

## China: Four Japanese will be put to death

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China has informed Japan that it will execute four Japanese nationals for drug-smuggling, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada revealed Friday, expressing concern over how the killings will impact public sentiment.

It was reported earlier this week that China planned to execute one Japanese man convicted of drug-running, possibly next Monday.

Japan established diplomatic relations with China in 1972, and at least from that point on no Japanese had been executed in the country.

Later Friday, Okada met with Cheng Yonghua, the Chinese ambassador to Japan, and expressed his concern over Beijing's announcement of the executions.

However, Okada said during a news conference that he could not ask Beijing to stop the executions because the sentences were handed down in accordance with China's domestic laws.

"Each country has its own laws and judicial system and I don't think this is an issue where I can squarely ask China to call off the executions," Okada said. "That goes for Japan as well. If another country (asked us to stop an execution), we would cite judicial independence or say that it is a domestic issue."

Beijing had notified Tokyo on Monday that Mitsunobu Akano, 65, would be executed within seven days, the Foreign Ministry said.

On Friday, Okada revealed that China told him Thursday it will also execute Teruo Takeda, 67, Hironori Ukai, 48, and Katsuo Mori, 67.

According to the ministry, Beijing said Thursday the three would be executed within seven days.

During the news conference, Okada also pointed out that there are many Asian countries that have the death penalty for drug-smuggling, including Singapore, Thailand and Malaysia.

"I would like people to act with full knowledge that" these countries also have death as the maximum penalty, Okada said. "Of course, (carrying narcotics) is a crime in Japan too, but I would like people to be fully aware that there are countries that impose severe punishment."

Cheng refused to answer questions from reporters, but he told Okada his concerns will be delivered to Beijing.

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