

Japanese PM to seek energy guarantee from Albanese

Phillip Coorey *Political editor*



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Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio will seek a personal assurance from Anthony Albanese over the reliability of gas exports to Japan amid concerns in Tokyo of rising “energy nationalism” in Australia.

Mr Kishida and Mr Albanese, who will meet in Perth on Saturday during a whistle-stop visit by the Japanese leader, will also significantly upgrade the security relationship between the two countries.



Japanese Ambassador Shingo Yamagami says the Australia-Japan relationship is “a two-way street”. **Alex Ellinghausen**

This will pave the way for greater intelligence sharing, military cooperation and what Japan’s ambassador to Australia, Shingo Yamagami, said would be other

“unprecedented measures”.

Speaking to *The Australian Financial Review* ahead of Mr Kishida’s visit, Mr Yamagami said the recent Queensland budget decision to impose hefty royalties on coal, [<https://www.afr.com/politics/federal/japan-warns-queensland-over-rise-in-coal-royalties-20220706-p5azk9>] and the unrest inside the federal government over the domestic supply and price of gas, including whether there should be market interference, had created anxiety in Tokyo over sovereign risk.

While Japan had been given assurances by Resources Minister Madeleine King and Trade Minister Don Farrell that Australia would continue to be a reliable energy provider, Mr Kishida would seek a similar assurance from Mr Albanese. Mr Yamagami pointed out the enormous level of Japanese investment in Australia and said the relationship was “a two-way street”.

“This meeting is crucial in terms of ensuring that Australia will remain a trusted, reliable supplier of energy,” he said.

“Japan will continue to be willing to invest and trade with Australia. This is a two-way street, this partnership, but energy security is certainly high in the mind of Prime Minister Kishida.

“We have to be careful about so-called resources nationalism and we have to make sure this is a win-win situation, a mutually beneficial relationship.

“Japanese business have invested a lot in Australia believing there is no significant sovereign risk. If Australia starts behaving like other countries in some other regions, I’m sure there will be a cry coming from Japanese.”

In a speech in Adelaide on Monday, Ms King repeated her assurance that Japan could continue to rely on Australia for energy.

“Australia’s role in ensuring the energy security of Japan and other regional neighbours is something this government takes very seriously,” she said.

This came a week after tensions surfaced between her and Industry Minister Ed Husic, who argued she had not done enough to force gas exporters to lower domestic prices.

Mr Yamagami said Japan was encouraged by such assurances and Mr Kishida’s visit was “a good opportunity to reconfirm that relationship at the top level”.

