

Japan PM Fumio Kishida announces he will step down in September

Kishida's three-year term has been marked by scandal, rising living costs and record defence spending

Japan's prime minister, Fumio Kishida, has said he will not run for the presidency of his ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) next month - a decision that will result in the appointment of a new leader of the world's fourth-biggest economy.

Kishida, who has been battling low approval ratings and a damaging fundraising scandal, said he would step down as LDP leader in September, telling reporters on Wednesday that the party needed an "open contest to promote debate".

His decision brings to an end a three-year term marked by scandal, rising living costs and record defence spending.

"In this presidential election, it is necessary to show the people that the LDP is changing and the party is a new LDP," Kishida, 67, said at a press conference at the prime minister's office.

"For this, transparent and open elections and free and vigorous debate are important. The most obvious first step to show that the LDP will change is for me to step aside."

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