

日本の国会

THE NATIONAL DIET OF JAPAN



Secretariat
House of Councillors
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House of Councillors

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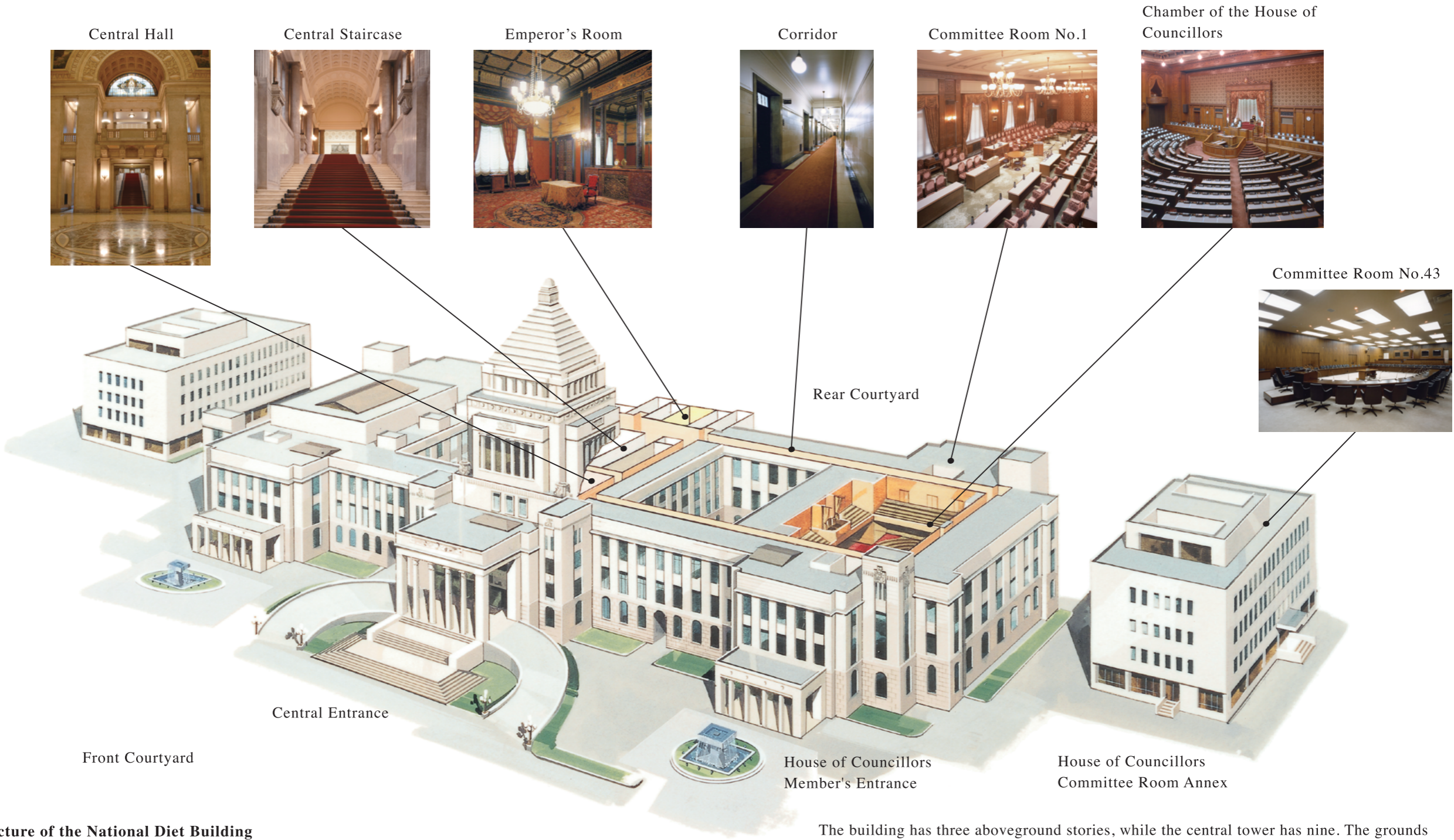
Area Surrounding the National Diet Building **20**

National Diet Building



Dominating the beautiful avenue of ginkgo trees that runs from Ginza through Sakuradamon, the impressive building of the National Diet of Japan stands on a hill in the Nagatacho district of Chiyoda City in Tokyo. In front of it lies the Diet Front Garden, an urban oasis, and behind it are the Members’ Office Buildings and other Diet-related facilities. The entire Diet complex has an air of dignity that is in keeping with the Diet’s position as the political center of the nation.

