

Rule change could make Abe longest-serving leader in Japan

By Ken Moritsugu
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Japan's ruling party approved a change in party rules that could pave the way for Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to become the country's longest-serving leader in the post-World War II era.

It is a remarkable turnaround for Abe, who lasted only a year during an earlier stint as prime minister, and in a country that had six prime ministers in the six years before Abe returned to office in December 2012.

Analysts say that Japan's 62-year-old leader learned from his first term in office, when he focused on divisive issues such as constitutional revision and patriotic education that contributed to his early downfall. This time, he has made an expansionary economic policy with a catchy name, "Abenomics," front and center at election time.

"The interesting thing is that formerly Abe did not seem to be interested in economic policy," said Yu Uchiyama, a professor of politics at Tokyo University.

He said that Abe, a conservative, had been more interested in things like constitutional change. "But right after he got power for the second time, he did not put forth such a right-wing agenda. Instead, he introduced and emphasized the economic issue."



That doesn't mean Abe has given up on goals such as revising the constitution, which was drafted by a U.S.-led occupation force after World War II. However, Abe needs to win over a reluctant public — any amendment requires approval by two-thirds of the legislature and a national referendum — and that will take time.

"The constitution represents the shape of our country, and it should describe Japan's ideal future," Abe told the annual convention of his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He said the LDP will take the lead in promoting discussion over details of a revision.

The party rubber stamped a decision by its leaders last fall to allow the head of the

party to run for a third three-year term, rather than be limited to two. In Japan's parliamentary system, the ruling party leader generally becomes the prime minister. The change would allow Abe to stay until 2021, if he can maintain the support of his party and voters, rather than step down in September 2018.

Abe, now in his fifth year in office, is Japan's sixth-longest serving prime minister since 1945. The recordholder is Eisaku Sato, who led the country for more than seven years from 1964 to 1972. He is also the brother of Abe's grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi, who was prime minister from 1957 to 1960. If Abe can hold on, he would surpass Sato in August 2020.

THIRD TERM? Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, center, shouts traditional banzai (long life) cheers with lawmakers and members of his ruling Liberal Democratic Party during its annual convention in Tokyo. Japan's ruling party has approved a change in party rules that could pave the way for Abe to become the country's longest-serving leader in the post-World War II era. (AP Photo/Shizuo Kambayashi)

Uchiyama said Abe has maintained his hold on power in part by taking advantage of electoral and administrative reforms that strengthened the prime minister's control of both his party and the bureaucracy.

Jeff Kingston, a Japan expert at Temple University's Japan campus in Tokyo, called Abe the most powerful prime minister in the postwar era.

"There has been an incredible concentration and centralization of power in the prime minister's office under Abe, unlike his predecessors, where power was widely distributed and the prime minister was one among many," he said.

Still, given public opinion, Kingston gave Abe only a 50-50 chance of achieving constitutional revision: "Polls suggest he has got a long battle to get the public with him."

A third term would also give Abe more time to try to resolve a thorny territorial dispute with Russia that has kept the two countries from signing a peace treaty to end World War II hostilities.

Associated Press writers Kaori Hitomi and Mari Yamaguchi contributed to this report.

Nepalese police tear down earthquake victim camp in the capital

By Binaj Gurubacharya
The Associated Press

KATHMANDU, Nepal — Authorities have torn down hundreds of makeshift huts in Nepal's capital, using bulldozers to level the largest temporary camp housing people who were made homeless when a devastating earthquake rocked the country nearly two years ago.

Wearing riot gear, police said they destroyed about 440 huts made of bamboo and plastic sheeting that had been home to about 2,000 people near Kathmandu's Boudha Shrine.

Settlers had been given one month's notice, but still were taken by surprise when the bulldozers appeared. Many rushed to collect their belongings, saying they had nowhere else to go after authorities offered no alternative housing.

"Our home is destroyed. I have no idea where I am going to go and live with my one-year-old baby," said Chameli Pariyar, 40, who said she was too sick to work and planned to beg in nearby temples.

Authorities said they were urging the residents to instead apply for government aid to help rebuild their homes.

"We gave them enough time to leave and told them to go back to their villages, so

they can collect the grant given by the government," said Him Nath Dawadi, a government administrator in Kathmandu.

Nepal has been sharply criticized for moving slowly in helping people rebuild after the 7.8-magnitude earthquake ripped across the Himalayan nation in April 2015, killing 9,000 people and destroying nearly a million homes and structures.

Only about \$250 million in aid has been dispersed to some 554,614 homeless families, out of a total \$2.6 billion Nepal has collected from \$4 billion pledged by foreign governments, according to the National Reconstruction Authority.

The payments already made cover just the first \$450 installment out of a planned total of \$1,890 for each qualifying family.

The destroyed Boudha camp was the largest makeshift camp for those displaced by the earthquake. There are dozens of other smaller makeshift camps around the Nepalese capital, but officials said there are no immediate plans to demolish those.

The government-funded National Human Rights Commission criticized the Boudha camp destruction, and said it would press the government to help the displaced residents.

"This was an inhuman act by the authorities," said Mohna Ansari of the commission.

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LAOTIAN: ກຳມກວດກຸມໂຄເລຊີຕາຂອງທ່ານ ເພື່ອຊີວິດຂອງທ່ານ.

VIETNAMESE: Luôn Kiểm Soát Tiểu Đường, Để Suốt Đời Sống Khỏe.

THAI: ควบคุมโรคเบาหวานเพื่อชีวิตของท่าน

INDONESIAN: Mengontrol gula darah untuk kesehatan Anda

KOREAN: 당신의 당뇨병을 조절하십시오. 평생동안

INDONESIAN: la pulea lou ma'i suka. Mu lou soifuaga.

INDONESIAN: Penderitaan ang inyung diyabetis, upang manatung malusog at masigla.

CHINESE: 珍惜生命 控制血糖

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