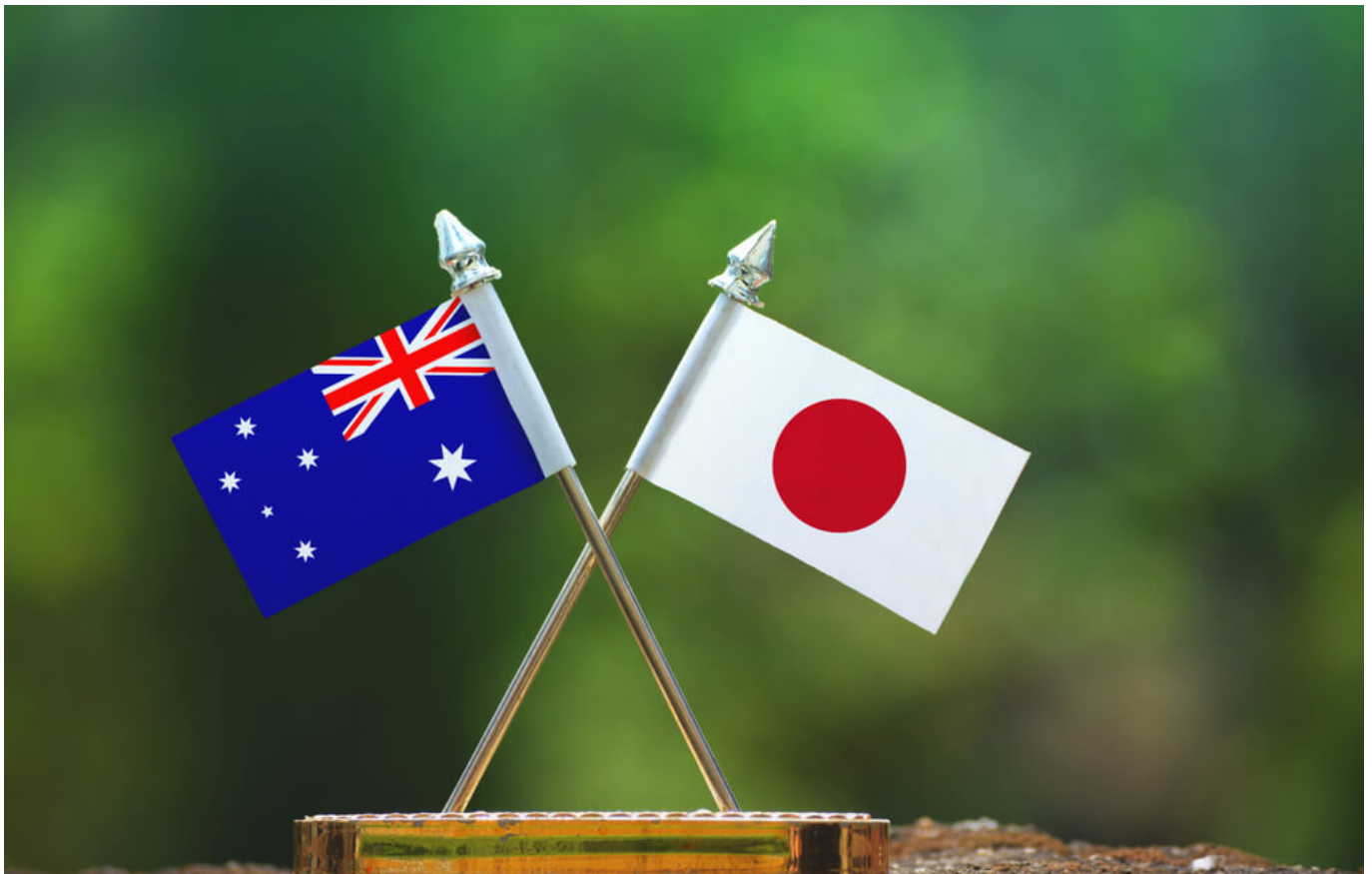




By: TA | AP Brief

Japan and Australia agreed to deepen cooperation in energy security, defense and critical minerals



The prime ministers of Japan and Australia agreed to deepen cooperation in a wide arrange of areas including energy security, defense and critical minerals as the Iran war threatens global supply chains.

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi met her Australian counterpart Anthony Albanese at Australia's Parliament House on Monday during Takaichi's first visit to the country as national leader.

Takaichi said they held strategic discussions on China, Southeast Asia, Pacific Island countries, nuclear issues and abductions by North Korea.

"The effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz had been inflicting enormous impact on the Indo-Pacific. We affirmed that Japan and Australian will closely communicate with each other in responding with a sense of urgency," Takaichi told reporters through an interpreter.

Australia provides almost half of Japan's liquefied natural gas. Japan is one of Australia's top five suppliers of refined gasoline and diesel.

Albanese traveled to Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia in recent weeks to shore up **supplies of gasoline** and diesel following disruptions caused by attacks on Iran by the United States and Israel beginning in February.

The bilateral agreements reached Monday would benefit the populations of Japan and Australia, Albanese said.

"For Australians, it will mean we are less vulnerable to global shocks like we are seeing right now because of conflict in the Middle East," Albanese said.

"Our joint statement on energy security reaffirms our commitment to navigate the current energy crisis together and maintain open trade flows of essential energy goods including liquid fuels and gas," he said.

Geopolitical tensions

The statement on economic security cooperation commits to consulting on contingencies "including those related to geopolitical tensions, economic coercion or other significant market interruptions."

The agreements also take aim at China's control and manipulation of the global production of **heavy rare earths**, which are used for making powerful, heat-resistant magnets in industries such as defense and electric vehicles.

"We express our strong concerns over all forms of economic coercion, and the use of non-market policies and practices that are leading to harmful overcapacity and market distortions, as well as export restrictions, particularly on critical minerals," the joint statement by the two countries said.

The two prime ministers "announce the elevation of critical minerals as a core pillar of our economic security relationship," the statement said.

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The prime ministers also announced new steps to enhance Japan-Australia defense and security cooperation.

Takaichi's visit comes two weeks after the Japanese and Australian defense ministers signed contracts to deliver the first three of a AU\$10 billion (\$6.5 billion) fleet of Japanese-designed warships.

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries will build the first three **Mogami-class frigates** in Japan. Australia plans to build another eight in a shipyard in Western Australia state.

Albanese, a keen disc jockey who performs at

charity events under the stage name DJ Albo, joked about Takaichi's renowned interest in heavy metal music.

"Sanae and I will spend more time together later today and we will continue our discussions including on issues like heavy metal music and other important matters of state," Albanese said.