General Layout



Structure of the National Diet Building

A nationwide competition was held in 1918 for designs for the Diet Building, and the present structure is based on the winning design. Construction was started in January 1920 and was completed about seventeen years later in November 1936. The north wing, on the right of the picture, is occupied by the House of Councillors, and the south wing, by the House of Representatives

The building has three aboveground stories, while the central tower has nine. The grounds cover an area of 103,007 square meters while the building has a total floor area of 53,464 square meters.

The Committee Room Annex of the House of Councillors is located to the north of the National Diet Building. It was built in December 1969 to create additional committee rooms.

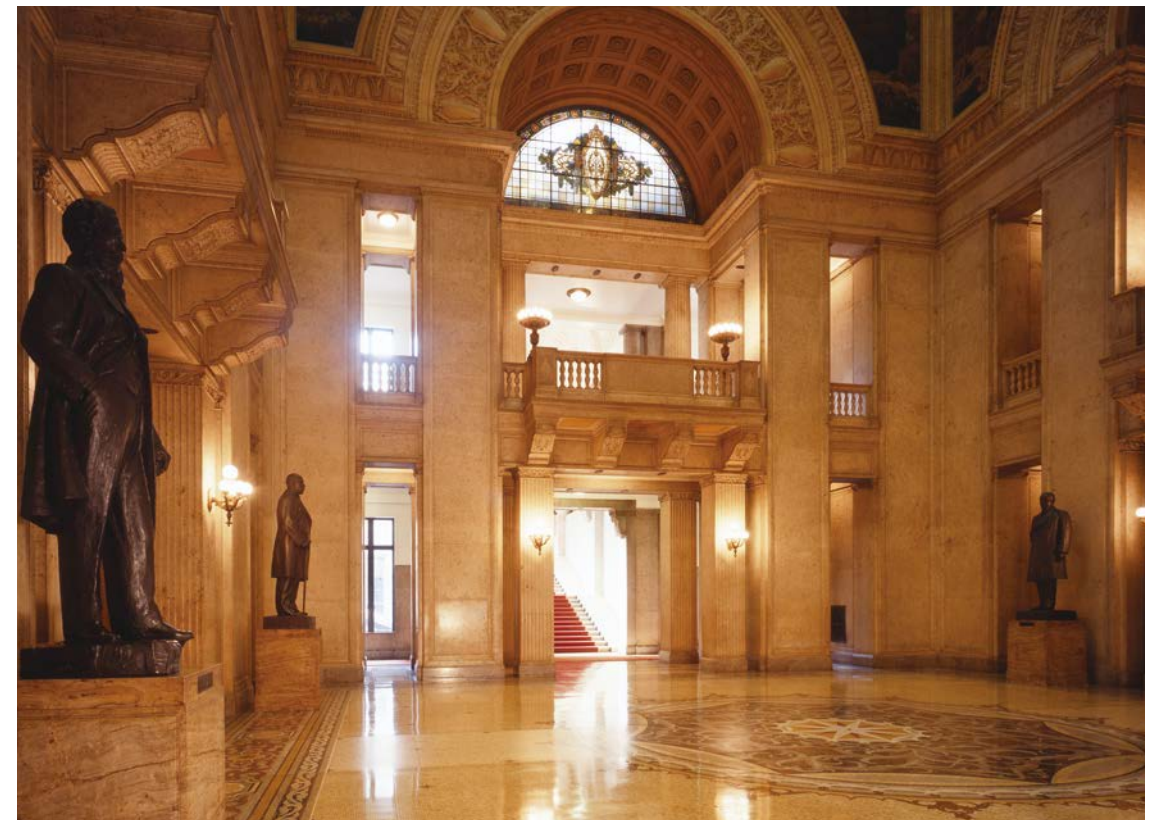
Central Entrance

The bronze doors of the Central Entrance are opened only for His Majesty the Emperor on the day of the Opening Ceremony, for State Guests on official visits, and for newly elected Members on the day of convocation of the first Diet session following their election.



