

Abe becomes Japan's longest-serving prime minister

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made history by becoming Japan's longest-serving political leader, though he hasn't achieved his biggest goal of revising the nation's pacifist constitution.

Abe recently marked his 2,887th day in office, surpassing Taro Katsura from the early 20th century.

"Day by day, I have made efforts to achieve the policies that I have promised, and because of these daily efforts I'm here to mark this day," Abe told reporters.

Following his disappointing 2006-2007 term, Abe returned to office in 2012 and has since bolstered Japan's defense role but hasn't yet been able to change the constitution to allow a full-fledged military.

Abe has been stepping up his effort for such a change before his party leadership ends in September 2021. That, however, is a challenge because of the lack of public interest.

Abe must obtain approval by two-thirds of both houses of parliament plus a majority in a national referendum to make any revision to the constitution.

Abe renewed his pledge to beat deflation, tackle Japan's aging and declining population, and achieve a constitutional revision.

He said he still has two more years left in his current term as head of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, pledging to tackle the unfinished political goals.

Abe's resignation after his scandal-laden first time was the beginning of six years of annual leadership change, remembered as the era of "revolving door" politics that lacked stability and long-term



LONG-SERVING LEADER. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, center, is seen with Indonesian President Joko Widodo, left, and Laos Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith, right, while taking a group photo during the East Asia summit in Nonthaburi, Thailand, on November 4, 2019. Abe has made history by becoming Japan's longest-serving political leader. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

sweeping structural reforms has kept the economy growing, but at a much slower rate than promised. Boosting growth remains a challenge given the fast aging of Japan's workforce and its shrinking population.

The Bank of Japan has stuck to its policy of keeping credit ultra-loose, with its key interest rate at minus 0.1% and tens of billions of yen (billions of dollars) in asset purchases a year. But consumer spending has not kept pace with expectations thanks to stagnant growth in wages and a shifting of much corporate investment into faster growing, more dynamic overseas markets.

Abe has made only halting progress with reforms intended to improve productivity and open up the labor market.

AP Business Writer Elaine Kurtenbach contributed to this report from Beijing.

policies.

When he returned to office in 2012, he vowed to revitalize the nation and get its economy out of the deflationary doldrums that had weighed on growth for years, after the implosion of the country's

financial bubble in the early 1990s.

His "Abenomics" formula of stimulating consumer demand through government spending, massive injections of cash into the economy via central bank purchases of government bonds and other assets, and

Indonesia arrests 85 Chinese nationals in phone scam

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Indonesian police say they arrested 85 Chinese citizens for involvement in a cross-border telephone and internet fraud ring after receiving a tip from Chinese police.

The suspects, including 11 women, were paraded at a police news conference in the capital, Jakarta, a day after their arrest.

Jakarta police chief Gatot Eddy Pramono said the suspects were arrested in several raids in Jakarta and East Java's Malang city. Police believe they are members of a telephone fraud and online investment scam syndicate.

Pramono said most of their targets appeared to be fellow Chinese who were called over the internet and tricked into transferring money to them. A preliminary investigation showed the gang collected at least 36 billion rupiah (\$2.5 million) over the past year.

He said members of the syndicate had come from China to Indonesia for three months at a time since last year, using tourist visas.

"They were committing the crimes from Indonesia after China cracked down [on] their networks," Pramono said.

He said Indonesian police are working closely with immigration officials and Chinese police in dealing with the suspects. Six Indonesian helpers who worked with them were also detained, but Pramono said they were not directly involved in the scam.

In 2017, Indonesia arrested at least 419 Chinese and Taiwanese citizens who were involved in a similar case. They were repatriated to face charges in their homeland after spending two months in Indonesian jails and being fined \$770 for violating their tourist visas.

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