

FEATURE

Japan's Fuji Electric workers detained in China, possibly over rare earths

[KYODO NEWS](#)

Jun 25, 2026 - 02:28 [All, Japan, World](#)
<https://english.kyodonews.net/articles/-/78504>

TOKYO/BEIJING - Two Japanese employees of Fuji Electric Co. have been detained in China since last month, possibly over attempts to take rare earth-related products overseas, sources familiar with the matter said Wednesday, as Beijing has tightened export controls on such items.

The Japanese government confirmed that they were both detained in May in the northeastern port city of Dalian for allegedly violating a law regarding the smuggling of prohibited imports or exports, without disclosing further details for privacy reasons.

The fresh detention of Japanese citizens came amid heightened Sino-Japanese tensions over a diplomatic row following Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's remarks on Taiwan.

The duo, at least one of whom is a worker of the major electric company's China unit, were detained over "the same case," according to the sources and the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told a press conference that Japan's Consulate-General in Shenyang and Consular Office in Dalian had been informed by local customs authorities that the two were detained on May 18 and May 25, respectively.

The government will communicate with the Japanese nationals concerned and related parties and "respond appropriately from the standpoint of protecting nationals overseas,"

Kihara said, adding that the two are not experiencing any health issues.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun confirmed Wednesday that two Japanese nationals had been detained for violating Chinese laws and that Beijing had informed Tokyo about the details of the case.

At a regular press conference, Guo urged Japan to "advise its nationals and businesses in China to abide by China's laws and regulations."

The recent detention could further heighten concerns among Japanese companies seeking to conduct business in China amid the diplomatic dispute, which was triggered by Takaichi's parliamentary remarks last November regarding how Japan might respond to an attack on Taiwan by mainland China.

In January, China strengthened controls of Japan-bound shipments of dual-use items that can be used for both civilian and military purposes, including rare earths.

China dominates the global supply of rare earths, which are essential for manufacturing high-tech products ranging from electric vehicles to weapons.

The Chinese Commerce Ministry has said only a small number of Japanese entities are targeted by the export curbs and that "normal economic and trade exchanges" between the two Asian countries will not be affected. The ministry

also explained that the steps aim to curb Japan's "remilitarization" and nuclear ambitions.

However, the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China said earlier this month the measures have even affected some items "purely for civilian purposes."

Exports of rare-earth magnets to Japan have dropped, indicating the effects of tighter controls.

In July last year, a Chinese court sentenced a Japanese man working for Astellas Pharma Inc. to three years and six months in prison over his engagement in spying activities.

The former executive at the pharmaceutical company's China unit was detained in March 2023, just ahead of his scheduled return to Japan. He had served as a senior official of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China.

The ongoing diplomatic feud between the two Asian neighbors stems from Takaichi's parliamentary comments that suggested an attack by mainland China on Taiwan, a self-ruled democratic island Beijing claims, could prompt a

response by the Japan Self-Defense Forces in support of the United States.

In a development possibly related to the case involving the Fuji Electric employees, the Chinese Commerce Ministry announced measures on Wednesday to encourage citizens to report on violations of critical mineral export controls.

Tip-offs about illegal acts such as smuggling will be accepted online and via a hotline, and the ministry may reward whistleblowers if their claims are verified, according to the announcement. The measures will be implemented on July 1.

Related coverage:

[Japan government urged to probe unauthorized flow of prized citrus saplings to China](#)

[China travel agencies resume Japan group tours, some later halt sales](#)

[Philippines says Chinese structure removed from disputed S. China Sea shoal](#)

Jun 25, 2026 [KYODO NEWS](#)