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## Koizumi's appointment fuels hopes for cheaper rice



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TOKYO, May 25 A majority of Japanese citizens are hopeful that rice prices will decline following the appointment of Shinjiro Koizumi as the country's new farm minister, a Kyodo News poll revealed.

The poll found that nearly 60 percent of respondents expect Koizumi to bring rice prices down,

after public anger forced his predecessor, Taku Eto, to resign. Eto had stirred backlash by claiming he never buys rice because his supporters supply it, a comment seen as insensitive amid record-high prices.

Rice prices in Japan have doubled over the past year despite government attempts to stabilize supply. Koizumi aims to reduce prices to the 2,000-yen range (about 14 U.S. dollars) by releasing stockpiled rice directly to retailers.

The same survey showed a slight increase in public approval for Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's Cabinet, rising to 31.7 percent. However, 52.6 percent still disapprove of the administration.

Ahead of the upcoming upper house election, the ruling party leads with 28.6 percent support, while the Democratic Party for the People and the Constitutional Democratic Party trail with 14.3 and 13.6 percent, respectively.

Koizumi's appointment has injected cautious optimism into Japan's political and economic landscape, particularly among consumers burdened by rising food costs.