



Japan Screen Topics

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PRIME MINISTER ZENKO SUZUKI

366 feet 10 min. 10 sec.

1. (DIET BUILDING) In early July of this year, Japan's National Diet building was the scene of voting to name a new Prime Minister for the country. Following a General Election, a special session of the Diet convened, as provided by Japan's Constitution, and each member of the Diet came forward to cast a ballot in favor of one of the candidates for the post.

When all the votes were in, an official count was taken and the announcement made that veteran parliamentarian Zenko Suzuki would serve as Japan's 70th Prime Minister.

2. (PALACE, WITH EMPEROR) Following the vote, Prime Minister-elect Suzuki meets with His Majesty the Emperor to receive official appointment.

3. (MEETINGS: CABINET) Then the new Prime Minister begins a canvass of the best-qualified political figures to serve in Cabinet posts. He consults with leaders of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, and one-by-one, names are selected to fill the vital executive positions of the government.

After selections have been made for each Cabinet post, an official announcement of the Ministers is made, and a formal attestation ceremony held at the Imperial Palace. Then, the new Suzuki Cabinet gathers for its initial meeting --at which the Ministers pledge to carry on and to further develop the policies which had been promoted by the late Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira.

4. (SPEECH TO DIET) One of his first major public acts as Prime Minister is a policy speech to the National Diet, in which Prime Minister Suzuki outlines his concepts and programs for Japan.

Prime Minister Suzuki's political philosophy is based on the concept of harmony. Reflecting this, Suzuki concluded his first policy speech before the National Diet on October 3, 1980, with the following words:

"From ancient times it has been said that opportunity from Heaven is no match for an impregnable castle, but even an impregnable castle is no match for harmony among people. With the wisdom and judicious adaptability of the Japanese people, I intend to carve out the future of Japan in the spirit of harmony."

The Prime Minister also pledged himself to seeking reforms that will establish a sense of political morality in public office and rectify public ethics. He cited administrative reform and restoring fiscal soundness as two pressing tasks facing his government.

In foreign affairs Prime Minister Suzuki noted Japan's ever closer relations with the ASEAN member countries and announced that he will visit the region in the near future.

The new Prime Minister, who has served 14 consecutive terms in the Diet since 1947, has long played major roles in Japan's politics. His experience in such posts as Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, of Health and Welfare, and of Agriculture and Forestry, plus his service as Chief Cabinet Secretary and as Chairman of the Executive Council of the Liberal Democratic Party, has given him a solid background in administrative affairs and nurtured his skills in consolidating and mediating conflicting opinions.

All this serves him well as he replies to opposition interpellations in the Diet: that is, questions regarding government policies and proposals.

5. (FOREIGN VIPS: PRES. KAUNDA) One important responsibility for the Prime Minister is meeting with many state guests from abroad. Here he greets President Kenneth Kaunda and Mrs. Kaunda of Zambia. Prime Minister Suzuki eagerly discussed conditions in Africa with the Zambian President.

Another state guest is King Juan Carlos of Spain and Queen Sofia. As an ardent student of history, Prime Minister Suzuki recalls Japan's long history of relations with his guest's homeland. The 69-year old Prime Minister also takes time to visit the opening of special Velasquez Exhibition at the National Museum of Art, which coincided with the visit of King Carlos.

And when former U.S. President Gerald Ford visited Japan, the Prime Minister Meets informally with him to discuss Japanese-American relations.

6. (PARTY) The Prime Minister attends a welcoming reception for the members of the "Ship for Southeast Asian Youth," which annually carries youths from the ASEAN nations and Japan on a cruise and study tour of Southeast Asia and Japan. He greets the members and expresses his hopes that such activities will be highly effective on promoting heart-to-heart understanding between the ASEAN nations and Japan.

7. (CHOIR SINGING) A pleasant interlude from his official duties comes when the Prime Minister listens to the visiting Vienna Boys' Choir sing, and then poses for commemorative photographs with them.

8. (VACATIONING) On a short weekend trip to the famed mountain resort of Hakone, Prime Minister Suzuki plays and talks with young children.

9. (NICKLAUS: GOLFING) An enthusiastic amateur golfer himself, the Prime Minister is pleased to meet his idol, American pro Jack Nicklaus.

And while he might not be a match for the 'Golden Bear' on the links, Japan's Prime Minister does manage quite well, shooting regularly in the 90s whenever he can take time out for a round, as with his son Shunichi.

His form suffers a bit from lack of practice, but Suzuki is a fierce competitor on the course, concentrating intently on each shot and freely expressing his joy, or disgust, depending on how his game is going any particular day.

10. At his own home in Tokyo, the Prime Minister likes to relax and tend his collection of Bonsai, miniature trees, which he has been maintaining for decades. He and his wife Sachi carefully prune and mold each branch to create the prized appearance of totally natural beauty for each tiny tree.

Some of his most prized Bonsai were brought with him from his family home on the coast of Iwate Prefecture in northern Japan, where Prime Minister Suzuki was born on January 11, 1911.

11. (GO: CALLIGRAPHY, READING) In addition to golf, the Prime Minister is an avid player of the ancient board game Go, considered to be the world's most intricate and intellectually demanding recreation. His personal secretary is a frequent victim of the Prime Minister's playing expertise.

Calligraphy is another pastime of Prime Minister Suzuki, and like most political leaders in Japan he frequently sends samples of his work as personal gifts to supporters and friends. A devoted family man, the Prime Minister spends as much time as his busy schedule allows with his wife, son and three daughters.

In the evenings Prime Minister Suzuki is most likely to be found relaxing with a cup of tea while reading, generally a work on history. And his interest in the past is strongly reflected in his approach to the government of Japan, as he frequently reminds his colleagues that together they are 'writing' the history books of the future in their daily activities.