under the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which the Government of Japan concluded with 45 countries, including the U.S., the UK and France, and through other bilateral treaties, agreements and instruments. These issues including those of claims of individuals have already been legally settled with the parties to these treaties, agreements, and instruments.

On this basis, the Government of Japan has actively taken measures to recover the honor of former comfort women and to provide remedies for them. In 1995, the Asian Women's Fund (AWF) was established with the cooperation of the people and the Government of Japan for the purpose of carrying out atonement and remedy projects for former comfort women. The Government of Japan provided a total of 4.8 billion Japanese yen. Furthermore, approximately 600 million Japanese yen was donated to the AWF by the people of Japan. The Government of Japan extended maximum cooperation to the AWF, which implemented medical and welfare support projects and provided "atonement money," to offer realistic relief to former comfort women. As part of the AWF's projects, "atonement money" (2 million Japanese yen per person), which was funded by donations from Japanese people, was provided to 285 former comfort women (211 in the Philippines, 61 in the ROK, 13 in Taiwan). Moreover, the AWF provided funds in those countries/areas for medical and welfare support funded with contributions by the Government of Japan (3 million Japanese yen per person in the ROK and Taiwan, 1.2 million Japanese yen per person in the Philippines) (for a total of 5 million Japanese yen per person in the ROK and Taiwan, 3.2 million Japanese yen per person in the Philippines). Furthermore, using funds contributed by the Government of Japan, the AWF extended support for projects to promote social welfare services for elderly people in Indonesia as well as projects to help improve the living conditions of former comfort women in the Netherlands.

When the "atonement money" as well as the medical and welfare support were provided to individual former comfort women, then-Prime Ministers (namely, Prime Ministers HASHIMOTO Ryutaro, OBUCHI Keizo, MORI Yoshiro and KOIZUMI Junichiro) sent signed letters expressing their apology and remorse directly to each former comfort woman.

As stated in the Statement by the Prime Minister issued in 2015, Japan will engrave in its heart the past, when the dignity and honor of many women were severely injured during wars in the 20th century. Japan will lead the world in making the 21st century an era in which women's human rights are not infringed upon.

Despite such sincere efforts by the Government of Japan, there are claims that can hardly be regarded to be based on historical facts, such as allegations of "forceful taking away" of comfort women and "sex slaves" as well as the figures such as "200,000 persons" or "several hundred thousands" for the total number of comfort women.

The Government of Japan's position regarding these claims is as follows:

"Forceful taking away"

The "forceful taking away" of comfort women by the Japanese military and government authorities could not be confirmed in any of the documents that the Government of Japan was able to identify.

"Sex slaves"

The expression of "sex slaves" contradicts the facts and should not be used. This point was confirmed with the ROK on the occasion of the Japan-ROK Agreement in December 2015 and the expression "sex slaves" is not used in the agreement.

Figures such as "200,000 persons" for the total number of comfort women

The figure "200,000 persons" lacks concrete evidence. As stated in the report of the Government study's result of August 4, 1993, it is virtually impossible to determine the total number of comfort women as no documents have been found which either indicate the total number or give sufficient ground to establish an estimate.

The Government of Japan has been making efforts to provide clear explanations regarding its sincere efforts and official position in international fora. Specifically, at the UN, the Government of Japan has explained its position on a number of occasions such as during the consideration of the Seventh and Eighth Periodic Reports by the Government of Japan based on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination

of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in February 2016,⁽⁴⁾ the Ninth Periodic Report on the Implementation of the CEDAW submitted in September 2021, the examination of the 2024 Ninth Periodic Report submitted in October 2024, and the examination of the Seventh Report of Japan under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October 2022.

There have been installations of comfort woman statues⁽⁵⁾ not only in the ROK but also in some other countries and regions. Such moves are extremely

regrettable and incompatible with the position of the Government of Japan. The Government of Japan will continue reaching out to various people involved in this issue to explain its position.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs website below details Japan's Efforts on the Issue of Comfort Women.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/page22e_000883.html



2 China / Mongolia, etc.

(1) China

A Situation in China

(A) Domestic Affairs

In March, the third session of the 14th National People's Congress (NPC) was held. Premier of the State Council Li Qiang delivered the Report on the Work of the Government and, in reviewing the previous year, stated that the path of development over the past year had been anything but ordinary, and that despite facing a complex and challenging situation of mounting external pressure and growing internal difficulties, economic performance had maintained stability while trending upward. With regard to the policy direction for 2025, Premier Li noted that the year is the concluding year of the 14th Five-Year Plan and that the foundation must be solidly laid for the 15th Five-Year Plan to get off to a good start. He also stated that the GDP growth rate target was set at roughly the same level as last year's initial goal (around 5%), but cautioned that achieving the 2025 targets would not be easy and that considerable effort would be required. Regarding the post-session press conference by the Premier of the State Council for both domestic and foreign journalists — which had continued for about 30 years — it was announced in 2024 that it would not take place for the next several years, and it was indeed not held in 2025 either.

In April, the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries was held. A Party Central conference on the theme of neighboring diplomacy attended by members of the top leadership had not been held for approximately 12 years, since the “Conference on the Diplomatic Work with Neighboring Countries” in 2013. President Xi Jinping also visited two border minority autonomous regions in succession — the Tibet Autonomous Region in August, where he attended the “Celebrations of the 60th Founding Anniversary of the Tibet Autonomous Region,” and the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in September to attend the “Celebrations of the 70th Founding Anniversary of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.”

The year 2025 marked the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II, and on September 3 China held the “Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War” at Tian'anmen Square, where a military parade was also conducted. In his address, President Xi Jinping expressed pride in the fact that the “War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression” was an important part of the World Anti-Fascist War and that the Chinese people, at an enormous national sacrifice, made a major contribution to saving human civilization and safeguarding world peace. He also expressed

(4) For details, see the following website:
https://warp.ndl.go.jp/web/20240701202902/https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page24e_000163.html

(5) For the sake of practical convenience, they are referred to as “comfort woman statues.” However, the use of this term is not a reflection of the recognition that these statues correctly embody the reality of those women at that time.

(4)



the view that humanity today is once again faced with choices between peace and war, dialogue and confrontation, and win-win cooperation versus a zero-sum game. President Xi further stated that the momentum toward the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” is irresistible.

In October, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee (the so-called “Fourth Plenary Session”) was held, which adopted the “Recommendations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for Formulating the 15th Five-Year Plan” (hereinafter, the “Recommendations”). The Recommendations indicated recognition that China is “in a period of development where strategic opportunities exist alongside risks and challenges and uncertainties and unforeseen factors are rising.” Among the major objectives for the period of the 15th Five-Year Plan, it set forth, inter alia, realizing significant achievements in high-quality development and substantial improvements in science and technological self-reliance and strength. On personnel matters, disciplinary actions against 14 senior officials, including former Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission He Weidong, were ratified.

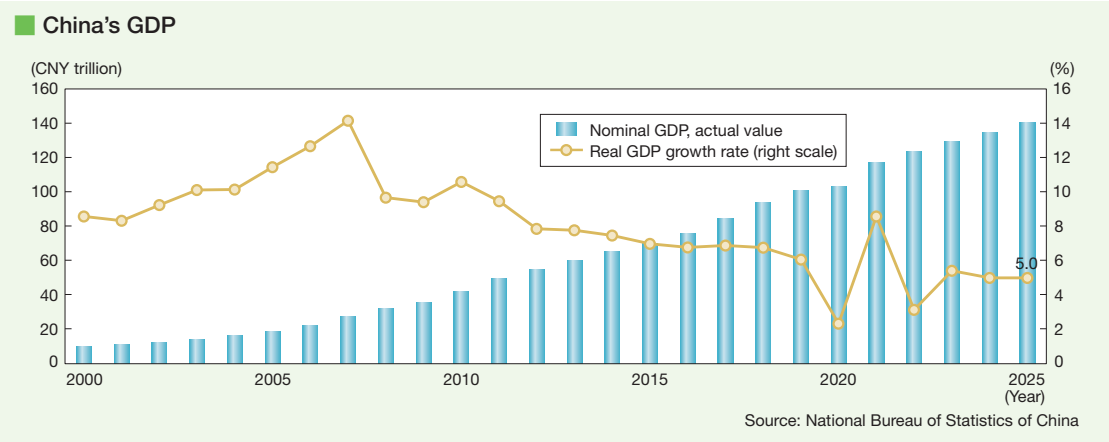
In December, the Central Economic Work Conference was held as usual.

The international community continues to express high interest in China's human rights situation, including in the XUAR and the situation surrounding Hong Kong. For example, in December, a G7 Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Jimmy Lai verdict in Hong Kong was issued, and concerns continued to be expressed about the deterioration of rights, freedoms,

and autonomy in Hong Kong. Japan believes that it is important that universal values and principles of the international community, such as freedom, respect for fundamental human rights, and the rule of law, are guaranteed in China, and Japan has been directly communicating its position to the Government of China, for example by also taking summit meetings and foreign ministers' meetings as opportunities to express serious concern about these situations. Furthermore, at the UN, Japan has been the only member state from Asia to participate in a joint statement by like-minded countries expressing concerns about the human rights situation in China. At the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly in November, the United States made a joint statement on behalf of 15 countries, expressing deep concern about serious human rights violations occurring in China, including human rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities such as Uyghurs and Tibetans, and Japan joined that statement. The Government of Japan will continue strongly urging China to take action while also closely cooperating with the international community.

(B) Economy

At the NPC held in March, the GDP growth rate target for 2025 was set at around 5%, the same as the previous year, while the consumer price inflation target was lowered to around 2% (compared to the 3% target for 2024). Premier Li Qiang also explicitly stated that “achieving this year's targets will not be easy.” The deficit-to-GDP ratio was also raised to 4.0% (up from 3.0% the previous year), and the upper limit for new local government special-purpose bonds was modestly



set at 4.4 trillion CNY (up from 3.9 trillion CNY the previous year). As a result, China's full-year real GDP growth rate for 2025 increased by 5.0% year-on-year, achieving the target, and by quarter, the first quarter (January to March) increased by 5.4% year-on-year, the second quarter (April to June) increased by 5.2% year-on-year, the third quarter (July to September) increased by 4.8% year-on-year, and the fourth quarter (October to December) increased by 4.5% year-on-year.

China's economy has remained stalled due to a sluggish real estate market and deteriorating consumer sentiment. At the NPC in March, "expanding domestic demand" rose from third to first among the list of priority items. With respect to consumption, the trade-in subsidy policies for home appliances and electric vehicles (EVs) that had been launched in 2024 drove some positive performance in the first half of 2025, but momentum faded in the second half due to the waning effect of those policies. In addition, the government announced support measures to expand service consumption and fiscal expenditure in the livelihood sector — including the waiver of childcare and education fees for some children at public kindergartens — as measures related to expanding domestic demand, but consumer sentiment has yet to improve. Meanwhile, with domestic consumer sentiment remaining sluggish, sectors such as the automotive industry saw problems with excessive discounting toward consumers and cutthroat competition (known as "neijuan" [involution]), and the July Central Committee Political Bureau (CPC) meeting set out policy directions such as curbing disorderly competition among enterprises and promoting production capacity management in key industries. Subsequently, in October, the National Development and Reform Commission and the State Administration for Market Regulation issued a notice on "neijuan," with the government signaling an "anti-neijuan" stance.

On the other hand, with respect to imports and exports, while exports to the United States declined significantly due to U.S. tariff increases on Chinese goods resulting from the U.S.–China economic confrontation exports to ASEAN and other regions performed well, and exports continued to drive China's overall economy. Imports were weaker than exports, reflecting sluggish domestic demand.

Regarding the real estate market, no large-scale support measures were announced throughout 2024, and in December, a major real estate developer in which a state-owned enterprise is the largest shareholder announced the deferral of corporate bond redemptions, suggesting that the sector will continue to weigh on the overall economy.

In December, the Central Economic Work Conference was held, with 2025 described as a far-from-ordinary year. It was noted that China's economy had advanced through pressure and developed in new and positive directions. Challenges identified included the impact of shifts in the external environment and the domestic tension between oversupply and insufficient demand, while the conference indicated recognition that many of these issues arise in the course of development and transition and are therefore addressable. As the direction of economic policy for 2026, the conference called for improving the efficiency of macroeconomic governance through counter-cyclical and cross-cyclical adjustments, and announced the continuation, following 2025, of a "more proactive fiscal policy" and "appropriately accommodative monetary policy."

As a long-term economic goal, the Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee was held in October, at which the Recommendations from the Chinese Communist Party regarding the "15th Five-Year Plan" were deliberated upon and adopted. Among the major objectives for the period of the 15th Five-Year Plan, the Recommendations set forth, *inter alia*, realizing significant achievements in "high-quality development," substantial improvements in science and technological self-reliance and strength, and fresh breakthroughs in further deepening reform comprehensively, with the aim of reaching a per capita GDP at the level of a mid-level developed country by 2035. A supply-driven economic model centered on manufacturing and new quality productive forces continues to be prioritized, while the policy of expanding domestic demand is emphasized more strongly than before, and specific provisions are made regarding livelihood issues (such as improving the social security system) that would contribute to expanding disposable income.

In recent years, the problem of excess production capacity has become increasingly apparent, and overcapacity — or the risk thereof — has been identified

across multiple Chinese industrial sectors, including steel and EVs, leading countries to implement tariff increases and trade remedy measures against Chinese goods. It is important to address non-market policies and practices that constitute the root causes of this problem — such as opaque industrial subsidies — and to work toward the development of rules in order to ensure a level playing field on a global basis.

China also, as export control measures, added related items in five mineral categories including tungsten to its control list in February 2025, and added related items in seven medium and heavy rare earth mineral categories to its control list in April of the same year. Furthermore, in October of the same year, China announced a series of additional export control measures, including re-export restrictions and technology export restrictions on rare earth-related items, and the addition of related items in five new medium and heavy rare earth mineral categories to the control list. The measures announced in October were subsequently subject to an announced delay of approximately one year, following agreements reached at the China-U.S. Summit Meeting held in the same month. Additionally, in January 2026, China announced strengthened export control measures on dual-use items destined for Japan, and in February the Ministry of Commerce of China announced export bans and other restrictions on dual-use items targeting certain Japanese companies and others.

(C) Foreign Policy

At the Foreign Minister's press conference during the NPC sessions in March, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, speaking on China's summit diplomacy for 2025, stated that "President Xi is expected to make a number of overseas visits. The summit diplomacy will write a new chapter on the closer cooperation and shared success between China and the world." In 2025 as well, diplomatic activities at various levels, led by high-level engagements headed by President Xi Jinping, have remained active. In particular, China hosted ceremonies and conferences on its own soil — including the "Tianjin SCO Summit" in late August to early September, the "Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's

War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War," and a "Global Leaders' Meeting on Women" in October — and conducted an active program of summit diplomacy by inviting heads of state and government leaders from various countries and holding bilateral summit meetings. At the SCO Summit in particular, President Xi Jinping, expressing his desire to work with all countries to promote the establishment of a more just and reasonable global governance system and to advance together toward a community with a shared future for humanity, proposed the "Global Governance Initiative" for the first time.

In relations with Russia, direct communication between the leaders of China and Russia remained frequent in 2025. President Xi Jinping visited Russia in May to attend the military parade commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Victory over Nazi Germany and held a China-Russia Summit Meeting, and President Vladimir Putin visited China in late August to early September on the occasion of the SCO Summit and the "Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War." Notably, at the China-Russia Summit Meeting in May, a joint statement was issued on the further deepening of the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between the two countries, which affirmed that they regard each other consistently as priority partners for cooperation and that they will jointly counter any scheme seeking to interfere with or destroy the traditional friendship and deep mutual trust between China and Russia. Furthermore, on the occasion of the September "Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War," President Kim Jong Un of North Korea also visited China.

In relations with neighboring countries, President Xi Jinping also traveled abroad actively, visiting Viet Nam, Malaysia, and Cambodia in April, traveling to Astana, Kazakhstan in June to attend the China-Central Asia Summit, and visiting Gyeongju, ROK in November to attend the APEC Leaders' Meeting, holding summit meetings with the leaders of each country visited.

In relations with Europe, in 2025 — which marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic

relations between the EU and China — a China-EU Summit was held in China in July, with President of the European Council António Costa and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen visiting China and holding meetings with President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang respectively. In addition, dignitaries of EU member states visited China individually, including King Felipe VI of Spain in November and French President Emmanuel Macron in December.

Between the U.S. and China, a broad exchange of trade restrictive measures including tariffs took place with the second Trump administration, which took office in January 2025. At the same time, communication between the U.S. and China has continued, including multiple rounds of ministerial-level U.S.-China Economic and Trade Meetings from May 2025 onward, a U.S.-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, and in October the first in-person U.S.-China Summit Meeting between President Trump and President Xi Jinping since the second Trump administration took office — as well as a U.S.-China Defense Ministers' Meeting.

The U.S. announced in February 2025 an additional 10% tariff on imports from China aimed at halting the flow of illicit drugs such as fentanyl, and subsequently announced in March a further increase to a uniform 20% additional tariff, citing China's insufficient response. In reaction, China announced tariff increases on certain U.S. imports and export control measures on rare earths, among others. China expressed its strong dissatisfaction with the U.S. and declared that if the U.S. persists in waging a tariff war or trade war, China will see it through to the end. In April, the U.S. announced the introduction of reciprocal tariffs, declaring a 34% additional tariff on imports from China among other measures aimed at addressing trade deficits. China in turn announced additional measures in response, and the tariff measures of both countries escalated, temporarily reaching a situation of mutual additional tariffs of 125% (which amounted to 145% on the U.S. side when combined with the 20% additional tariff levied through March). Amid these circumstances, in May in Switzerland, the First U.S.-China Economic and Trade Meeting (ministerial-level) was held between U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer on the American side, and Vice Premier

of the State Council He Lifeng on the Chinese side, and a U.S.-China Joint Statement was issued. As a result, the U.S. and China announced the removal or suspension of mutually elevated tariffs and the elimination of non-tariff measures, and decided to establish an economic and trade consultation mechanism between the two countries. Subsequently, through U.S.-China leaders' telephone calls in June and September and at the U.S.-China Economic and Trade Meeting (ministerial-level), discussions continued on the extension of the tariff suspension, China's rare earth export control measures, and China's suspension of soybean imports from the U.S., among other issues. In October, a U.S.-China Summit Meeting was held in the ROK, and agreements were reached on reducing the fentanyl-related additional tariff from 20% to 10%, extending for one year the partial reduction of reciprocal tariffs from 34% to 10%, the suspension of China's rare earth export control measures, and large-scale purchases of U.S. soybeans.

As described above, while tensions between the U.S. and China had risen sharply at one point — with additional tariff rates under the second Trump administration exceeding 100% — the frequent high-level communication yielded some results, including the removal and suspension of certain trade restrictive measures.

Stable U.S.-China relations are important not only for Japan, but also for the entire international community. Japan will continue to closely monitor future developments with keen interest.

(D) Military Affairs and Security

At the 19th CPC National Congress (2017), President Xi Jinping stated that China would transform its armed forces into a world-class military by the middle of this century. Additionally, the communique from the fifth plenary session of the 19th CPC Central Committee, published in October 2020, set the new goal of “securing the realization of the centennial goal by 2027, the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Furthermore, at the 20th CPC National Congress in 2022, he reiterated this point, stating that “Achieving the goals for the centenary of the People's Liberation Army in 2027 and more quickly elevating our people's armed forces to world-class standards are strategic tasks for building a modern socialist country in all

respects.” The defense budget published by China does not sufficiently disclose its breakdown or the intentions behind its increases, and is believed to represent only a portion of actual military expenditures. Amidst such circumstances, China, under its “development strategy of civil-military fusion,” has been extensively and rapidly enhancing the quality and quantity of its military power centered on its nuclear and missile capabilities and naval and air forces. In addition, China is placing importance on ensuring its superiority in new domains of outer space, cyberspace, the electromagnetic spectrum, AI, and unmanned systems, and promoting the modernization of its military through “integrated development of mechanization, informatization and intelligentization.”

In 2025, China continued to conduct active operations in the vicinity of Japan. In June, Japan confirmed and publicly announced for the first time that the Chinese Navy aircraft carrier *Liaoning* had operated in waters east of Iwo To (i.e., in waters east of the so-called “Second Island Chain”), and that two aircraft carriers, *Liaoning* and *Shandong*, had simultaneously operated in the Pacific Ocean. In September, Japan confirmed and publicly announced for the first time the navigation of the aircraft carrier *Fujian*, which is larger than the previous two carriers and is believed to be equipped with electromagnetic catapults capable of operating fixed-wing early warning aircraft. In December, the aircraft carrier *Liaoning* advanced into the Pacific Ocean and was confirmed for the first time to have navigated high seas east of Okinawa Main Island and east of Amami Oshima. In addition, China conducted military exercises in the maritime and air domains surrounding Taiwan in April and December. In the South China Sea, China has been continuing and intensifying its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion as well as dangerous and coercive actions that heighten regional tensions, which go against the rule of law and openness, based on its expansive maritime claims without legal merit — including further militarization of disputed features and dangerous maneuvers against coastal States and others such as the use of water cannons and ramming actions.

In recent years, China has grown to have a great influence on the international community, not only politically and economically, but also militarily. China's

current external stance, military activities, and other activities have become a matter of serious concern for Japan and the international community, and present an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of the international community, as well as in strengthening the international order based on the rule of law, to which Japan should respond with its comprehensive national power and in cooperation with its ally, like-minded countries and others. With regard to China's rapid strengthening of its military capabilities and expansion of military activities, Japan will work in cooperation with its ally, like-minded countries, and others to encourage China to improve transparency and to cooperate constructively with international efforts for arms control, disarmament, and other such efforts. Furthermore, in order to build confidence between China and Japan, Japan will enhance communication with China in the security field through various dialogues and other means, promote efforts between Japan and China to avoid and prevent unforeseen situations, and work together with related countries to make efforts to dispel the concerns of the international community and Japan.

B Japan-China Relations

(A) Bilateral Relations: General

It is Japan's consistent policy to comprehensively promote a Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests with China and to build constructive and stable Japan-China relations. In relations with China, there are numerous outstanding concerns and challenges, including unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea, including the situation surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and the South China Sea, a series of military activities in the vicinity of Japan including those conducted in coordination with Russia, and China's export control measures on rare earths and other items. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is also important. Furthermore, Japan is seriously concerned about the situation in Hong Kong and the human rights situation in the XUAR. As China is an important neighboring country, and given the various pending concerns and challenges between Japan and China, Japan will continue communication and

respond calmly and appropriately from the perspective of its national interests.

On March 22, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a Japan-China Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who was visiting Japan to attend the Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The two foreign ministers confirmed that as the international situation changes significantly, it is important that the foreign ministers of Japan and China meeting face-to-face and discuss the resolution of issues and concerns candidly, amid significant changes in the international situation. The two foreign ministers also discussed how to proceed with Japan-China relations in 2025 and shared the view to ensure the progress of reducing issues and concerns and increasing cooperation and coordination, under a broad direction of comprehensively promoting a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations" as confirmed by the leaders of both Japan and China. In addition, at the Sixth Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue, both sides confirmed the importance of continuing to strengthen cooperation in the fields of medical care, nursing care, and healthcare, and concurred on continuing the promotion of economic cooperation in the private-sector in third-country markets.

On July 10, Foreign Minister Iwaya, who was visiting Malaysia to attend the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The two foreign ministers confirmed that Japan and China have held discussions on various topics since their mutual visits in December 2024 and March 2025 toward resolving several specific pending issues, and that despite the remaining unsolved challenges, Japan and China will advance the bilateral relations forward by strengthening communication.

In addition, on July 11, the China National Day event was held at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry MUTO Yoji attended the ceremony as the representative of the Government of Japan, and Vice Premier of the State Council He Lifeng attended from the Chinese side. Prior to the China National Day ceremony, Minister Muto, together with MORIYAMA Hiroshi, Secretary-General of the Liberal Democratic Party



Japan-China Summit Meeting (October 31, ROK; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

and Chairperson of the Japan-China Friendship Parliamentarians' Union, met with Vice Premier He Lifeng and exchanged views on developments in Japan-China relations, including in the economic field. On the same day, the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in Animal Health and Quarantine, which is a precondition of resumption of Japanese beef exports to China, entered into force. In light of the entry into force of this Agreement, the Government of Japan will continue to advance relevant consultations with the Government of China toward the early resumption of exports.

On October 31, Prime Minister Takaichi, who was visiting the ROK to attend the APEC Leaders' Meeting, held a summit meeting with President Xi Jinping. President Xi expressed his congratulations to Prime Minister Takaichi on her appointment. The two leaders reaffirmed the broad direction of Japan-China relations to comprehensively promote a "Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests" and building "constructive and stable Japan-China relations." On top of that, Prime Minister Takaichi raised to President Xi the importance of fulfilling the weighty responsibilities for ensuring peace and prosperity in the region and the international community. Prime Minister Takaichi pointed out that, precisely because there are concerns and issues between Japan and China, including on security and economic security, it is essential to reduce these concerns, increase mutual understanding and cooperation, and produce tangible achievements, while confirming the will to advance a Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests between the two leaders.

The two leaders affirmed the importance of dialogue between the leaders themselves and of multilayered communication across a wide range of fields between Japan and China.

Furthermore, with regard to the discharge of ALPS treated water⁽⁶⁾ into the sea, the missions of additional measures under the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have been conducted multiple times, and the Government of China announced that the results of the analyses that had been completed were normal, and at the end of June 2025 issued a public notice restoring imports of aquatic products from certain regions of Japan. In light of these developments, the two leaders welcomed the resumption of imports of Japanese aquatic products and confirmed that they would continue to steadily implement the “Shared Recognition between Japan and China” announced by both governments in September 2024. Prime Minister Takaichi called on China to facilitate imports of Japanese aquatic products. In addition, she called for the promotion of relevant consultations to achieve the resumption of imports of Japanese beef and the prompt lifting of the remaining import restrictions on agricultural and aquatic products from 10 prefectures. The two leaders concurred to make progress on concrete cooperation in areas such as third-country market cooperation, green economy, and medical care, nursing care, and healthcare, and to cooperate on global issues. Prime Minister Takaichi expressed her congratulations on the China Pavilion at Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, winning the Gold Award in the exhibition design category.

