

July 13<sup>th</sup> 2017, *The Times*: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/japanese-mps-must-recruit-new-party-members-or-face-fines-hd2vpf6mh>

## **Recruit members or we'll fine you, Shinzo Abe's party tells MPs**

Richard Lloyd Parry

MPs in Japan's ruling party are being threatened with fines of more than £13,000 if they fail to recruit new members. Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) politicians have been told they must each bring in at least 1,000 members, and party bosses are threatening to publicly shame and fine those who fail to meet their quota.

The party aims to bring in 1.2 million members after suffering defeat in elections in Tokyo this month. Shinzo Abe, the prime minister, has the lowest approval ratings since he took office in 2012.

The LDP's 417 elected MPs from the lower and upper houses of the Diet have been told that they could be fined ¥2,000 (£13.70) for every recruit short of the 1,000 target. Yasuaki Yamaguchi, a party manager, said last month: "We'll look at disclosing of the names for those who are far below their quota, and respond strictly."

This week journalists got hold of the name at the top of the list of shame: Tamayo Marukawa, the minister in charge of the 2020 Olympic Games.

Ms Marukawa admitted that she recruited only two members last year. "I am profoundly ashamed of myself," she said yesterday. "There must be other ways of measuring my efforts, I think."

Since being elected five years ago for his second stint as prime minister, Mr Abe's approval ratings had been unusually buoyant. Despite public unease about his expansion of the armed forces' powers, his support for nuclear energy and his passing of laws allowing whistleblowers to be prosecuted, he has benefited from the weakness of the opposition and support for his "Abenomics" policies.