Members' Entrance and Attendance Board

When Members arrive at the Diet, they press their name-buttons on the Attendance Board at the Members' Entrance to indicate that they are present.



Central Hall

The Central Hall, which lies directly under the central tower, is located in the heart of the Diet. The ceiling and windows are made of stained glass, and the marble floor is accented with a beautiful mosaic. It has a floor area of 267.65 square meters, and the ceiling rises to 32.62 meters. Three bronze statues of men who rendered distinguished service in the foundation of the parliamentary system in Japan add to the room's magnificence. A fourth marble pedestal is vacant, as a reminder that the future too will bring forth great statespersons.

Mural Paintings

The mural paintings in the upper corners represent the four seasons in Japan.

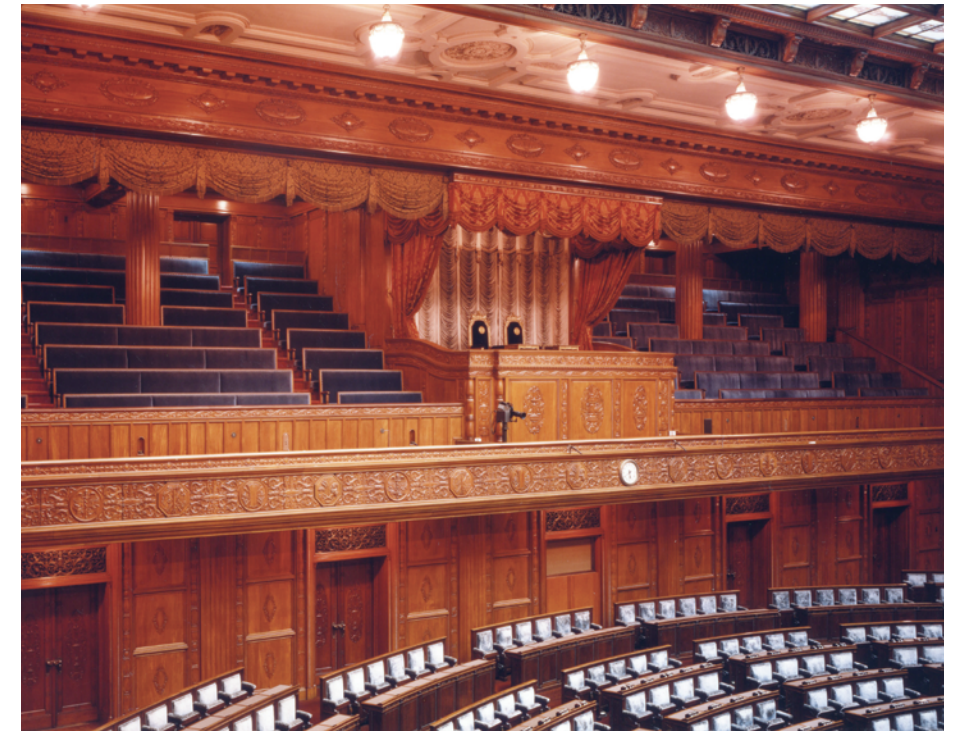




Chamber of the House of Councillors

Located on the second floor of the National Diet Building, this Chamber is the venue for the plenary sittings of the House of Councillors. Arabesque-patterned stained-glass squares adorn the ceiling. The Chamber is 32 meters long and 23 meters wide, and the ceiling is 13 meters high. The podium and the President's seat face the Members' seats which fan out in a semicircle around the podium. There are 460 Members' seats although the legal number of Councillors is 248.

The President's seat is the one with the high back in the center of the dais, and the Secretary General sits to the President's right. Seated below the podium are the stenographers. Behind the President's seat is the Throne of His Majesty the Emperor, for use by His Majesty the Emperor when he attends the Opening Ceremony. A white curtain hangs behind the Throne. There are also two rows of seats flanking the President's seat to the left and right. The seating in the front row is for Ministers of State, and the Prime Minister's seat is the front-row seat immediately to the President's right. The second row of seats is for the staff of the Secretariat of the House of Councillors.



Public Gallery

In principle, the deliberations of both Houses are open to the public. Visitors and members of the press may watch the proceedings from the Public Gallery on the second floor.