Prime Minister Takaichi expressed Japan's serious concerns over China's escalation and maritime survey activities in the East China Sea, including around the Senkaku Islands, and the intensification of Chinese military activities near Japan, and urged the Chinese side to address these issues. The two leaders also concurred on the importance of ensuring effective crisis management and communication between defense authorities. Prime Minister Takaichi expressed strong concerns regarding China's export control on rare

earths. The two leaders affirmed that they would strengthen communication between relevant authorities, including through the Japan-China Export Control Dialogue. Prime Minister Takaichi demanded that the security of Japanese nationals be ensured and called for the early release of detained Japanese nationals, for the sake of Japanese citizens who feel uneasy about staying in China, in light of the cases of Japanese nationals being attacked, and detained in China. Prime Minister Takaichi reiterated the importance of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait for the international community, including Japan. In addition, Prime Minister Takaichi once again expressed Japan's serious concerns about the situations in the South China Sea, Hong Kong, and the XUAR, and others.

The two leaders also exchanged views on the situation surrounding North Korea, including the abductions issue.

On November 1, on the occasion of the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) held in Malaysia, a Japan-China Defense Ministerial Meeting was also held between Minister of Defense KOIZUMI Shinjiro and Chinese Minister of Defense Dong Jun.

In 2025, exchanges between Japanese and Chinese lawmakers and political parties were also actively conducted. In January, a delegation led by Liberal Democratic Party Secretary-General MORIYAMA Hiroshi and Komeito Secretary General NISHIDA Makoto visited China to participate in the 9th Japan-China Ruling Party Exchange Council. In April, Komeito Chief Representative SAITO Tetsuo and his delegation, as well as a delegation from the Japan-China Friendship Parliamentarians' Union led by Chairman MORIYAMA Hiroshi, visited China in succession.

On the other hand, since November, China has intensified unilateral criticism and coercive measures against Japan, including in response to discussions in the Diet. Among such developments, social media posts by the Chinese Consul General in Osaka were extremely inappropriate as communications by a head of an overseas diplomatic mission, and Japan lodged

(6) ALPS treated water refers to water that contains radioactive substances from inside the buildings of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (FDNPS) and has been purified and treated through multiple treatment facilities, including ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System), until the concentrations of all radioactive substances besides tritium satisfy the safety regulatory standards. As for tritium, the water is significantly diluted with seawater before the discharge into the sea so that it fully satisfies safety regulatory standards.

strong protests with the Chinese side on multiple occasions. In addition, the Government of China issued a request to Chinese nationals to refrain from traveling to Japan. Such announcements by the Chinese side risk discouraging bilateral people-to-people exchanges, including study and tourism, and Japan appropriately raised objections to the Chinese side. Furthermore, China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations issued letters on two occasions containing groundless assertions, and on November 21 the Chinese Embassy in Japan issued communications regarding the so-called "former enemy state clauses" in the Charter of the United Nations. On December 6, Chinese military fighter aircraft intermittently illuminated Japan Air Self-Defense Force fighter aircraft with their radar. This occurred while the Japan Air Self-Defense Force's fighter aircraft were carrying out countermeasures against airspace violations in response to the Chinese fighter aircraft. (See (D) on page 45.) The Government of Japan, while closely monitoring the situation, has been resolutely refuting and protesting against such factually incorrect communications and coercive measures by the Chinese side, and at the same time has been calling on the Chinese side to take appropriate action.

Furthermore, on January 6, 2026, China announced strengthened export control measures on dual-use items destined for Japan. In response, Japan made representations to the Chinese side that such measures, which target only Japan, deviate significantly from international practice, are by no means acceptable, and are extremely regrettable, lodged strong protests, and called for the withdrawal of the measures. In addition, on February 24, China announced bans on exports of dual-use items to certain Japanese companies and others. In response, Japan, similarly to the above-mentioned measures announced on January 6, made clear that such measures are absolutely unacceptable and extremely regrettable, lodged strong protests, and called for their withdrawal.

Precisely because there are pending issues and challenges between Japan and China, it is all the more important for Japan and China to communicate with each other. Japan keeps the door open to various dialogues with China and has not closed it. Under this stance, Japan intends to continue to engage in

communication with the Chinese side and to continue responding calmly and appropriately from the perspective of national interests. In addition, it is extremely important to gain the understanding of various countries regarding the position and accurate factual basis of the Government of Japan, and the Government of Japan has hitherto explained Japan's position and views to various countries, including the United States, on every available occasion, and has been gaining the understanding of the international community. For example, as of February 2026, resolutions had been submitted in both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate which reaffirm an unwavering commitment to the Japan-U.S. Alliance and express support for Japan's efforts.

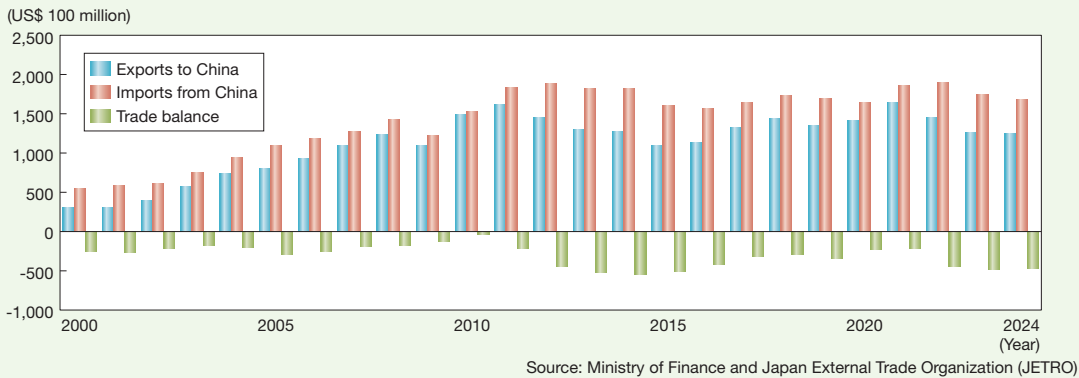
(B) Japan-China Economic Relations

Economic relations between Japan and China, including trade and investment, are very close. In 2024, the total trade between Japan and China (excluding Hong Kong) amounted to about 44.2 trillion Japanese yen (4.7% increase year-on-year), and China was Japan's largest trading partner for the second consecutive year.

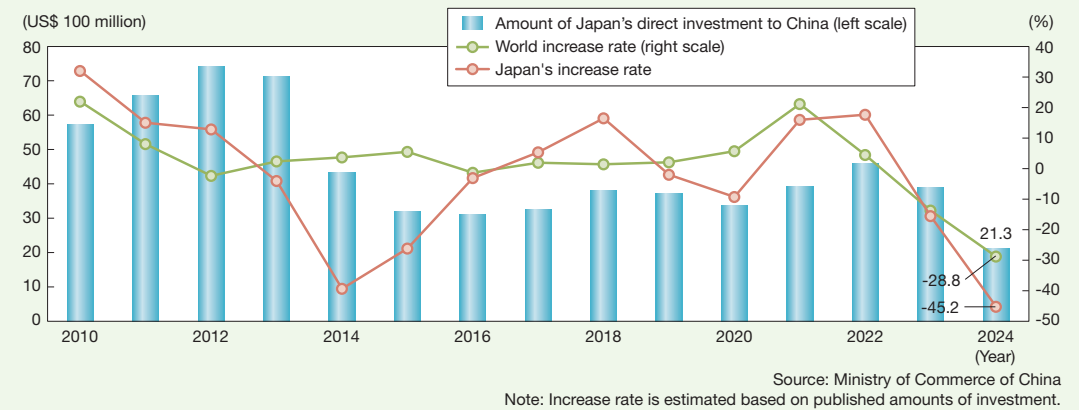
Moreover, according to Chinese statistics, Japan's direct investment in China was about 2.13 billion U.S. dollars (a 45.2% decrease year-on-year, as estimated from officially published information on investment) in 2024. Japan ranks fourth in terms of the amount of direct investment to China (Singapore ranks first, the United States ranks second, and the ROK ranks third). According to balance of payment statistics, China is Japan's 14th largest investment destination, and is a source of direct investment income of approximately 2.7 trillion Japanese yen.

In addition, continuing on from 2024, in February a joint delegation to China comprised of the KEIDANREN (Japan Business Federation), the Japan-China Economic Association, and the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry visited China and held meetings with Vice Premier of the State Council He Lifeng and others; and in June, the Japan Association for the Promotion of International Trade visited China.

Japan's Value of Trade with China



Japan's direct investment to China



(C) Promotion of Mutual Understanding Between Japanese and Chinese People
(Current situation of people-to-people exchanges between Japan and China)

In 2025, the number of visitors to Japan from China reached approximately 9.096 million (provisional value from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)), marking a substantial increase from approximately 6.981 million visitors in the previous year (finalized value from JNTO) and recovering to roughly 95 percent of the 2019 level. Meanwhile, on November 14, after the Chinese Government called on Chinese nationals to refrain from traveling to Japan, some cancellations of travel to Japan from China occurred; the pace of growth slowed in November 2025 (an approximately 3% increase year-on-year) and turned to a decline in December (an approximately 45% decrease year-on-year).

Regarding youth exchange programs for the next generation, under the JENESYS program to promote

mutual understanding and understanding of Japan, students and young researchers from Japan and China deepened mutual understanding through exchanges, and sector-specific delegations also deepened their understanding of and interest in Japan's initiatives through site visits and lectures in related fields.

Moreover, personnel at various levels and fields such as politics, economics, governments, and academia in the central and regional settings are invited to Japan in an effort to build and strengthen wide-ranging partnerships. Through these exchanges, it is expected that invitees and Japanese counterparts will forge strong relationships and that an accurate understanding of Japan will be fostered.

Up until October, exchanges between Japan and China had been built up across a wide range of fields, including culture, economy, education, and regional cooperation. Since November, however, there has been a series of event cancellations and postponements.

(D) Specific Pending Issues (Situation Surrounding the East China Sea)

In the East China Sea, China Coast Guard vessels continue to intrude into the Japanese territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands. The Chinese military has also been rapidly expanding and increasing its activities in quality and quantity in the sea and in the airspace over the East China Sea.

The Senkaku Islands are indisputably an inherent territory of Japan in light of historical facts and based upon international law. Indeed, the Senkaku Islands are under the valid control of Japan. Thus, there exists no issue of territorial sovereignty to be resolved concerning the Senkaku Islands. From 1895, when the Senkaku Islands were incorporated into Japanese territory by lawful means under international law, until the 1970s, when the islands became the focus of attention after it was suggested that there might be oil reserves in the East China Sea, China had not raised any objections to Japan's sovereignty over the Senkaku Islands. Moreover, China has never explained why it had not expressed objections until then. Subsequently, in 2008, two vessels belonging to China's State Oceanic Administration intruded into Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands for the first time.⁽⁷⁾

During 2025, 27 incidents were recorded in which China Coast Guard vessels intruded into the Japanese territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands (there were 39 incidents in 2024 and 34 incidents in 2023), and the number of confirmed days in 2025 in which China Coast Guard vessels navigated the contiguous zone around the Senkaku Islands reached a record high of 357 days. Furthermore, since May 2020, Chinese Coast Guard vessels have intruded into the Japanese territorial sea of the Senkaku Islands and there have been incidents in which China Coast Guard vessels frequently attempt to approach Japanese fishing boats in those waters, and the situation remains severe, as evidenced by an incident associated with such attempts that occurred in March 2025, in which an intrusion into Japan's territorial sea lasted more than 92 hours, the longest ever recorded. In addition, in May, a

helicopter launched from a China Coast Guard vessel that had intruded into Japan's territorial sea surrounding the Senkaku Islands violated Japan's territorial airspace. The activities of the China Coast Guard vessels, which make their own assertions in Japan's territorial sea around the Senkaku Islands, are in violation of international law, and, in response to China's such unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, through diplomatic routes the Government of Japan has repeatedly lodged strong protests, has called for the prompt withdrawal of Chinese vessels from Japan's territorial sea, and has demanded that such incidents be prevented from reoccurring. With the determination to defend Japan's territory as well as territorial sea and airspace, Japan will continue to take a calm and resolute approach to the situation.

Chinese naval vessels and aircraft have also been accelerating their activities in the sea and airspace around Japan, including in the East China Sea. In May 2025, the aircraft carrier *Liaoning* navigated the East China Sea, and Japan observed that carrier-based fighters and carrier-based helicopters conducted take-offs and landings in waters close to Japan. In addition, following an unusual close approach over the high seas in the Pacific Ocean in June, in July, over the high seas in the East China Sea, Chinese military fighter-bombers flew in unusual close proximity toward Air Self-Defense Force aircrafts. Furthermore, in December, over the high seas southeast of Okinawa island, a fighter aircraft which took off from the Chinese aircraft carrier "Liaoning" intermittently illuminated Japan Air Self-Defense Force's fighter aircraft with its radar for approximately 30 minutes. This occurred while the Japan Air Self-Defense Force's fighter aircraft were carrying out countermeasures against airspace violations in response to the Chinese fighter aircraft. With regard to such incidents, given the possibility that they could trigger accidental collisions, Japan has expressed serious concerns and lodged strong protests calling for the prevention of recurrence through both diplomatic and defense channels. In addition, regarding China-Russia military cooperation around Japan, joint navigation

(7) Ministry of Foreign Affairs website detailing the position of the Government of Japan on the Senkaku Islands:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/index.html>





Chinese marine structures confirmed to have been installed near the geographical equidistance line between Japan and China

(Photo: Ministry of Defense)

For details, see: https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/c_m1/page3e_000356.html



by Chinese and Russian naval vessels was confirmed in August, and joint flights by Chinese and Russian bombers were confirmed in December, as in the previous year. On multiple occasions Chinese naval vessels were also confirmed to be navigating waters surrounding Japan including in those around the Senkaku Islands. Japan has serious concerns in light of these recent developments by Chinese military, including China-Russia cooperation, in the sea and airspace around Japan, including in the East China Sea. Japan has appropriately raised objections with the Chinese side regarding each incident.

Chinese aircraft activity, including by unmanned aerial vehicles, continues to occur, and the number of scrambles by the Air Self-Defense Force in response to Chinese military aircraft since 2013 has remained high. In response to these recent activities by the Chinese military, Japan has repeatedly been raising the issues through diplomatic routes.

At the Japan-China Summit Meeting held in October, Prime Minister Takaichi expressed Japan's serious concerns regarding the intensifying activities of the Chinese military around Japan and called on the Chinese side to address them.

China has been continuing its unilateral activities to develop natural resources while the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the continental shelf between Japan and China in the East China Sea remain pending delimitation. In addition to the four structures built by the Chinese side prior to the "2008 Agreement" on resource development in the East China Sea, the

Government of Japan has confirmed 12 new structures built between June 2013 and May 2016 that are west of the geographical equidistance line, two new structures that have been built since 2022, and movements toward the installation of four further new structures confirmed between 2025 and 2026, for a total of 22 structures have been installed so far. Such unilateral development activities are extremely regrettable, and every time such moves by China are detected, Japan has strongly requested China to cease its unilateral development and to immediately resume negotiations for the conclusion of international agreements based on the implementation of the "2008 Agreement" regarding the development of natural resources in the East China Sea. At the Japan-China Summit Meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping in Osaka in June 2019, the two leaders shared the view of promoting and implementing the "2008 Agreement" regarding resource development in order to achieve the goal of making the East China Sea a "Sea of Peace, Cooperation and Friendship."

In recent years numerous activities by China to carry out maritime surveys in and around Japan's EEZ, including in the East China Sea, without obtaining Japan's approval, have also continued to be confirmed, and on each time this happens, Japan has lodged objections and protests with the Chinese side through diplomatic routes.

In order to appropriately deal with these maritime and security concerns, both Japan and China have been promoting dialogue and exchanges between the

authorities concerned. For example, in June 2018 the defense authorities of Japan and China began operation of the “Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism between the Japan-China Defense Authorities”, which is highly significant for promoting mutual understanding between both countries and avoiding and preventing accidental collisions.

It is highly meaningful from the perspective of building trust and bolstering cooperation for diplomats from both countries to directly and frankly exchange opinions through the Japan-China Security Dialogue, the Japan-China High-Level Consultation on Maritime Affairs, and other discussions between related authorities of both countries. The Government of Japan will continue asserting Japan's position on individual issues through steady dialogue and bolstering of communication.

(Yamato Bank)

Regarding Japan's responses to Chinese fishing vessels engaging in illegal fishing in the waters around the Yamato Bank in the Sea of Japan, the number of vessels warned to depart by Fisheries Agency enforcement vessels and Japan Coast Guard patrol vessels was 32 in 2024 and 12 in 2025, and illegal fishing by Chinese fishing vessels continues to be confirmed. In light of this situation, Japan has repeatedly conveyed its concerns to the Chinese side on various occasions, and has strongly urged the Chinese side to take effective measures to resolve the issue of illegal fishing.

(Japanese Food Import Restrictions Issue)

Regarding China's import restrictions on Japanese food products, Japan has repeatedly and strongly urged for their elimination as soon as possible, at all levels, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels.

In August 2023, in response to the start of the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea, the Government of China announced a temporary suspension of all imports of Japanese aquatic products. However, in September 2024, the two governments announced a “Shared Recognition between Japan and

China”⁽⁸⁾ regarding the discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea and China's import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products. After conducting additional measures under the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Chinese side would initiate adjustment of its import restrictions on Japanese aquatic products, and would steadily restore imports of Japanese aquatic products. From October of that year onward, the missions of additional measures have been conducted on multiple occasions with the participation of experts from third countries including China, and the Government of China has announced that, the results of analysis of samples have been normal. At the Japan-China High-Level Economic Dialogue in March 2025, the two governments confirmed to conduct the additional measures under the framework of the IAEA, and concurred on promoting relevant consultations towards the resumption of imports of Japanese aquatic products, on the premise that no abnormalities are seen in the results of the analysis. Building on these exchanges, technical consultations between the authorities of Japan and China on the resumption of exports of Japanese aquatic products to China were held in March, April, and May of the same year, and at the fourth technical consultation on May 28, both sides reached an agreement on the technical requirements necessary for the resumption of Japanese aquatic product exports to China. At the end of June 2025, the Government of China issued an announcement restoring imports of aquatic products from certain regions of Japan, thereby initiating the procedures for re-registration of Japanese export-related facilities. With regard to the resumption of imports of Japanese aquatic products, it is above all important to steadily implement the “Shared Recognition between Japan and China” announced in September 2024, and the Government of Japan will continue to request the Chinese side to facilitate exports, including through the prompt re-registration of Japanese export-related facilities, while strongly calling for the lifting of import restrictions on aquatic products from the remaining 10 prefectures.

(8) For the “Shared Recognition between Japan and China” released on September 20, 2024, refer to the MOFA website: https://warpp.ndl.go.jp/web/20250901233603/https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00598.html



(Cases of Detainment of Japanese Nationals)

Since May 2015, 17 Japanese nationals have been detained on charges related to China's "national security." In regard to successive cases of detainment of Japanese nationals, the Government of Japan has urged the early release of Japanese detainees on various occasions between Japan and China, including at summit and foreign ministers' meetings, and, so far, five Japanese nationals have been released before being arrested, one Japanese national died of illness while serving the sentence, six Japanese nationals have returned to Japan after serving their sentences, and as of the end of 2025, five Japanese nationals are being detained (currently serving their sentences).

The Government of Japan has strongly urged the Government of China to ensure the early release of detained individuals; to increase transparency in law enforcement and judicial processes, including the reasons for detention under the revised Counter-Espionage Law; to appropriately protect the rights of Japanese nationals; and to ensure fairness and impartiality, as well as humane treatment. In 2025, the Government of Japan raised these issues with the Government of China at various levels and opportunities, including at the leader and foreign ministerial levels, such as the Japan-China Summit Meeting in November and the Japan-China foreign ministers' telephone call in October, and Japan will continue to persistently urge them to do so. Additionally, from the perspective of protecting Japanese nationals, the Government of Japan is providing as much support as possible, including consular visits and contact with family members.

In response to these successive cases of Japanese nationals being detained, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Embassy of Japan in China, and the Consulates General of Japan in China have issued warnings on their websites urging Japanese residents to be aware that acts deemed to "endanger national security" are subject to investigation, and that they may not only be forced to spend long periods of time in detention, but may also face penalties such as imprisonment if convicted. Additionally, in response to the revised Counter-Espionage Law taking effect in July 2023, the content of the warning on the MOFA's Overseas Safety website has been updated to provide more detailed and specific warnings.

(Abandoned Chemical Weapons Issue)

The Government of Japan, in accordance with the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), has been steadily working on the disposal of abandoned chemical weapons left by the former Japanese military forces in China. In 2025, Japan carried out excavation, recovery, and destruction operations of Abandoned Chemical Weapons (ACW) in the Harbaling area of Dunhua City, Jilin Province, and destruction operations of ACW in Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province, and Wuhan City, Hubei Province. Additionally, Japan also carried out field surveys and the excavation and recovery operations of ACW in various other parts of China (as of December 2025 approximately 149,000 ACW have been destroyed).

(2) Taiwan**A Domestic Politics and Economy**

Following the resignation in January 2025 of Taiwan People's Party (TPP) Chairman Ko Wen-je, who had been indicted on corruption charges, a by-election for party chairman was held in February, and Huang Kuochang assumed the chairmanship.

From January onward, a large-scale recall campaign led by civic groups was pursued with the aim of breaking the deadlock in the Legislative Yuan. Recall votes targeting 31 Kuomintang (KMT) legislators were held in July and August, but all failed to pass. On August 27, the Executive Yuan announced a cabinet reshuffle, including the establishment of a new Ministry of Sports.

In October, a KMT chairperson election was held upon expiration of the incumbent's term, and former legislator Cheng Li-wun was elected.

In recent years, Taiwan's economy has continued to perform strongly, underpinned by robust demand related to AI and information and communications equipment. Taiwan's real GDP growth rate in 2025 reached +8.63%, the highest level in the past 15 years, with per capita GDP reaching 37,826 U.S. dollars. The Lai Ching-te administration has been prioritizing industries such as semiconductors, AI, defense, and next-generation communications, and is working to strengthen whole-of-society defense resilience and to establish Taiwan's critical position in global supply chains.

B Cross-Strait Relations and External Relations

The military balance across the Taiwan Strait is rapidly shifting as a whole in a direction increasingly favorable to China. The activities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) around Taiwan are on an increasing trend, and PLA aircraft crossing the equidistance line of the Taiwan Strait and naval vessel activities to the east of Taiwan have become routine occurrences.

On March 13, 2025, President Lai Ching-te convened a high-level national security meeting, announced 17 major strategies to respond to China's "united front threat," and stated that China meets the definition of a "foreign hostile force." In response, China conducted military exercises on April 1 and 2 with aircraft carriers and coast guard vessels operating in a coordinated manner.

In August, the Executive Yuan of Taiwan announced that the defense budget proposal for fiscal year 2026 would amount to 3.32% of GDP, and President Lai Ching-te declared a policy target of 5% of GDP by 2030.

On December 17, the United States Government announced its approval of an arms sale to Taiwan worth approximately 11.1 billion U.S. dollars — the largest ever — and initiated the required congressional notification procedures. On December 29, China announced that it would conduct military exercises around Taiwan beginning that day; the exercises continued through December 31. China described the exercises as a "stern warning to 'Taiwan independence' forces and external interference forces." The live-fire exercises in the waters surrounding Taiwan and the designation of exercise zones prohibiting the entry of aircraft and other vessels encircling Taiwan marked the first such occurrence since August 2022. In response, Japan issued a Statement by the Press Secretary saying that the military exercises constitute actions that increase tensions across the Taiwan Strait and the Government of Japan has conveyed its concerns to the Chinese side.

Visits by senior Taiwanese officials to countries that recognize Taiwan and to Western nations continued in 2025. In November, Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim attended the annual general meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) held in

Brussels, Belgium, becoming the first senior Taiwanese official to address a parliament abroad.

Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait are important for the stability of the entire international community. The G7 has also reaffirmed the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and agreed to call for the peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues; the Joint Statement of G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2025 emphasizes the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, and in particular expresses opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion.

Taiwan has been unable to participate as an observer in the World Health Organization (WHO) General Assembly since 2017, having done so from 2009 to 2016. Japan has consistently maintained that there should be no geographical gaps in responding to international health issues, and from this perspective has consistently supported Taiwan's observer participation in the WHO General Assembly. The 2025 Joint Statement of the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting expresses support for Taiwan's meaningful participation in appropriate international organizations.

Regarding the reciprocal tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Taiwan in April, following six rounds of face-to-face negotiations, both the U.S. and Taiwan announced on January 15, 2026, that they had reached a trade and investment agreement under which the total rate of the U.S. reciprocal tariffs applied to Taiwanese products would be capped at 15%, and Taiwanese companies would make investments in the U.S. totaling 250 billion U.S. dollars, among other terms.

C Japan-Taiwan Relations

For Japan, Taiwan is an extremely important partner and a valuable friend, with which it shares fundamental values and principles such as freedom, democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law, and enjoys close economic relations and people-to-people exchanges. Japan-Taiwan relations are maintained as a non-governmental working relationship based on the Japan-China Joint Communiqué of 1972.

The mutual affinity between the peoples of Japan and Taiwan is generally positive. According to a survey conducted by the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association between December 2024 and January 2025, 81%

of Taiwan residents responded that they feel close to Japan (or somewhat close to Japan), and according to a survey conducted by the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan in October 2025, 74.5% of Japanese people responded that they feel close to Taiwan (or somewhat close to Taiwan).

In terms of people-to-people exchanges, while the number of overseas travelers from Japan is still recovering, the number of visitors from Taiwan to Japan reached 6.76 million, exceeding the 6.04 million recorded in 2024, and setting a new record high.

Regarding the import restrictions imposed in connection with the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO's) Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station in 2011, which had been progressively eased, Taiwan announced on November 21 that it would lift all restrictions on Japanese food products. Taiwan's decision supports the recovery of the disaster-affected areas, and the Government of Japan welcomes it. In addition, on May 22, the Taiwanese side announced the lifting of the age restriction on imports of Japanese beef, which had required the cattle to be under 30 months of age. This fully lifted Taiwan's import restrictions on Japanese beef that had been in place since 2001.

