

Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe dies after being shot at political activity



Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe lies on the ground after an apparent shooting in Nara, western Japan, July 8, 2022 (Kyodo via Reuters)

Tokyo, July 8 (RHC)-- Former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe is dead after being shot at a campaign event in the Nara region, local media report. The 67-year-old Abe had been delivering a stump speech near a train station in the western city of Nara when he was shot by an assailant.

He was taken to the hospital by first responders, media reported. Authorities were quoted as saying that he was in cardio-respiratory arrest.

Amateur footage showed people rushing towards him as plumes of smoke filled the air behind him. It, however, did not capture the exact moment he was hit. NHK said a man in his 40s had been arrested for attempted murder and a gun had been confiscated from him.

The former leader was delivering a speech at an event ahead of Sunday's upper house elections, NHK and the Kyodo news agency said. "He was giving a speech and a man came from behind," a young woman at the scene told NHK. "The first shot sounded like a toy. He didn't fall and there was a large bang. The second shot was more visible, you could see the spark and smoke," she added. "After the second shot, people surrounded him and gave him cardiac massage."

Abe served as Japan's prime minister from December 2012 to September 2020, making him the country's longest-serving prime minister before stepping down in 2020 over alleged ill health. He had, however, remained a dominant presence over the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) party, controlling one of its major factions.

His successor, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, faces an upper house election on Sunday in which he is projected to emerge from Abe's shadow and define his premiership.

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