

Japan's next PM ready to lift ban on e-campaigning

December 21 2012



Japan's incoming prime minister Shinzo Abe speaks at a breakfast meeting with Japanese business leaders at a hotel in Tokyo, on December 18, 2012. Abe said on Friday he wanted to lift the strict ban on all forms of Internet electioneering as he met with information technology company chiefs.

Japan's incoming prime minister Shinzo Abe said on Friday he wanted to lift the strict ban on all forms of Internet electioneering as he met with

information technology company chiefs.

"I think we should remove the [prohibition](#) on election campaigning over the Net by the next poll," Abe told reporters.

"I think it would lead to higher [voter turnout](#)," he said after holding a meeting with IT business people.

Abe's conservative Liberal Democratic Party is already gearing up for upper-house elections next summer after scoring a landslide win in Sunday's lower-house polls, which saw voter turnout fall to a record low 59.3 percent.

Hiroshi Mikitani, [chief executive](#) at online retailer Rakuten, who was in the meeting with Abe, said he was "very much encouraged" by the incoming prime minister's attitude.

Despite its reputation for innovative wizardry, Japan has a sometimes confounding tendency to shun technology.

Electoral laws that predate the Internet era treat anything appearing on a screen as akin to a leaflet, which means it falls under restrictions on how many fliers any nominee can produce.

Candidates and their supporters are not permitted to Tweet, use Facebook, update their websites or even send emails during the official campaign period.

They spend two frenetic weeks driving and walking around their districts doing little more than shouting out their names.

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Citation: Japan's next PM ready to lift ban on e-campaigning (2012, December 21) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-12-japan-pm-ready-e-campaigning.html>

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