

Japan: Crisis in the DPJ over Prime Min. Kan Resignation

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Prime Min. Kan, DPJ Execs Discuss Timing of Resignation

Tokyo, June 5 (Jiji Press)—Embattled Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan held talks with government and ruling party executives on Sunday to discuss specifically when he will step down, after having made up his mind to leave office in the summer.

The officials agreed that the Kan government will compile a fiscal 2011 second supplementary budget to pay for reconstruction of areas devastated by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami and aim for enactment of legislation to enable government bond issuance needed to implement the fiscal 2011 regular budget.

However, it is uncertain whether things will play out according to Kan's wishes, because the Liberal Democratic Party, the largest opposition party, demands that Kan leave office by the end of June. The second extra budget should be drawn up by a new government, the LDP insists.

Sunday's meeting brought together Kan, Katsuya Okada, secretary-general of Kan's ruling Democratic Party of Japan, Jun Azumi, chair of the DPJ Diet Affairs Committee, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano.

Kan said in the meeting he "wants to achieve" the compilation of the second extra budget and enactment of government bond legislation, according to sources.

Jiji Press, June 5, 2011

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2011060500237>

Kan's foes persist in pursuing resignation

Executives of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, members of the Cabinet and figures from the opposition issued public calls Saturday for Prime Minister Naoto Kan to step down, just two days after a no-confidence motion against the Cabinet was voted down.

Some within Kan's own party are trying to rally DPJ lawmakers to support their efforts to topple the

prime minister.

Comments made by Kan during a meeting of DPJ lawmakers held just before the vote were interpreted by some as an indication of his intention to resign soon. At a press conference after the vote, Kan indicated he planned to remain in office for the foreseeable future, which in some quarters was seen as a reversal on his earlier words.

Yoshikatsu Nakayama, a parliamentary secretary of economy, trade and industry and a senior member of a group of DPJ lawmakers led by former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, said on a TV Asahi program Saturday morning, "We're determined to hold a general meeting of all Diet members of our party and press the prime minister to resign."

Convening a general meeting of all DPJ members of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors requires the support of at least one-third of those lawmakers. Nakayama indicated a list of signatures will be submitted to the party leadership early next week.

"We've already collected signatures from more than one-third of our party's lawmakers," Nakayama said on the TV program.

Appearing on the same program and also critical of Kan was Shu Watanabe, chairman of the DPJ's National Rallying and Canvassing Committee and a member of the party's Standing Officers Council.

"What the prime minister said in the meeting of our party's lawmakers prior to the vote on the no-confidence motion was nothing less than a pledge to step down. I don't think he's got much time left," Watanabe said.

From the opposition camp, Nobuteru Ishihara, secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party, appeared on a BS Asahi TV program Saturday. "We hope to see Prime Minister Kan step down soon, preferably by the end of June," he said.

Asked about potential developments after Kan's resignation should that come to pass, the LDP's No. 2 mentioned two possibilities—an LDP-DPJ grand coalition, or a new DPJ cabinet with cooperation from the LDP.

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Kan digs in, others speak out

Kan, for his part, reiterated his intention to stay on as leader Saturday.

Kan met with Keisuke Tsumura and Hironao Honda, both members of the lower house and of Kan's intraparty group, at the prime minister's official residence.

"I'd like to run the government with input from a wide range of people in our party," Kan was quoted as telling the two.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano, appearing on a TV Tokyo program on Saturday, said, "Prime Minister Kan has no intention of remaining in office for very long, I believe."

The chief government spokesman denied Kan wants to stay in office until the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant is stabilized, or even until a planned visit to the White House in September.

"There's a Japan-U.S. summit meeting scheduled for September, but Prime Minister Kan has never said he himself will attend the meeting," Edano said.

On the same program, DPJ Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Jun Azumi seemed to predict Kan's resignation was around the corner. "My impression is that Mr. Kan will make a big decision sometime this summer," Azumi said.

