

Record 85% favor death penalty

Kyodo News

The percentage of people in favor of the death penalty has reached a record high, with 85.6 percent of survey respondents saying capital punishment is "unavoidable," according to a government poll released Saturday.

The highest percentage since the government began the surveys in 1994 indicates the public is seeking strict punishment for heinous crimes following a spate of such incidents, including a stabbing rampage in Tokyo's Akihabara district in 2008.

About 55 percent of respondents described the extension of the statute of limitations for capital crimes, including murder, to 25 years from 15 years in 2005 under the revised Code of Criminal Procedure, as "too short."

Of those who said the period is too short, 49.3 percent said the statute of limitations should be abolished, according to the survey.

For the latest survey, which is conducted every five years, the Cabinet Office polled 3,000 men and women aged 20 or older nationwide in November to December, receiving valid responses from 64.8 percent.

The proportion of respondents in favor of the death penalty rose by 4.2 percentage points from the previous survey in 2004, indicating that the number of people who hold such a view has been steadily increasing since posting 73.8 percent in the first survey.

Only 5.7 percent said the death penalty should be abolished, down 0.3 point from the 2004 poll.

In expressing their preference for execution, 54.1 percent said the feelings of victims and their families would not be satisfied if the death penalty were abolished, while 53.2 percent said perpetrators of heinous crimes should pay for their crimes with their lives.

In addition, 51.5 percent said they believe the number of such crimes would increase if the death penalty were abolished.

Of the respondents who said execution should be abolished, 55.9 percent said the perpetrators should be kept alive to pay for their crimes, while 43.2 percent said miscarriages of justice would be irrevocable if the death sentence were carried out.

In a related development, an advisory body to the justice minister proposed in January the abolition of the statute of limitations for crimes whose maximum penalty is the death sentence.

The Legislative Council will report its proposals to the justice minister shortly, and a bill to revise the Code of Criminal Procedure is expected to be submitted to the ongoing Diet session.

In the survey, respondents were allowed to give multiple answers to why they are in favor of the death penalty, seek the abolition of capital punishment and think the period of the statute of limitation for capital crimes is too short.

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