Japan and Taiwan are both prone to large-scale natural disasters and have extended helping hands to each other in the past whenever a disaster has occurred. In October 2025, in response to a disaster caused by torrential rainfall from Typhoon No. 18 that struck Hualien County, Japan provided Taiwan with water level monitoring buoys to observe water levels in landslide dams (landslide-dammed lakes). It is expected that cooperation and exchanges between Japan and Taiwan in the field of disaster prevention will continue to deepen.

In December, the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association and the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association signed the "Arrangement for the Mutual Cooperation on Digital Trade" and the "Memorandum on Cooperation in Regional Customs." Through these outcomes, it is expected that practical cooperation will be further strengthened in areas such as smooth and reliable free digital trade, as well as facilitation of border control measures and customs procedures. In addition, with regard to Japan-Taiwan cooperation in the semiconductor

supply chain sector, Japan Advanced Semiconductor Manufacturing, Inc. (JASM) began mass production at its Kumamoto first plant in December 2024, and construction of its second plant commenced in October 2025, marking further progress in this area.

(3) Mongolia

A Domestic Politics

Prime Minister Luvsannamsrai Oyun-Erdene, who was reappointed as Prime Minister following the 9th State Great Hural elections in 2024, faced a surge of public discontent from May onward over the lavish lifestyle of his son and his fiancée, leading to daily protest demonstrations calling for his resignation and other demands. As a result, a motion of confidence in the Prime Minister submitted to the State Great Hural in June was voted down, and Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene resigned, with the entire cabinet tendering its resignation.

In June, a resolution to appoint Chief of Staff to the Office of the President Gombojav Zandanshatar as Prime Minister, on the recommendation of the Mongolian People's Party as the largest ruling party, was passed, and Prime Minister Zandanshatar came into office. Prime Minister Zandanshatar formed a coalition government comprising the Mongolian People's Party, the HUN Party, and the Civil Will-Green Party. Prime Minister Zandanshatar has emphasized his commitment to implementing slogans such as "human-centered" development and "a government that values fairness," while maintaining the policies of the Oyun-Erdene cabinet and party unity.

B Foreign Policy

Mongolia, which is situated between China and Russia and increasingly dependent on both countries in terms of economy and energy, has long pursued a foreign policy of maintaining good relations with both countries as a top priority while at the same time maintaining a balance by strengthening relations with other countries, including Japan and Western countries, which it positions as its "Third Neighbors."

In 2025 as well, the heads of state of Austria visited Mongolia in May, and those of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in June, respectively, while President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh, Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene,

Column

Visit to Mongolia by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan

In July, Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan visited Mongolia as State Guests following the invitation of President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh. His Majesty the Emperor had previously visited Mongolia in 2007 (His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince at the time), making this his second visit, while for Her Majesty the Empress it was her first. It was also the first-ever visit to Mongolia by an Emperor and Empress of Japan. The visit not only demonstrated to both Japan and the world the deep bonds of friendship and goodwill between the two countries, but Their Majesties also received an exceptionally warm welcome, with President Khurelsukh stating that the visit marked a monumental milestone in the bilateral relationship between Japan and Mongolia.

Their Majesties attended a welcoming ceremony and a State Banquet, and at the national festival of *Naadam*, they observed the opening ceremony as well as various competitions including archery, horse racing, and *shagai* — a traditional Mongolian game in which players flick sheep anklebones with their fingers to shoot at a target. Throughout these events, Their Majesties received a warm welcome from President Khurelsukh and his spouse.

During the visit, Their Majesties offered flowers at the Monument to the Souls of Deceased Japanese People located on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar, and paid their respects to those who, after the end of World War II, passed away far from their homeland through circumstances beyond their control.

Their Majesties also toured the Chinggis Khaan National Museum, Gandantegchinlen Monastery, and Hustai National Park — a specially protected area located approximately 100 kilometers west of Ulaanbaatar that is home to the *takhi* (Przewalski's horse), a wild horse native to Mongolia — and experienced Mongolia's history, culture, and natural splendors.

Furthermore, Their Majesties visited the Mongolia-Japan Hospital of MNUMS (Mongolian National University of Medical Sciences), constructed through Japan's grant aid, and inspected the Gachuurt Water Source, observing firsthand how Japan's support and cooperation are contributing to Mongolia's economic and social development. In the field of "water," in which His Majesty the Emperor takes a deep personal interest, His Majesty listened attentively to those involved as they explained Mongolia's water-related challenges.

Throughout the visit, Their Majesties held informal conversations with those who have long supported the friendship and goodwill between Japan and Mongolia, and warmly engaged with young Mongolians and children who will be responsible for the future of the bilateral relationship, including at School No.149 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongol Koosen College of Technology, and Shine Mongol School.

During the visit, large numbers of Mongolian citizens gathered near the sites Their Majesties visited and along the streets to express their welcome, and the visit received daily favorable coverage in the Mongolian media. In particular, the sight of Their Majesties partaking of *aaruul* (dried curds, dairy product) offered as a sign of welcome by the Mongolian side upon Their Majesties' arrival



Their Majesties experience *shagai* at *Naadam* (July 11, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)



Their Majesties greeted by President Khurelsukh and his spouse at the welcoming ceremony (July 8, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)

at the airport and at the sites they visited, as well as Their Majesties trying their hand at *shagai* at the *Naadam* venue, were received extremely favorably as expressions of the respect Their Majesties showed for the Mongolian culture.

This visit served as an important opportunity to reaffirm the many exchanges and cooperative efforts that have taken place between Japan and Mongolia over the years, and to look ahead to a future of mutual understanding, friendship and goodwill for the younger generation. The Government of Japan will continue to work toward further deepening mutual understanding between the peoples of the two countries and toward the further development of friendship, goodwill, and cooperative relations between Japan and Mongolia.

Prime Minister Zandanshatar, and Foreign Minister Batmunkh Battsetseg each actively visited foreign countries and engaged in active dignitary diplomacy.

In terms of Mongolia's relations with its two neighboring countries, President Khurelsukh visited China from August to September to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit and the grand commemorative meeting marking the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. In addition, in November, Prime Minister Zandanshatar visited Russia on the occasion of the SCO expanded meeting held in Russia.

C Economy

In 2025, the Mongolian economy continued to record positive growth, with robust exports of mineral resources such as coal and copper to China, despite the impact of falling international coal prices. Meanwhile, the inflation rate at the end of the year stood at 7.5%, remaining elevated at a level similar to the previous year. The economic growth rate for 2025 rose by 1.9 percentage points from the previous year to 6.8%. Mongolia's trade value for 2025 decreased by 0.5% in terms of exports and decreased by 2.6% in terms of imports when compared to the previous year. In

addition, the international credit rating agency S&P upgraded Mongolia's credit rating from "B+" to "BB-."

D Japan-Mongolia Relations

In regard to relations with Japan, high-level exchanges and dialogues continued in 2025.

In March, Foreign Minister Battsetseg visited Japan as a guest of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Ishiba and held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya. In late July, Deputy Prime Minister Togmid Dorjkhund visited Japan to attend the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. In August, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs IKUINA Akiko attended the World Women Entrepreneurs Forum hosted by the Government of Mongolia, paid a courtesy call on Foreign Minister Battsetseg, and inspected Chinggis Khaan International Airport.

In particular, with regard to bilateral cooperation, progress was made in the security field, including through the entry into force of the Agreement on the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology in January. In addition, to promote economic exchanges, the 12th Japan-Mongolia Government and Business Sector Joint Committee was held in Japan in November, and Deputy Prime Minister Khassuuri Gankhuyag visited Japan to attend the Committee.

3 Korean Peninsula

(1) North Korea (including the Abductions Issue)

The Government of Japan has been taking various initiatives based on its basic policy of achieving the normalization of relations with North Korea through comprehensively resolving outstanding issues of concern, such as the abductions, nuclear and missile issues, as well as settlement of the unfortunate past in accordance with the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration of September 2002.

In 2025, North Korea continued its nuclear and missile development, including through repeated launches of ballistic missiles. This series of actions by North Korea constitutes a grave and imminent threat to Japan's national security and poses a clear and serious

challenge to the region and the international community, and is totally unacceptable. In addition, the maintenance of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime is of utmost importance to Japan. Japan will advance efforts toward the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and seek the complete dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs in cooperation with the international community, including the U.S. and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

With the aging of the abductees and their families, the abductions issue is a humanitarian matter with lives at stake that must be resolved immediately, as well as a matter of infringement of the sovereignty of Japan.

Japan continues to call on North Korea to implement the May 2014 Japan-North Korea agreement (the

agreement in Stockholm)⁽⁹⁾ and will work closely with the international community, including the U.S. and the ROK, and do its utmost, without ruling out any options, to resolve the various issues with North Korea, including the return of all abductees at the earliest possible date.

A North Korea Nuclear and Missile Issues

(A) Recent Trends in North Korea Nuclear and Missile Issues

North Korea has not carried out the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner, in accordance with the series of relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

In 2025, North Korea launched ballistic missiles four times (at least five launches). On January 6, it launched a ballistic missile which it described as a “new-type hypersonic intermediate-range ballistic missile;” on May 8, it launched ballistic missiles which it described as a “600mm multiple rocket launcher” and a “tactical ballistic missile ‘Hwasongpho-11 Ka;’” on October 22, it launched a ballistic missile which it announced as a “hypersonic projectile;” and on November 7, it also launched a ballistic missile.

Despite North Korea's continued activities in violation of relevant UN Security Council resolutions, in April 2024, the Panel of Experts for the UNSC 1718 Sanctions Committee ended its activities due to the veto of Russia. In light of this situation, in October of that year, like-minded countries, including Japan established the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT)⁽¹⁰⁾. The MSMT is strengthening its efforts to contribute to the full implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions by sharing information among participating states on violations and evasions of sanctions imposed under those relevant Security Council resolutions, and by disseminating that information to the international community. Specifically, in May 2025, the MSMT published its first report on the theme of unlawful military cooperation, including arms transfers, between North Korea and Russia.

The report contains specific information on violations and evasions of the sanction measures stipulated in the relevant Security Council resolutions on North Korea, such as arms transfers between North Korea and Russia, deployment of North Korean troops to Russia, and illicit trade networks. In July, MSMT participating countries held a briefing at UN Headquarters in New York on the report to share the key findings of the report with UN Member States, and confirm that they would continue to fulfill the role previously carried out by the Panel of Experts of monitoring and reporting on violations and evasions of sanction measures by North Korea. In October, the MSMT published its second report on the theme of North Korea's cyber and information technology (IT) worker activities. The report contains specific information on North Korea's cyber activities such as cryptocurrency thefts and its laundering and use, foreign currency earnings generated by IT workers, and information theft. Japan will continue to work closely with the international community, including MSMT participating countries, to advance efforts toward the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and call for the complete dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

In addition, the Government of Japan has taken measures against North Korea, designating a total of 144 entities and 133 individuals as being subject to asset freezes and other measures.

Regarding North Korea's nuclear development-related activities, on February 8, 2025, the founding anniversary of the Korean People's Army, North Korean President of the State Affairs Commission Kim Jong Un visited the Ministry of National Defense, referred to new planning projects to strengthen all deterrent forces, including nuclear capabilities, and reiterated the policy of further advancing nuclear forces. In addition, according to an announcement by the Missile General Bureau, on September 8, President Kim Jong Un reportedly inspected a ground combustion test of a high-power solid-fuel engine using carbon fiber composite materials, and stated that the development of the

⁽⁹⁾ In May 2014, Japan-North Korea Intergovernmental Consultations were held in Stockholm, Sweden. North Korea promised to conduct a comprehensive and full-scale investigation on all Japanese nationals, including abductees.

⁽¹⁰⁾ For the joint statement on the establishment of the MSMT, refer to the MOFA website: https://warp.ndl.go.jp/web/20250903125104/https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/pressite_000001_00652.html

⁽¹⁰⁾



engine would herald a significant change in the expansion and strengthening of strategic nuclear forces. Furthermore, on September 26, it was announced that President Kim Jong Un met with scientists and engineers in nuclear-related fields, including at the “Nuclear Weapons Institute,” presided over an important consultative meeting on nuclear material production and nuclear weapons production, and put forward key tasks for advancing nuclear capabilities.

In addition, North Korea is expanding its malicious cyber activities, including cryptocurrency thefts and activities by IT workers, which serve as funding sources for its unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs. According to the MSMT's second report published in October 2025, North Korea is utilizing cryptocurrency thefts and IT worker activities to advance its nuclear and missile programs, and it is pointed out that North Korea stole cryptocurrency worth approximately 1.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2024 and approximately 1.65 billion U.S. dollars between January and September 2025. The report also refers to the fact that North Korea dispatches IT workers abroad to generate income by obtaining work under false identities, that their methods are becoming increasingly sophisticated and their activities are expanding globally, and that there is a possibility that such IT workers are also engaged in malicious cyber activities, including information theft.

(B) Initiatives by Japan and Cooperation with the International Community

The repeated launches of ballistic missiles and others by North Korea are serious challenges not only to Japan, but also to the region and international community, and are totally unacceptable. In addition, the maintenance of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime is of utmost importance to Japan. It is crucial that the international community makes concerted efforts to fully implement the UN Security Council resolutions for the dismantlement of all weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles of all ranges in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner by North Korea. Japan has confirmed these points at meetings

with the heads of state and foreign ministers of various countries.

In order to respond to North Korea's growing threat, Japan, the U.S., and the ROK have been communicating at multiple levels and strengthening their solidarity. In 2025, in particular, five Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held, and the three countries confirmed their commitment to further advancing their response to North Korea. At the September meeting, for example, the three ministers discussed the growing threats posed by North Korea and affirmed that they would further strengthen communication at all levels. Specifically, they expressed their serious concerns over North Korea's nuclear and missile development and reaffirmed the three countries' commitment toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions. The three ministers also reaffirmed that they would work closely together on issues such as the advancement of Russia-North Korea military cooperation and North Korea's malicious cyber activities including cryptocurrency thefts, which fund its nuclear and missile programs. Furthermore, in response to North Korea's repeated ballistic missile launches, the three countries have held Foreign Ministries' Official Telephone Meetings on North Korea during which they have strongly condemned the launches as threats to the peace and security of the region and the international community and reaffirmed close coordination among Japan, the U.S., and the ROK. At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in October between U.S. President Trump, who was visiting Japan, and Prime Minister Takaichi, both leaders shared their views on the situation surrounding North Korea and affirmed the need to address its nuclear and missile issues together, as well as their resolute commitment to the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

Furthermore, as part of the Self-Defense Forces' surveillance operations and the Japan Coast Guard's patrolling activities, Japan has been conducting information gathering on the activities of vessels suspected to be violating the UN Security Council resolutions. When the Government of Japan finds activities strongly

Special Feature

Efforts to Address North Korea's Cyber-Related Threats

In October, the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT), established by like-minded countries including Japan, released a report on the theme of “the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) cyber and information technology (IT) worker activities.”

According to the report, North Korea is exploiting cryptocurrency thefts and the activities of IT workers to advance its nuclear and missile programs. It is indicated that North Korea stole approximately 1.2 billion U.S. dollars' worth of cryptocurrency in 2024, and approximately 1.65 billion U.S. dollars' worth between January and September 2025. The report also notes that North Korea dispatches its IT workers to foreign countries, where they generate income by obtaining work under false identification; that their methods have become increasingly sophisticated and their activities have expanded globally; and that these IT workers are also involved in malicious cyber activities, including the theft of information.

In Japan as well, in 2024, cryptocurrency was stolen from a cryptocurrency-related business by a North Korea-backed cyberattack group. Cases have also been confirmed in which North Korean IT workers, impersonating Japanese nationals, used online platforms provided by Japanese companies and others for placing and receiving work orders to obtain work and generate income.

As described above, the threat posed by North Korea's malicious cyber-related activities is escalating further. Japan expresses serious concern over such activities, which fund North Korea's unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs, and has been responding in close coordination with the international community, including the United States (U.S.) and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Among Japan, the U.S. and the ROK, in August 2025, at the 4th Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Diplomatic Working Group on North Korea's Cyber Threats, the three countries held action-oriented discussions and confirmed their commitment to advance tangible efforts. In addition, the “Joint Statement on Cryptocurrency Thefts by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Public-Private Collaboration” was issued in January, and the “Joint Statement on North Korean Information Technology Workers” was issued in August, respectively. Furthermore, in August, the Japan-U.S.-ROK Public-Private Event on North Korean IT Workers was co-hosted in Tokyo, and discussions were held for the public and private sectors to bolster their collective protection.

In addition, at the G7 level, at the Kananaskis Summit in June, Japan expressed its concerns regarding North Korea's cryptocurrency thefts, and the Chair's Summary stated that G7 leaders expressed the need to jointly address North Korea's cryptocurrency thefts.

In addition to such coordination with the international community, Japan has designated entities such as the Lazarus Group — which is said to be a subordinate organization of North Korean authorities and reported to target cryptocurrency-related companies and others — as subjects of Japan's own measures against North Korea. Furthermore, in August, Japan updated its domestic alert on North Korean IT workers' activities, informing relevant companies of the details of their methods and urging them to take measures such as strengthening identity verification procedures.

Japan will continue to strengthen its response to North Korea's malicious cyber-related activities in close coordination with the international community, including the U.S. and the ROK, as well as the private sector.



Japan-U.S.-ROK Public-Private Event (August 26, Tokyo)

suspected to be violating the UN Security Council resolutions, including ship-to-ship transfers⁽¹¹⁾ with North Korean-flagged vessels, measures have been taken, such as notification to the UN Security Council 1718 Sanctions Committee and other bodies, sharing of information with related countries, and releasing of information to the public. Aircraft of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and France, in addition to U.S. aircraft, have, based on the UN Status of Forces Agreement, used U.S. military facilities and areas in Japan to engage in surveillance operations against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers. Monitoring and surveillance activities were also conducted in the waters surrounding Japan by naval vessels, such as vessels of the U.S. Navy and the ROK Navy, the UK Royal Navy patrol vessel *HMS Spey* and frigate *HMS Richmond*, Royal Australian Navy destroyer *HMAS Sydney*, the Royal Canadian Navy frigate *HMCS Ottawa* and patrol vessel *HMCS Max Bernays*, the Italian Navy frigate *Antonio Marcegaglia*, the Royal New Zealand Navy replenishment ship *HMNZS Aotearoa*, the French Navy replenishment ship *Jacques Chevallier*, and multi-purpose destroyer and frigate *Prairial*. From the perspective of further deepening the multinational cooperation, Japan considers it significant that concerned countries are sharing information and coordinating efforts to ensure that UN Security Council resolutions are implemented fully and effectively.

In addition, Japan is seriously concerned about North Korea's malicious cyber-related activities that fund its unlawful weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missile programs, and has been responding in close coordination with the international community, including the U.S. and the ROK. For example, at the 4th Japan-U.S.-ROK Trilateral Diplomacy Working Group for Foreign Ministry Cooperation on North Korea's Cyber Threats held in August, the three countries conducted action-oriented discussions and confirmed that they would advance tangible efforts. In addition, Japan, the U.S., and the ROK jointly issued a "Joint Statement on Cryptocurrency Thefts by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and

Public-Private Collaboration" in January, and a "Joint Statement on North Korean Information Technology Workers" in August. Furthermore, in August, the three countries co-hosted a Japan-U.S.-ROK Public-Private Event to Counter North Korean IT Worker Threats, which enabled discussions between the public and private sector to bolster their collective protection. In coordination with relevant ministries and agencies, in August, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the National Police Agency, the Ministry of Finance, and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry updated a domestic alert on the activities of North Korean IT workers, notified relevant companies of the details of their methods, and called for measures such as strengthening identity verification procedures. Furthermore, at the G7 Kananaskis Summit in June, Japan expressed concern over North Korea's cryptocurrency thefts, and in the Chair's Summary G7 leaders expressed the need to jointly address North Korea's cryptocurrency thefts.

B The Abductions Issue and Japan-North Korea Relations

(A) Basic Position on the Abductions Issue

To date, the Government of Japan has identified 12 separate incidents, involving a total of 17 Japanese abductees, 12 of whom have not yet returned home. North Korea claims that eight of these 12 abductees have died and that it is unable to confirm that the other four ever entered its territory, but as no convincing explanation of this claim has been provided, Japan continues to work toward the resolution of this issue on the assumption that all of the abductees whose whereabouts are unknown are still alive. As well as being a critical issue concerning the sovereignty of Japan and the lives and safety of Japanese citizens, abductions by North Korea constitute a universal issue among the international community as a violation of basic human rights. In addition, the abductions issue is a humanitarian matter with lives at stake which must be resolved immediately, with not just the abductees themselves, but also their families having reached an advanced age. Japan continues to work toward the resolution of this issue with a determination to "never give up." Based

⁽¹¹⁾ In this context, "ship-to-ship transfers" refers to the transfers to or from North Korean-flagged vessels of any goods or items at sea, which UN Security Council resolution 2375 (adopted in September 2017) prohibits UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.

on the basic recognition that the normalization of its relations with North Korea is impossible without resolving the abductions issue, Japan has positioned its resolution as the most important issue. Accordingly, Japan has strongly urged North Korea to provide a full account of all the abduction cases, to hand over the perpetrators to Japan, and to ensure the safety of all abductees and their immediate return to Japan, irrespective of whether the abductees are officially identified. In October, Prime Minister Takaichi stated in her policy speech, “As the abductees and their families become older, the abductions issue is one of the highest priority issues for my administration. We are firmly committed to taking all necessary measures to bring all abductees home at the earliest possible time.”

(B) Initiatives by Japan

Following the nuclear test by North Korea in January 2016 and the launch of the ballistic missile in the following month, which North Korea purported to be a “satellite,” Japan announced its autonomous measures against North Korea in February 2016. In response, North Korea unilaterally announced that it would completely stop the investigations on all Japanese abductees and dissolve the Special Investigation Committee. Japan lodged a serious protest against North Korea, conveyed its intention of not abandoning the agreement in Stockholm, and strongly demanded that North Korea implement the agreement and return all the abductees home at the earliest possible date.

In November, Prime Minister Takaichi stated at the Citizens’ Rally to Demand the Immediate Return to Japan of All Abductees at the Same Time, “Toward building a new and mutually fruitful relationship between the two sides, I intend to face President Kim Jong Un directly, take the initiative in engaging him at the leadership level, and act decisively and boldly in response to various circumstances to deliver tangible results. I am fully determined to make a breakthrough and resolve the abductions issue at all costs during my tenure, without ruling out any options.”

(C) Cooperation with the International Community

In order to resolve the abductions issue, it is essential for Japan not only to proactively urge North Korea, but also to gain understanding and support from other

countries regarding the importance of resolving the abductions issue. Japan has taken all possible diplomatic opportunities to raise the abductions issue, including at summit meetings, foreign ministers’ meetings and international conferences such as the G7 Summit. For example, at the G7 Kananaskis Summit in June, Prime Minister Ishiba once again asked the G7 leaders for their continued understanding and cooperation toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue. At the Japan-ASEAN Summit Meeting in October, Prime Minister Takaichi stated that the immediate resolution of the abductions issue by North Korea is an urgent task, and called for the continued understanding and cooperation of the participating countries. The ASEAN side also made reference to the importance of resolving the abductions issue. Furthermore, at the G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in November, Foreign Minister Motegi once again asked the G7 countries for their understanding and cooperation toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

Regarding the U.S., at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held between Prime Minister Ishiba and President Trump in February, Prime Minister Ishiba asked for continued understanding and cooperation of the U.S. for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and once again gained full support from President Trump. Furthermore, at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump in October, Prime Minister Takaichi asked for continued understanding and cooperation of the U.S. for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and gained full support from President Trump. In addition, President Trump and Secretary of State Rubio met with the families of abductees, and together with the Japan-U.S. Summit Meetings, this served as an opportunity to reconfirm the full cooperation of the United States and the strong Japan-U.S. partnership toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

Regarding China, following the Japan-China Summit Meeting in November 2024, at the Japan-China Summit Meeting in October 2025 as well, the two leaders exchanged views on the situation surrounding North Korea, including the abductions issue.

Regarding the ROK, for example, at the Japan-ROK Summit Meetings in August 2025 and January

2026, Japan requested the continued understanding and cooperation of President Lee Jae Myung toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and the two leaders concurred on the importance of such efforts.

The resolution on the situation of human rights in North Korea, for which Japan was a co-sponsor, was adopted without a vote at the UN Human Rights Council in April and the UN General Assembly in December. Japan will continue to closely coordinate and cooperate with relevant countries, including the U.S., toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

C North Korea's External Relations, etc.

(A) U.S.-North Korea Relations

The United States has consistently stated, on various occasions, that it remains committed to the complete denuclearization of North Korea. For example, at the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting held in October, Prime Minister Takaichi and President Trump shared their views on the situation surrounding North Korea and affirmed the need to address the nuclear and missile issues together, and their resolute commitment to the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

In addition, as measures in response to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, illicit arms transfers from North Korea to Russia, and North Korea's illicit cyber activities, the U.S. decided to add individuals and entities to the list of targets subject to sanctions against North Korea in January, July, August, September, and November of 2025. Furthermore, the U.S., together with Japan and the ROK, conducted the third Japan-U.S.-ROK trilateral multi-domain exercise "Freedom Edge" in September.

While continuing such pressure on North Korea, President Trump, who took office in January, has communicated that he has built a good relationship with President Kim Jong Un, and stated at the U.S.-ROK Summit Meeting in August that he hoped to meet with President Kim Jong Un at an appropriate time.

In response, on September 21, President Kim Jong Un reportedly stated at the 13th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly, "If the United States abandons its absurd obsession with denuclearization and, based on acknowledging reality, wishes to pursue

genuine peaceful coexistence with us, there is no reason why we cannot face the United States. I still personally have good memories of the current U.S. President Trump."

Furthermore, on October 27, before his visit to the ROK, President Trump stated that he would be happy to meet with President Kim Jong Un if he wished to do so, but during his visit to the ROK on October 29, he stated that he was not the timing had not worked out.