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, who helped compose a memorandum agreed upon by Kan and Hatoyama before Thursday's vote that helped Kan secure the support of Hatoyama's group, spoke to reporters in Singapore on Friday night. The memorandum, he said, was based "on the assumption the premier would step down."

The Yomiuri Shimbun , June 5, 2011

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110604003130.htm>

Kan denies early exit plan / Opposition bloc, some DPJ members furious over 'swindle'

Prime Minister Naoto Kan has denied any intent to resign soon and instead suggested he plans to stay in power at least until the end of the year, sparking criticism from both the ruling and opposition parties.

Kan survived a no-confidence motion against his Cabinet on Thursday only hours after hinting he would step down once reconstruction from the March 11 disaster is put on a stable track. Yet, the prime minister later the same day appeared to change his tune, expressing willingness to stay in office for the foreseeable future.

"We need to formulate the second supplementary budget and build a system for reconstruction [from the Great East Japan Earthquake]. We also need to work harder to steadily bring the nuclear crisis under control," Kan said at a press conference Thursday night.

"We are in the first stages of creating a new society," he said.

As for the timing of his resignation, Kan indicated he would remain in power until the so-called Step Two is completed at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, a stage that is scheduled to come sometime from mid-October to mid-January according to projections by the government and plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co.

"I'll do everything in my power to stop the radiation leaks and achieve [the Step Two] goal as soon as possible. That is my responsibility," Kan said at the press conference.

However, if Kan does not step down at an early date, calls for his resignation are certain to rekindle. On Friday, lawmakers slammed Kan not only from the opposition parties but even from within his Cabinet and the ruling Democratic Party of Japan.

At a Cabinet meeting early Friday morning, Kan told his ministers, "As the Diet may stay in session until the end of the year, I want you to submit legislation without pause."

At Thursday's press conference, Kan said the current Diet session, now scheduled to close June 22, could be extended through the year-end.

"If we are to respond to the people's desire that the Diet will be there to discuss important issues whenever it's necessary, we need to have the Diet session continue throughout the year," the prime minister said.

Observers interpreted these remarks as implying Kan does not plan to step down soon and intends to stay in office.

Prior to the no-confidence vote Thursday, Kan reportedly promised his predecessor Yukio Hatoyama he would quit soon. During their meeting, the two also reached an agreement aimed at preventing a split in the DPJ.

Kan later said, however, "We didn't talk about anything except what's in the memorandum."

Hatoyama later expressed frustration with Kan.

"Right before the no-confidence vote, he said he 'would quit,' but once the motion was defeated, he started saying he 'wouldn't quit.' The sitting prime minister shouldn't be a swindler," Hatoyama told reporters in front of his home. "I should've voted for the no-confidence motion."

Hatoyama claimed that during their meeting Thursday Kan agreed to step down once the compilation of the second supplementary budget for fiscal 2011 and the passage of other major reconstruction efforts came into sight. In return, Hatoyama opposed the no-confidence motion against Kan's Cabinet.

Members of Hatoyama's intraparty group met Friday morning and agreed to demand the Kan Cabinet resign quickly at a general meeting of DPJ lawmakers. The general assembly can be convened through the agreement of one-third of the party's Diet members.

Meanwhile, Cabinet ministers have had mixed reactions toward the changes in Kan's attitude and remarks.

Ryu Matsumoto, state minister for disaster management, hinted he is in favor of early resignation, saying Kan's stepping down would come in late June. Koichiro Gemba, state minister in charge of national policy, said, "The prime minister isn't attached to the post."

Meanwhile, Kaoru Yosano, state minister in charge of economic and fiscal policy, defended Kan. "It's a matter of course for a prime minister in power to try to keep his job to fulfill his duties," he said.

Opposition parties, however, had nothing but criticism.

Liberal Democratic Party President Sadakazu Tanigaki told party members at a meeting Friday, "I question why [Kan] expressed intention to remain in power even after he announced he would step down."

"We'll cooperate on a basic disaster reconstruction law, but we can't extend any other cooperation to a lame duck administration," Tanigaki said.

The Yomiuri Shimbun , June 4, 2011

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T110603005363.htm>

