

Japan - Majority supports suspension of operations at Hamaoka plant

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Over 60 percent of public supports suspension of operations at Hamaoka plant: Mainichi poll

Over 60 percent of Japanese support the government's decision to suspend operations at the Hamaoka nuclear power station in Shizuoka Prefecture in the wake of the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, a Mainichi poll suggests.

In the weekend survey conducted by the Mainichi on May 14 and 15, 66 percent of respondents backed Prime Minister Naoto Kan's recent decision to halt operation of Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant in the prefectural city of Omaezaki, while 25 percent answered that they did not support the shutdown.

Fifty-four percent answered there was no need for nuclear facilities other than Hamaoka to be suspended, while 34 percent answered that the government should halt operation at another nuclear power plant or plants besides Hamaoka.

Despite strong public support for its decision to suspend the Hamaoka plant, the Cabinet's rating remained low at 27 percent, up five points from the previous survey in April, while the disapproval rating remained the same as a month earlier at 54 percent.

Nuclear power generation has covered around 30 percent of the country's overall electricity demand; however, with the crisis at the crippled Fukushima plant showing no sign of settling down, the number of individuals who believe the government should move toward reducing the amount of nuclear power stations in the country increased by six points from April to 47 percent, while 31 percent, nine points less than the previous poll, said the country has no choice but to depend on nuclear energy. Only 12 percent, 1 point less than the previous survey, said all nuclear power plants in Japan should be abolished.

With regard to the Hamaoka plant, 78 percent of respondents supporting Kan's Cabinet backed the decision to halt operation of the facility, and 61 percent of those who do not support the administration also approved of the move.

By party, the decision was approved of by 79 percent of supporters of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, 58 percent of Liberal Democratic Party supporters, and 55 percent of New Komeito supporters.

Meanwhile, 50 percent of respondents, three points less than the previous poll, answered that the prime minister should step down after the needs of areas hit hard by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami settle down, and 25 percent said he should resign immediately.

The number of people who disapproved of Kan's Cabinet because of the lack of leadership reached 54 percent — the highest level since he assumed the position in June last year.

Asked what they think of the government's information disclosure on radiation leaks from the Fukushima nuclear plant, 64 percent answered they do not trust official reports on the issue, largely exceeding the 26 percent who believe the government is telling the truth about the crisis.

Forty-eight percent of respondents supported a tax increase to secure funds for the restoration of disaster areas, while 41 percent said they were against it.

Four percent of respondents were highly satisfied with the government's relief and recovery efforts in disaster-struck areas and 46 percent were fairly satisfied, while 44 percent expressed dissatisfaction.

With regard to the timing of the next House of Representatives election, 47 percent, up 11 points against the figure registered in February before the disaster, said there is no need to call an election soon. The number of individuals who think the election should take place as soon as possible had a large decrease from 60 percent to 41 percent.

Random numbers were used to contact 1,517 households with eligible voters, and 1,043 people responded.

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<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/news/20110516p2a00m0na035000c.html>

56% want govt to hike crisis funds / 59% unhappy with efforts since quake

A majority of people expressed dissatisfaction with the recently decided compensation framework for nuclear accidents, saying the government should shoulder a bigger burden, according to a recent survey conducted by The Yomiuri Shimbun.

Of those responding in the survey, 56 percent said they believed government funds should be increased, while 33 percent felt this was unnecessary.

Under the framework, the government's share of the burden of compensation is essentially limited to 120 billion yen per nuclear power plant for accidents caused by earthquakes or tsunami.

In the survey, carried out from Friday to Sunday, computer-generated telephone numbers were used to determine households with at least one eligible voter. A total of 1,743 households were approached and valid responses received from 1,073, or 62 percent, of them.

Asked what they thought about the government's relief and restoration efforts following the Great East Japan Earthquake, 59 percent believed they were inadequate, far greater than the 44 percent who answered similarly in the previous survey, conducted April 1 to 3.

Respondents who felt the government was doing a good job totaled 33 percent, down from 43 percent in the previous survey.

A hefty 73 percent of respondents expressed dissatisfaction over the government's response to the crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, up from 61 percent in the previous survey. Those who expressed satisfaction fell to 19 percent from 27 percent.

These figures apparently indicate the public is becoming more frustrated that restoration work is not going smoothly although two months have passed since the massive earthquake, and the government has not been able to say when the nuclear crisis will be brought under control.

Prime Minister Naoto Kan, however, won support over the suspension of the Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Omaezaki, Shizuoka Prefecture. Of those responding, 68 percent supported this action, while 25 percent did not.

Fifty percent of respondents, down from 60 percent in the previous survey, said they supported tax increases to help fund restoration work, while 46 percent opposed this, up from 32 percent in April.

Among those who supported tax increases, 52 percent said the consumption tax rate should be raised, followed by corporate tax, 24 percent, and income tax, 21 percent.

The support rate for the Kan Cabinet dropped a percentage point to 30 percent, while the disapproval rate rose to 60 percent from 56 percent in April.

A large majority—75 percent—believe Kan has not been exercising leadership in the government's responses to the earthquake and nuclear crisis. This was an increase from 69 percent in the previous survey. Those who thought otherwise totaled 20 percent, down from 24 percent.

When asked "Until when do you want Kan to continue as prime minister?" 39 percent chose the answer, "Around summer this year when the current Diet session ends." The current ordinary Diet session is scheduled to end on June 22.

Other answers were: "Until fall next year when his term as Democratic Party of Japan president expires" (22 percent), "Until the end of the year" (16 percent), and "Until summer next year when his term as House of Representatives member ends" (13 percent).

However, 67 percent of respondents said they "cannot understand" why some DPJ members, mainly in groups supporting former DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa, have demanded Kan's resignation as prime minister and DPJ president, while 27 percent said they thought this was understandable.

A total of 56 percent respondents thought the DPJ and the opposition Liberal Democratic Party should form a grand coalition to deal with restoration work and the nuclear crisis, down from 64 percent in the April survey. Thirty-eight percent disagreed.

On party support rates, both the DPJ and the LDP received 20 percent, followed by New Komeito (5 percent), Your Party (3 percent), the Japanese Communist Party (2 percent) and the Social Democratic Party (1 percent). Those who supported no party accounted for 47 percent.

Asked which political parties they would vote for in the proportionate representation section of the next lower house election, 15 percent said they would support the DPJ, while 29 percent said they would back the LDP.

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110516004766.htm>