(B) Inter-Korean Relations

In June, ROK President Lee Jae Myung emphasized in his inaugural address the importance of building peace on the Korean Peninsula through dialogue and cooperation, while defending against North Korean nuclear weapons and military provocations through strong deterrence based on the ROK-U.S. Alliance. In his Liberation Day address in August, President Lee Jae Myung stated that the ROK respects the North Korean system, will not pursue any form of unification by absorption, will take proactive, gradual steps to restore the "September 19 Military Agreement," and will usher in a new era of peaceful coexistence and shared growth on the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, in his address to the UN General Assembly General Debate in September, President Lee Jae Myung put forward the "E.N.D. Initiative," which aims to end the era of hostility and confrontation on the Korean Peninsula through comprehensive dialogue centered on Exchange, Normalization, and Denuclearization, and also advocated a phased solution, beginning with a "stop" in the sophistication of nuclear and missile capabilities, going through a "reduction" process, and reaching "dismantlement." In addition, the Lee Jae Myung administration implemented a series of measures aimed at reducing tensions, including requesting the suspension of leaflet drops toward North Korea by private organizations and halting loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts directed at North Korea in June, suspending radio and television broadcasts directed at North Korea in July, and removing loudspeakers directed at North Korea that had been installed near the inter-Korean military demarcation line in August.

Meanwhile, at the 9th Enlarged Plenary Meeting of the 8th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in December 2023, President Kim

Jong Un stated regarding inter-Korean relations that “The North-South relations have been completely fixed into the relations between two states hostile to each other and the relations between two belligerent states, not the consanguineous or homogeneous ones anymore,” and declared the abandonment of the goal of unification. Furthermore, after the inauguration of the Lee Jae Myung administration in the ROK, in July 2025, through a statement by Vice Director of the WPK Central Committee Kim Yo-jong, North Korea asserted that the suspension of broadcasts directed at North Korea was a problem that the ROK had brought upon itself and was not worthy of appreciation, and that regardless of the administration in power, the ROK is not an object of reconciliation and cooperation. Then, at the 13th Session of the 14th Supreme People’s Assembly in September, President Kim Jong Un stated that North Korea would have nothing whatsoever to do with the ROK, that there was absolutely no intention of pursuing unification, and that the fact that the two countries could never become one would be enshrined in national law.

(C) China-North Korea Relations

In 2025, high-level exchanges took place between China and North Korea. In September, President Kim Jong Un attended the “Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War” held in Beijing, and held a summit meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping, their first in approximately six years and three months. In the same month, Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui subsequently visited China and held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Furthermore, in October, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Premier Li Qiang attended the celebrations marking the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK) held in Pyongyang, and held a meeting with President Kim Jong Un.

According to figures released by Chinese authorities, trade between China and North Korea, which is estimated to account for more than 90% of North Korea’s entire external trade, was significantly reduced

compared to pre-COVID-19 levels due to traffic restrictions following the global spread of COVID-19, but recovered to near pre-pandemic levels in 2023. While the volume decreased slightly in 2024 compared to the previous year (2023), it increased by approximately 25.5% in 2025 compared to the previous year (2024).

(D) Russia-North Korea Relations

At the end of April 2025, Russia announced that North Korean soldiers had participated in combat in Russia’s Kursk Oblast under the “Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership,” which entered into force in December 2024. Following this announcement, North Korea also announced that it had “decided to participate in the war” based on the Treaty. High-level exchanges have continued alongside these developments in military cooperation. At the leader level, a telephone summit meeting was held between President Kim Jong Un and President Putin in August 2025, and in September, a summit meeting was held between President Kim Jong Un, who had visited China to attend the “Commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People’s War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War,” and President Putin, at which President Putin stated that Russia-North Korea relations “have come to take on a dimension of alliance.” At the foreign ministers’ level, in July, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited Wonsan, North Korea and held a strategic dialogue, and in October, Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui visited Moscow and held a foreign ministers’ meeting.

The advancement of Russia-North Korea military cooperation is a development of grave concern not only because they lead to further deterioration of the situation in Ukraine, but also from the perspective of its impact on the security of the region surrounding Japan. It is also deeply concerning that Russian nuclear and missile-related technology could be transferred to North Korea in exchange for North Korea’s military support, including the dispatch of troops to Russia. Based on this recognition, in May, the Multilateral Sanctions Monitoring Team (MSMT), including Japan, published its first report on the theme of illicit military cooperation between Russia and North Korea, including arms transfers. On this occasion, the MSMT

participating countries also issued a joint statement reaffirming their common resolve toward the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Japan, in close coordination with the international community, including the U.S. and the ROK as well as G7, is gathering and analyzing relevant information, and working toward the full implementation of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and the realization of a just and lasting peace in Ukraine at the earliest possible date through efforts such as expressing serious concern over Russia-North Korea military cooperation on multiple occasions.

(E) Other Issues

In 2025, a total of 12 drifting or wrecked wooden vessels presumed to be from North Korea were discovered on Japan's coast with the Sea of Japan (13 in 2024). The Government of Japan continues its effort to gather and analyze information, with great interest on relevant developments. In September 2020, a vessel that appeared to be an official North Korean vessel was confirmed in Japan's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in the west of the Yamatotai bank in the Sea of Japan, and when this incident occurred the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conveyed Japan's position to North Korea. Japan will continue to deal appropriately with these issues in close coordination among relevant ministries and agencies.

D Domestic Political Affairs and Economy

(A) Political Affairs

North Korea is believed to be advancing the strengthening of its military capabilities, including nuclear and missile development, based on the "Five-Year Plan for the Development of National Defense Science and the Weapons System" (2021–2025) and other plans reportedly presented at the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in January 2021. It was reported that when President Kim Jong Un inspected a nuclear material production base and the Nuclear Weapons Institute in January 2025, he stated that 2025 — the final year of the Five-Year Plan — is an extremely important year in which the plan for the production of weapons-grade nuclear material must be exceeded and an epoch-making achievement must be made in strengthening the nuclear shield. At

the enlarged meeting of the WPK Central Military Commission in May, it was reported that "a series of new planning projects in the field of national defense science and industry" were approved. Furthermore, it was reported that during the inspection of "important munitions enterprises" in August, President Kim Jong Un highly praised the expansion of missile production capacity and the commencement of mass production of various types of missiles, and that at the 13th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in September, he gave a speech denying denuclearization and claiming that North Korea would not relinquish its nuclear weapons. In October, it was reported that a military parade was held to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the WPK where a formation of "intercontinental ballistic missiles of the Hwasong-20 type" participated. Regarding the participation of North Korean soldiers in combat in Russia's Kursk Oblast, in April, through a written statement of position by the WPK Central Military Commission, North Korea publicly acknowledged this for the first time domestically and internationally; in August, a commendation ceremony was held for overseas operational units of the Korean People's Army, and through Korean Central Television, it was revealed that the decision to dispatch troops was made in August 2024 and that they participated in combat from October of that year.

(B) Economy

It was reported that at the 12th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly held in January, North Korea presented sector-specific tasks that must be achieved in 2025 — the final year of the "Five-Year Plan for National Economic Development" (2021–2025), which primarily focuses on self-reliance — and that the adopted budget proposal allocates 44.1% of total expenditure to economic construction. Furthermore, it was reported that at the 13th Session of the 14th Supreme People's Assembly in September, President Kim Jong Un stated that, while key industrial sectors and major economic sectors had not yet reached a satisfactory level, the Five-Year Plan was expected to be successfully completed, that the agricultural sector was in a stable harvest condition following on from 2024, and that housing construction in Pyongyang and in rural areas was also proceeding smoothly. In addition,

completion ceremonies for the Wonsan Kalma Coastal Tourist Zone in June and for the Pyongyang General Hospital in October were held in the presence of President Kim Jong Un.

E Other Issues

Defectors who have fled North Korea have to be kept in hiding to avoid being cracked down on by the authorities in the countries where they are staying or to avoid being forcibly repatriated to North Korea. The Government of Japan is addressing the protection of and support for these North Korean defectors, in line with the purpose of the North Korean Human Rights Violation Act, taking into account a comprehensive range of factors, including humanitarian considerations, the safety of those concerned, and relations with the countries in which these defectors reside. Relevant ministries and agencies in Japan are closely working together to promote measures aimed at helping the settlement of defectors accepted by Japan.

(2) Republic of Korea (ROK)

A Situation in the ROK

(A) Domestic Affairs

On the night of December 3, 2024, President Yoon Suk Yeol declared emergency martial law, but before dawn on December 4, the National Assembly passed a “resolution calling for the lifting of emergency martial law,” and President Yoon lifted it. The then-opposition parties, led by the Democratic Party of Korea, submitted a motion to impeach President Yoon on the grounds that the declaration of emergency martial law was unconstitutional. When the motion was passed in the National Assembly on December 14, President Yoon’s authority to perform his duties was suspended. On January 15, 2025, President Yoon was, for the first time as a sitting president, arrested and detained, and on January 26, he was indicted on charges of leading insurrection as a ring leader.

On April 4, the Constitutional Court of Korea unanimously upheld the impeachment of President Yoon and declared his removal from office, and President Yoon was immediately dismissed. In the presidential election held on June 3 in response to this, Lee Jae-myung, the candidate from the opposition Democratic Party of Korea, defeated other candidates including

Kim Moon-soo of the ruling People Power Party, and assumed office as the 21st President on June 4.

After taking office, President Lee advanced senior personnel appointments, including appointing Representative Wi Sung-lac (former Ambassador to Russia) as the National Security Office Director, former Minister of Unification Lee Jong-seok as Director of the National Intelligence Service, Representative Kim Min-seok as Prime Minister, former First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Hyun as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Representative Ahn Gyu-back as Minister of National Defense, and Representative and former Minister of Unification Chung Dong-young as Minister of Unification, thereby establishing the lineup of the administration.

Meanwhile, former President Yoon was additionally indicted on charges including abuse of authority and benefitting the enemy in addition to leading insurrection as a ring leader, and former First Lady Kim Keon-hee was indicted on charges of bribery through the use of personal influence as well as violations of the Capital Markets Act and the Political Funds Act, while former Prime Minister Han Duck-soo was indicted on charges of aiding and abetting insurrection as a ring leader, with accountability proceedings against figures from the previous administration continuing to advance.

In the political arena, in August, the ruling Democratic Party of Korea elected Representative Jung Chung-rae as its new leader, and the opposition People Power Party elected Representative Jang Dong-hyeok as its new leader. Local elections, including elections for the Mayor of Seoul and the Mayor of Busan, are scheduled to be held in June 2026.

(B) Foreign Policy

During the first half of 2025, domestic political developments surrounding the presidential impeachment continued. In the meantime, on the diplomatic front, there were developments such as Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul participating in the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in Munich, Germany in February, and the 11th Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers’ Meeting held in Tokyo in March.

President Lee, who won the presidential election on June 3, held a telephone call with U.S. President Trump immediately after taking office, and in the same

month attended the G7 Kananaskis Summit held in Canada, meeting with leaders of various countries including Prime Minister Ishiba, thereby relaunching summit diplomacy. In addition, on October 31 and November 1, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting was successfully held in Gyeongju with the participation of leaders of major countries including Prime Minister Takaichi.

Regarding relations with the U.S., Foreign Minister Cho Hyun visited the U.S. in July and met with Secretary of State Rubio. In August, President Lee visited the U.S. following his visit to Japan and held a summit meeting with President Trump. In October, President Trump visited the ROK on the occasion of the APEC Gyeongju Leaders' Meeting, and a second summit meeting was held between President Trump and President Lee. At the meeting, comprehensive discussions were held on the economy, modernization of the ROK-U.S. Alliance, the Korean Peninsula issue, regional affairs, and ROK-U.S. cooperation in shipbuilding and manufacturing, and in particular, the ROK side raised the issue of the introduction of nuclear submarines to the ROK against the backdrop of changes in the security environment. The U.S. side approved the ROK's construction of nuclear submarines and expressed its intention to support, in accordance with the ROK-U.S. Nuclear Agreement and U.S. legal requirements, processes leading to civilian uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing for peaceful purposes by the ROK. In addition, both sides clarified the details of U.S. tariff measures on the ROK — on which a deal had been announced between the U.S. and the ROK in July — while also concurring on the breakdown of the ROK's 350 billion U.S. dollars investment in the U.S.

Regarding relations with China, National Assembly Speaker Woo Won-shik visited China in February and September and held meetings with Zhao Leji, Member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and Chairman of China's National People's Congress Standing Committee (and also met with President Xi Jinping during the February visit). In September, Foreign Minister Cho Hyun also visited China and held consultations with Wang Yi, Member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central

Committee and Foreign Minister, on ROK-China relations, the Korean Peninsula issue, and other matters. In November, President Lee held his first in-person summit meeting with President Xi Jinping, who visited the ROK as a state guest on the occasion of the APEC Leaders' Meeting in Gyeongju. In addition to the Chinese side raising the issue of improving public sentiment, agreement was reached on extending the CNY-KRW currency swap, accelerating the second phase of negotiations on the ROK-China Free Trade Agreement (FTA), and strengthening cooperation to address cross-border fraud crimes.

(C) Economy

In 2025, the GDP growth rate in the ROK was 1.0%, down from 2.0% in the previous year (preliminary figures from the Bank of Korea). Total value of exports were approximately 709.7 billion U.S. dollars, which increased by 3.8% year-on-year, while total value of imports were approximately 631.7 billion U.S. dollars, roughly unchanged from the previous year, resulting in a trade surplus of approximately 78.0 billion U.S. dollars — the largest surplus since 2017 (figures published by the ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources).

Following the declaration of emergency martial law in December 2024, the Composite Consumer Sentiment Index (CCSI) fell sharply and economic growth remained sluggish, but the economy showed a gradual recovery heading into the second half of the year, driven by economic stimulus through a supplementary budget, a recovery in private consumption, and a recovery in exports centered on semiconductors. Subsequently, in September 2025, the Lee Jae-myung administration selected “123 National Policy Tasks” as a roadmap for priority government initiatives over the next five years, announcing in the economic field “A world-leading innovative economy,” “Balanced growth to ensure prosperity for all,” and “A society with strong fundamentals.” In November, a joint fact sheet was announced containing agreements related to additional U.S. tariffs and the ROK's 350 billion U.S. dollars investment in the U.S.. Following this, the four major conglomerates of the ROK, including Samsung Group and SK Group, announced domestic investment plans totaling approximately 550 billion U.S. dollars.

B Japan-ROK Relations

(A) Bilateral Relations

Japan and the ROK are important neighboring countries that should cooperate with each other as partners in dealing with various issues in the international community, and in light of the current strategic environment, the importance of the Japan-ROK relations are further increasing. In 2025, close communication continued to be maintained between the two countries, including through “shuttle diplomacy” by the two leaders, as well as at other high levels, and cooperation in various fields was further expanded.

On June 17, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with President Lee on the occasion of the G7 Kananaskis Summit held in Canada — their first in-person meeting — and the two leaders concurred to promote close communication between the two governments for stable development of the Japan-ROK relations. Taking note of the active people-to-people and economic exchanges between the two countries under the favorable trend in bilateral relations in recent years, they also concurred that the government would continue to support such efforts in 2025 as it marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the ROK. The two leaders also reaffirmed that they would continue to closely work together between Japan and the ROK, as well as among Japan, the ROK, and the U.S., on the policies toward North Korea, including on the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue.

On August 23, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with President Lee, who was visiting Japan. In the joint press release issued, the two leaders concurred to significantly develop Japan-ROK relations in a future-oriented and stable manner, building on the foundation of the Japan-ROK relations that has been established since the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the ROK in 1965. The two leaders concurred on the launch of a framework for consultations between the two governments to share knowledge with each other and cooperate to find solutions for common social and economic challenges facing both countries, such as regional revitalization, the declining birthrate and aging population, the rapid population decline, agriculture, and ensuring resilience against disasters. They also welcomed the decision to



Japan-ROK Summit Meeting (August 23, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

expand the working holiday program between the two countries and concurred that the government would support efforts to promote exchanges and mutual understanding between the peoples of the two countries. The two leaders also concurred to further promote bilateral cooperation on hydrogen, ammonia, AI, and other areas as new frontiers in the economic field.

On September 30, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Busan, ROK. At the summit meeting with President Lee, the two leaders concurred to significantly develop Japan-ROK relations in a stable manner, based on the outcomes of the August summit meeting in Tokyo, and also concurred to convene the Japan-Korea Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation to discuss cooperation in the field of science and technology, including AI. The two leaders affirmed that Japan and the ROK would continue strategic communication on security and economic security areas to respond in coordination amid the increasingly severe strategic environment. The two leaders also exchanged views on the regional situation including the Indo-Pacific and Palestine, and reconfirmed that, with regard to their policies toward North Korea including the nuclear and missile issues, they would work closely together between Japan and the ROK, as well as among Japan, the ROK and the U.S., toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea.

On October 30, Prime Minister Takaichi visited the ROK to attend the APEC Leaders' Meeting and held her first summit meeting with President Lee. The two leaders concurred that, while acknowledging that there are various issues on which their positions differ due to their proximity as neighboring countries, they would manage these issues through their leadership,



Japan-ROK Summit Meeting (January 13, 2026, Nara; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)



Drum session by the leaders of Japan and the ROK (January 13, 2026, Nara; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

and that they would develop Japan-ROK relations in a future-oriented and stable manner, based on the foundation of the Japan-ROK relations which has been established since the normalization of the Japan-ROK relations. The two leaders also concurred to actively promote “shuttle diplomacy” and to continue close communication between the two governments.

On January 13, 2026, Prime Minister Takaichi held a summit meeting with President Lee, who was visiting Nara Prefecture. The two leaders shared their recognition of the strategic importance of the Japan-ROK relations and affirmed that they should work together to play a role in ensuring the stability of the region. The importance of strategic coordination, including security cooperation between Japan and the ROK as well as among Japan, the ROK and the U.S., was discussed. In addition, the two leaders concurred on deepening the discussions among relevant ministries in order to promote strategic and mutually beneficial cooperation in the fields of economy and economic security.

The two leaders also discussed their policies toward North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues, and reaffirmed that they would work closely together between Japan and the ROK, as well as among Japan, the ROK and the U.S. toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea. The two leaders concurred to continue close communication between the two governments going forward, including through the active promotion of “shuttle diplomacy.”

In addition to such exchanges at the leader and ministerial levels, close communication was also actively conducted at various levels over the past year, including the Japan-ROK Vice-Ministerial Strategic Dialogue, Japan-ROK Consultations on Common Social Issues, and the Japan-ROK Committee on Science and Technology Cooperation.

(B) The Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

The Government of Japan maintains the view that it is necessary to advance Japan-ROK relations based on the platform on which the friendly and cooperative bilateral relations have been built since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1965, and that the issue of CWKs that was ruled on by the ROK Supreme Court in 2018 needs to be resolved to that end. Based on this recognition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has engaged in close communication with its ROK counterparts including at the ministerial level on this issue.

On March 6, 2023, the Government of the ROK announced its position on the issue of CWKs, and stated that a ROK foundation would pay court-awarded fees and late charges to the plaintiffs in the 2018 final judgments by the ROK Supreme Court.

In response, on the same day, the Government of Japan made public its view, stating that it values the measures announced by the Government of the ROK as a move toward restoring Japan-ROK relations, which had been severely strained due to the ROK Supreme Court ruling in 2018, to a sound footing.⁽¹²⁾

Meanwhile, the ROK Supreme Court also rendered final judgments in December 2025 in multiple similar lawsuits, following the 2018 judgment, ordering Japanese companies to pay compensation. On these

(12) See References on the Issue of Former Civilian Workers from the Korean Peninsula (CWKs)

judgments, the Government of Japan has lodged representations based on Japan's consistent position to date. In its announcement of the measures on March 6, 2023, the Government of the ROK has stated that a ROK foundation would pay the court-awarded fees and late charges in the event that other currently pending CWK-related lawsuits (at the time of the announcement) end in favor of the plaintiffs.

As of November 2025, payments have been made by the ROK foundation to 26 plaintiffs who are CWKs. The Government of the ROK has stated that it will continue to make efforts to gain the understanding of the plaintiffs, and the Government of Japan will continue to maintain close communication with the ROK side.

The below Ministry of Foreign Affairs website details the issue of CWKs.

https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/na/kr/page4e_000947.html



(C) The Issue of Comfort Women

Japan has sincerely dealt with the issue of comfort women as it has been a major diplomatic issue between Japan and the ROK since the 1990s. The issue concerning property and claims between Japan and the ROK was settled “completely and finally” in 1965 through the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Cooperation between Japan and the ROK. However, from the perspective of facilitating feasible remedies for the former comfort women, in 1995, the people and the Government of Japan cooperated to establish the Asian Women's Fund, through which they carried out medical and welfare projects and provided “atonement money” to each former comfort woman in Asian and other countries, including the ROK. Furthermore, successive Prime Ministers have sent letters expressing their “apology and remorse” to former comfort women.

Furthermore, as a result of great diplomatic efforts, the Governments of Japan and the ROK confirmed that the issue of comfort women was “resolved finally

and irreversibly” with the agreement reached at the Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in December 2015. Directly after this Japan-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting, the Japanese and ROK leaders also confirmed that they would take responsibility as leaders to implement this agreement and that they would deal with various issues based on the spirit of this agreement, and that the Government of the ROK committed to the agreement. This agreement was welcomed by the international community, including then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the U.S. Government. In accordance with the agreement, in August 2016, the Government of Japan contributed 1 billion Japanese yen to “the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation” established by the Government of the ROK. As of December 31, 2023, the fund provided financial support to 35 out of 47 former comfort women who were alive at the time of the agreement, and to the bereaved families of 65 out of 199 former comfort women who were deceased at the time. The agreement has been received positively by many former comfort women.

However, in December 2016, a comfort woman statue⁽¹³⁾ was installed on the sidewalk facing the Consulate General of Japan in Busan. Later, the Moon Jae-in administration was inaugurated in May 2017. Based on the results of the assessment made by the Taskforce to Review the Agreement on Comfort Women Issue under the direct supervision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, the position of the Government of the ROK on the issue of comfort women was announced to be as follows: i) it will not ask for a renegotiation with Japan; and ii) the 2015 agreement, which fails to properly reflect the wishes of the victims, does not constitute a true resolution of the issue. In November 2018, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family announced that it would proceed with its dissolution of “the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation” and has since moved ahead with the dissolution procedures. The moves to dissolve the Foundation are totally unacceptable for Japan in light of the 2015 Japan-ROK Agreement.

Moreover, on January 8, 2021, in the lawsuit filed by former comfort women and others against the

⁽¹³⁾ For the sake of practical convenience, they are referred to as “comfort woman statues.” However, the use of this term is not a reflection of the recognition that these statues correctly embody the reality of those women at that time.

Government of Japan, the Seoul Central District Court of the ROK rendered a judgment which ordered the Government of Japan, *inter alia*, to pay compensation to the plaintiffs, denying the application of the principle of State immunity under international law. On January 23, 2021, this judgment was confirmed.⁽¹⁴⁾ On April 21 of the same year, in a similar lawsuit filed by former comfort women and others, the Seoul Central District Court dismissed the case, taking into account the principle of State immunity under international law, but on November 23, 2023, at the appeal in this case, the Seoul High Court rendered a judgment denying the application of the principle of State immunity under international law and allowing the plaintiff's lawsuit, and this judgment was confirmed on December 9 of that year. On April 25, 2025, in a lawsuit filed by the bereaved families of former comfort women against the Government of Japan, the Cheongju District Court rendered a judgment denying the principle of State immunity under international law and ordering the Government of Japan to pay compensation to the plaintiffs, and this judgment was confirmed on May 15 of that year. Japan has repeatedly expressed its position that this lawsuit must be dismissed because for these comfort women lawsuits it is not acceptable for the Government of Japan to be subject to the jurisdiction of the ROK in accordance with the principle of State immunity in international law. As mentioned above, the issue concerning property and claims between Japan and the ROK, including the issue of comfort women, was "settled completely and finally," with the Agreement on the Settlement of Problem concerning Property and Claims and on the Economic Co-operation between Japan and the ROK of 1965. Furthermore, it was confirmed that the issue of comfort women was "resolved finally and irreversibly" with the agreement between Japan and the ROK in 2015. Therefore, these judgments are extremely

regrettable and absolutely unacceptable, as they are clearly contrary to international law and agreements between the two countries. Japan has strongly urged the ROK to immediately take appropriate measures to remedy the status of its breaches of international law on its own responsibility as a country.

The Japan-ROK agreement in 2015 is an agreement between two countries, and abiding by promises made between two countries is the foundation of bilateral relations. The ROK has a responsibility to the international community to steadily implement the agreement. As stated above, the Government of Japan has implemented all measures it committed to under the Japan-ROK agreement. The Government of the ROK itself also acknowledges that this agreement is an official agreement between the two governments, and the Government of Japan will continue to strongly urge the ROK to steadily implement the Japan-ROK Agreement. (See page 33 for the comfort women issue in the international community.)

(D) Takeshima

Regarding the dispute between Japan and the ROK concerning the territorial sovereignty over Takeshima, Takeshima is indisputably an inherent territory of Japan both in light of historical facts and based on international law. However, the ROK has continued its illegal occupation of Takeshima with no legal basis in international law, including stationing permanent security personnel. Japan has been keeping the world informed about Japan's position on the issue through various media platforms.⁽¹⁵⁾ Japan has also repeatedly lodged strong protests against the ROK over matters such as South Korean citizens including members of the ROK's National Assembly landing on the island, and the ROK's military exercises and marine surveys in and around Takeshima. In 2025, military exercises were conducted in and around Takeshima, and

⁽¹⁴⁾ See References on the Issue of Comfort Women.

The relevant section of the MOFA website on Japan's efforts regarding the comfort women issue can be found here:
https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/postwar/page22e_000883.html

⁽¹⁵⁾ In February 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published a pamphlet entitled "Takeshima: 10 points to understand the Takeshima Dispute." It is available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website in 11 languages: Japanese, English, Korean, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Arabic, Russian, Chinese and Italian. Furthermore, since October 2013, videos and flyers about Takeshima have been available on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website, and they are currently available in the above 11 languages. Furthermore, Japan has taken initiatives such as distributing a smartphone app that aims to increase awareness of the Takeshima issue. Further details are available on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here:
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/index.html>

⁽¹⁴⁾



⁽¹⁵⁾



the Government of Japan lodged strong protests against these acts based on Japan's consistent position on Takeshima.⁽¹⁶⁾ Japan will continue to respond resolutely based on Japan's basic position regarding Takeshima.

