

Japan: Abe Cabinet approval rating drops to 55%

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The approval rating of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Cabinet fell nine percentage points to 55 percent, the lowest since its launch in December in 2012, according to a nationwide opinion poll recently conducted by *The Yomiuri Shimbun*.

While the approval rating showed a drop from 64 percent in the previous poll in November, the disapproval rating rose by 15 percentage points from 23 percent to 38 percent in the latest poll, conducted from Friday through Sunday.

As for reasons for disapproval, the largest portion of respondents, or 40 percent, said, "Because it is a Liberal Democratic Party-led administration." The figure is the highest since the launch of the Cabinet, rising from 26 percent in the previous poll.

The approval rating of the party also declined, from 42 percent to 36 percent.

The drop in approval ratings of both the Cabinet and the LDP likely reflects public discontent with the ruling parties' handling of the Diet over the law on protecting specially designated state secrets.

Of the 1,068 people responding to the poll, 39 percent support the new law, while 50 percent oppose it.

Approval ratings for major political parties were 6 percent for the Democratic Party of Japan, up from 4 percent in the previous poll; 4 percent for New Komeito, unchanged from the previous figure; and 3 percent for the Japanese Communist Party, up from 2 percent.

Regarding China's declaring an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea, which encompasses the Senkaku Islands, 85 percent of the respondents consider it a "threat," with 52 percent saying it is a "serious threat" and 33 percent saying they think it is "somewhat of a threat."

Eighty-three percent said they support the government requesting that China retract the claim of an ADIZ.

Concerning the issue, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden held talks with Abe, and the two confirmed the close cooperation between Tokyo and Washington. Eighty-two percent of respondents approved the commitment.

Regarding the Cabinet's policy of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' air station in Futenma, Okinawa Prefecture, to the Henoko district in Nago, in the same prefecture, 50 percent support it and 35 percent do not.

In the previous poll, 74 percent answered that a reduced tax rate should be introduced along with the consumption tax hike. The figure rose to 78 percent in the latest poll.

The poll was conducted by calling computer-generated, random phone numbers. Of 1,716

households with eligible voters, 62 percent gave valid answers.

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* <http://the-japan-news.com/news/article/0000860476>