



Analysis of LDP presidential election

27 September 2024

Shigeru Ishiba (former LDP Secretary-General) elected LDP president

On 27 September, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) presidential election to succeed prime minister Fumio Kishida was held, resulting in former Secretary-General Shigeru Ishiba being elected as the new LDP president.

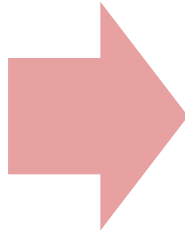
On 1 October, Ishiba is expected to be nominated as the new prime minister at a plenary session of the House of Representatives and the House of Councillors, and a new cabinet will be formed.

He has been considered a candidate for prime minister for many years but failed to win the LDP presidential election and had been languishing in the “non-mainstream” camp, but he has now been elected LDP president and thus prime minister on his fifth attempt.

Ishiba came in second to Sanae Takaichi in voting among local party members, and third among voting among LDP Diet members, placing him second in the overall vote. Since Takaichi, the leader in the overall vote, failed to reach a majority in the first round of voting, a runoff election was held between the two top candidate, Ishiba and Takaichi, with Ishiba coming from behind to win.



1 st round of voting	
1	Sanae Takaichi
2	Shigeru Ishiba
3	Shinjiro Koizumi
4	Yoshimasa Hayashi
5	Takayuki Kobayashi
6	Toshimitsu Motegi
7	Yoko Kamikawa
8	Taro Kono
9	Katsunobu Kato



Run-off voting	
1	Ishiba (215 votes)
2	Takaichi (194 votes)

The Kishida administration lasted three years, but in the last year the cabinet's approval rating slumped to around 20%, forcing the prime minister to step down at the end of his term. With the expiration of his term in the House of Representatives approaching in October 2025, the focus of the presidential election was to select an "electoral face" who could win despite the headwinds against the LDP, in anticipation of a general election that will take place after the dissolution of the House of Representatives.

Following the disbandment of the LDP factions due to the political funds issue, the presidential election became a crowded race with a record number of nine candidates. In addition to Shinjiro Koizumi and Shigeru Ishiba, who are popular with the public, Sanae Takaichi, who enjoys the support of the conservative base, was in the lead in the final stages of the campaign. However, Ishiba, who advocated for a "final battle" and broadened his support among local party members, won the run-off election.

Ishiba's victory in the deciding vote was attributed to the fact that the Diet members feel he can attract support from a wider range of voters more than Takaichi, who is more conservative, in the upcoming House of Representatives election.



Ishiba, 67, has been elected to the House of Representatives 12 times. He has held important positions such as Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Minister of Defence, and LDP Secretary-General, and is popular with the public. In 2015, while in the Abe administration, Ishiba established his own faction, “Suigetsukai”. However, this was disbanded in 2021 after Ishiba lost twice in the LDP presidential election and many faction members had left.

This time around Ishiba’s camp was supported by former Ishiba faction member Masaaki Taira, a member of the House of Representatives, Akimasa Akazawa, State Minister of Finance, and other veteran lawmakers, including Seiichiro Murakami, former Minister of State for Regulatory Reform, and Katsuei Hirasawa, former Minister for Reconstruction. Ishiba’s cabinet and party executive appointments are expected to include the appointment of former Minister of the Environment Shinjiro Koizumi, who fought the presidential election, and others to build a party structure.

Ishiba will indicate he will continue the Kishida administration's economic policy of a “virtuous cycle of growth and distribution”. In addition to the creation of a “Ministry of Disaster Prevention” to deal with frequent disasters, he will also position regional development as a catalyst for the Japanese economy and take large-scale initiatives. After assuming the prime minister's office, Ishiba stated that he would dissolve the Diet as soon as possible. After deliberations at the budget committee, the House of Representatives may be dissolved by the end of October.

Ishiba’s stance towards the U.S., which will have its presidential election in November, will need to be closely observed. For example, he has called for the revision of the Agreement regarding the Status of United States Armed Forces in Japan, which defines the legal status of U.S. forces in Japan, as well as the creation of an Asian version of NATO, a collective security arrangement in the Asian region.

As the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly and Upper House elections are coming up next summer, there is a possibility that the prime minister will be in power for a short period of time if the LDP loses many seats. However, if the party manages to win these elections, there will be no more national elections until 2028, and a long-term Ishiba administration could be envisaged.