For a peaceful settlement of the Takeshima dispute, Japan proposed to the ROK that the issue be referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1954, 1962 and 2012. However, the ROK rejected the proposal in all instances. Japan is determined to continue to engage in persistent diplomatic efforts to settle the Takeshima dispute in a peaceful manner in accordance with international law.

(E) Exchanges and Travel

As for travel between Japan and the ROK, since early 2020, due to the strengthening of border measures related to the spread of COVID-19, the number of travelers between the two countries significantly decreased, and in 2021 approximately 30,000 people made trips between the two countries. In 2024 and 2025, the number of travelers solidly increased, reaching consecutive record highs of approximately 12.04 million in 2024 and approximately 13.11 million in 2025.

In Japan, K-POP and related content is widely accepted mainly among younger generations, and Korean dramas and movies have become widely popular amongst people of all ages. Interest in learning the Korean language is also growing. This content and the Korean language are believed to help make cross-cultural understanding more accessible. In addition, 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the ROK. Throughout this milestone year, a wide variety of exchanges took place across regions, generations, and fields. The major Japan-ROK grassroots exchange program "Japan-Korea Exchange Festival" (Nikkan Koryu Omatsuri) was held in Tokyo and Seoul in 2025, with a total of approximately 116,000 people

from both countries participating. The Government of Japan, through "Japan Friendship Ties Programs (JENESYS2025)," is fostering mutual understanding, primarily between youth from Japan and the ROK, and is promoting friendly and cooperative relationships for the future.

(F) Other Issues

The Governments of Japan and the ROK concluded the Agreement on the Protection of Classified Military Information (GSOMIA) in November 2016 in order to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the two countries in the field of security and contribute to regional peace and stability. Afterwards, the agreement was automatically extended in 2017 and 2018. However, the Government of the ROK announced on August 22, 2019, its decision to terminate the GSOMIA in connection with Japan's update of licensing policies and procedures on exports and notified the termination on the following day, August 23. Following this and after exchanges between Japan and the ROK, on November 22, 2019, the Government of the ROK announced that it would suspend the effect of the notification of termination of August 23. On March 21, 2023, immediately after President Yoon's visit to Japan, the Government of the ROK officially notified that it would withdraw its notification of August 2019 to terminate the Japan-ROK GSOMIA. In view of the current regional security environment, the Government of Japan considers it important for the Agreement to continue operating in a stable manner.

Sea of Japan is the only internationally established name for the sea area concerned, and the UN and governments of major countries such as the U.S. adopt Sea of Japan as the official name. Objections to this name, however, were first raised by the ROK and North Korea in 1992. Since then, the ROK and North Korea have been objecting to the name at the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN),⁽¹⁷⁾ the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)

⁽¹⁶⁾ In July and December, the ROK military conducted military exercises related to Takeshima. The Government of Japan immediately lodged strong protests based on Japan's consistent position on Takeshima.

⁽¹⁷⁾ A UN conference where experts on place names and geospatial information from each country discuss, from a technical point of view, the definitions of terms related to place names and the notation methods for place names. In 2017, the UN Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which had been held every five years, and the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, which had been held every two years, were integrated into the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

and other international conferences. These assertions however are groundless, and Japan has firmly refuted these assertions each time they arise.⁽¹⁸⁾

A cultural property⁽¹⁹⁾ which had been stolen and taken to the ROK, and for which the Government of Japan had been urging the Government of the ROK to promptly return, was returned from the ROK government to its rightful owner, a Japanese temple, in January 2025. Upon receipt from the Daejeon District Prosecutors' Office, Kannon-ji Temple temporarily lent the property to the ROK-side temple in light of the ROK-side temple's request to borrow the property for a 100-day memorial service. After the conclusion of the 100-day memorial service, in May of that year, the statue was returned from Buseoksa Temple to Kannon-ji Temple and brought back to Tsushima.

Japan has provided support and taken measures as much as possible from a humanitarian perspective in various fields, including responses for ethnic Koreans in Sakhalin,⁽²⁰⁾ addressing the issue of atomic bomb survivors living in the ROK,⁽²¹⁾ and helping Hansen's disease patients admitted to sanitariums in the ROK.⁽²²⁾

C Japan-ROK Economic Relations

The total value of trade between Japan and the ROK amounted to approximately 11.4621 trillion Japanese yen in 2025. Japan is the ROK's fifth largest trading partner, and the ROK is Japan's fourth largest trading partner. The ROK's trade deficit with Japan increased by approximately 8.5% from the previous year, reaching approximately 2.4562 trillion Japanese yen (Trade Statistics of Japan, Ministry of Finance). Japanese direct investment in the ROK totaled approximately 4.4 billion U.S. dollars (down 28.1% from the previous year) (figures published by the ROK Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources).

Japan and the ROK also cooperate as parties to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement, and work together in various economic frameworks, including the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF).

As for import restrictions on Japanese food products by the Government of the ROK, Japan is taking various opportunities to urge the ROK to remove the restrictions as soon as possible.

(18) Ministry of Foreign Affairs website with information on the issue of the name "Sea of Japan":
<https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/maritime/japan/index.html>

(19) After being stolen in Tsushima City, Nagasaki Prefecture in 2012 and shipped to the ROK, the "Kanzeon Bosatsu Statue" was collected and stored by the Government of the ROK. A Korean temple asserting ownership of the statue has filed a claim seeking to have the Government of the ROK hand over the statue, and in January 2017 the Daejeon District Court issued a verdict of the first hearing to the plaintiff's side (the Korean temple), but in February 2023 the Daejeon High Court reversed the initial ruling and dismissed the plaintiff's claim. The plaintiffs have made an appeal, but in October 2023 the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal.

(20) For various reasons, before the end of World War II, people from the Korean Peninsula traveled to what was then known as Minami Karafuto (South Sakhalin) and were compelled to remain there for a long time after the war ended under the de facto rule of the Soviet Union, without being given the opportunity to return to the ROK. The Government of Japan is providing such people with support, such as to enable them to return home temporarily and to visit Sakhalin.

(21) This is the issue of provision of support to those who were exposed to the atomic bombs while living in Hiroshima or Nagasaki during World War II and subsequently went to live overseas. To date, Japan has provided support in the form of the Atomic Bomb Victim Health Handbook and allowances based on the Atomic Bomb Survivors' Assistance Act.

(22) In February 2006, the "Act on Payment of Compensation to Inmates of Hansen's Disease Sanatorium" was amended, and former residents of Hansen's disease sanatoriums outside of Japan, which were established by Japan before the end of World War II, were made eligible for compensation, similar to former residents of domestic sanatoriums. Additionally, in November 2019, the "Act on Payment of Compensation to Families of Former Patients of Hansen's Disease" was enacted, and the families of former Hansen's disease patients were also made eligible for compensation.

(18)



Column

The 60th Anniversary of the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK)

On June 22, 1965, Japan and the ROK signed the “Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea,” and exchanged instruments of ratification on December 18 of the same year, thereby normalizing diplomatic relations. The year 2025 marks the milestone of the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the ROK. Over the past 60 years, Japan and the ROK have accumulated various exchanges and cooperation in diverse fields, including politics, economy, and culture.



In particular, one of the pillars supporting the current positive state of Japan-ROK relations is the active exchange between the peoples of the two countries. Throughout this year, a wide range of exchanges and initiatives have been conducted in both Japan and the ROK to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations. Under the catchphrase “Joining Hands for a Better Future,” over 500 commemorative events recognized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the ROK were held by private organizations, companies, and other entities from both Japan and the ROK. People-to-people exchanges between Japan and the ROK, particularly among younger generations, have now come to take place naturally. Japan looks forward to seeing the friendship between Japan and the ROK, nurtured through the 60th anniversary, continue to expand significantly in the years ahead.

On February 15, Tokyo Tower was illuminated under the theme “Japan-ROK Exchange: Lighting Our Way Together,” with the hope of promoting people’s growing interest in exchanges between Japan and the ROK and fostering mutual understanding. At the same time on the same day, Namsan Seoul Tower in the ROK was also illuminated, marking a vibrant occasion that impressively heralded the opening of the 60th anniversary year.

For a period of 30 days from June 1 to 30, the facilitation programs for immigration procedures were implemented at selected airports in both Japan and the ROK for nationals of both countries who met certain conditions. In the same month, commemorative receptions hosted by the Embassy of Japan in the ROK and the Embassy of the ROK in Japan were held in Seoul and Tokyo, respectively, where the 60th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations was celebrated together with people who have engaged in exchanges between Japan and the ROK across a wide range of fields. At each reception, Prime Minister Ishiba and President Lee Jae Myung delivered congratulatory remarks. Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan would like to further expand the scope of Japan-ROK cooperation and ensure that the exchanges the two countries have cultivated are passed on to the next generation.

The “Japan-Korea Exchange Festival” (*Nikkan Koryu Omatsuri*), which began in Seoul on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations in 2005, was held on a larger scale than in previous years (in Tokyo on September 27 and 28, and in Seoul on October 12). In Tokyo, a parade recreating the costumes of the “Joseon Tongsinsha (*Chōsen Tsūshinshi*),” the diplomatic mission that has long been a symbol of exchange between Japan and the ROK, enlivened the atmosphere at the venue with music and dance. Korean food booths offering dishes such as *jeon* (Korean savory pancakes) and *kimbap* (Korean-style rice rolls) were also set up, and K-pop concerts featuring artists from both Japan and the ROK were held on both days, attracting approximately 49,000 visitors. In Seoul, a special stage was presented where a Korean *gayageum* (traditional Korean stringed instrument) player, a Japanese *koto* player, and a Japanese calligrapher performed together, expressing “friendship” through music and calligraphy, among other events, attracting approximately 67,000 visitors.

In addition, many other commemorative events were held, including an exhibition of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea and its related documents, signed and entered into force 60 years ago (held at the Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), as well as the issuance of special stamps depicting, through illustrations, the culture, animals, and plants that represent the ROK.



Recreated Joseon Tongsinsha performance stage (above) and exhibition booths (below) at the Japan-Korea Exchange Festival (September 27 and 28, Tokyo)

4 Southeast Asia

(1) Indonesia

Indonesia is a major country in the Southeast Asia region with the fourth largest population in the world (at approximately 280 million people) and situated in a strategic location on sea lanes such as the Strait of Malacca, and plays a leading role in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, as ASEAN's sole G20 member and as one of the leading countries in the Global South, its importance in addressing regional and international challenges has been increasing. President Prabowo Subianto, who took office in October 2024, stated in his inaugural address that he would focus on poverty reduction (including the expansion of the free nutritious meal program), improving self-sufficiency in food and energy, and eradicating corruption, and has been advancing various policies under stable parliamentary management through his coalition government. In terms of foreign policy, while formally joining BRICS,⁽²³⁾ Indonesia pursues a foreign policy based on non-alignment, including by requesting its accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). To that end, President Prabowo himself has also been actively visiting foreign countries. Japan and Indonesia, as Comprehensive Strategic Partners, have been strengthening cooperation across a wide range of fields including security and economy, and deepening their coordination in an increasingly severe regional and international situations. In January, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Indonesia as one of his first bilateral destinations following his assumption of the office of Prime Minister, and concurred with President Prabowo on further strengthening cooperative relations. In May, KISHIDA Fumio, member of the House of Representatives and Supreme Advisor to the Parliamentary Association of the Asia Zero

Emission Community (AZEC), visited Indonesia as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister and confirmed the strengthening of bilateral cooperation on decarbonization and energy transition. Also in May, Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Cultural Affairs Pratikno visited Japan to attend the Indonesian National Day Event of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and in September, President Prabowo also visited Japan to view the Expo. In November, the third Japan-Indonesia Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting ("2+2") was held in Tokyo, at which Foreign Minister Motegi, Defense Minister KOIZUMI Shinjiro, Foreign Minister Sugiono, and Defense Minister Sjafrie Sjamsuddin confirmed, while sharing strategic assessments on regional and international situations, that they would further strengthen bilateral security and defense cooperation. Through such high-level exchanges and communication, the two countries have been developing their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership based on their long-standing close relations of friendship and cooperation.

(2) Cambodia

Cambodia, located in the Mekong region, is a key country in strengthening connectivity and narrowing the development gap in the region. Due to the impact of COVID-19, Cambodia experienced negative growth in 2020, but has maintained 5–6% growth since 2022.

In terms of domestic affairs, the general election held in July 2023 saw the ruling Cambodian People's Party win a landslide victory after the Candlelight Party, which had become the largest opposition party in the 2022 commune council elections, was denied the right to register its candidates. Hun Sen, who had served as Prime Minister for many years, stepped down from his post, and a new Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Hun Manet was formed.

(23) BRICS: A term referring to a group consisting of countries such as Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, and other countries. At the inaugural foreign ministers' meeting in 2006 and the inaugural summit meeting in 2009, the original four countries — Brazil, Russia, India, and China — participated. South Africa joined in 2011, giving the grouping its current name, BRICS. In 2024, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran joined as Member Countries, followed by Indonesia in 2025. At the summit meeting in October 2024, a new category of "BRICS Partner Countries" was introduced, and it was announced that Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, Uzbekistan, and Nigeria joined as Partner Countries from January 2025, with Viet Nam's accession as a Partner Country announced in June of the same year.

Japan has cooperated with Cambodia's peace, reconstruction, and development efforts, including in the first full-scale deployment of UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) personnel in 1992. In recent years, in addition to the expansion of economic relations through investment by Japanese companies, cooperation has also been progressing in new fields such as security and digital technologies, and in April, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels called at Ream Naval Base as the first foreign naval vessel to do so following maintenance work.

At the Japan-Cambodia Summit Meeting in May, Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Hun Manet issued a joint statement and an "Economic Co-creation Package," and confirmed that they would cooperate in fields such as security, economy and investment, democracy, and countermeasures against online fraud under the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership." On the international stage as well, Japan and Cambodia are cooperating on mine-clearance action in third countries such as Ukraine, drawing on their collaboration in mine-clearance efforts in Cambodia.

Military clashes between Cambodia and Thailand occurred near the border in May and July. Japan has been advancing efforts toward de-escalation, including the steady implementation of the cease-fire agreement between the two countries, through an Emergency Grant of approximately 1.8 million U.S. dollars in response to the emergency humanitarian needs in the border area of the two countries, and provision of equipment for cease-fire monitoring.

(3) Singapore

Singapore is the most economically advanced country within ASEAN. Based on its omnidirectional foreign policy, the country maintains friendly relations with major countries including the U.S. and China. In May, the first general election since Prime Minister Lawrence Wong took office was held, with the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) winning 87 out of 97 contested seats. In his new cabinet, Prime Minister Wong has been addressing priorities such as securing Singapore's position in an unpredictable world — in particular deepening relations with the United States and China and cooperation with like-minded countries — as well as reviewing economic strategies, strengthening social

compact, and domestically reinforcing solidarity. In Japan-Singapore relations, Prime Minister Ishiba held a telephone call with Prime Minister Wong in April, exchanging views primarily on the global economy and concurring on coordinating toward the promotion of a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)," and in August, met with Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong (former Prime Minister), who had visited Japan for the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and held a ceremony to present Senior Minister Lee with the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun. Foreign Minister Iwaya held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan at the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings in Malaysia in July, and confirmed that they would promote cooperation in a wide range of fields such as digital, green, and security, looking ahead to the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Japan-Singapore diplomatic relations in 2026. In addition, through the "Japan-Singapore Partnership Programme for the 21st Century (JSPP21)," which provides joint technical cooperation to third countries, Japan and Singapore conducted training for approximately 170 people primarily in ASEAN countries in 2025, including in the fields of green and digital technologies. In September, the 18th Japan-Singapore Symposium was held in Tokyo, where a wide range of fields including politics, economy, and security were discussed.

(4) Thailand

Thailand is a constitutional monarchy located at the heart of the Southeast Asian mainland (Mekong region). It is also one of the original member states of ASEAN and holds significant geopolitical importance. Thailand has become a major production center for Japanese companies, including the automobile industry, and today is an indispensable part of the Japanese economy as a key part of regional supply chains, with more than 6,000 Japanese companies operating and more than 70,000 Japanese nationals living in Thailand.

In 2025, military clashes with Cambodia occurred and a subsequent change of government took place, making it a year of continued flux. In May, military clashes with Cambodia occurred, and as tensions rose due to border closures between the two countries and other factors, in June, Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra held a telephone call with Cambodian

Senate President Hun Sen to de-escalate the situation. However, following the leak of an audio recording of their conversation, the Constitutional Court ruled in August that Prime Minister Paetongtarn's remarks during the telephone call violated the ethical standards set forth in the Constitution, and she was removed from office. In September, following a vote for prime minister in the House of Representatives, Anutin Charnvirakul, who had criticized Prime Minister Paetongtarn's remarks and withdrawn from the coalition government, was appointed Prime Minister and a new government was formed.

Japan continues to work to strengthen bilateral relations with Thailand. In May, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa, who was visiting Japan, and confirmed the strengthening of cooperation in the fields of economy and security, and following the outbreak of armed conflict with Cambodia, urged de-escalation of the tension through Japan-Thailand Foreign Ministers' telephone calls and other means.

In December, Foreign Minister Motegi held a meeting with Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow, who was visiting Japan, and concurred to strengthen cooperation in various fields under the "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership."

(5) Timor-Leste

Japan established diplomatic relations with Timor-Leste upon its independence in 2002. In 2022, the country celebrated the 20th anniversary of its independence; it has realized peace and stability with the support of the international community, and it has also been making nation building efforts based on the principle of democracy. As a result of the election for the National Parliament held in May 2023, a new government led by Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão was inaugurated in July 2023. As its economy is highly dependent on natural resources such as petroleum and natural gas, the country has been working on industrial diversification as the highest national priority. On the diplomatic front, Timor-Leste achieved full ASEAN membership at the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in October. At the Japan-ASEAN Summit Meeting held on that occasion, Prime Minister Takaichi expressed her congratulations and extended a warm welcome to

Prime Minister Gusmão. High-level exchanges have also taken place, with Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina visiting Timor-Leste in July and paying courtesy calls on President José Ramos-Horta, Prime Minister Gusmão, and other senior government officials, and confirming the strengthening of bilateral cooperation and enhanced coordination on regional and international situations. On the occasion of the foreign ministers' meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Bendito dos Santos Freitas, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina signed and exchanged notes for the Grant Aid "the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship." In August, President Ramos-Horta visited Japan to attend the National Day Event of the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan and Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with President Ramos-Horta, confirming that they would strengthen the Comprehensive Partnership between the two countries. In addition, people-to-people exchanges between the two countries are also expanding - for example through an increase in the number of Timorese technical intern trainees accepted in Japan.

(6) The Philippines

The Philippines is a maritime nation situated at a strategic point on sea lanes, and shares strategic interests with Japan. The Philippines maintained an economic growth rate of 5.7% in 2024, making it one of the ASEAN countries with the highest economic growth rates, and it is on the verge of becoming an upper middle-income country. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., now in his fourth year in office and reaching the midpoint of his term in 2025, continues to prioritize improving the quality of life of the people through agriculture, education, health, and social security, as well as the development of public infrastructure. As for the Mindanao Peace Process, despite the delays seen in the decommissioning of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants and weapons, based on the amended Bangsamoro Organic Law, the process toward the establishment of an autonomous government following the first autonomous regional parliamentary election is continuing.

In Japan-Philippines relations, 2025 also saw visits at various levels beginning with Foreign Minister



Japan-Philippines Summit Meeting (October 26, Malaysia; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

Iwaya's visit to the Philippines in January, and the further strengthening of the Strategic Partnership looking ahead to the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations in 2026 is advancing steadily. In April, Prime Minister Ishiba visited the Philippines, and at the summit meeting with President Marcos, the two leaders concurred on commencing government-level discussions on the negotiation of an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and on an Agreement on the Security of Information, with active high-level exchanges continuing thereafter, including a foreign ministers' meeting in May. In the security field, the Japan-Philippines Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) entered into force in September, and was applied for the first time to the Japan-Philippines Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief joint exercise (Doshin-Bayanihan) conducted in October and to logistical transport support in response to the Cebu earthquake, and at the meeting between Prime Minister Takaichi and President Marcos in October, the agreement in principle on ACSA was confirmed. In the fields of economy and people-to-people exchanges, the Japan-Philippines High Level Joint Committee on Infrastructure Development and Economic Cooperation was held in March and September, with discussions on cooperation in infrastructure and the economic field in anticipation of the Philippines becoming an upper middle-income country, and in June, President Marcos visited Japan and inspected the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. In addition, in January 2026, Foreign Minister Motegi visited the Philippines and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Secretary for Foreign Affairs Maria Theresa Lazaro, signing the ACSA and confirming the further

strengthening of bilateral cooperation in the fields of security, economy, and other areas on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the normalization of Japan-Philippines diplomatic relations. In addition, Foreign Minister Motegi met with other economic ministers and visited an ODA project (the Pasig-Marikina River Channel Improvement Project). In addition to the signing of the ACSA, notes were also signed and exchanged for the Official Security Assistance (OSA) and ODA.

In addition to such bilateral cooperation, trilateral Japan-U.S.-Philippines cooperation is also advancing steadily. In addition to a Japan-U.S.-Philippines Leaders' Video Conference in January, the first Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meeting under the Trump administration was held in July, and concrete cooperation in a wide range of fields including security and economy continues to advance.

(7) Brunei

Brunei has achieved high economic standards and comprehensive social welfare backed by its abundant natural resources and is politically and economically stable. Under the constitutional monarchy, the Sultan serves concurrently as Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economy, Minister of Defense, and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Located in the center of Southeast Asia, Brunei is one of the countries involved in the issue of the South China Sea and has adopted a balanced diplomacy built on the pillar of promoting ASEAN unity and centrality. Brunei's economy is supported by natural gas production and oil refining ventures, but the Government of Brunei is aiming for economic diversification to avoid overreliance on energy resources.

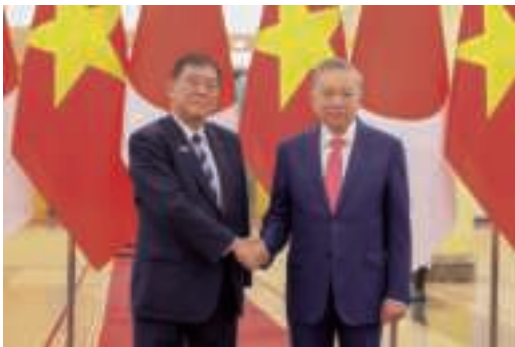
Japan and Brunei have been building an excellent relationship since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1984, symbolized by continued exchanges between the Imperial Family and the Royal Family. In addition, economic relations are also close, with more than 50% of Brunei's liquefied natural gas (LNG) exports bound for Japan. In July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina visited Brunei, welcoming the deepening of bilateral relations following the elevation of the relationship to a "Strategic Partnership" in 2024, and exchanged views on bilateral

cooperation and various issues facing the region and the international community.

(8) Viet Nam

Located next to sea lanes in the South China Sea and sharing a long border with China, Viet Nam is a geopolitically important country. Given that the country embraces the third largest population in Southeast Asia and is experiencing a surge in the number of people in middle-income brackets, Viet Nam is a promising market. At the same time, in recent years, the movement to diversify supply chains has been gaining momentum, and foreign firms, including Japanese companies, have continued moving their production bases to Viet Nam. The country is promoting GX (Green Transformation) and DX (Digital Transformation) with the aim of joining the ranks of developed countries by 2045 and of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, and is currently striving to achieve stable economic growth through the stabilization of the macroeconomy, the promotion of foreign investment by the development of infrastructure and the improvement of the investment environment. Since 2022, the economy has been strengthening its recovery from the downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving a growth rate of 7.1% in 2024. General Secretary of the Communist Party of Viet Nam Tô Lâm, looking ahead to the “new era” beginning with the 14th Party Congress in January 2026, has placed emphasis on pragmatic and rational socioeconomic development, and rapidly implemented large-scale administrative reforms including reorganization of ministries and agencies and consolidation of local governments.

Japan and Viet Nam established diplomatic relations on September 21, 1973, and in 2023, on the



Meeting between Prime Minister Ishiba and General Secretary Tô Lâm (April 27, Hanoi, Viet Nam; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

50th anniversary, elevated the bilateral relationship to a “Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for Peace and Prosperity in Asia and the World.” Under the new bilateral partnership, 2025 also continued to see active visits by dignitaries and high-level meetings. In April, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Viet Nam and held meetings with General Secretary Tô Lâm, Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính, and other senior leaders, confirming the further concretization of security cooperation and support for upgrading and strengthening Viet Nam’s industrial base through cooperation in new fields such as semiconductors and GX. Foreign Minister Motegi met with Foreign Minister Lê Hoài Trung on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings in October and exchanged views on bilateral relations and regional and international affairs. In December, the 1st Vice-Ministerial Security Consultations (Vice-Ministerial 2+2) were held, at which strengthening of cooperation in the security field was discussed.

The number of Vietnamese nationals residing in Japan, primarily technical intern trainees, is continuing to increase, from approximately 50,000 in 2012 to over 660,000 by the end of June 2025, making Vietnamese nationals the second largest group of foreign nationals residing in Japan by country, after Chinese nationals.

(9) Malaysia

Comprised of the Peninsular Malaysia of the Malay Peninsula and the East Malaysia of Borneo, Malaysia is a geopolitically important country facing the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca that is situated in a crucial spot in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Furthermore, it is a federal state comprised of 13 states and three federal territories, and also a multiethnic state comprised of Bumiputra (Malay including indigenous peoples) (70%), Chinese (23%) and Indian people (7%), among others. In particular, in 2025, Malaysia served as ASEAN Chair and demonstrated leadership and a prominent presence, including working to mediate reconciliation between Cambodia and Thailand — whose border conflict had broken out — while securing U.S. involvement.