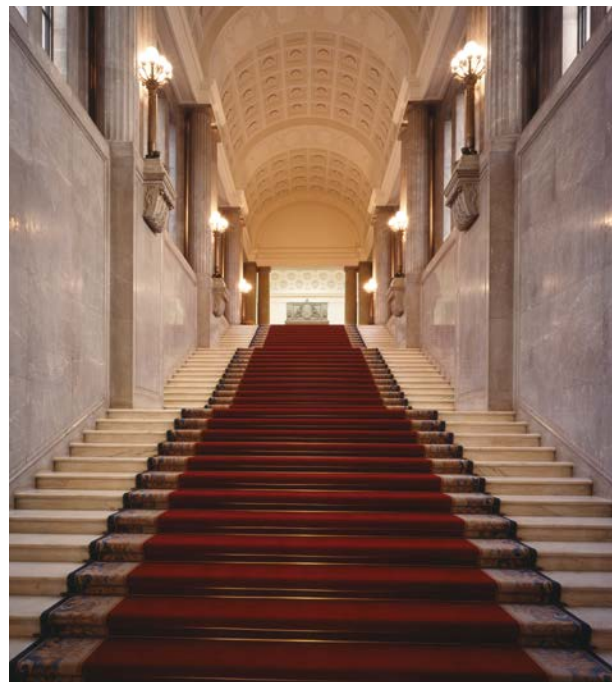


Stained-glass ceiling in the Chamber of the House of Councillors



Emperor's Room

His Majesty the Emperor gives an address at the Opening Ceremony of the Diet. The President and Vice-President of the House of Councillors and the Speaker and Vice-Speaker of the House of Representatives are received by His Majesty the Emperor in this room before the Opening Ceremony.



Central Staircase

The Central Staircase leads from the Central Hall to the Emperor's Room on the third floor and was used only when His Majesty the Emperor was in attendance.



Office of the President of the House of Councillors



Reception Room of the President of the House of Councillors

The President uses this room to receive foreign guests. Meetings of the Committee on Rules and Administration are also held here.

The House of Councillors has fifteen committee rooms: five in the National Diet Building and ten in the Committee Room Annex.



Committee Room No. 1



Committee Room No. 3



Committee Room No. 43



Room for the Conference Committee of Both Houses

This room is located directly above the Central Entrance and is used by the Conference Committee of both Houses.

National Diet

The Constitution of Japan was promulgated on November 3, 1946, and came into force on May 3, 1947. The first session of the Diet based on this new Constitution was convened in the same year on May 20.

Status

The Constitution provides that “The Diet shall be the highest organ of state power, and shall be the sole law-making organ of the State” (Article 41). As it most directly reflects the will of the people, the Diet is the most important organ in the nation. The Diet is also the only organ which can enact laws.

Organization

The National Diet is composed of two Houses: the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors. The bicameral system means that, although each House independently deliberates and decides on their positions on individual bills, the will of the Diet is established when both Houses agree.

Today, the House of Representatives has 465 Members of whom 176 are elected under the proportional representation system and 289 are elected from single-seat constituencies. The term of office of Members of the House of Representatives is 4 years. In contrast, the House of Councillors has 248 Members, of whom 100 are elected by the proportional representation system. The other 148 Members are elected from 45 Prefectural constituencies. There are two Prefectural constituencies comprising two prefectures: Tottori/Shimane and Tokushima/Kochi. The term of office of Members of the House of Councillors is 6 years, half of the Members being elected every 3 years.

Functions

The National Diet is authorized not only to enact laws but also to decide the national budget, approve the conclusion of treaties with other nations, designate the Prime Minister, and initiate amendments to the Constitution.

Each House may also conduct investigations in relation to government; consider petitions submitted by the public; elect its own Presiding Officer and Deputy Presiding Officer, and Chairmen of Standing Committees, as well as establish, if necessary, Special Committees at the beginning of each session; set up its own rules pertaining to meetings, proceedings, and internal discipline; and punish Members for disorderly conduct.

To perform these functions, Members may submit bills and resolutions; pose questions to the Cabinet about general affairs of national administration; and ask questions, debate, and participate in voting regarding bills.

Convocation and Term of Session

The Cabinet decides the convocation of the Diet, which is then convoked by promulgation of the Imperial Rescript. There are three types of sessions: ordinary, extraordinary, and special.

An ordinary session must be convoked once a year in January for a term of 150 days in order to deliberate the national budget and related bills for the next fiscal year.

