



Labour Update

労組周辺動向 No. 236



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This bulletin contains information on law changes that have either passed, or are being discussed, in parliament, court decisions, and other labor issues in Japan that are of interest to activists.

1. Law/Policy

(1) Government Decides Basic Policy on Foreign Nationals—"Restricts Land Acquisition," Plans to Finalize Framework for Regulations by Summer

On the morning of January 23, the government decided on its basic policy for foreign nationals at a ministerial meeting examining foreign nationals policy. It plans to establish rules to regulate land acquisition from a national security perspective and stated that it will finalize the framework for the regulations by this summer.

Regarding the focal point of restricting land acquisition by foreign nationals, the government did not reach a conclusion this time and will continue examining the content of regulations while also referencing examples from other countries. It is moving toward establishing an expert panel as early as February. It will also scrutinize whether to limit the scope to foreign nationals or include Japanese nationals as well.

In terms of residence management, the policy includes a direction to mandate participation in programs for learning Japanese language and other subjects for permanent resi-

dence permits. For naturalization, the government will consider changing the residence period from "five years or more" to "in principle, ten years or more," similar to permanent residence permits.

The government will strengthen its grasp of tax and social insurance premium delinquency status and utilize this in immigration and residence screening. It will also establish a database for centralized management of various facilities to regulate inappropriate private lodgings.

In relation to this, at a cabinet meeting on the morning of January 23, the government decided on sector-specific operational policies that include the maximum number of foreign workers to be accepted under the "Cultivation of Specified Skills" residence status, which will begin in April next year to replace the Technical Intern Training Program, and the existing "Specified Skilled Worker" status. As per the original plan, a maximum of approximately 1.23 million people will be accepted by the end of fiscal year 2028.

"Comprehensive Measures for Acceptance of Foreign Nationals and Realization of an Orderly Multicultural Society (Summary)" January 23, 2026 Ministerial Meeting on Acceptance of Foreign Nationals and Realization of an Orderly Multicultural Society

https://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/gaikokujinzai/pdf/kettei_gaiyo_shosai.pdf

(2) Candidates for House of Representatives Election Finalized—24.4% Women, Highest Ever

The 51st House of Representatives election, officially announced on January 27, closed candidate registration at 5:00 PM, with a total of 1,285 people registering nationwide. Of these, 313 were women, accounting for 24.4% of all candidates, surpassing the previous record of 23.4% set in the 2024 House of Representatives election.

The number of candidates by party: Liberal Democratic Party 337, Centrist Reform Alliance 236, Japan Innovation Party 89, Democratic Party for the People 104, Communist Party 176, Reiwa Shinsengumi 31, Tax Reduction Japan-Yukoku Alliance 18, Sanseito 190, Japan Conservative Party 20, Social Democratic Party 15, Team Mirai 15, minor parties 13, independents 41.

(3) "Summary of Discussions So Far at the Study Group on 'Workers' under the Labor Standards Act (Draft)" January 27, 2026 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Study Group on "Workers" under the Labor Standards Act

<https://www.mhlw.go.jp/content/11201250/001642684.pdf>

(4) Deportation Notice to Lawyers Two Months in Advance to Be Abolished—Stricter Measures Following Escape Incidents

The Immigration Services Agency has decided to revise rules concerning deportation of foreign nationals. It intends to abolish by the end of this year the "lawyer notification,"

which in principle informs lawyers acting as representatives of the scheduled deportation period two months in advance when forcibly deporting foreign nationals for illegal stays and other reasons. Although opposition from lawyers is expected, cases of foreign nationals escaping before deportation due to the notification have occurred, prompting stricter responses.

In September 2010, under the Democratic Party administration, the then Immigration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice and the Japan Federation of Bar Associations concluded an agreement on deportation rules. Immigration authorities agreed to notify lawyers who wish to be informed of the scheduled deportation period as "○ month, ○ week" in principle two months in advance, and at least 50 or more such notifications were made in 2025. The Immigration Services Agency has entered into discussions with the Japan Federation of Bar Associations to revise the rules and has already conveyed its intention to abolish the lawyer notification.

A representative of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations stated to the press, "We cannot comment on whether discussions are underway," but pointed out that "exceptions" of notifying the scheduled deportation period at the last minute have also been occurring frequently. "This already constitutes a violation of the agreement. It disregards the right to a trial and is problematic from a humanitarian perspective. The lawyer notification should continue to be maintained."

2. Legal Violations/Disputes

(1) "Part-time Lecturers Are Workers" Judgment—Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology Loses in Reversal—Tokyo High Court

On January 15, the Tokyo High Court issued an appellate judgment in a lawsuit where a 62-year-old man who was a part-time lecturer at the national Tokyo University of Marine Science and Technology (Minato Ward, Tokyo) sought confirmation of his employment status, claiming "termination on the grounds of a commissioned contract is invalid." Presiding Judge Masatoshi Miyasaka reversed the Tokyo District Court judgment that had dismissed the claim, ruling that "part-time lecturers qualify as workers" and ordered the university to pay unpaid wages.

The judgment examined "worker status," including whether the man had the freedom to refuse work and whether he was subject to direction and supervision, stating "there are no strong circumstances to deny worker status."

