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मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

# JAPAN

## *Digest*

March 2026

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## Japan marks 15 years since 3/11 quake-tsunami

On 11 March 2026, Japan [marked](#) the fifteenth anniversary of the devastating magnitude 9.0 earthquake that shook the Tohoku region of Japan for days and triggered a massive tsunami that engulfed many cities and towns along the coast of the Pacific Ocean. The tsunami also caused the ‘world's worst nuclear disaster since the 1986 Chernobyl crisis’ when it hit the Fukushima Daiichi reactor plant, leading to the complete shutdown of the complex and radiation leakage. The total number of lives lost in the ‘triple disaster’ has crossed 22,000, with over 2,500 people still registered as missing as of February 2026. Around 26,000 people remain internally displaced, as per the agency set up to reconstruct the region.

On 11 March, Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi visited Fukushima Prefecture to participate in the memorial services held there. In her address, she [stated](#) that her ‘heart ache[d] in empathy and overflow[ed] with sorrow and condolences for those who have lost beloved family members, relatives, and friends’, but lauded the reconstruction efforts mounted by the Government of Japan since the disaster. She also assured listeners of the government’s determination to press on with the ‘safe and steady decommissioning of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station of Tokyo Electric Power Company’ (expected to be completed by 2051) as well as the safe disposal of ‘soil

and other matter’ from the damaged reactor complex. She called on the government and people of Japan to ‘pass these lessons on to future generations, never allowing them to fade’, promising in her speech to set up a central Disaster Management Agency within 2026.

## Prime Minister Takaichi’s US visit

Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi embarked on a three-day visit to the United States of America, her first, on 18 March. Her visit occurred at a time when the US, along with Israel, was in the midst of offensive operations against Iran, which in response closed off the pivotal Strait of Hormuz to international container traffic, causing knock-on effects on prices of critical fuels such as crude oil and natural gas. A key background question during her visit concerned the likelihood of US President Donald Trump demanding Japan’s participation in any effort to ‘open’ the Straits of Hormuz, a demand he had previously made to all transatlantic and transpacific partners.

During their prolonged hour-and-a-half long meeting, Prime Minister Takaichi [conveyed](#) to President Trump that Japan remained consistently opposed to Iran developing a nuclear capability, and it condemned the closure of the Straits of Hormuz. However, she reportedly [stopped](#) short of offering any tangible military assistance, informing Trump that Japan’s Constitution forbade the deployment of the Self-Defence Forces to regions where

Japan's 'survival' was not threatened. The two leaders also discussed the Free and Open Indo-Pacific, where cooperation with the Quad members was mentioned without a reference to the Quad as a format.

In terms of bilateral relations, both sides 'affirmed that they would advance high-quality Japan-US cooperation in concrete terms across a wide range of areas, including the economy, economic security, and security, and elevate the Japan-US Alliance to further heights'. Under this framework, they discussed defence technology cooperation through co-development and co-production of missile systems, economic security cooperation through the stable supply of energy as well as critical minerals and Artificial Intelligence, economic cooperation through the announcement of a second tranche of Japanese investments under the trade and tariff agreement signed in August 2025. These investments [include](#) the construction of Small Modular Reactors (SMR) in Tennessee and Alabama states by a collaborative enterprise comprised of GE Vernova Inc and Hitachi Ltd., as well as natural gas generation facilities in the American states of Pennsylvania and Texas.

On the day after the Summit meeting, Prime Minister Takaichi [visited](#) the Arlington National Cemetery and laid a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

## Japan foreign ministry sets up mediation, India offices

On 17 March, Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi [announced](#) the establishment of a new office within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) tasked with mediating international disputes. The new unit, called the International Peace Mediation Unit, is expected to 'further strengthen' Japan's 'active and flexible engagement in peace mediation efforts' at a time when 'the imperative of preventing disputes before they arise and supporting early resolution by engaging from the outset of conflicts and providing seamless support from the realization of ceasefire through humanitarian assistance, recovery and reconstruction has become ever more pronounced'. The new unit reports to the Policy Coordination Division of MOFA, and is headed by a Director-level official.

On 31 March, MOFA also [announced](#) the creation of a new office tasked with developing economic ties between India and Japan. The Japan-India Economic Affairs Division is expected to 'make public-private efforts to promote companies' expansion of business and investment from Japan to India and to deepen cooperation in the area of economic security with India' in light of India's rapid economic growth. The new unit will report to the Southwest Asia Division, Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department of MOFA, and is headed by a Director-level official.