

Japan PM support falls in first month to 55pc: Poll
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TOKYO, Oct 2 – Public support for Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda’s government was at 54.6 per cent, a Kyodo news agency survey showed today, down 8.2 percentage points in the first month after he took office.

Noda (picture), Japan’s sixth premier in five years, enjoyed strong support right after he took over from his unpopular predecessor, but the 54-year-old premier had to sack his trade minister just a week after taking office due to gaffes.

His government is now trying to draft and submit to the divided parliament this month another extra budget to fund rebuilding efforts from a huge earthquake and tsunami that destroyed northeastern Japan and its Pacific coast in March.

The government and the ruling Democratic Party agreed last week the size of the extra budget, the third one for this fiscal year to March 2012, would be about 12 trillion yen (RM497.64 billion).

They also agreed to raise taxes by 9.2 trillion yen over a 10-year period to fund rebuilding projects as Japan grapples with a public debt twice the size of its US\$5 trillion (RM15.95 trillion) economy.

But with confusion over how much non-tax revenues the government would be able to secure from selling its stakes in firms such as Japan Tobacco and Inpex Corp , it could end up hiking taxes by an additional 2 trillion yen.

Respondents to the Kyodo survey backed the extra budget draft but were split over the tax hike plan.

In the telephone poll, 63.2 per cent backed the extra budget draft, while 30.3 per cent did not.

On the possible 11.2 trillion yen tax hikes, 50.5 per cent were opposed to the idea, while 46.2 per cent backed the proposal.

Noda needs help from opposition parties which control the upper chamber of parliament and can block bills.

Opposition parties have said they are willing to cooperate on the third extra budget, but the main opposition Liberal Democratic Party wants a snap election after this budget is enacted.

Noda has said he does not plan to call a snap election anytime soon. – Reuters

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