Active high-level exchanges were achieved between Japan and Malaysia. In January, Prime Minister Ishiba visited Malaysia as one of his first bilateral destinations following his assumption of the office of Prime Minister



Japan-Malaysia Summit Meeting (October 26, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim, and in May, KISHIDA Fumio, member of the House of Representatives and Supreme Advisor to the Parliamentary Association of the Asia Zero Emission Community (AZEC), visited Malaysia as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister. In July, Foreign Minister Iwano visited Malaysia for the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings and held a foreign ministers' meeting with Foreign Minister Dato' Seri Utama Haji Mohamad bin Haji Hasan. Through these meetings, the two countries confirmed the strengthening of bilateral relations in various fields such as maritime security, economy, environmental issues, advanced technologies, and rare earths, and concurred on continuously coordinating to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

In addition, in October, Prime Minister Takaichi visited Malaysia to attend the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Anwar, at which both leaders welcomed the delivery of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and rescue boats through Japan's Official Security Assistance (OSA), as well as the signing and exchange of notes on the provision of a new diving support vessel and cease-fire monitoring equipment for the activities of the ASEAN Monitoring Mission at the Cambodia-Thailand border.

(10) Myanmar

More than five years have passed since the coup d'état by the Myanmar military on February 1, 2021, yet

clashes continue to erupt across the country between the military and both pro-democracy forces and various ethnic armed organizations, resulting in a deteriorating situation and numerous civilian casualties. On March 28, a massive earthquake of magnitude 7.7 struck near Mandalay in central Myanmar, causing over 3,700 deaths and more than 5,100 injuries according to official figures, and resulting in severe damage including the collapse and damage of houses and public facilities. Immediately after the earthquake, the Government of Japan dispatched Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) medical teams and Self-Defense Forces aircraft to transport medical equipment to the disaster-affected areas, and provided emergency grant aid of approximately 6 million U.S. dollars through international organizations, as well as the provision of emergency relief goods through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and emergency support kits through the Grant Assistance for Grass-roots Human Security Projects, among other measures.

On the political front, on July 31, the National Defence and Security Council announced the lifting of the state of emergency that had continued for four and a half years, and newly organized the State Security and Peace Council under the chairmanship of Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Min Aung Hlaing. In addition, the Union Election Commission announced that a general election would be held between December 28, 2025, and January 2026, and is steadily making preparations for the election, including scrutiny of candidate lists. In response to these developments, the Government of Japan issued a Foreign Minister's Statement expressing its concern that if a general election were to be held without seeing any moves toward political progress, peaceful resolution would become even more difficult, and expressing its strong desire for all parties to sincerely work toward the peaceful resolution of the situation, while noting that the general election should be positioned as a process toward the restoration of a democratic political system.

In addition, since the coup d'état, the Government of Japan, based on its belief that it is important for ASEAN to respond in a unified manner to resolve the situation in Myanmar, has been fully supporting

ASEAN's unified efforts, including the implementation of the "Five-Point Consensus,"⁽²⁴⁾ which encompasses humanitarian assistance. Japan has also actively participated in various discussions on Myanmar in international fora and has been working in cooperation with the international community, including by co-sponsoring the Human Rights Council resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (April).

The serious deterioration of the humanitarian situation is an urgent challenge, and the Government of Japan, based on its consistent policy of supporting the people of Myanmar who are facing hardship, has been actively providing humanitarian assistance and support for improving the lives of the people through international organizations and NGOs and other channels in a way that directly benefits the people of Myanmar, providing a total of over approximately 200 million U.S. dollars in humanitarian assistance to date (as of the end of December 2025).

(11) Laos

Laos is a landlocked country bordering China, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Viet Nam, and is a key country for Mekong connectivity. On the domestic front, Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone is addressing economic and fiscal management challenges, including surging prices and external debt issues, and at the 9th Ordinary Session of the 9th National Assembly's 9th Legislature in June, he reported that the inflation rate had significantly improved from approximately 24% in the previous year to approximately 11%. In terms of relations with Japan, 2025 marks the 70th

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, and mutual high-level visits and other exchanges were carried out throughout the year. In January, Prime Minister Sonexay paid an Official Working Visit to Japan and, at the summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, the two leaders concurred to elevate bilateral relations to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," and a joint statement was signed. On March 5, the anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, messages were exchanged between the leaders of the two countries.

In May, President Thongloun Sisoulith visited Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, exchanging views on further developing bilateral relations under the Partnership. In July, on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Foreign Ministers' Meetings in Malaysia, Foreign Minister Iwaya and Foreign Minister Thongsavan had an informal talk, and Minister attached to the Prime Minister's Office Khamjane Vongphosy visited Japan to attend events related to Laos National Day at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan (July 9). In September, a delegation of the Laos-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Group headed by President Thoummaly Vongphachanh visited Japan at the invitation of the House of Representatives. In addition, throughout the year, various cultural and people-to-people exchange programs were conducted at both government and private levels, including a visit to Laos by TAKASHIMA Chisako, Goodwill Ambassador for the 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Japan and Laos.

⁽²⁴⁾ The Five-Point Consensus was announced at the ASEAN Leaders' Meeting held on April 24, 2021. It calls for (1) immediate cessation of violence, (2) commencement of constructive dialogue among all parties concerned, (3) mediation of the dialogue process by a special envoy of the ASEAN Chair, (4) providing humanitarian assistance through the AHA Centre, and (5) visiting Myanmar to meet with all parties concerned by the ASEAN special envoy and delegation.

Column

Timor-Leste and the Future of ASEAN

■ Another “Land of the Rising Sun”

Timor-Leste is an island nation located between Indonesia and Australia, with a population of 1.34 million and an area roughly the same size as Iwate Prefecture. Although the lack of direct flights from Japan may make it feel quite far away, it is one of the few countries that shares the same time zone as Japan. Moreover, the country’s name in the local language, “*Timor Lorosa’e*,” carries the same meaning as Japan — “Land of the Rising Sun.”

■ Steps from Independence to Development and Bilateral Cooperation

Timor-Leste, which gained independence in 2002, was the first country to achieve independence in the 21st century. From the standpoint that the stability and development of Timor-Leste are important for peace in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan has consistently supported the country’s nation-building, working together with Timor-Leste to promote infrastructure development and industrial diversification.

In 1999, Japan hosted the first Donors’ Meeting on Timor-Leste. In 2002, shortly before independence, Prime Minister Koizumi visited the country and held talks with President-elect Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão. Japan also dispatched Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) units as part of United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKO). Even after nation-building was on track, Japan continued its assistance through Official Development Assistance (ODA). In 2018, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) constructed a bridge called “*Hinode Bridge (Ponte Hinode)*” in the capital, Dili, significantly improving traffic conditions within the city.

■ Japan’s Comprehensive Partner — and the 11th ASEAN Member State

Bilateral relations between Japan and Timor-Leste have been deepening rapidly in recent years.

In the economic field, an increasing number of Japanese companies are showing interest in investing in Timor-Leste, with concrete developments already underway in areas such as shipbuilding and solar power plants. In terms of people-to-people exchanges, Kochi Prefecture became the first prefecture in Japan to accept technical intern trainees from Timor-Leste in 2023, and since then, Timorese nationals have been playing active roles in communities across Japan. In the security field as well, defense cooperation is advancing through such means as the participation of the Japan Self-Defense Force in Exercise “*Hari’i Hamutuk*,” a joint capacity building project conducted with the Australian, the U.S., New Zealand and Timor-Leste Defense Forces.

When Prime Minister Gusmão visited Japan in 2023, in light of this strengthening cooperation, the bilateral relationship was upgraded to a “Comprehensive Partnership” with Prime Minister Kishida. During President Ramos-Horta’s visit to Japan in 2025, Prime Minister Ishiba and the President concurred, among other areas, on the implementation of Official Security Assistance (OSA) for Timor-Leste for the first time, marking a broadening scope of cooperation.

In October 2025, Timor-Leste officially became a member state of ASEAN. Japan has long supported the country’s efforts toward this goal. Since gaining independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has faced challenges including peacebuilding, the development of basic infrastructure and national institutions, and economic development. This accession represents a major step forward toward its greater participation in the international community, and a demonstration of its com-

mitment to contributing to regional peace and prosperity.

At a time when the international community faces complex crises, relations with Timor-Leste — a country that shares common values such as democracy and human rights, and is situated on a critical sea lane linking the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific — are becoming increasingly important. As a member of ASEAN, Timor-Leste’s efforts to work together with Japan toward maintaining and strengthening the international order based on the rule of law will serve as an important milestone for advancing peace and stability in the region.



Japan-Timor-Leste Summit Meeting (August 26, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister’s Office of Japan)

Column

The 70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Laos



The year 2025 marked the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Laos. During Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone's visit to Japan in January, the two countries elevated their bilateral relations to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," and at the Japan-Laos Summit Meeting held during President Thongloun Sisoulith's visit to Japan in May, the two sides confirmed the further strengthening of their cooperative relationship. Furthermore, from November 17 to 22, Her Imperial Highness Princess Aiko officially visited Laos. Under the warm welcome extended by government dignitaries including President Thongloun, Vice President Pany Yathotou, and Prime Minister Sonexay, Her Imperial Highness Princess Aiko delivered addresses on Japan-Laos relations at an official dinner and, through visits to various facilities, deepened exchanges with the younger generation. This was the first visit to Laos by a member of the Imperial Family since His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince (now His Majesty the Emperor) visited in 2012, and it served as an opportunity to demonstrate, both domestically and internationally, the bonds between the two countries as they continue to develop toward the next generation.

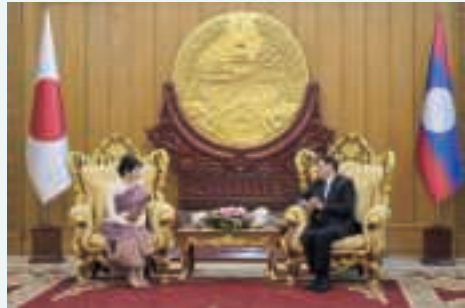
In addition to such high-level exchanges, a wide range of commemorative events and exchange programs were held throughout the year in both countries.

As part of these efforts, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed violinist TAKASHIMA Chisako as Goodwill Ambassador for the "70th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Laos." She played a leading role in grassroots exchanges in the fields of culture and education, including providing music instruction to local elementary school students. In addition, IDEBUCHI Koichi, a designer from Kagawa Prefecture, created a commemorative logo featuring an elephant and cherry blossoms — symbols of both countries — which was used in various public relations activities.

The foundation of the friendly relations between the two countries rests on the accumulation of people-to-people exchanges and cooperation over many years. In 1965, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs) of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) were first dispatched to Laos, the program's first overseas deployment, and since then, approximately 1,100 volunteers have contributed to the country's development across a wide range of fields including education, health, and agriculture. Japan also dispatches "NIHONGO Partners" — who serve as assistants to the local Japanese-language teachers and as conversation partners for Japanese-language learners — thereby contributing to the support of Japanese-language education and the introduction of Japanese culture in Laos. Furthermore, elephants donated from Laos under the "Elephant Breeding Project at Kyoto City Zoo" and cherry trees planted in Houaphanh Province in Laos have become beloved symbols of friendship among many citizens. In addition, the number of former Lao students who have studied in Japan under the Japanese Government (Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology) Scholarship has reached approximately 1,300, and they are active in a wide range of fields spanning politics, government, business, and academia.

In the development of economic and social infrastructure as well, Japan, as one of the largest donor countries, has implemented "Quality ODA," contributing to the strengthening of connectivity with neighboring countries through the construction of arterial roads and an international airport in the capital Vientiane, the Pakse Bridge in the southern region, and the rehabilitation of hydroelectric power stations. On the governance front, Japan has also been steadily implementing support for legal and judicial development, including assistance in the establishment and dissemination of Laos's first Civil Code. In recent years, sports cooperation has also expanded, with progress being made on the project for reconstruction of the Chao Anouvong Stadium in the center of the capital. On the tourism front, exchanges are expanding throughout the country, including cooperation and exchanges between Luang Prabang, a historic city in northern Laos, and Takayama City in Gifu Prefecture.

Based on the mutual trust and friendship deepened in this manner, the Government of Japan will continue to further develop the bilateral relationship with Laos, which is flourishing across all fields, and contribute to the interests of the peoples of both countries as well as to peace and prosperity in the region.



Her Imperial Highness Princess Aiko paying a courtesy call on President Thongloun (November 18, Vientiane, Laos; Photo: Imperial Household Agency)

5 South Asia

(1) India

India is now the world's most populous country, the fifth largest economy, and is strengthening its presence in the international community. In terms of its economy, India has been achieving steady economic growth through various economic initiatives, including “Make in India, Make for the World.” In diplomatic relations, India has been actively engaging in diplomacy, primarily in the Indo-Pacific region, under the “Act East” policy, and is increasingly exerting influence in the international arena as a global power, positioning itself as a voice of the “Global South.”

Japan and India are the two largest democracies in Asia, sharing fundamental values as well as strategic interests. Under the “Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership,” the two countries have broadly deepened cooperation in a wide range of fields, such as economy, security, and people-to-people exchanges. India is also an important partner in realizing a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP),” and multilateral cooperation such as Japan, Australia, India, and the U.S. framework is steadily making progress. The deepening of bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Japan, which faces the Pacific Ocean, and India, which is located in the center of the Indian Ocean, will greatly contribute to the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region. Japan-India relations are among the most promising bilateral relationships in the world, and its importance is growing amid increasing uncertainty in the existing international order.

In 2025, Japan and India held frequent high-level exchanges, including summit meetings. At the leaders' level, in August, Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Japan for the first time in approximately seven years under the framework of annual mutual leader visits. On this occasion, the two countries concurred to further strengthen cooperation in three areas — security, economy/investment/innovation, and people-to-people exchanges — by leveraging their respective strengths and building a mutually complementary relationship. Furthermore, in October, a Japan-India Summit Telephone Meeting was held soon after the inauguration of Prime Minister Takaichi,



18th Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue (January 16, 2026, Delhi, India)

and a face-to-face Japan-India Summit Meeting was held on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in South Africa in November. At the foreign ministerial level, Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Meetings were held in the United States in January (on the occasion of the inauguration of U.S. President Trump) and July (on the occasion of the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting), and a Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Meeting was also held shortly after Foreign Minister Motegi took office, on the occasion of the ASEAN-related Summit Meetings held in Malaysia in October. Furthermore, in January 2026, Foreign Minister Motegi visited India and held a Japan-India Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. To realize a FOIP, they shared their recognition of the current challenging regional and international situation and concurred to cooperate, including within the Quad framework. At the working level, the Japan-India Foreign Vice-Ministers' Dialogue was held in India in July.

(2) Pakistan

Pakistan is situated in a strategic location connecting Asia and the Middle East, and its political stability and economic development are essential for the stability and growth of the region. The country has a population of more than 200 million and approximately 65% of the total population is under 30 years old, which makes its economic potential significantly high, although improving the government's fiscal situation

Column

Visit to Japan by Prime Minister Modi of India

— Building Relations through a Regional Visit —

From August 29 to 30, Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, visited Japan.

Japan and India have actively been conducting high-level exchanges, including at the leaders' level. This is seen in the two countries' agreement on the "Japan-India Annual Summit" framework in 2006, under which the leaders of the two countries visit each other's country in turn.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan was the first such visit under the "Annual Summit" framework in about seven years. Prime Minister Modi has visited Kyoto, Hyogo, and Yamanashi prefectures in his past visits under this framework. The fact that the two leaders spend long stretches of time together, including through visits to regional areas that offer a different charm from Tokyo, has further strengthened the personal relationship between the leaders and has laid the foundation for today's robust Japan-India relations.

To ensure that this visit would further bring Japan and India closer together, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs proceeded with preparations for a visit to a regional area. In considering the destination, the Government of Japan placed particular emphasis on the direction that future Japan-India cooperation should take. Ten years have passed since Prime Minister Modi's first visit to Japan as Prime Minister in September 2014, when the two countries agreed to elevate the Japan-India relations to a "Special Strategic and Global Partnership." Since then, Japan-India cooperation has made remarkable strides in a wide range of fields. Against this backdrop, India today is home to a large pool of highly skilled personnel and is undergoing remarkable economic growth. Japan possesses advanced technological capabilities that drive global growth. During this visit, it was decided that the two countries would announce the "Japan-India Joint Vision for the Next Decade," which aims to build a mutually complementary relationship in which the two countries leverage their respective strengths and co-create solutions to shared challenges they face. The regional destination selected as fitting for this vision was Miyagi Prefecture. The decisive factor was Japan's cutting-edge technology.

First, in order to deepen understanding of the high speed rail project, a flagship project between Japan and India, the two leaders boarded the *Shinkansen* together and visited Sendai. During the 90-minute journey, Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Modi sat next to each other on the train and exchanged views. The trip also featured a variety of carefully arranged activities, including interaction with Indian train drivers undergoing training at the East Japan Railway Company, a tour of the *Shinkansen* driver's cabin, and a briefing on the experimental rolling stock "ALFA-X." After arriving in Miyagi Prefecture, the leaders toured a plant of Tokyo Electron Limited, which manufactures semiconductor production equipment. The semiconductor sector is another important area in which public-private cooperation is being advanced under the "Japan-India Economic Security Initiative."

The warm welcome extended by local residents to Prime Minister Modi and his delegation was also essential to the success of the regional visit.

The Japan-India relations, which have been further strengthened through this regional visit, are being firmly carried forward between Prime Minister Takaichi and Prime Minister Modi. Following the inauguration of Prime Minister Takaichi, the two leaders promptly held a telephone call and held an in-person meeting at the G20 Johannesburg Summit (South Africa) in November, at which they confirmed to achieve tangible results based on the vision outlined during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan. Going forward, Japan intends to further develop the Japan-India relations while leveraging the rich appeal of Japan's regional areas.



Prime Minister Ishiba and Prime Minister Modi shaking hands in front of the *Shinkansen* (August 30, Tokyo Station; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

and breaking out of a period of low growth remains to be challenges.

In terms of relations with Japan, a Japan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' telephone call was held in May. In September, the 13th Japan-Pakistan Vice-Ministerial Political Consultations and the 9th Japan-Pakistan High-Level Economic Dialogue were held, at which both sides exchanged views on economic relations and trade and investment cooperation, security and defense cooperation, people-to-people and cultural exchanges, disarmament and non-proliferation, global issues including climate change, cooperation through international organizations, and the regional situation. In recent years, Japan has been providing support to Pakistan, focusing on social sectors closely linked to people's livelihoods where Japan's strengths are most applicable, such as disaster prevention and climate change, health, education, and water and sewerage. In May, Notes concerning a "Project for Economic and Social Development (Water Supply-Related Equipment in Faisalabad)" (510 million yen) and other grant aid projects were signed and exchanged. Furthermore, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan visited Japan in May, and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar Khan visited Japan in August.

(3) Bangladesh

Bangladesh, in which Muslims account for around 90% of the population, is located in the Bay of Bengal, at the crossroads of India and ASEAN, and in recent years has been experiencing sustained and stable growth (economic growth rate of 5.2% in 2024). With a population of around 170 million people, Bangladesh has been attracting attention as a production base with abundant high-quality labor and a potential market with considerable demand for infrastructure development. On the domestic front, following the political upheaval in August 2024, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who had led the government for over 15 years, stepped down, and the Interim Government was formed under Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus. Chief Adviser Yunus has pledged that, after implementing necessary reforms to state systems, a free, fair, and participatory election would be held at the earliest possible opportunity, and announced that a general

election would be held in the first half of February 2026. In response to the deteriorating security situation in Rakhine State of Myanmar in August 2017, more than 750,000 displaced persons have flooded into Bangladesh, but their return has not yet been realized. There are concerns that their prolonged displacement will increase the burden on host communities and lead to a deterioration of local security.

As for relations with Japan, under the bilateral "Strategic Partnership," the Japan-Bangladesh Agreement concerning the Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology, for which negotiations were launched in April 2023, was signed in February 2026, and the Japan-Bangladesh Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), for which the decision to launch negotiations was made in March 2024, was also signed in February 2026. The number of Japanese-affiliated companies operating in the country has increased from 61 in 2005 to 330 in 2025. Ensuring a stable power supply and developing infrastructure remain challenges for promoting investment by foreign companies, and Japan has been supporting Bangladesh's development through measures such as the provision of yen loans. In addition to the visit of Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina to Bangladesh in February, Chief Adviser Yunus visited Japan in May and held a meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, and Foreign Affairs Adviser Touhid Hossain, who accompanied the Chief Adviser, held a meeting with Foreign Minister Iwaya. At the working level, the 6th Japan-Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Level Consultation was held in May.

(4) Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is situated in a strategic location on the sea lanes in the Indian Ocean, and its geopolitical importance is note-worthy. On the domestic front, local council elections were held nationwide in May, and the ruling National People's Power (NPP) won a majority in more than half of local parliaments. On the economic front, in March, notes on debt rescheduling were signed and exchanged between the Governments of Japan and Sri Lanka, formally completing the debt restructuring between the two countries. In July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) completed the 4th review under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and approved borrowings of approximately 350

million U.S. dollars by the authorities of Sri Lanka, and in October, a staff-level agreement was reached on the 5th review of the facility. The Government of Sri Lanka continues to implement various reforms required under the EFF program. In its foreign policy, Sri Lanka fundamentally adheres to non-alignment and neutrality while placing importance on balanced diplomacy.

In relations with Japan, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina visited Sri Lanka in February and attended the Independence Day Ceremony. In July, Japan-Sri Lanka Economic Cooperation Policy Consultations and the Japan-Sri Lanka Senior Official Level Policy Dialogue were held. In September, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake visited Japan on the occasion of the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan and held a summit meeting with Prime Minister Ishiba, confirming the further strengthening of relations under the “Comprehensive Partnership” between the two countries. At the same time, notes were signed and exchanged on the provision of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for surveillance and disaster response (500 million yen) as the first Official Security Assistance (OSA) project for Sri Lanka, and notes were also signed and exchanged on the Grant Aid for the Project for the Enhancement of Productivity in the Dairy Sector (463 million yen) to improve the livelihoods of low-income and small-scale dairy farmers in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

(5) Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked state in South Asia situated between the major powers of China and India, and has been moving forward as a democracy since the promulgation of its new constitution in 2015. On the domestic front, Prime Minister Sharma Oli, who assumed office in July 2024, resigned due to large-scale youth protests in the capital, Kathmandu, and other major cities in September which called for the lifting of social media restrictions and the eradication of corruption. Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Sushila Karki was appointed Prime Minister of an interim

government, which subsequently dissolved the House of Representatives. It has been announced that a general election will be held on March 5, 2026. Economically, Nepal's growth rate from 2023 to 2024 stood at 3.7%, remaining sluggish, and due in part to domestic instability, breaking out of the low-growth cycle continues to be a challenge. In foreign affairs, Nepal traditionally adheres to non-alignment and neutrality, maintains strong economic and cultural ties with India, and also maintains good relations with China.

As for relations with Japan, the two countries have long built traditional friendly ties through people-to-people exchanges such as mountaineering, and the number of people studying Japanese has been increasing in recent years. As of 2025, over 270,000 Nepalese people reside in Japan and are active in various fields. In May, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina participated in an international conference on climate change (Sagarmatha Sambaad) hosted by the Government of Nepal and conveyed Japan's commitment to climate change countermeasures. Japan has also been a major donor country to Nepal for many years, providing economic cooperation in a variety of fields, including the three priority areas of poverty reduction, disaster prevention and climate change countermeasures, and strengthening democratization. The Nagdhunga Tunnel (total length: 2,688 meters, a Japanese yen loan project), which became the first mountain transportation road tunnel in Nepal and was fully excavated in 2024, is expected to contribute to the region's social and economic development after its opening in 2026. This will be achieved by streamlining the transportation network in the relevant section, meeting rapidly increasing traffic demand, reducing travel time, and improving traffic safety.

(6) Bhutan

Bhutan is a landlocked country located between China and India. Guided by its Gross National Happiness (GNH)⁽²⁵⁾ framework, Bhutan's 13th Five-Year Plan (2024-2029) adopts a ten-year strategic roadmap aimed at transforming the economy into a high-income

(25) Gross National Happiness (GNH): A unique concept proposed by the Royal Government of Bhutan in contrast to Gross National Product (GNP). It reexamines an excessive focus on economic growth and development and emphasizes the importance of development that contributes to the happiness of the people, based on four pillars: (a) Economic growth and development, (b) Preservation of cultural heritage and promotion of traditional culture, (c) Conservation and sustainable use of a rich natural environment, (d) Good governance.

GNH model by 2034 and achieving a target GDP of 5 billion U.S. dollars by 2029. Under this plan, the Government of Bhutan is working to strengthen equitable, high-quality healthcare and education, safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity, establish a trusted governance ecosystem, and accelerate economic growth. Bhutan maintains diplomatic relations only with 58 countries, including neighboring countries and Japan, as well as the EU, and has close ties with India in areas such as national defense. In terms of its relationship with Japan, exchanges between the Japanese Imperial Family and the Bhutanese Royal Family, as well as various forms of support in the field of economic cooperation, have been carried out over many years.

(7) The Maldives

Situated in a strategically important location on sea lanes, the Maldives is an important partner to Japan in realizing FOIP. On the domestic front, in the parliamentary election conducted in April 2024, the ruling People's National Congress (PNC) secured

two-thirds of the seats, thereby consolidating President Mohamed Muizzu's governing mandate. Economically, the Maldives' primary industries are fisheries and tourism, which account for about 30% of its GDP, and although it was affected by the spread of COVID-19, the country's per-capita GDP has reached the highest level in the South Asia region. In terms of its diplomacy, President Muizzu has pursued a policy of balanced diplomacy since taking office.

In terms of relations with Japan, in July, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina attended the 60th Anniversary celebration of the Independence of the Maldives as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister. Furthermore, in the field of economic cooperation, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina and Foreign Minister Abdulla Khaleel signed and exchanged the Notes for Grant Aid project concerning the development of coastal disaster prevention facilities (seawalls) and other projects, with the aim of overcoming the capital city Malé's vulnerability to water disasters and ensuring the stability of the people's livelihoods and the socio-economic infrastructure.

