



Bodies recovered at DR Congo mine accident site

Navalny's allies claim symbolic council seat wins in regional polls

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TOKYO: (From L to R) Japan's former foreign minister Fumio Kishida, outgoing Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, newly elected leader of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Yoshihide Suga and former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba celebrate after ruling party's leadership election in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Japan ruling party picks successor to Abe

Next prime minister will face a raft of complicated challenges

TOKYO: Japan's ruling party voted yesterday for its next leader, with top government adviser Yoshihide Suga all but certain to win and replace Shinzo Abe as the country's new prime minister. Chief cabinet secretary Suga is heavily tipped to win the Liberal Democratic Party ballot, with a parliamentary vote tomorrow set to elevate him to the country's top job.

Even before he formally announced his run, the 71-year-old had won the support of key factions within the ruling party, with his candidacy viewed as promising stability and a continuation of Abe's policies. The LDP has chosen to poll only its lawmakers in parliament and three representatives from each of the country's 47 regions, eschewing a broader ballot including rank-and-file members that officials said would have taken too long to organise.

The format is expected to further bolster Suga against his two competitors, former defence minister Shigeru Ishiba and LDP policy chief Fumio Kishida.

Ishiba is popular with Japanese voters, but viewed with suspicion by some in his party for having once left its ranks and also challenging Abe's

leadership. Kishida was formerly viewed as Abe's favoured successor, but appeared to fall from grace in the months before the prime minister decided to step down.



Abe smashed records

Abe, who smashed records as Japan's longest-serving prime minister with more than eight years in power over two terms, has declined to endorse any one candidate. He made the shock announcement he would step down with a year left in his mandate in late August, saying a recurrence of the ulcerative

colitis he has long battled made it impossible for him to stay on.

If Suga succeeds him, analysts say no major policy reversals are on the agenda, and the candidate himself has said his run is intended to ensure a continuation of Abe's key policies.

Snap election?

The next prime minister will face a raft of complicated challenges. The country was already in recession before the coronavirus pandemic, and many of the gains of the signature Abenomics economic policy are now in danger.

Suga has said kickstarting the economy will be a top priority, along with containing the virus — essential if the postponed Tokyo 2020 Olympics are to open as planned in July 2021. There are also diplomatic challenges on the agenda, including protecting the US alliance and navigating ties with China as global opinion hardens against Beijing after the coronavirus and unrest in Hong Kong.

"Now is a difficult time for Japan as the US is

putting pressure on China," said Makoto Iokibe, a professor of political and diplomatic history at University of Hyogo. "But simply following the path Washington is pursuing and raising tensions with China is not in Japan's interest," he told AFP.

One key unknown remains whether Suga will decide to call a snap general election to consolidate his position and avoid being seen as a caretaker facing a new vote in a year — when Abe's mandate would have ended. Several senior government officials have mooted the possibility, perhaps as early as October, but Suga has been circumspect so far. A large part of Japan's fractious opposition has recently come together in a new bloc, hoping to pose a stronger challenge to a ruling party that has held power for all but a few years in the last six decades.

But the LDP would still be heavily favoured in any new elections, even if Suga's personal appeal to voters remains an open question. "Mr Suga is capable of implementing policies by controlling bureaucrats, but his weakness is in winning the heart of the public," said Iokibe. — AFP

Israel to reimpose lockdown as WHO reports record cases

JERUSALEM: Israel said it will reimpose a national lockdown to battle a coronavirus surge, as the number of daily infections around the world reached a record high. Britain, France, Austria and the Czech Republic also reported spikes, as global cases rapidly approached 29 million with more than 921,000 Covid-19 deaths, according to an AFP tally. The Israel lockdown will last three weeks starting Friday, keeping people to within 500 metres (yards) of their homes. It is the first developed economy to take such drastic steps to contain a second wave of infections.

"I know these measures will exact a heavy price from all of us," said Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu. The World Health Organization reported 307,930 new cases worldwide on Sunday, the highest daily figure in its database since the beginning of the pandemic.

The surge has sparked concern in Europe, where Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz warned that his country was facing "the beginning of the second wave". The Czech Republic has also faced a surge, with one epidemiologist saying over the weekend that at the current rate, cases could overwhelm hospitals.

New restrictions are set to come into force across England, with social gatherings limited to no more than six people. Other

parts of the world are still battling their first coronavirus waves, including some of the most populous nations such as Indonesia, where new restrictions came into effect yesterday.

'Reckless and selfish'

Governments are being forced to balance the devastating economic cost of lockdowns with the need to contain the deadly virus. Schools in some European nations were set to open on Monday, with millions returning to classrooms in Italy, Greece and Romania.

And Saudi Arabia announced it would partially lift its suspension of international flights from September 15, six months after travel curbs were imposed. South Korea's coronavirus restrictions will also be eased temporarily in the greater Seoul area from yesterday after cases declined.

Many nations have seen backlash and protests against lockdowns. In Australia on Sunday, police arrested dozens at an anti-lockdown rally in Melbourne after crowds defied stay-at-home orders.

That rally followed demonstrations in Germany and Poland on Saturday, which were attended by anti-vaccine campaigners, conspiracy theorists and far-right activists. Such rallies have also been organised frequently in the United States, the hardest-hit nation in the world with more than 6.5 million infections and 194,000 deaths. President Donald Trump is under pressure over his handling of the outbreak, and was slammed for holding big rallies over the weekend, including an indoor event on Sunday.

"Tonight, President Donald Trump is taking reckless and selfish actions that are putting countless lives in danger here in Nevada," state governor Steve Sisolak, who is from the rival Democratic Party, tweeted ahead of the Sunday rally. "The President appears to have forgotten that this country is still in the middle of a global pandemic." — AFP



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gives a briefing on coronavirus developments in Israel at his office in Jerusalem. Israel's government announced it would impose a three-week nationwide lockdown in an effort to stem one of the world's highest novel coronavirus infection rates after a surge in cases. — AFP



CONSUMER PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

RECALL INFORMATION





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RECALL REASON

In the affected vehicles, an incorrectly embossed symbol on the rear doors may result in a misinterpretation of the locking status of the child safety lock and it has been determined that on certain G-Class vehicles (463 platform) the control unit of the differential locking module might not meet the specification.

REMEDY

As a precautionary measure, a corrected label will be fixed over the incorrect lock symbol in the rear doors and we will check the differential lock actuators in the affected vehicles and replace if necessary. The required work will certainly be carried out free of charge.

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