

Japan elects its first ever female prime minister

23rd October 2025



Japan has its first ever female prime minister. Her name is Sanae Takaichi. She was elected as the country's 104th prime minister on Tuesday. She won 237 votes in the lower house of Japan's Diet (parliament). Her opponent,

Yoshihiko Noda, won 149 votes. Ms Takaichi takes over from former leader Shigeru Ishiba. He was in power for just one year. Takaichi is head of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). To get enough votes to win the election, she had to make an alliance with the right-wing Japan Innovation Party. She has a tough job ahead of her. Japanese people are unhappy about rising prices, job security, a falling birth rate, and how to care for the increasing number of old people.

Sanae Takaichi, 64, has led an interesting life. At university, she played drums in a heavy metal rock band. She likes sport and supports the Gamba Osaka soccer team and the Hanshin Tigers baseball team. She was interested in motorcycles and had a powerful Kawasaki Z400 motorbike. In 1987, Takaichi moved to the USA and wrote books about American politics. In 1989, she worked as a TV anchor on a variety show. Women in Japan hope Takaichi's background means she will support gender equality and diversity. However, she opposes same-sex marriage and allowing separate surnames for married couples. In addition, she does not agree that a woman should become emperor ahead of a man.

Sources: apnews.com / mainichi.jp / asahi.com / wikipedia.org

Writing

Women are better leaders than men. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

prime minister / votes / parliament / opponent / power / alliance / right-wing / prices / an interesting life / playing the drums / sport / motorbike / gender equality / surname

True / False

- 1) Japan had 103 prime ministers before Sanae Takaichi was elected. T / F
- 2) Sanae Takaichi's opponent got over 200 votes in the election. T / F
- 3) The prime minister before Sanae Takaichi was leader for two years. T / F
- 4) Sanae Takaichi made an alliance with a left-wing party. T / F
- 5) Sanae Takaichi liked playing drums and riding motorbikes. T / F
- 6) Sanae Takaichi lived in the US for a while. T / F
- 7) Sanae Takaichi is a strong supporter of same-sex marriage. T / F
- 8) Takaichi believes people should have separate surnames after marrying. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|---------------|
| 1. elected | a. past |
| 2. opponent | b. sufficient |
| 3. former | c. partners |
| 4. enough | d. rival |
| 5. tough | e. follows |
| 6. supports | f. fairness |
| 7. moved | g. chosen |
| 8. background | h. difficult |
| 9. equality | i. relocated |
| 10. couples | j. ex- |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How interesting a life have you had?
- c) How important is it for a leader to have an interesting background?
- d) What musical instruments can you play?
- e) What sports are you interested in?
- f) How is gender equality in your country?
- g) Should people keep their at-birth surname after getting married?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Sanae Takaichi?

Phrase Match

1. She won 237
 2. She has a tough job
 3. people are unhappy about rising
 4. a falling birth
 5. care for the increasing number
 6. Sanae Takaichi, 64, has led
 7. She was interested
 8. she will support gender equality and
 9. same-
 10. married
- a. ahead of her
 - b. sex marriage
 - c. of old people
 - d. an interesting life
 - e. prices
 - f. in motorcycles
 - g. couples
 - h. rate
 - i. diversity
 - j. votes

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of your country's leader?
- b) Who is the world's best national leader?
- c) Are male or female leaders best?
- d) Would you be a good leader of your country?
- e) What would you like your country's leader to do?
- f) How worried are you about rising prices?
- g) How worried are you about job security?
- h) What advice do you have for Sanae Takaichi?

Spelling

1. She was ecteeld
2. Her tenopopn, Yoshihiko Noda
3. takes over from merfro leader Shigeru Ishiba
4. she had to make an alnclael
5. She has a tgohu job ahead of her
6. job screutiy
7. ppsoturs the Gamba Osaka soccer team
8. a TV anchor on a aetriyv show
9. gender equality and ietdiysvr
10. she opposes same-sex rgearaim
11. separate mrausnse for married couples
12. a woman should become eeoprrm

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. j	4. b	5. h
6. e	7. i	8. a	9. f	10. c

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	How many votes did Sanae Takaichi win to become prime minister?
2.	How long was former prime minister Shigeru Ishiba in power for?
3.	What kind of party did Sanae Takaichi make an alliance with?
4.	What kind of job does the article say Sanae Takaichi has?
5.	What are Japanese people worried about the security of?
6.	What kind of life does the article say Sanae Takaichi has had?
7.	What two sports does Sanae Takaichi like?
8.	What did Sanae Takaichi write books about?
9.	What did Sanae Takaichi work as in 1989?
10.	What do women hope Sanae Takaichi will support besides diversity?

Speaking – Issues

Rank these with your partner. Put the most important issues at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Food prices
- Jobs
- Immigration
- Crime
- Falling birth rates
- Care for old people
- Gender equality
- Same-sex marriage

Answers – True False

1	T	2	F	3	F	4	F	5	T	6	T	7	F	8	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.