Furthermore, considering circumstances such as ∇there is no difference between the work of full-time and part-time workers who are employees∇it is common for university faculty to be treated as workers even if part-time∇the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has instructed that lecturers be treated as workers—the judgment recognized the man as a "worker." Based on this, it ruled that the man had already converted to indefinite-term employment and ordered payment of unpaid wages.

(2) Amazon to Cut Approximately 16,000 Jobs—Nearly 5% of Corporate Division

Amazon.com Inc. announced it will cut approximately 16,000 corporate division employ-

ees. The company is further streamlining its organization as competition over artificial intelligence (AI) intensifies.

Amazon had just announced cuts of approximately 14,000 corporate positions several months ago. Combined with the current plan, the cuts total approximately 30,000, exceeding the approximately 27,000 cuts implemented from late 2022 to early 2023.

As of the end of September last year, Amazon's global workforce totaled approximately 1.57 million, the majority of whom are workers at logistics facilities. White-collar positions number approximately 350,000; therefore, the current workforce reduction represents approximately 4.6% of this group.

(3) Former Temporary Employee and Fujitsu Reach Settlement—Transfer Invalidated, Settlement Money Paid—Tokyo High Court

A lawsuit where a former temporary employee in his 50s sought confirmation of employment status and payment of unpaid wages from Fujitsu and others, claiming he was transferred to another group company based on false explanations from a Fujitsu subsidiary, reached a settlement at the Tokyo High Court on January 16.

At a press conference in Tokyo after the settlement, the man stated, "This is almost a complete victory. I feel relieved."

(4) 3 Years and 3 Months Working Alone in Reception Room Ruled "Power Harassment"—Aozora Bank Ordered to Pay Damages

An appellate judgment was issued on the 22nd at the Tokyo High Court (Presiding Judge Tetsuji Sato) in a lawsuit where an employee in his 50s working at Aozora Bank (Tokyo) sought damages, claiming it was unjust to be made to work alone in a reception room for approximately three years after making an internal report. The High Court judgment changed the first-instance Tokyo District Court judgment, ruling "this constitutes power harassment" and ordering payment of 1.1 million yen in damages.

The judgment also invalidated demotion and pay cuts, ordering payment of a total of approximately 8.47 million yen, including approximately 7.37 million yen in wage differentials.

3. Situation/Statistics

(1) Global Growth Rate 3.3%—Boosted by AI Investment—IMF Upward Revision of 2026 Forecast

On January 19, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released its latest World Economic Outlook. The growth rate is 3.3% for both the 2025 estimate and 2026 forecast, revised upward by 0.1 and 0.2 percentage points respectively from the previous October 2025 outlook. While the Trump administration's large-scale tariff measures continue to have an impact, it pointed out that trade friction is trending toward mitigation as a result of negotiations between the United States and various countries, and that the rapid increase in artificial intelligence (AI)-related investment is providing a tailwind.

On the other hand, it analyzed that prospects "remain biased toward downside risks." If AI's productivity improvements prove disappointing, the upward stock price trend driven by the AI boom could lose momentum, with the risk that stock prices could decline over the long term.

The global inflation rate for 2026 is 3.8%, revised upward by 0.1 percentage point from the previous forecast. Of this, advanced economies remained at 2.2%. For the United States, it predicted that price increases based on a series of high tariff measures will gradually subside and fall to around 2% during 2027.

For Japan, it showed a forecast that goods inflation, such as food products, will settle down in 2026 and converge to the 2% target the Bank of Japan aims for in 2027.

"WORLD ECONOMIC OUTLOOK UPDATE" January 19, 2026 International Monetary Fund

<https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/weo/2026/january/english/text.pdf>

(2) "Summary of the 2025 (Reiwa 7) Monthly Labour Survey Special Survey" January 26, 2026 Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare

https://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/itiran/roudou/monthly/tokubetu/25/dl/toku2025_pdfgaikyo.pdf

(3) Spring Wage Negotiations Start, Wage Increase Rate in Focus—Can 5% Level Be Maintained?

A meeting between the top labor and management representatives of Rengo, the central organization of labor unions, and Keidanren took place on the morning of January 27 in Tokyo, effectively launching this year's spring wage negotiations. With real wages declining due to rising prices, both labor and management agree on the need for wage increases, with the focus on the level. Key themes will be whether wage increases of 5% (including regular pay raises) can be achieved for the third consecutive year, the spread of wage increases to small and medium-sized enterprises, and narrowing the gap with non-regular workers.

(4) Spain to Legalize 500,000 Undocumented Immigrants—Draws Line with Other European Countries

Spain's left-wing Sanchez administration decided on January 27 to legalize undocumented immigrants who meet certain conditions. According to Spanish media, approximately 500,000 people are expected to be eligible. This draws a line with other European countries that are tightening immigration policies, and its future impact is attracting attention. The government aims for the rapid integration of legalized immigrants into society and the labor market.

According to the government announcement, the conditions are that foreign nationals can prove they have resided for at least five months by the end of last year and have no criminal record. They can obtain a one-year residence permit, which can be extended thereafter. Applications will be accepted from April to June this year.