When an ordinary session is not meeting, an extraordinary session may be convoked whenever considered necessary by the Cabinet, for example, to consider urgent matters or a supplementary budget or bills for countermeasures against a disaster. When a quarter or more of the total Members of either House request that an extraordinary session be convoked, the Cabinet must

convene a meeting. An extraordinary session must be convoked after a general election has been held following the expiration of the term of office for the Members of the House of Representatives, or after a regular election for the Members of the House of Councillors has been held.

A special session must be convoked after a general election following the dissolution of the House of Representatives. Upon convocation of the Diet, the Cabinet resigns en masse, and the two Houses must designate a Prime Minister.

The term of extraordinary and special sessions is determined by a vote of both Houses. The term of session may be extended once for ordinary sessions and twice for special sessions and extraordinary sessions.

Opening Ceremony

At the beginning of each session, an Opening Ceremony attended by the Members of both Houses is held in the Chamber of the House of Councillors in the presence of His Majesty the Emperor. The Speaker of the House of Representatives gives a ceremonial address on behalf of the Members of both Houses and then the Emperor delivers a speech.

Government Policy Addresses

After the Opening Ceremony, Ministers of State deliver speeches at the plenary sitting of each House. In an ordinary session, the Prime Minister delivers an address on general policy. This address is followed by speeches by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of State for Economic and Fiscal Policy. In extraordinary and special sessions, the Prime Minister and, when necessary, other Ministers of State give addresses. Several Members then ask questions on behalf of their own parties and groups, and the Prime Minister or other Ministers of State respond.

Plenary Sitings

Plenary sittings are meetings of all the members of the House. The will of the House is determined at these sessions. The deliberations of each House are, as a rule, open to the public, and business cannot be transacted in either House unless one-third or more of the total House membership is present. All matters are decided by a majority of those present, except as elsewhere provided. There are four ways of voting at plenary sittings at the House of Councillors: oral (Members are asked whether they have any objections), standing (Members are requested to rise if they are in favor of a question), open-ballot (Members in favor of the bill cast white ballot slips with their names on them and Members in opposition cast blue slips), and push-button (Members cast their vote by pushing the “approval” or “objection” button at their seats). Generally, plenary sittings begin at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at the House of Councillors and at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday at the House of Representatives.

Standing Committees, Special Committees, Research Committees, and Commission on the Constitution

In each House, there are two kinds of Committees: Standing Committees and Special Committees. In addition to these two, the House of Councillors has Research Committees.

The House of Councillors has the following 17 Standing Committees: (1) Cabinet; (2) General Affairs; (3) Judicial Affairs; (4) Foreign Affairs and Defense; (5) Financial Affairs; (6) Education, Culture and Science; (7) Health, Welfare and Labor; (8) Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; (9) Economy and Industry; (10) Land and Transport; (11) Environment; (12) Fundamental National Policies; (13) Budget; (14) Audit; (15) Oversight of Administration; (16) Rules and Administration; and (17) Discipline.

Every Member must serve on at least one Standing Committee. Special Committees are established for each Diet session by vote of each House when the House regards it as necessary. Research Committees are unique to the House of Councillors and are established at the plenary sitting of the extraordinary session convoked after the regular election for the Members of the House of Councillors. Research Committees carry out long-term comprehensive studies relating to fundamental matters of state administration; however, they are not empowered to examine bills.

Membership of Standing Committees, Special Committees, and Research Committees is allocated to the various political parties and groups in proportion to the number of seats they each hold in the House. The appointment of Members to Committees is performed by the President based on recommendations from the political parties and groups.

Additionally, deliberations on proposals or procedural matters related to changing the Constitution are handled by the Commission on the Constitution.

No business may be transacted by a Committee unless at least one-half of its members are present, and all matters are decided by a majority vote of those present. No persons other than news reporters and others authorized by the Committee Chairman are permitted to observe a Committee meeting.

Committees conduct detailed examinations of the budget, treaties, bills, and petitions based on expert knowledge in preparation for the plenary sittings. They also conduct investigations into those aspects of government which come under their respective spheres of work. The Committee on Fundamental National Policies is unique in that it meets jointly with the House of Representatives' committee of the same name, and functions as a venue for debate between the Prime Minister and opposition party leaders.