6 Oceania

(1) Australia

A Brief Summary and Overview

The strategic visions of Japan and Australia toward maintaining and strengthening a free and open international order based on the rule of law are aligned in wide-ranging areas, and both Japan and Australia are like-minded countries with the will and capability to play a leading role in realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)." With the region facing a variety of challenges, cooperation between the two countries is more important than ever, and looking ahead to the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between Japan and Australia in 2026, both countries are deepening bilateral cooperation across various areas — including security, economy, economic security, and people-to-people exchanges — with a view to elevating the "Special Strategic Partnership" to even greater heights, based on close coordination between their Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers. Furthermore, with a view to

contributing to the peace and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region and the international community, both countries are further promoting multilayered cooperation with the U.S. and other like-minded countries, including through frameworks such as Japan-U.S.-Australia and Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (QUAD), on the basis of the Japan-Australia relationship, as the central pillar of the coordination among like-minded countries. In May, a federal election was held, and the Australian Labor Party, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, won for the second consecutive time following the previous election in 2022, with Prime Minister Albanese and key cabinet ministers continuing in their posts.

In the economic sphere, Australia is Japan's third-largest trading partner, and Japan is Australia's second-largest trading partner, and the two countries are further developing their mutually complementary economic relations through the implementation of the Japan-Australia Economic Partnership Agreement

(EPA) in 2015, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) in 2018, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement in 2022.

At the summit level, Prime Minister Ishiba held a telephone call with Prime Minister Albanese immediately after the Australian federal election in May and confirmed that the two countries would work closely together across various fields to further strengthen the “Special Strategic Partnership” between Japan and Australia. At the Summit Meeting in June, Prime Minister Ishiba stated that Japan-Australia cooperation serves as a model for collaboration among like-minded countries, after which the two leaders exchanged views on the security environment of the Indo-Pacific region, including the situation in East Asia, concurred on further strengthening coordination, and confirmed the importance of deepening strategic cooperation between the two countries and promoting cooperation with allies and other like-minded countries. In October, the Japan-Australia Summit Meeting was held immediately after Prime Minister Takaichi took office and Prime Minister Takaichi stated that Japan and Australia are like-minded countries with the will and capability to play a leading role in realizing FOIP. The two leaders then concurred on further strengthening bilateral cooperation across a wide range of areas, including security, economy, and people-to-people exchanges to elevate the bilateral relationship to even greater heights, looking ahead to the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Basic Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between Japan and Australia in 2026.

At the foreign minister level, in January, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a Japan-Australia Foreign

Ministers’ Meeting with Foreign Minister Wong and concurred on promoting multilayered cooperation with the United States and other like-minded countries, including efforts by the Quad, and confirmed that the two countries would steadily implement the commitments made at the Japan-Australia “2+2” meeting held in September 2024, regarding Japan-Australia security cooperation, including cyber and economic security. At the Japan-Australia Foreign Ministers’ Working Dinner in September, the two foreign ministers confirmed that they would enhance cooperation and dialogue in the economic field and people-to-people exchanges, and concurred on further advancing cooperation in light of the “Japan-Australia Memorandum of Cooperation on Assisting Japanese and Australian Nationals Overseas” signed on the same day. In October, the Foreign Ministers’ Meeting was held immediately after Foreign Minister Motegi took office, and the two ministers concurred on further promoting multilayered cooperation with like-minded countries in light of the current challenging strategic environment and on further advancing concrete cooperation in the field of economic security, including supply chains for critical minerals.

Japan and Australia are strengthening their cooperation in the following areas through such close communication between their Prime Ministers and Foreign Ministers as described above.

B Cooperation in the Security Field

Japan-Australia security cooperation has become broader and more robust than ever before. Under the Japan-Australia Reciprocal Access Agreement, which entered into force in 2023, force interoperability between the two countries has been strengthened, and the two countries have reinforced their collective engagement in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

In August, the Government of Australia announced its selection of the upgraded Japanese *Mogami* class frigate as Australia’s future general-purpose frigates, marking a major step forward in elevating the overall Japan-Australia relationship, including security and defense cooperation, to even greater heights.

In September, the 12th Japan-Australia 2+2 Foreign and Defence Ministerial Consultations (“2+2”) were



Japan-Australia Summit Meeting (October 26, Malaysia; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

held in Tokyo, and Japan and Australia concurred on further developing cooperation to strengthen collective deterrence in line with the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (JDSC),⁽²⁶⁾ issued in 2022, and on enhancing discussions between their foreign and defense authorities on potential contingencies that may affect their sovereignty and regional security interests, while sharing strategic assessments. The four ministers also confirmed that they would strengthen cooperation in areas such as operational cooperation, defense industry and advanced capabilities, economic security, strategic communication, and cyber and information security.

C Economic Relations

As shown by the two countries spearheading the CPTPP negotiations, Japan and Australia are working closely and demonstrating leadership in promoting the regional free trade order and building a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law.

Between the two countries, a mutually complementary economic relationship has developed over many years, in which Japan mainly exports industrial products such as automobiles to Australia and Australia mainly exports to Japan energy resources such as coal and natural gas, and agricultural and livestock products such as beef. In particular, in recent years, new cooperation has been advanced in areas such as critical minerals and hydrogen and ammonia-related fields.

D Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

There exists a foundation for affinity toward Japan in Australia cultivated over many years, as shown by the fact that approximately 424,000 people in Australia learn the Japanese language (the fourth largest group in the world), and that there are over 100 sister state and sister city relations. A variety of initiatives to strengthen the foundation of Japan-Australia relations are implemented, including the promotion of mutual understanding through the JET Programme (the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme), the “New Colombo Plan,” and the Japan-Australia Young Political Leaders Exchange Program. Both Japan and

Australia will continue to work on the appropriate and steady operation of the Japan-Australia Working Holiday Program.

E Cooperation in the International Community

The two countries are strengthening cooperation toward making an active contribution to peace and stability in the international community. In particular, cooperation has been deepened on various challenges facing the region, such as maritime security and North Korea's nuclear and missile development. Against illicit maritime activities, including ship-to-ship transfers⁽²⁷⁾ with North Korea-flagged vessels, which are prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions, Australia deployed the destroyer *HMAS Sydney* in May to conduct its 13th monitoring and surveillance activities by naval vessel since 2018. In addition, in March and October, Australia conducted its 15th and 16th monitoring and surveillance activities by aircraft for the times since 2018.

(2) New Zealand

A Brief Summary

Japan and New Zealand share fundamental values, such as democracy and a market economy. The two countries have been maintaining good relations over the years. Under the “Strategic Cooperative Partnership” between the two countries, in addition to strengthening bilateral cooperation in areas including the economy, security, and people-to-people exchanges, the two countries are also strengthening their cooperative relations on challenges facing the region and the international community.

B High-Level Consultations

Amid the increasingly challenging regional situation, Japan and New Zealand have been maintaining close communication, including at the summit and foreign minister levels. At the summit level, in June, Prime Minister Ishiba held a telephone call with Prime Minister Luxon, in which Prime Minister Ishiba stated that New Zealand is an important partner in

⁽²⁶⁾ Document signed at the October 2022 Japan-Australia Leaders' Meeting outlining the direction of Japan-Australia security and defense cooperation for the next 10 years.

⁽²⁷⁾ In this context, “ship-to-ship transfers” refers to the transfers to or from North Korea-flagged vessels of any goods or items at sea, which UN Security Council resolution 2375 (adopted in September 2017) prohibits the UN member states from facilitating or engaging in.



Signing of the Japan-New Zealand Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and the Japan-New Zealand Information Security Agreement (December 19, Tokyo)

promoting a free and open international order based on the rule of law in the Indo-Pacific region, and the two leaders discussed a wide variety of economic issues, including increased uncertainty in the global economy and the multilateral free trade system, and concurred on further deepening bilateral relations, including in the field of security. At the foreign ministers' level, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Foreign Minister Peters in July, in which Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that the strengthening of cooperation between Japan and New Zealand as partners in promoting FOIP was reassuring, and looked forward to enhancing the "Strategic Cooperative Partnership" in light of the steady deepening of bilateral security cooperation, while welcoming that the two countries have decided to commence negotiations toward the conclusion of the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA). In addition, Foreign Minister Iwaya asked Minister Peters for continued understanding and cooperation for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and gained the support. The two foreign ministers also exchanged views on the severe security environment in the region, affirmed that the two countries would continue to closely communicate on the regional affairs, and concurred on strengthening multi-layered cooperation with allies and like-minded countries to play an important role in tackling the strategic issues in the region. In August, a foreign ministers' telephone call was held at which the two foreign ministers exchanged views on the situations in Ukraine, Pacific Island countries, and the Middle East, and confirmed that they would work closely together to effectively address regional and international challenges.

In addition, in December, Foreign Minister Motegi signed the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) and the Information Security Agreement with New Zealand Minister of Defence Collins, who was visiting Japan. At a meeting following the signing ceremony, the two ministers exchanged views on bilateral security cooperation, economic security, regional issues, and the importance of U.S. engagement in the region, and concurred on the importance of further strengthening security cooperation between Japan and New Zealand.

C Economic Relations

The two countries enjoy complementary economic relations and have closely cooperated on the steady implementation of the CPTPP and RCEP Agreement, WTO reforms, and the promotion of a free trade system including Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), and on building a free and fair economic order based on the rule of law. At the Japan-New Zealand Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, the two ministers confirmed that they would further strengthen cooperation in the economic field including the CPTPP.

D Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges

People-to-people exchanges between Japan and New Zealand take place through exchange programs like JENESYS, and a cumulative total of more than 1,200 people had participated by 2025. By 2025, more than 3,600 people have also participated in the Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme (on average approximately 100 people annually, and one in 1,500 people are former JET participants), and active exchanges are continuing. Additionally, 44 sister-city relationships have been established between municipalities in the two countries (the largest number of sister-city relationships that New Zealand has with any country).

E Cooperation in the International Community

The two countries are cooperating closely for the peace and stability of the international community in the international arena, including the United Nations. The two countries are playing a proactive role in regional

stability and development, for example by cooperating in regional cooperation frameworks such as the East Asia Summit (EAS), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM), and through cooperation in the Pacific Islands region and the Japan-Australia-New Zealand-ROK framework. In support of surveillance for illicit maritime activity, New Zealand deployed the Royal New Zealand Navy sustainment ship *HMNZS Aotearoa* in November for its second monitoring and surveillance activities by vessel since 2024 targeting illicit maritime activities including prohibited ship-to-ship transfers with North Korean vessels under UN Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, in April and November, New Zealand deployed a P-8A and conducted its 17th and 18th monitoring and surveillance activities by aircraft since 2018.

(3) Pacific Island Countries⁽²⁸⁾

A Brief Summary and Overview

The Pacific Island countries, surrounded by the vast and beautiful ocean, are rich in marine resources and nature. This region can be divided into three subregions, Micronesia, Polynesia, and Melanesia, each with its own distinct characteristics. Many of these relatively young nations gained independence from colonial or trusteeship status following World War II, chiefly since the 1970s. At the same time, they face various vulnerabilities: “insularity,” with their territories scattered across small islands; “smallness,” with limited populations that preclude economies of scale; and “remoteness,” lying far from major international markets. Among these vulnerabilities, climate change poses “the single greatest existential threat” to the Pacific Island countries. In response to these challenges, since 1971 the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF; formerly the South Pacific Forum (SPF) until 1999) has been developed as a forum for dialogue between the leaders of the Pacific Island countries and regions to advance regional cooperation across political, economic, security, and other domains.

The Pacific Island countries and Japan, bound by the Pacific Ocean, have deep historical ties, and are important partners in areas such as cooperation in the international arena and the supply of fisheries and mineral resources. They are becoming increasingly important as a cornerstone of FOIP, as they are located at the heart of the Pacific Ocean. In addition to bilateral cooperation, Japan is also promoting cooperation with the PIF. At its Leaders Meeting in 2022, the PIF announced the “2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent” (2050 Strategy), which outlines the ideal political, economic, and other conditions and strategic measures for Pacific Island countries and regions in 2050. Japan has consistently expressed strong support for the 2050 Strategy, and at the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM10) held in July 2024, discussions were held in line with this Strategy and the PALM Joint Action Plan was compiled.

B Pacific Islands Forum (PIF)

At the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), the regional organization of Pacific Island countries, the Leaders Meeting was held in Solomon Islands in September, and the “Ocean of Peace Declaration” was approved in the Forum Communique as an initiative emphasizing regionally-led dialogue and consensus on peace and security, and ensuring peace and security through regional unity.

In March, Foreign Minister Iwaya met with PIF Secretary General Waqa, while he was visiting Japan, and conveyed that Japan had decided to contribute three million U.S. dollars to the “Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF)” as part of its effort to address climate change, which is the “single greatest existential threat” to the Pacific Island countries. Foreign Minister Iwaya also explained that the safety of the discharge of ALPS treated water⁽²⁹⁾ into the sea has been ensured, and that Japan would continue to keep transparency based on scientific evidence and work to enhance the confidence in the safety. In response, Secretary General Waqa expressed understanding of Japan's efforts. In

⁽²⁸⁾ Pacific Island countries: Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea

⁽²⁹⁾ ALPS treated water is water that contained radioactive substances from inside the buildings of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (FDNPS) and has been purified and treated through multiple treatment facilities, including ALPS (Advanced Liquid Processing System), until the concentrations of all radioactive substances besides tritium satisfy the safety regulatory standards. As for tritium, the water is significantly diluted with seawater before the discharge into the sea so that it fully satisfies safety regulatory standards.



Holding of the Japan-Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Secretariat “Kizuna Talanoa” Consultations Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) (July 11, Suva, Fiji)

addition, Foreign Minister Iwaya proposed the launch of a senior official level dialogue to strengthen communication between the two sides in order to further solidify their cooperative relationship. In response, the first Japan-Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat “Kizuna Talanoa” consultations were held in July (“Talanoa”: a Fijian word meaning “open and transparent dialogue,” a traditional concept among the Pacific Island countries).

C Country-Specific Developments

(A) Kiribati

In October, Ambassador for Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting Okuyama visited Kiribati, paid a courtesy call on President and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration Maamau, and held meetings with ministers, exchanging views on cooperation ahead of PALM11, strengthening bilateral relations, and cooperation on the collection of remains.

(B) Cook Islands

In August, Ambassador of Japan to the Cook Islands Osawa attended the ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the Cook Islands’ self-governance as a representative of the Japanese Government, paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Brown, held meetings with ministers, and exchanged views on strengthening bilateral cooperation and cooperative relations through the PALM process. On this occasion, a handover ceremony for an economic cooperation project was also held.

(C) Samoa

In September, a handover ceremony was held for the Samoa Integrated Training Centre for Community Development, which was constructed through Japan’s Grant Assistance for Grass-Roots Human Security Projects, and a handover ceremony of equipment provided under the “Project to Strengthen Border Control and Response to Infectious Diseases” was also held at the Office of the Prime Minister of Samoa.

(D) Solomon Islands

In October, Solomon Islands’ National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade Agovaka. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a foreign ministers’ meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs and External Trade Agovaka and exchanged views on bilateral cooperation across a wide range of fields including fisheries, health, and human resource development, as well as the PALM process. In addition, Solomon Islands assumed the PIF Chairmanship from September and hosted the 54th PIF General Assembly from September 8 to 12.

(E) Tuvalu

In February, a signing and exchange ceremony was held in Tuvalu for notes concerning “The Project for the Provision of School Bus in Funafuti Atoll” and the “The Project for the Provision of School Bus in Vaitupu Island.” In July, Tuvalu’s National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by Minister of Transport, Energy, Communications and Innovation Kofe. In June, recruitment of Tuvaluan nationals wishing to emigrate to Australia was carried out under the “Falepili Union Treaty” concluded between Tuvalu and Australia.

(F) Tonga

In April, Tonga’s National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by His Royal Highness, Crown Prince Tupouto’a ‘Ulukalala, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for His Majesty’s Armed Forces and Her Royal Highness, Crown Princess Sinaitakala Tu’imatamoana’I Fanakavakilangi Fakafanua Tuku’aho. Foreign Minister Iwaya also held a foreign ministers’ meeting with the Crown Prince, confirmed the further strengthening of

bilateral cooperative relations, expressed the intent to work together on shared challenges including climate change and the marine environment, and exchanged views on strengthening relations through bilateral cooperation and the PALM process. In December, notes were signed and exchanged on the first Official Security Assistance (OSA) project for Tonga. Tonga served as PIF Chair from August 2024 to September 2025.

(G) Nauru

In August, Nauru's National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Kun. State Minister for Foreign Affairs FUJII Hisayuki held a meeting with Deputy Minister Kun, who was visiting Japan, and exchanged views on further strengthening relations through bilateral cooperation and the PALM process. In August, a cable landing ceremony was held as part of the East Micronesia Cable Project (a Japan-Australia-U.S. joint project).

(H) Niue

In 2025, Japan and Niue marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In November, Japan decided to implement grant assistance providing disaster response equipment manufactured by Japanese companies for the strengthening of disaster preparedness in Niue and the promotion of its economic and social development. In December, State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao held a meeting with Prime Minister Tagelagi, while he was in Japan.



Luncheon between State Minister for Foreign Affairs Horii and Prime Minister Tagelagi of Niue (December 11, Tokyo)

(I) Vanuatu

Following emergency assistance including the provision of goods in the wake of the major earthquake that struck in December 2024, in support of reconstruction and recovery under the “Build Back Better” approach, notes on the provision of earthquake disaster recovery equipment were signed and exchanged between the Governments of Japan and Vanuatu in March. In July, notes on the development of economic and social infrastructure centered on the reconstruction of damaged bridges were also signed and exchanged. In July, Vanuatu's National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by First Policy Advisor of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce Marcellino Pipite.

(J) Papua New Guinea (PNG)

In 2025, Japan and Papua New Guinea marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In July, Papua New Guinea's National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by Prime Minister Marape. Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with Prime Minister Marape and exchanged views on further strengthening bilateral relations and strengthening cooperation through bilateral cooperation and the PALM process. A joint foreign ministers' statement commemorating the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries was issued on the Independence Day of September 16. On that day, State Minister for Foreign Affairs MIYAJI Takuma, who was visiting Papua New Guinea as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister, attended the Flag Raising Ceremony of the 50th Independence Anniversary of Papua New Guinea, and held meetings with Prime Minister Marape and Foreign Minister Tkatchenko, and signed and exchanged notes on the first OSA project for PNG with Foreign Minister Tkatchenko. In October, Prime Minister Marape signed the Papua New Guinea-Australia Mutual Defence Treaty (commonly known as the “Pukpuk Treaty”) with Australian Prime Minister Albanese.

(K) Palau

In January, Foreign Minister Iwaya visited Palau, attended the inauguration ceremony of President Whipps for his second term, and held meetings with President Whipps and Minister of State Aitaro. At the

meetings, Foreign Minister Iwaya expressed Japan's intention to further strengthen its "*tokubetsu*" (special) relationship with Palau, which will serve as PIF Chair from 2026, ahead of PALM11. In February, Prime Minister Ishiba held a summit meeting with President Whipples, while he was visiting Japan, and expressed his intention to work toward further strengthening bilateral relations. In April, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Miyaji visited Palau and attended the ceremony to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the visit of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress to Peleliu. Also in April, Palau's National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by President Whipples. In October, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Horii attended the inaugural ceremony for the regular direct flights to Palau held at Narita International Airport. President Whipples visited Japan a total of five times during 2025.

(L) Fiji

In May, notes were signed and exchanged on the provision of a disaster response vessel. In addition, at the end of May, the handover of provided equipment under an OSA project took place — the first in the world since the establishment of the OSA framework in 2023. In September, Fiji's National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for External Trade, Cooperatives, SMEs and Communications Kamikamica. In November, Prime Minister Takaichi held a meeting with Prime Minister Rabuka, who paid an Official Working Visit to Japan, confirmed cooperation toward the realization of FOIP, and signed a joint statement on the Japan-Fiji "*Lomavata Kizuna*

Partnership" — which will serve as a guiding framework for strengthening bilateral cooperation across a wide range of fields to elevate the bilateral relationship to even greater heights ("*Lomavata*": a Fijian word meaning "unity").

(M) Marshall Islands

In March, Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with President Heine, while she was visiting Japan, and exchanged views on strengthening cooperation through bilateral cooperation and the PALM process. In May, Parliamentary Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs Ikuina visited the Marshall Islands, paid courtesy calls on President Heine and Chairman for the Council of Iroij of the RMI Kabua, and held meetings with Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade (Minister of Education, Sports and Training) Zakios, Speaker of the Parliament of the RMI Wase, and others, and also laid a wreath at the "Monument of the War Dead in the Eastern Pacific." In September, the Marshall Islands National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by Minister of Culture and Internal Affairs Gaspar Jr.

(N) Federated States of Micronesia

In March, President Simina paid an Official Working Visit to Japan. Prime Minister Ishiba held a meeting with President Simina, confirmed cooperation toward the realization of FOIP, and exchanged views on strengthening cooperation through bilateral cooperation and the PALM process. President Simina also visited the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO)'s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station (FDNPS) and deepened his understanding of the safety of Japan's discharge of ALPS treated water into the sea. Furthermore, Foreign Minister Iwaya held a meeting with Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs Robert, who visited Japan together with President Simina. In April, Vice President Palik visited Japan to attend the opening ceremony of the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, and held a meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary HAYASHI Yoshimasa. In July, the Federated States of Micronesia National Day was held at the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan, attended by President Simina and his spouse, Foreign Minister Robert, and others.



Japan-Fiji Summit Meeting and Signing Ceremony (November 13, Tokyo; Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

Column

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations: 50th Anniversary with Papua New Guinea, 10th Anniversary with Niue

The year 2025 marked the 50th and 10th anniversaries of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Papua New Guinea (PNG) and between Japan and Niue, respectively.

Both PNG and Niue are friends of Japan connected by the Pacific Ocean, and, like Japan, they are island nations. PNG is the largest country in the Pacific Islands countries region in terms of both population and territory, and is a country rich in diversity, with more than 800 tribes and languages and unique ecosystems. Niue, on the other hand, with a population of approximately 1,600 people, is the second least populous country in the world. Although both are Pacific Island countries, there are significant differences between them.

■ Japan-PNG Relations

At the same time as PNG gained independence from Australian trusteeship in September 1975, Japan established diplomatic relations with the country and has supported PNG's nation building for more than 50 years. The current partnership between the two countries is robust, and Japan's cooperation has contributed to PNG's sustainable development and the improvement of the lives of its people in a wide range of fields. For example, the National Fisheries College, established through Japan's first grant aid to PNG, serves as a hub for the country's fisheries industry. The Nadzab airport, which was rehabilitated by Japan and opened in 2023, was named the "Nadzab *Tomodachi* (friendship) International Airport" by Prime Minister Marape and stands as a symbol of the friendly relations between the two countries. In September 2025, the implementation of Official Security Assistance (OSA) for PNG — the first OSA for the country — was decided. For Japan, PNG is an important supplier of liquefied natural gas (LNG), accounting for approximately six percent of Japan's total LNG imports. Such cordial relations are based on the long history of over 50 years of cooperation and friendship. Marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations as a milestone, and with the determination to stride forward together toward the next 50 years and to pass the baton on to the next generation, who will carry the future of both countries forward with trust and in a spirit of *Tomodachi*, the foreign ministers of both countries issued a Joint Statement by Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Japan and Papua New Guinea in September.



Logo for the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and PNG



Nadzab *Tomodachi* International Airport in Lae (Photo: JICA)

■ Japan-Niue Relations

Niue became a territory of New Zealand in 1901 and adopted self-rule in 1974. In May 2015, Japan recognized Niue as a state, and diplomatic relations were established in August of the same year. Since then, Japan has worked over the past ten years to strengthen relations with Niue, and has supported the country's efforts to enhance its social infrastructure through cooperation in various fields, including infrastructure development, social services, and disaster risk reduction and response. Notably, even before the establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan, Niue has attended the Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM) since its first meeting launched in 1997. On the occasion of PALM, held every three years, the leaders of the two countries have held meetings, promoting friendly relations. In July 2024, the Honorary Consulate of Niue in Tokyo was established as Niue's first honorary consulate, and Prime Minister Tagelagi, who visited Japan to attend the 10th Pacific Islands Leaders' Meeting (PALM10), attended the opening ceremony. In December 2025, on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Prime Minister Tagelagi visited Japan and exchanged views with State Minister for Foreign Affairs HORII Iwao on bilateral cooperation and on strengthening relations through the PALM process. As the strategic environment surrounding the Pacific Island countries changes, the bilateral relationship with Niue is becoming all the more important.

7 Regional and Inter-Regional Cooperation

In the Indo-Pacific region, which is the hub of global vitality, it is important to ensure peace and prosperity for the entire region, and by extension for the world, by realizing a free and open order based on the rule of law. From this perspective, while maintaining the Japan-U.S. Alliance as the cornerstone, Japan strategically advances initiatives toward realizing FOIP through multilateral cooperative frameworks, including the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. (Quad), Japan-U.S.-ROK, Japan-U.S.-Philippines, and Japan-U.S.-Australia frameworks, as well as various regional cooperative frameworks such as Japan-ASEAN, Japan-Mekong, ASEAN+3, EAS, ARF, and APEC, while also coordinating with like-minded countries including ASEAN, Australia, India, Pacific Island countries, and European countries.

In particular, Japan has consistently supported the “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP),”⁽³⁰⁾ which ASEAN formulated in 2019. AOIP shares fundamental principles with FOIP, including openness, transparency, inclusivity, and respect for international law, and Japan has been assisting its mainstreaming. Japan intends to continue respecting ASEAN Centrality and unity and contribute to the stability and prosperity of the entire Indo-Pacific region by implementing concrete cooperation that contributes to the principles espoused by FOIP and AOIP.

(1) The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

Located at a geopolitical strategic point in the center of the Indo-Pacific, ASEAN is key to the realization of FOIP. In 2019, the AOIP, which is a guideline for ASEAN's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region and shares fundamental principles with FOIP, was adopted. ASEAN also plays an important role as a hub of regional cooperation, and is leading multilayered frameworks such as ASEAN+3, EAS, and ARF.

Since its founding, ASEAN has sought to build a community, and in 2015 declared the establishment of the “ASEAN Community,” since which time it has been pursuing deeper integration in line with the “ASEAN Community Vision 2025.” As a milestone marking the 10th anniversary of the Community's establishment, the ASEAN Summit in May adopted the “ASEAN Community Vision 2045,” which carries forward that vision. In addition, Timor-Leste formally acceded to ASEAN in October, and ASEAN is pursuing even deeper integration, including through the implementation of the “ASEAN Community Vision 2045.”

