



YOUR WEEKLY RECAP OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN JAPAN!

The Weekly Observer

October 14-18

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 (1st Half of FY 2024):
¥3.11 trillion deficit
7th 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%)
2nd 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)