



# The Weekly Observer

October 14-18

YOUR WEEKLY RECAP OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN JAPAN!

THIS WEEK IN NUMBERS

## **Nakatani Attends G7 and NATO Defense Ministerial Meetings**

On October 20, **Minister of Defense Nakatani Gen** attended the **first-ever G7 Defense Ministerial Meeting** in Napoli, Italy, where the ministers discussed the Middle East, Africa, the Indo-Pacific, Ukraine and the need for defense readiness.

On Friday, Nakatani also became the **first defense minister to attend the NATO Defense Ministerial Meeting** in Brussels, Belgium. He noted the importance of **deepening cooperation with like-minded countries in NATO** as “serious concerns” mount over **China, Russia, and North Korea**.

Nakatani was tasked by **Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru** to investigate how **NATO member states with Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) with the United States** are adjusting cooperation with Washington, as he hopes to propose **revisiting Japan’s bilateral SOFA** with the United States for a **more equal partnership**.

## **LDP and Komeito Face Tough Test in Lower House Election**

The **Lower House election** kicked off on Tuesday, with **1,344 candidates** competing for 465 seats. A record number of **314 women** are running. The key question will be whether the **LDP and Komeito maintain over 233 seats for a majority**.

Key issues of the election include **political reform and economic policy**, amid the LDP’s scandals and increasing costs of living. LDP President Ishiba positions this election as an **opportunity to “revitalize Japan,”** while main opposition **Constitutional Democratic Party leader Noda Yoshihiko** aims for a change in government.

Media surveys suggest a **tough battle** for the majority between the ruling and opposition parties, with **many indicating losses for the LDP and significant gains for the CDP**. Some of the **minority parties** stand to gain seats at the expense of the larger parties, **suggesting discontent with the status quo**.

## **Cabinet Approval**



**28%** (+9 pts.)

**30%** (+27 pts.)

[Jiji Press](#) (Oct. 14)

## **State of the Economy**

**Trade Balance (1<sup>st</sup> Half of FY 2024):**  
¥3.11 trillion deficit  
7<sup>th</sup> consecutive quarter running deficit

**Consumer Price Index (Sept.):**  
108.2 (+2.4%)  
Rate of increase narrowed for the first time in 5 months

**Machinery Orders (August):**  
¥858.1 billion (-1.9%)  
2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive month in decline

**Tourist Spending (2024):**  
¥5.86 trillion (Jan.-Sept.)  
Exceeded 2023 numbers  
July-Sept.: ¥1.95 trillion (up ¥1.38 trillion from same period last year)