
Japan's ruling party elects Sanae Takaichi as new leader



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TOKYO, Oct. 5 (rki.news)—Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) on Saturday elected former Economic Security Minister Sanae Takaichi as its new president, setting her on course to become the country's first female prime minister. The 64-year-old politician, known for her conservative views and close association with late Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, won a runoff against Agriculture Minister Shinjiro Koizumi. She replaces Shigeru Ishiba, who resigned following electoral setbacks.

Takaichi's election is historic in a nation that ranks poorly on gender equality, while also signaling the LDP's tilt toward more conservative policies. She is a staunch supporter of the U.S.-Japan alliance and has pledged to prioritize defense and strengthen regional cooperation with South Korea, Australia, and the Philippines. A summit with U.S. President Donald Trump is reportedly being planned for late October, where defense spending will likely be a key issue.

At home, Takaichi faces the pressing challenge of restoring public confidence after the LDP's recent election losses left the party weakened in both chambers of parliament. She has vowed to address rising living costs, expand fiscal spending, and reinforce Japan's military and cybersecurity capabilities. Analysts say her ability to work with opposition groups and coalition partner Komeito will be vital for advancing policy.

Her visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine and hard-line image could strain ties with Asian neighbors, though she has recently presented herself as a "moderate conservative" to broaden her appeal. Public reaction has been cautiously optimistic, with many voters hopeful she can balance tradition with reform.

A parliamentary vote scheduled for mid-October is expected to confirm Takaichi as prime minister, making her the first woman to lead Japan in its modern political history.