Investigations in Relation to Government

Both Houses conduct general investigations in relation to government in order to effectively enact laws and oversee the administrative affairs of the government. To conduct investigations, Committees hear explanations from government authorities and others concerned, ask questions to the government, and request documents. They may also demand the presence and testimony of witnesses and voluntary testifiers, and dispatch members to conduct investigations. As a result of these investigations, they may propose bills and pass resolutions demanding that the government take measures.

Petitions

Petitions can be filed with either House. Presenting petitions to the Diet is a right guaranteed to every citizen by the Constitution. Any person wishing to make a petition should submit it to the Presiding Officer with an introduction of a House Member. The petition is then examined by the Committee concerned. Petitions which are considered appropriate are passed by the House and then sent to the Cabinet which then takes appropriate measures. The Cabinet must report annually to both Houses on the status of the review of petitions.

Relationship between the Two Houses

Establishment of the will of the Diet requires a concurrent decision of both Houses. For example, a bill which is passed by the House of Representatives and sent to the House of Councillors becomes a law when the latter passes it, and vice versa. When the House of Councillors amends a bill originally sent from the House of Representatives, the bill is referred back to the House of Representatives, and it becomes a law if the House of Representatives agrees to the amendment. If the two Houses do not agree, they may call a meeting of the Conference Committee of both Houses to make the necessary adjustments so that an agreement can be reached.

If no agreement can be reached between the two Houses on the budget, treaties, bills, or the designation of a Prime Minister, the superiority of the House of Representatives is recognized in accordance with the Constitution. For example, a bill which is passed by the House of Representatives, and upon which the House of Councillors makes a decision different from that of the former, becomes a law when passed once again by the House of Representatives by a majority of two-thirds or more of the Members present. In the case of the budget, treaties, and designation of a Prime Minister, when the House of Councillors makes a decision different from that of the House of Representatives and no agreement can be reached even through a meeting of the Conference Committee of both Houses, or when the House of Councillors fails to take final action within a certain time after receipt of the bill, the decision of the House of Representatives becomes that of the Diet. The budget bill is considered first by the House of Representatives.

Emergency Session of the House of Councillors

When the House of Representatives is dissolved, the House of Councillors is closed at the same time, and the functions of the Diet stop. In times of national emergency, however, the Cabinet may convoke an emergency session of the House of Councillors during the period between the dissolution of the House of Representatives and the convocation of a special session of the Diet following the general election of Members of the House of Representatives. Because the House of Councillors executes proxy for Diet functions at the emergency session, measures taken are provisional and become null and void unless confirmed by the House of Representatives within a period of 10 days after the opening of the next session of the Diet. Such emergency sessions have been convoked only two times in the past.