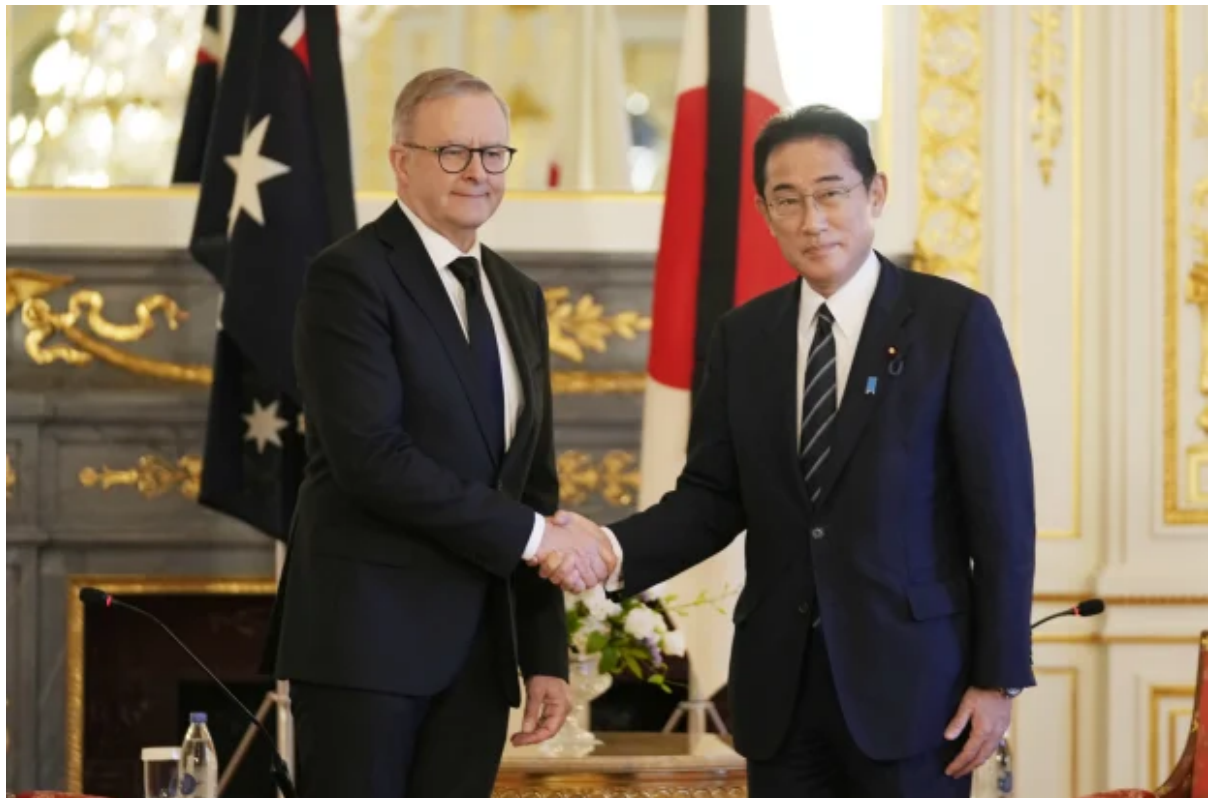
Food, critical minerals on the agenda

Japan is also enormously dependent on Australia for food and Mr Kishida will be seeking assurances on that as well. Japan is also eager to secure Australian critical minerals to ease its dependence on China, and increase its investment in hydrogen development to help Australia become a renewable energy superpower.

In a statement released on Wednesday, Mr Albanese said: “As Australia seeks to become a clean energy superpower, we will remain a steady and reliable supplier of energy to Japan, including for new energy sources like hydrogen.”

The meeting will be the third face-to-face between the two leaders since Mr Albanese became Prime Minister in May.

Mr Yamagami said the frequency of meetings for two leaders was “extraordinary” and should send a message to the region and the wider world that Australia and Japan, two of the region’s leading nations and close allies of the United States, were serious about maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific.



Japan’s Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (right) with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese in Tokyo in September. **Getty Images**

The new security relationship will significantly upgrade the 2007 joint declaration of security cooperation signed by John Howard and Shinzo Abe.

“As far as Japanese and Australian policymakers are concerned, the security environment has drastically changed since 2007. We are facing a much more serious security environment,” Mr Yamagami said.

He cited the “unilateral attempts by China to change the status quo by force and intimidation” in the South and East China seas, and its growing incursions into Japanese airspace and territorial waters.

Mr Yamagami said the security agreement would “strengthen the exchange of strategic assessments between our two countries” and “enhance interoperability” between the countries’ defence forces.

“Rather than dwelling on changing security circumstances, we will come up with what we can do together.”

Strengthening security ties

Mr Yamagami said while negotiations were still being finalised, “some of the measures will be unprecedented, you will be amazed to see”.

Mr Albanese said Japan was one of Australia’s closest friends and a key partner in the region.

“This visit provides an opportunity for Australia to further deepen its relationship with Japan and explore new areas to strengthen cooperation, bilaterally and in the region.

“Discussions between leaders will look to strengthen the defence and security partnership, and leaders will consider next steps to implement the Reciprocal Access Agreement which will enhance the ability of defence forces to operate and exercise together.

Leaders will also discuss ways to address the climate crisis and support our region to transition to net zero. This includes capturing opportunities to scale up investment in clean energy technologies and supply chains.”



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Phillip Coorey is the political editor based in Canberra. He is a two-time winner of the Paul Lyneham award for press gallery excellence. *Connect with Phillip on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).*
Email Phillip at pcoorey@afrc.com