

Japan's consumer sentiment deteriorates in April

TOKYO, May 15 (Xinhua) -- Japanese consumer sentiment declined in April on month to mark for the first contraction in a year, the government said on Tuesday.

The confidence index for households comprising two or more people fell to 40.0 from 40.3 in the previous month, the Cabinet Office said. Readings below 50 reflect that pessimism outweighed optimism among households.

The office said the drop was due to sluggish car sales and stock prices. However, it maintained its assessment that the consumer sentiment is on a recovery track, saying the fall was a slight one.

Three surveyed components for the index - livelihood, employment conditions and willingness to purchase durable goods - saw decline, while income growth, the fourth ingredient, showed improvement.

Analysts said crude oil prices and a power shortage after all the country's reactors were suspended will be the key factors to affect sentiment in the coming months.