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# JAPAN

## *Digest*

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## Japan's Foreign Minister visits key Asian countries

Toshimitsu Motegi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, embarked on an eight-day tour of five Asian countries from 10 January. During his tour, he visited Israel, the State of Palestine, Qatar, the Philippines and India.

Israel served as Motegi's first stop. On 11 January, he and his Israeli counterpart Gideon Sa'ar [held](#) a meeting and working lunch where the Japanese chief diplomat explained Japan's position on the disarmament of Hamas in line with the Comprehensive Plan agreed to by Israel under the auspices of the United States of America, urged Israel to take greater steps to protect civilians caught in the Gaza conflict and to allow unimpeded humanitarian assistance by international aid agencies including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency in Palestine (UNRWA), noted Japan's concern at increased activity by illegal settlers in the West Bank and called for 'maintaining peace and stability while aiming for sustainable economic development'. The protests in Iran were also discussed. He later [visited](#) the site of Hamas' heinous terror attack on Israeli civilians on 7 October 2023.

On the same day, Motegi also [visited the](#) State of Palestine, where he called on Palestinian Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh and Prime Minister Dr. Mohammad Mustafa. With the Palestinian side, he expressed support for the two-state solution, expressed 'concern over the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza', conveyed

Japan's commitment to helping rebuild Gaza and learnt of the Palestinian side's internal reforms. The two sides agreed to establish a 'Japan-Palestine High-level Political Dialogue' mechanism to take relations forward. After the meetings, Motegi [visited](#) Jalazone Refugee Camp at the outskirts of Ramallah to interact with Palestinian refugees housed there. The Camp receives assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Following this, Motegi visited Qatar on 13 January, where he [held](#) a Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani. The two sides reviewed key developments in the bilateral relationship since 2021, when the dialogue mechanism was put in place. Motegi thanked the Qatari side for its role in providing stable supplies of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Japan and acknowledged 'steady progress in bilateral defence exchanges'. The two sides also welcomed further development of people-to-people and academic exchanges, discussed the humanitarian reconstruction of Gaza and exchanged views on global flashpoints.

In the Philippines, Motegi [met](#) his counterpart Maria Theresa Lazaro in Manila on 15 January. The two sides noted the significance of bilateral ties on the eve of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of bilateral ties and signed an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement guaranteeing mutual resource provision. Also initialled at the meeting was the Official Security Assistance

agreement under which Japan would provide the Philippines with ‘boathouses and slipways for rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) for Philippine Navy’, even as they welcomed the arrival of the components of an onshore radar station to be constructed by Japan. Economic projects such as the Metro Manila Subway Project, civil nuclear cooperation, critical minerals and flood control projects were discussed. Japan also expressed support of the Philippines’ accession as Chair of ASEAN.

Arriving in India on 15 January, Motegi first [called](#) on Prime Minister Narendra Modi the next day, after which he met External Affairs Minister Dr S. Jaishankar for the 18<sup>th</sup> round of the India-Japan Strategic Dialogue. The two sides reviewed the existing state of relations and underlined the importance of following through on the outcomes of the August 2025 summit meeting between the two leaders in Tokyo. The India-Japan AI Dialogue was launched at the meeting, and both sides agreed to convene a Joint Working Group on Critical Minerals under the Economic Security Initiative agreed to in 2025. The meeting concluded with both ministers looking forward to celebrating 2027 as the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India-Japan ties. Japan’s chief diplomat concluded his tour by commemorative visits to Raj Ghat and the Delhi Metro.

### **Japan-ROK Summit Meeting**

Japan’s Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi [hosted](#) a summit with the President of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Lee Jae Myung

on 13 January in her hometown of Nara. The summit meeting marked the continuation of ‘shuttle diplomacy’ put in place in 2022 to rebuild frayed ties between the two East Asian neighbours.

At the start of the meeting, Takaichi welcomed Lee to Japan in the new year and conveyed an intention to ‘develop the Japan-ROK relations to [a] greater height’. The two leaders also engaged in a ‘candid’ discussion on overall trends in bilateral relations. Detailed discussions were held on cooperation on supply chain issues, while a framework for deepening inter-ministerial cooperation on economic security was considered. The two leaders agreed to formalise via written agreement their cooperation on countering transnational organised crime involving fraud, a common menace for both countries.

Though official releases did not detail if historical issues were discussed, both leaders did welcome the ‘progress in the coordination between the two countries toward cooperation on DNA testing, regarding the remains discovered at Chosei Coal Mine in Ube City, Yamaguchi Prefecture’ in Japan. This mine, which collapsed in 1942 causing the deaths of 136 Korean miners, is being investigated by a local non-governmental organisation which has conducted DNA tests to identify the remains found within the mine shaft.

The summit concluded with the two leaders agreeing to continue ‘shuttle diplomacy’ as a component of close cooperation between the two governments.