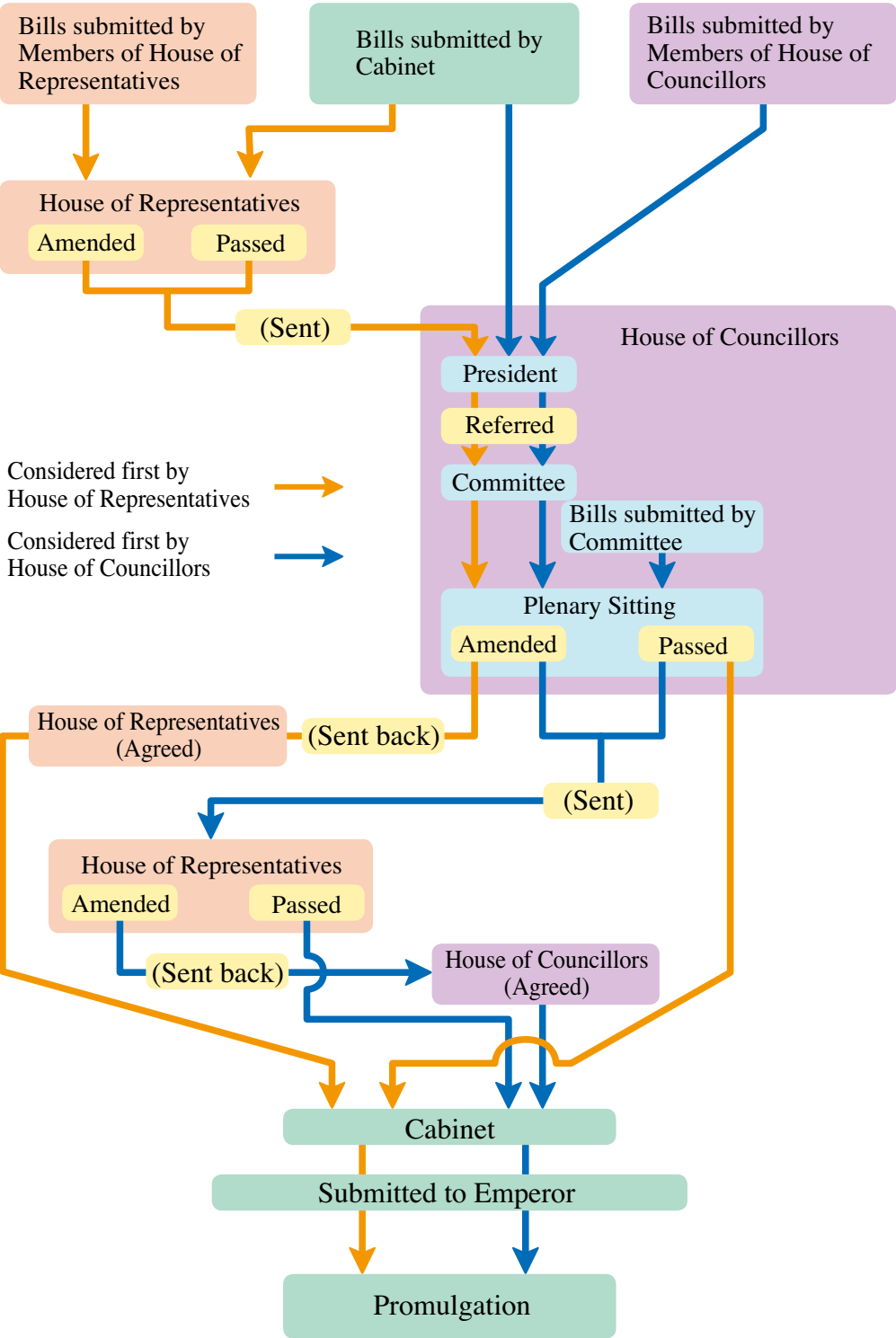
Judge Impeachment

The Diet has two organs that specialize in judge impeachment matters. The Judge Indictment Committee institutes dismissal suits against judges, and the Judge Impeachment Court tries judges against whom removal proceedings have been initiated. Both organs are composed of Members of the two Houses.

Secretariat and Legislative Bureau

Each House has a Secretariat which conducts the clerical affairs of the House. Within the Secretariat, some staff conduct research necessary for Committee activities under the direction of the Committee Chairmen. Each House also has a Legislative Bureau to assist Members in drafting bills.

Legislative Procedure



1. Submission of a Bill

Bills may be submitted either by Diet Members or by the Cabinet. Bills are signed by the Member proposing the bill and other Members supporting the bill and are presented to the Presiding Officer of the proposing Member's House.

Cabinet bills are presented to the Presiding Officer of either House by the Prime Minister.

2. Reference of a Bill

The Presiding Officer then refers the bill to the appropriate Standing Committee. Deliberations by the Committee may be omitted in the case of urgent matters. In the case of major legislation, however, the purpose of the bill is explained in a plenary sitting before the bill is referred to a Committee.

3. Committee Deliberations

- (1) Explanation of purpose of bill
- (2) Questions
- (3) Public hearings (meetings to hear views of experts) and combined meetings (meetings of related Committees)
- (4) Hearings of voluntary testifiers
- (5) Debate
- (6) Voting

4. Bill Submitted by a Committee

A Committee can present a bill concerning matters under its jurisdiction to the Presiding Officer under the name of the Committee Chairman.

5. Plenary Sitting Deliberations

- (1) Report by Committee Chairman
- (2) Debate
- (3) Voting

6. Meeting of a Conference Committee of Both Houses

When the two Houses reach different decisions regarding a bill, the Conference Committee of both Houses meets to consider a compromise. The compromise bill drafted by the Conference Committee becomes a law if approved by both Houses.

7. Submission to the Emperor

A law is submitted to His Majesty the Emperor through the Cabinet by the Presiding Officer of the House which was the last to pass the bill.



