

Fukuda govt. approval ratings drop

by UPI

TOKYO -- The approval rating of Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's Cabinet has fallen to 35.3 percent, down 11.7 points from last month, a new poll indicated. The nationwide telephone opinion survey, conducted during the weekend by Kyodo News, also found the disapproval rating of the Fukuda government jumped 11 points to 47.6 percent during the same period. Kyodo News said this is the first time the disapproval rating percentage -- blamed largely on public discontent over scandals involving the defense ministry and the pension-record blunders -- has gone over the approval rating percentage since Fukuda became prime minister in September. The poll also found 46.7 percent of the 1,033 respondents in households with eligible voters opposed a bill to resume the Maritime Self-Defense Force's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean for U.S.-led anti-terrorism operations in and near Afghanistan, while 38.8 percent supported the measure. The bill has already been approved by Japan's lower house, where Fukuda's ruling coalition has a large majority. But the upper house, controlled by the opposition, plans to reject the measure, the report said. The report did not list a margin of error for the poll.

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