On the economic front, ASEAN has traditionally been an important production base for Japanese companies, particularly in the manufacturing industry, and in recent years has been attracting attention as a vibrant growth center for the global economy and as a growing consumer market. In addition, ASEAN has become a hub for free trade and building close economic relations in the region through the conclusion of agreements including the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement with Japan, FTAs⁽³¹⁾ with countries outside the region, and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) Agreement.

(2) Issues Surrounding the South China Sea

In the South China Sea, amidst disputes over territorial sovereignty, China has been continuing its unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion, which is against the rule of law and openness, and its dangerous and coercive actions that increase regional tensions, including the militarization of disputed features (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 3 (3) D on page 215.), and dangerous maneuvering against coastal countries and other countries such as the use of water cannons and

⁽³⁰⁾ AOIP: ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific

AOIP is a guideline for ASEAN's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region, and was adopted at the ASEAN Summit Meeting in June 2019. In addition to strengthening ASEAN centrality in the Indo-Pacific region, AOIP sets out to promote cooperation in areas such as maritime cooperation, connectivity, SDGs, and the economy based on the principles of openness, transparency, inclusiveness, rules-based frameworks, good governance, respect for sovereignty, non-interference, complementarity with existing cooperation frameworks, equality, mutual respect, mutual trust, mutual benefit, and respect for international laws including the UN Charter, the UNCLOS, and other relevant UN conventions.

⁽³¹⁾ While FTA usually refers to a free trade agreement, ASEAN uses the term FTA to refer to a free trade area.

collisions. Moreover, China has been refusing to accept the Arbitral Tribunal's Award⁽³²⁾ to the Philippines and China, and has continued to assert maritime claims that are inconsistent with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Based on the position that the issues surrounding the South China Sea are directly related to the peace and stability of the region and are a legitimate concern of the entire international community as a whole, Japan, together with the international community, has repeatedly expressed serious concern and strong opposition to China's unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion as well as any actions that increase regional tensions. In addition, from the standpoint that the three principles of the rule of law at sea should be consistently adhered to (See Chapter 3, Section 1, 6 (2) on page 255.), Japan has also consistently emphasized the importance of all parties related to the South China Sea to work toward peaceful settlements of disputes based on international law, in particular UNCLOS. Moreover, Japan has also repeatedly pointed out that China's assertions in the South China Sea are not based on relevant provisions of UNCLOS; that the Arbitral Tribunal's Award, which determined that China's claim of "historical rights" based on the "nine-dash line," which has no clear basis in international law, violates UNCLOS, is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute; and that it is important for the parties to comply with the award.

Cooperation among allies and like-minded countries is also important to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

At the Japan-U.S. Summit Meeting in February, the two leaders reaffirmed their strong opposition to China's unlawful maritime claims, militarization of reclaimed features, and threatening and provocative activities in the South China Sea.

At the Japan-Australia-India-U.S. Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, the four ministers expressed serious concern over dangerous and provocative actions in the South China Sea such as the unsafe use of water cannons and ramming and blocking actions, as well as

the militarization of disputed features, and reaffirmed the importance of upholding unimpeded commerce consistent with international law. At the Japan-U.S.-Philippines Foreign Ministers' Meeting in the same month, they reaffirmed their opposition to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion, and confirmed the importance of respecting the rule of law, and underscored the need to uphold freedom of navigation.

In the joint statement released on the occasion of the Japan-U.S.-ROK Foreign Ministers' Meeting in September, the three ministers strongly opposed unlawful maritime claims in the South China Sea as well as attempts to enforce such claims. At the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in November, the G7 Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their strong opposition to any unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the South China Sea, in particular by force or coercion, and that the Arbitral Tribunal's Award is an important milestone, binding upon the parties. They also expressed serious concern over dangerous maneuvering and the use of water cannons in the South China Sea, as well as efforts to restrict freedom of navigation and overflight through militarization and coercion.

Furthermore, with regard to the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea (COC), which has been under discussion for many years between China and ASEAN, Japan has stated its position that it should be effective, substantive, consistent with international law, as reflected in UNCLOS, and respect the legitimate rights and interests of all stakeholders who use the South China Sea.

(3) Japan-ASEAN Relations

The stability and prosperity of ASEAN, the key to the realization of FOIP, is absolutely essential to the stability and prosperity of the region as a whole. Since the establishment of the ASEAN Community in 2015, Japan has been fully supporting ASEAN's efforts toward further integration based on the "ASEAN Community Vision 2025," and will continue its support toward the "ASEAN Community Vision 2045."

⁽³²⁾ In January 2013, the Government of the Philippines instituted arbitral proceedings under UNCLOS as to the disputes between the Philippines and China regarding the South China Sea, and on July 12, 2016, the Arbitral Tribunal organized by these proceedings rendered the final award. Japan issued a statement by the Foreign Minister, stating, "As the Tribunal's award is final and legally binding on the parties to the dispute under the provisions of UNCLOS, the parties to this case are required to comply with the award. Japan strongly hopes that the parties' compliance with the award will eventually lead to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the South China Sea."

Currently, cooperation is being strengthened in a wide range of areas under the three pillars based on the “Joint Vision Statement on ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation” and its concrete “Implementation Plan,” which were adopted at the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation held in December 2023: (a) connecting to the next generation and strengthening the long-standing relationship of trust as “Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations,” (b) finding solutions to common challenges as “Partners for Co-Creation of Economy and Society of the Future,” and (c) promoting FOIP as “Partners for Peace and Stability.”

Moreover, regarding AOIP, in addition to the “Joint Statement of the 23rd ASEAN-Japan Summit on Cooperation on ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” adopted in 2020, Japan is using the “Joint Statement of the 28th ASEAN-Japan Summit on Further Promotion and Implementation of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP),” adopted in October, as a guiding framework, and is advancing concrete cooperation centered on the four priority areas of cooperation of AOIP, namely maritime cooperation, connectivity, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and economy.

At the ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers’ Meeting in July, Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that the role of ASEAN, the key to the realization of FOIP and the world’s growth center, is of increasing importance to the peace and prosperity of the region as a whole, and that Japan would support ASEAN’s further integration while respecting ASEAN Centrality and unity. On regional and international affairs, Foreign Minister Iwaya also explained Japan’s position on the situation in Myanmar and the East China Sea and the South China Sea, as well as on issues regarding North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue. The Foreign Ministers of ASEAN Member States expressed high expectations for further strengthening cooperation with Japan in the fields of economy, people-to-people exchanges, and security, and made statements regarding the importance of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the resolution of the abductions issue.

At the ASEAN-Japan Summit in October, Prime Minister Takaichi stated that Japan and ASEAN have



28th ASEAN-Japan Summit (October 26, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia;
Photo: Official Website of the Prime Minister's Office of Japan)

built their relationship as “Trusted Partners” with “heart-to-heart” connections, expressed her consistent support for the AOIP, which shares fundamental principles with FOIP, and welcomed the adoption of a joint statement confirming the synergies between FOIP and AOIP and the promotion of further cooperation, as well as expressing her strong determination to further strengthen coordination with AOIP and advance cooperation to enable Japan and ASEAN to grow stronger and more prosperous together. Furthermore, Prime Minister Takaichi explained the steady progress of cooperation in line with the three pillars of the Joint Vision Statement announced at the 2023 ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit, referencing ODA, OSA, the launch of the “Japan-ASEAN AI Co-creation Initiative” to jointly build a safe, secure, and trustworthy AI ecosystem in the region, the dispatch of “NIHONGO Partners” (assistant Japanese language teachers) to the region, and various people-to-people exchange programs.

Furthermore, in response to the high expectations expressed by ASEAN leaders for the strengthening of cooperation with Japan — including in new areas such as digital and green — as well as for the promotion of economic partnerships through the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP) Agreement and other instruments, Prime Minister Takaichi proposed launching a working group to strengthen Japan-ASEAN economic relations and discuss a wide range of measures, which was welcomed by the ASEAN side. On regional and international affairs, Prime Minister Takaichi stated that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion must not be tolerated anywhere in the world, and explained

Japan's position on the situations surrounding the East China Sea, the South China Sea, Taiwan, North Korea, Myanmar, the Middle East, and Ukraine.

(4) Mekong-Japan Cooperation

Peace and prosperity in the Mekong region (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam) are extremely important to the region as a whole, including Japan, as they also contribute to narrowing the development gap within ASEAN and promoting regional integration.

In July, the Mekong-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting was held in Malaysia for the second consecutive year following 2024, and discussions were held on the progress of cooperation based on the "Mekong-Japan Cooperation Strategy 2024," with agreement to further deepen cooperation in each field. Foreign Minister Iwaya, who served as co-chair, stated that Japan wishes to coordinate and expand across the Mekong region as a whole the cooperation it is advancing bilaterally with each country in areas such as connectivity, disaster risk reduction, decarbonization, and digitalization, and also to strengthen countermeasures against transnational crimes such as organized fraud. Japan will continue to contribute to the prosperity and development of the region through the implementation of Japan-Mekong cooperation projects in various fields.

(5) ASEAN Plus Three

The ASEAN Plus Three was established in 1997, when the Asian financial crisis triggered the addition of three countries (China, Japan, and the ROK) to ASEAN. ASEAN Plus Three has developed with a focus on areas such as finance and food security. Today, it covers cooperation in 24 areas, including finance, agriculture and food, education, culture, tourism, health, energy and the environment. Further cooperation is progressing in each area under the "ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation Work Plan (2023-2027)."

At the ASEAN Plus Three Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that efforts are being made in areas important to Japan, while touching on the establishment of the "Rapid Financing Facility" (RFF) under the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM)⁽³³⁾ in May, which strengthened the regional financial safety net against pandemics and natural disasters; the swift response of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) following the earthquake in Myanmar in March; the importance of the ASEAN Plus Three Emergency Rice Reserve (APTERR)⁽³⁴⁾ and the ASEAN Food Security Information System (AFSIS)⁽³⁵⁾ initiatives; and support for capacity building through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and information sharing among practitioners in Bangkok (Thailand). In addition, Foreign Minister Iwaya explained Japan's policies toward North Korea including the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue.

At the ASEAN Plus Three Summit in October, Foreign Minister Motegi, attending as the representative of Prime Minister Takaichi, pointed out that ASEAN Plus Three has contributed to building a regional safety net, and noted that in addition to finance and food security, it holds great potential for addressing shared challenges such as disaster response, the declining birthrate and aging population, and organized crime. Foreign Minister Motegi also expressed Japan's intention to further strengthen ASEAN Plus Three cooperation in line with the "ASEAN Community Vision 2045," which Japan fully supports, and introduced cooperation in the areas that Japan particularly values — namely financial cooperation, cooperation toward a sustainable society, and cooperation for the safety of the people — referring respectively to expectations for the role of the ASEAN Plus

⁽³³⁾ The Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralisation (CMIM) is a framework agreed upon at the 2nd ASEAN+3 Finance Ministers' Meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in May 2000, in response to the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis with the aim of preventing a recurrence of currency crises within East Asia. To forestall regional financial contagion and escalation, the CMIM enables member countries facing difficulties in meeting foreign-currency payments to obtain short-term U.S. dollar liquidity through currency swaps in exchange for local currency.

⁽³⁴⁾ A framework to prepare for emergencies such as large-scale disasters in order to enhance food security and eradicate poverty. It provides support to those affected by emergencies such as typhoons and floods, and support for poverty alleviation.

⁽³⁵⁾ Manages an agricultural statistics database and implements human resource development and other measures for the purpose of strengthening regional food security.

Three Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO),⁽³⁶⁾ contributions to APTERR and AFSIS and initiatives under the East Asia Think-Tank Network (NEAT),⁽³⁷⁾ and cooperation to strengthen law enforcement capability through international organizations including UNODC and other means to address organized crime, which is causing significant economic harm to ASEAN Plus Three countries. Furthermore, Japan's position on North Korea, including the nuclear and missile issues and the abductions issue, was also expressed.

(6) East Asia Summit (EAS)

EAS was established in 2005 with the aim of facilitating discussions and cooperation on strategic challenges to the region, regarding politics, security, and economy. In order to maintain and strengthen a free and open international order based on the rule of law and to guide the region, where divisions and confrontations are deepening, toward cooperation, the importance of EAS as the Leaders-led premier forum of the region, where major regional countries gather together and engage in frank discussions, is becoming even more important.

At the EAS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in July, Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that EAS plays an extremely important role in guiding the region from division and confrontation toward dialogue and cooperation amid increasing severity and uncertainty in the international situation, and that Japan fully supports ASEAN Centrality and unity, the "ASEAN Community Vision 2045," and AOIP, and will advance concrete cooperation in accordance with principles such as openness, inclusivity, transparency, and rules-based frameworks.

On regional and international affairs, Foreign Minister Iwaya emphasized that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are unacceptable anywhere in the world, including in the East China Sea. Japan is seriously concerned about the intensified actions in the South China Sea that increase regional tensions. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is important for the international community.

Foreign Minister Iwaya also explained the importance of coordinated responses toward the complete denuclearization of North Korea in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions, called for continued understanding and cooperation from each country for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, and explained Japan's positions on the situation in Myanmar, countermeasures against international organized crime, the situation in the Middle East, and the situation in Ukraine.

At the 20th EAS held in October, Foreign Minister Motegi, attending as the representative of Prime Minister Takaichi, stated that Japan, as a free and democratic peaceful nation that upholds human rights and the rule of law, has been contributing to regional peace and prosperity, and expressed Japan's intention to continue contributing to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region through promoting FOIP, which is on the extended line of this path. Foreign Minister Motegi also stated that in order to lead the region toward cooperation and dialogue, Japan will promote FOIP based on the rule of law and actively contribute to ASEAN-led regional frameworks, particularly EAS.

On regional and international affairs, Foreign Minister Motegi emphasized that unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion are unacceptable anywhere in the world, including in the East China Sea. Japan is seriously concerned that in the South China Sea, dangerous and coercive activities are intensifying. From the perspective of supporting the full enforcement of the rule of law at sea, Japan hopes for the parties to the dispute to comply with the Arbitral Tribunal's Award and the disputes to be settled peacefully. Peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait are important for the international community. He also noted that North Korea is advancing its nuclear and missile capabilities, funded by cryptocurrency theft and gained combat experience through military cooperation with Russia, and that its threat is growing day by day, and once again asked for coordinated responses for the complete denuclearization of North Korea in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions

⁽³⁶⁾ Conducts analysis of regional economies, provides policy recommendations to ASEAN+3 countries, operates the Chiang Mai Initiative, and provides technical assistance to the government of member states, for the purpose of promoting regional economic stability.

⁽³⁷⁾ A network of government-recognized think tanks aimed at providing intellectual support for regional cooperation and fostering a sense of regional solidarity. Policy recommendations adopted at the annual general meeting are taken up at the ASEAN+3 Summit.



Foreign Minister Motegi attending the 20th EAS (October 27, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia)

and reiterated the call for the continued understanding and cooperation from all countries for the immediate resolution of the abductions issue, which is an urgent matter. Foreign Minister Motegi also explained Japan's position that peace and stability in the Middle East are of the utmost importance to Japan, and that Japan will play a proactive role toward improvement of the humanitarian situation in Gaza, early recovery and reconstruction, and the realization of a two-state solution. In addition, he expressed serious concern about the situation in Myanmar, as well as respect for the diplomatic efforts of the U.S. and Malaysia in mediating a cease-fire agreement between Cambodia and Thailand, while also explaining Japan's positions on transnational issues and the situation in Ukraine.

(7) Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Cooperation

Japan, China, and the ROK share geographical proximity and deep historical ties, play a major role in the global economy, and are a driving force of the prosperity of the East Asian region. There is great potential for the three countries to promote exchanges and mutual understanding, and to cooperate in addressing various challenges in the international community.

Japan assumed the chairmanship from the ROK following the May 2024 Summit, and in March held the 11th Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tokyo. Foreign Minister Iwaya stated that enhancing future-oriented exchanges and cooperation of the three countries which share the significant influence and responsibilities for the peace and prosperity of the region and the international community holds



Foreign Minister Iwaya attending the 11th Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Foreign Ministers' Meeting (March 22, Tokyo)

great significance. Both the Chinese and ROK Foreign Ministers also made remarks on the importance of Japan-China-ROK cooperation. The three Foreign Ministers concurred to promote future-oriented cooperation under the three pillars of (1) Knowing each other better, (2) Cooperation to shape and protect the livelihood, and (3) Joint efforts of all generations to tackle common challenges, and to accelerate coordination to achieve concrete outcomes ahead of the next Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit. The three Foreign Ministers also discussed regional and international affairs including the situation surrounding North Korea, the situation in Ukraine, and East Asian cooperation such as ASEAN and APEC, and Foreign Minister Iwaya asked for continued understanding and cooperation toward the immediate resolution of the abductions issue.

In addition to the Foreign Ministers' Meeting, a total of seven ministerial-level meetings were held within the Japan-China-ROK framework in 2025, and joint statements or documents similar to joint statements were adopted at five of those meetings. In December, the 18th Tripartite Health Ministers' Meeting was held, at which views were exchanged and a joint statement was adopted on the themes of "AI and Digital Health for Universal Health Coverage (UHC)," "Promoting Healthy and Active Ageing," and "Mental Health."

Regarding the Japan-China-ROK Summit, as scheduling could not be coordinated in 2025, Japan continues to work on coordinating arrangements for holding the Summit in Japan at an appropriate time under Japan's chairmanship.

(8) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (See Chapter 3, Section 3, 3 (5) on page 311.)

Consisting of 21 economies (countries and regions) in the Asia-Pacific region, APEC is an economic cooperation framework aimed at achieving sustainable growth and prosperity in the region. Promoting economic cooperation and strengthening trust in the Asia-Pacific region, which is the hub of growth and prosperity in the international community, is extremely important for Japan's further economic development.

At the APEC Leaders' Meeting held in Gyeongju, the ROK, at the end of October, the "Gyeongju Declaration" was adopted as the Leaders' Declaration. Prime Minister Takaichi, who attended the meeting, communicated the importance of a rules-based, free, and fair international economic order and the promotion of WTO reform, among other matters. In addition, it was decided that Japan will serve as APEC Chair in 2031.

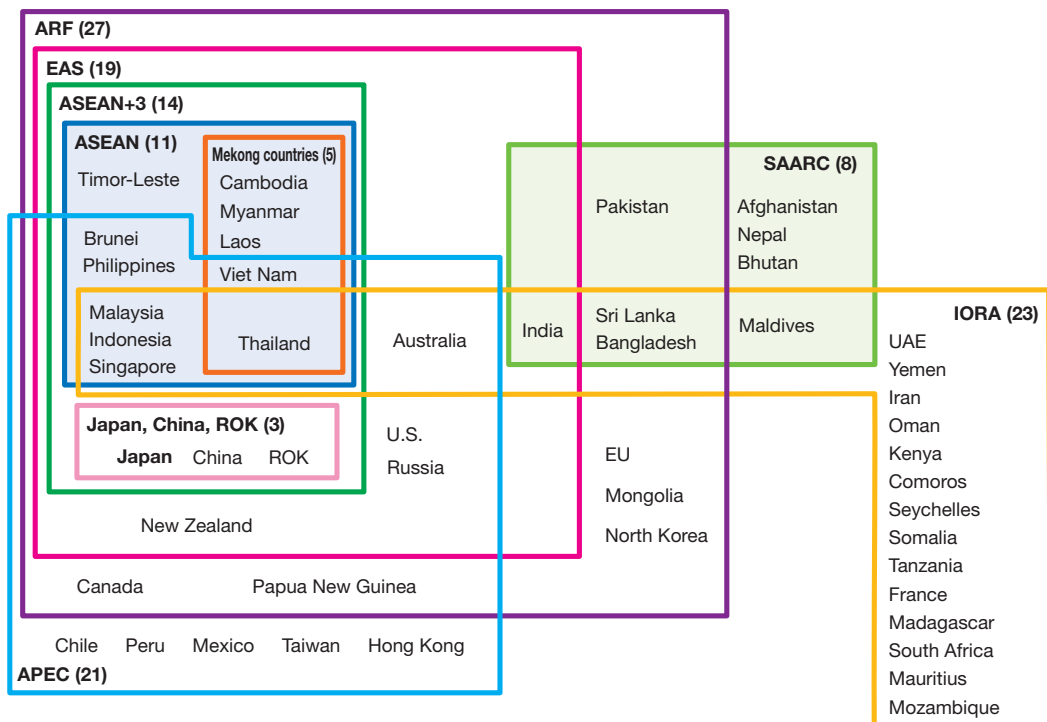
(9) South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

SAARC was officially inaugurated in 1985 with multiple objectives such as enhancing the welfare of citizens of the South Asian countries, and cooperation and collaboration in economic and social development and cultural areas. As of December 2025, SAARC has eight member states (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, the Maldives and Afghanistan) and nine observer countries and institutions including Japan, and has been cooperating as a relatively loose framework of regional cooperation, primarily in economic, social and cultural areas, through summit meetings and meetings of the Council at the ministerial level (Foreign Ministers' Meetings). However, no Summit Meeting has been held since 2014, and no Ministerial Meeting has been held since 2016. As part of youth exchanges with SAARC, Japan has invited a cumulative total of 8,956 people by the end of 2025.

(10) Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

IORA is a regional organization aimed mainly at promoting economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean Rim region, and Japan has been participating as a dialogue partner since 1999.

Major Frameworks of the Asia-Pacific Region



The numbers within () indicate the number of participating countries, regions, or organizations

<Abbreviations>

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)

EAS (East Asia Summit)

ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum)

APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation)

SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation)

IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association)

Column

Working Together with Southeast Asian Countries to Strengthen Disaster Resilience

Building a Resilient Region through Cooperation with the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) Mission of Japan to ASEAN

More than 20 years have passed since the Sumatra Earthquake, which left deep scars across the region in December 2004. In response to the earthquake, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has worked on disaster risk reduction and disaster response measures as a region as a whole.

In 2005, the year following the earthquake, ASEAN formulated the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER), which serves as the foundation for policies on disaster prevention and emergency response in the region. The agreement provided for the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre), which today serves as the regional coordination hub for coordinating disaster response in the Southeast Asian region.

Since the start of its operations in 2011, the AHA Centre has expanded its role and has become an indispensable institution in advancing disaster response in the region. To strengthen its coordination function, Japan has provided robust support for the Centre's activities through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) from the time of its establishment to the present day. This support focuses on three major pillars: (a) disaster monitoring (the enhancement of an Emergency Operations Centre and ICT equipment), (b) advance preparedness and emergency response (the development of an emergency relief stockpiling and dispatch system, and the training of emergency response and assessment teams), and (c) human resource development in the disaster prevention field (capacity building for senior officials of national disaster management organizations). ASEAN countries have expressed deep appreciation and gratitude for these contributions by Japan every year at the ASEAN-Japan Ministerial Meeting on Disaster Management, the ASEAN-Japan Summit, and other occasions.

The long-standing Japan-ASEAN cooperation in disaster prevention yielded major results in the response to the earthquake that struck central Myanmar on March 28, 2025. The AHA Centre deployed rapidly to the affected area and began operations the following day. The Emergency Response and Assessment Team — composed of members from the 10 ASEAN countries who had been trained with Japan's support — played a vital role, including confirming on-the-ground needs through rapid needs and impact assessments of the disaster situation and interviews with affected communities, as well as facilitating the receipt of relief supplies and coordinating their transport. Just two days after the earthquake, relief supplies were promptly delivered to Myanmar through the emergency relief stockpiling and dispatch system that Japan had supported, and were subsequently delivered to affected communities. The words of an affected resident sheltering in temporary accommodation, who said that “receiving the family kit was truly a blessing from heaven for our family. As a housewife, I felt that every item in the kit was incredibly useful,” demonstrate that this cooperation in the disaster prevention field is genuinely useful for those affected by disasters.

Such cooperation enhances resilience to disasters and also contributes to strengthening humanitarian supply chains and is therefore indispensable in pursuing stability and prosperity in the region. Going forward, Japan will continue to advance cooperation with ASEAN to build a more resilient and prosperous region.



Emergency relief supplies being transported to Myanmar (Photo: AHA Centre)



Activities of the ASEAN Emergency Response and Assessment Team in Myanmar (Photo: AHA Centre)

■ Japan's Assistance for the Earthquake Damage with the Epicenter in Myanmar

On March 28, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake occurred near Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city, located in the central part of the country, resulting in numerous casualties in Myanmar and Thailand. For Japan, a country prone to natural disasters, earthquake damage in Southeast Asia is not a distant concern, and Japan provided assistance closely attuned to the needs of the local people.

In Myanmar, where the humanitarian situation has continued to deteriorate since the coup d'état by the Myanmar military on February 1, 2021, this earthquake inflicted enormous damage on people's lives. The Government of Japan dispatched a Japan Disaster Relief (JDR) Medical Team to the affected areas, providing medical care to a cumulative total of 2,100 people through 20 days of activity. During this period, the JDR Self-Defense Force unit airlifted medical equipment and supplies, including pharmaceuticals and reagents necessary to continue humanitarian assistance activities, to the operational area. The JDR Medical Team reported on its activities on the ground as follows: "We of course delivered high-quality, attentive medical care to the disaster victims of Myanmar, but through our medical activities, we also conveyed the feelings of support from the Japanese people, who share the same experience of having been affected by disasters. Despite their suffering and constrained living conditions, the people of Myanmar expressed words of gratitude and provided gifts of food and other items, and our activities were truly supported by the local people." In addition, Japan distributed relief supplies (such as water and water purifiers) to disaster victims through United Nations agencies. Through Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects, Japan provided emergency relief supplies such as water tanks and tents to schools in disaster-affected areas, as well as implemented emergency grant aid totaling six million U.S. dollars (approximately 900 million yen).

In Thailand, the Thai government requested the dispatch of experts in the fields of road and building safety and earthquake countermeasures. Based on this request, the Government of Japan dispatched a team of experts in the road and building fields to Thailand on three separate occasions. In June, the Japan-Thailand Technical Cooperation Meeting on post-earthquake infrastructure safety inspections and other matters was held at the Ministry of Transport of Thailand.