

Key candidates in Japan's leadership race

The ruling Democratic Party of Japan is expected to elect its new leader following Naoto Kan's decision to step down. The successful candidate will become the country's sixth prime minister in five years

SEIJI MAEHARA, 49

Former foreign minister

Popular with electorate. Regarded as favourite to replace Kan before funding scandal forced him to resign in March



Has voiced concern over China's military growth, but urges dialogue with Beijing. Wants phasing out of nuclear power by 2030

YOSHIHIKO NODA, 54

Finance minister

Frontrunner until entry of Maehara. Shares Kan's policy of cutting public debt through reforms, such as raising 5% sales tax



Has distanced himself from Kan's opposition to nuclear power, saying Japan should restart its reactors once they pass safety tests

BANRI KAIEDA, 62

Trade minister

Oversees energy policy. Has been closely involved in working to bring crippled Fukushima nuclear plant under control



Seeks improvements in nuclear safety instead of scrapping plants. Has suggested central bank could do more to tackle public debt

SUMIO MABUCHI, 51

Former transport minister

Replaced in January cabinet reshuffle. Wants Japan to reduce its reliance on nuclear power but urges public debate on issue



Opposed to short-term tax hikes. Would prioritize pulling Japan's economy out of deflation through policy of quantitative easing