Spring



Autumn



Summer



Winter

Area Surrounding the National Diet Building

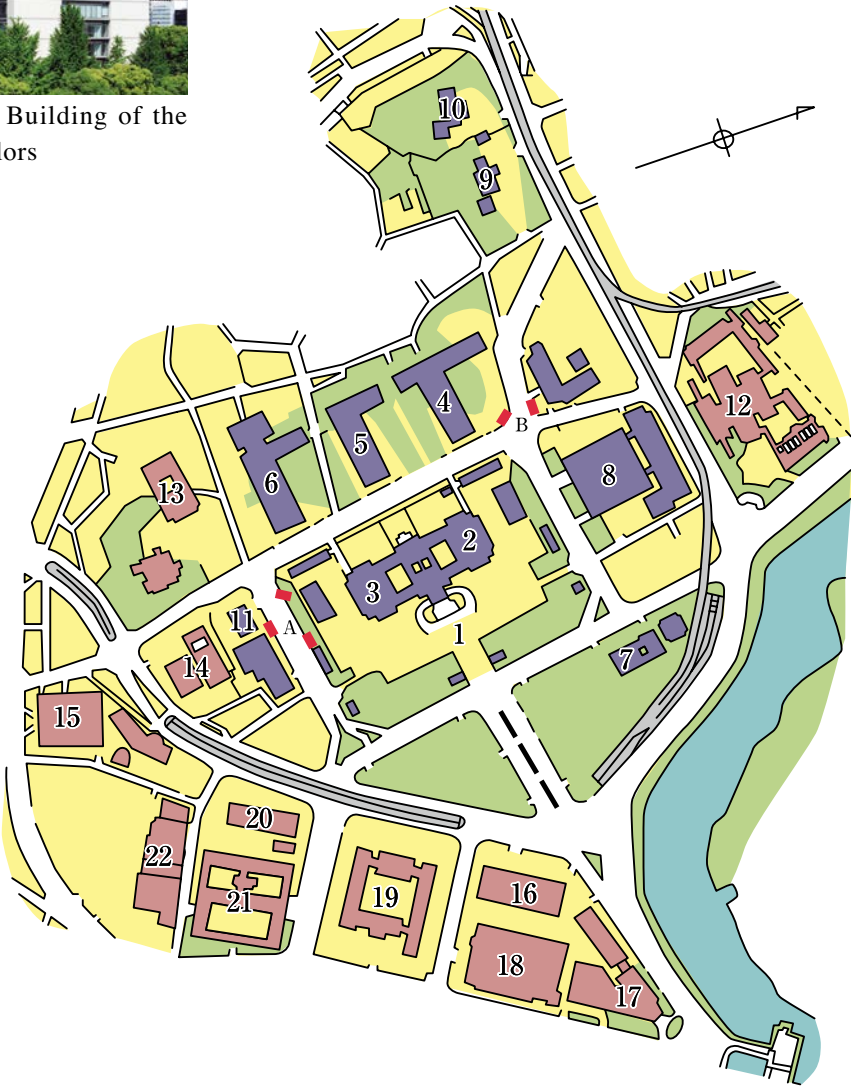


Official Residence of the President of the House of Councillors



Members' Office Building of the House of Councillors

Nearest Subway Stations
(A) Kokkai-gijidomae
(Marunouchi and Chiyoda Lines)
(B) Nagatacho
(Yurakucho, Hanzomon, and Namboku Lines)



- 1. National Diet Building
- 2. House of Councillors
- 3. House of Representatives
- 4. Members' Office Building of the House of Councillors
- 5. Second Members' Office Building of the House of Representatives
- 6. First Members' Office Building of the House of Representatives
- 7. Parliamentary Museum
- 8. National Diet Library
- 9. Official Residence of the President of the House of Councillors
- 10. Official Residence of the Speaker of the House of Representatives
- 11. Diet Press Center
- 12. Supreme Court
- 13. Official Residence of the Prime Minister
- 14. Cabinet Office
- 15. Japan Patent Office
- 16. Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism
- 17. Metropolitan Police Department
- 18. National Public Safety Commission (National Police Agency)
Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport
- 19. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 20. Cabinet Legislation Bureau
Cabinet Office
- 21. Ministry of Finance
- 22. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology
Financial Services Agency
Board of Audit