

Japanese ruling coalition loses its upper house majority

Ben McGrath
21 July 2025

Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior partner Komeito suffered a significant blow in the parliamentary upper house election on Sunday, resulting in a loss of its majority in the body.

In total, 125 seats out of 248 in the House of Councillors were up for election, including an additional race to fill a vacancy. Members serve six-year terms with half of the seats up for election every three years.

The LDP and Komeito lost 13 seats and six seats respectively, holding onto 39 seats and eight seats. When added to the LDP's 62 seats and Komeito's 13 seats not up for election, the coalition's total in the upper house is 122 or three short of a majority.

This is the second major loss for Shigeru Ishiba since becoming prime minister last year. The ruling coalition lost its majority in the general election for the lower house last October for only the third time since 1955, leaving Ishiba at the head of an unstable minority government.

Ishiba stated at a news conference on Monday that he intends to stay in power, saying "As the first party in parliament, we have to fulfill our responsibility with the public so as to prevent politics from stagnating or drifting... Challenges such as the global situation and natural disasters won't wait for a better political situation."

The Japanese economy is immediately facing a heavy hit from 25 percent "reciprocal" tariff on Japanese exports to the US slated to go into effect on August 1. Sectorial tariffs have also been imposed on Japanese goods including a 25 percent tariff on vehicles and auto parts. Japan experienced a trade deficit of 2.2 trillion yen (\$US14.9 billion) for the first half of 2025, with exports to the US dropping by 11.4 percent in June alone. As a result, the government is under considerable

pressure from big business to reach a deal.

Japan's lead negotiator Ryosei Akazawa is in Washington this week for the eighth round of talks between the two countries. The Trump regime is demanding the opening of Japan to US agricultural products, including rice, which the Ishiba government has rejected. The production of rice in Japan is not only important economically, but plays a major role in Japanese culture, making it a highly sensitive issue.

The LDP has also overseen rising cost-of-living, including the doubling of rice prices since 2024. It has also been at the center of several corruption scandals, including one over fundraising that forced Fumio Kishida to resign as prime minister last year. Tokyo's program of remilitarization, which includes doubling military spending to two percent of GDP, is also highly unpopular. The danger of a US-instigated war against China and Tokyo's support for such a conflict went largely unmentioned during the election.

With the government facing considerable public hostility and opposition, there is media speculation that another party could join the ruling coalition. On Monday, Ishiba downplayed the suggestion, saying the LDP will seek partners on a case-by-case basis. "We will hold sincere discussions with opposition parties on policy issues of particular urgency," he said.

This is the first time since the LDP's founding in 1955 that it has lost its majority in both houses of parliament and attempted to stay in power.

The government of the day must control the lower house. But legislation must pass the upper house except when choosing a prime minister, passing a budget, or approving a treaty. The lower house can only override the upper body with a two-thirds majority, meaning without support from an opposition party, the government cannot pass its agenda.

The opposition bloc is currently headed by the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDP), which retained the same number of seats, 22, for a total of 38 in the upper house. While CDP leader Yoshihiko Noda has previously rejected the idea, a “grand coalition” between the LDP and CDP has previously been suggested, including by Ishiba himself in January.

The LDP will more likely rely on the support from more right-wing parties, such as the Democratic Party for the People (DPP), formed in 2018 in a split from the CDP. The DPP won 17 seats on Sunday, raising its total to 22. The DPP has previously worked with the ruling LDP coalition, but has adopted a cautious approach to any talk of joining the ruling bloc.

The far-right Nippon Ishin no Kai, which won seven seats, including its total by one to 19, has also rejected joining the LDP-led coalition. Both Ishin and the DPP are seeking to distance themselves from the highly unpopular LDP-led government.

The fascistic Sanseito party, which ran on a Trump-style platform of “Japanese first” and the demonization of foreign residents and tourists, won 14 seats, raising its total number of seats to 15. The result reflects the growing hostility to the entire political establishment which Sanseito has exploited through its criticisms of both the LDP and CDP.

Furthermore, the political establishment and media allowed Sanseito to set the tone for the election, providing the party with regular and favorable coverage. As in the US and elsewhere, the ruling class in Japan, sensitive to rising opposition to its agenda of austerity and militarism, is cultivating fascistic layers.

Sanseito leader Sohei Kamiya has praised the Trump regime while criticizing the Ishiba government’s approach to negotiating with the US president. He has called for Tokyo to deal with Trump on the basis of a shared fascistic outlook.

In a July 15 interview, Kamiya stated, “Trump is thinking of changing the rules of politics around the world. I have a firm grasp of what new rules he wants to use to drive world politics, and he is turning everything upside down, including DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion), decarbonization policies, and immigration. Some people call that ‘absurd,’ but I think he has a proper philosophy, so if Japan shows a willingness to work together as partners, we can come to an agreement on tariffs and negotiate the terms.”

Kamiya and other Sanseito members have also called for Japan to acquire nuclear weapons, which would generate widespread opposition in the only country on which atomic bombs have been dropped. Other politicians have raised a similar possibility, including former prime minister Shinzo Abe who suggested in February 2022 that Japan should host US nuclear arms.

The minority Ishiga government has only remained in office to date as a result of the deep political divisions among the opposition parties. The loss of its majority in the upper house only compounds its political difficulties and will fuel further political instability.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact