

## Controversial conspiracy bill approved by Abe Cabinet

- 1) The Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe approved Tuesday a controversial bill that would revise the organized crime law so authorities can crack down on individuals and organizations who conspire to engage in serious criminal activity. (organized crime law: 組織犯罪処罰法、conspire 共謀する)
- 2) The conspiracy charges apply to groups of two or more people, where at least one person procures funds, supplies or surveys a location in preparation for committing a crime. Efforts to maintain or expand organized crime groups would also be punished, while reduced penalties would be considered for those who turn themselves in before a crime is carried out. (procure: 調達する、turn oneself in: 出頭する、自首する)
- 3) The government is pushing to enact the revised bill during the ordinary Diet session through mid-June, but strong objections by opposition parties are expected amid concern that the law may be used against civic groups.
- 4) The backlash against the measure has been a persistent hurdle in passing the anti-conspiracy law, which the government has attempted and failed to enact three times in the past, as it targeted “groups” in general. (backlash: 大衆の反発、抵抗、persistent: しつこい、持続する)
- 5) The bill needs to be passed to ensure necessary counterterrorism measures are in place before the upcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, according to the government. It is also a prerequisite to ratify the U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which was adopted by member states in 2000 and took effect in 2003. (in place: 全て準備万端に整って、prerequisite: 必須 [前提] 条件、ratify: 批准する、U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime: 国際的な組織犯罪の防止に関する国際連合条約)
- 6) “It is an urgent necessity for the government to ratify the treaty to promote international cooperation on counter-terrorism,” Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told a news conference Tuesday. Japan signed the treaty in 2000, but is the only country among the Group of Seven nations that has not ratified it.
- 7) Suga also said the targets of the new bill would be strictly applied to terrorists and other organized crime syndicates, not ordinary citizens.
- 8) Some opposition parties and the Tokyo Bar Association denounced the revisions, which they say would still allow the possibility of government overreach and retaliation against civic groups. (Tokyo Bar Association: 東京弁護士会、overreach: 範囲 [勢力、手]を広げすぎること、retaliation: 報復、仕返し)
- 9) “The conspiracy bill goes against the basic principles of our country’s criminal code and the legal system,” Motoji Kobayashi, president of the Tokyo Bar Association, said in a statement in January. “It threatens the function of protecting human rights.” (criminal code: 刑法)
- 10) The government previously included 676 crimes in its original draft, but has narrowed that number down to 277 in the revised bill.
- 11) Yukio Yamashita, an attorney and member of the association, warned that 277 crimes are still too many and noted some are unnecessary.
- 12) For example, a person using forged stamps or competing in a motor boat race without a license would be subject to punishment under the revised bill, Yamashita said in a seminar held earlier in March. (forged: 偽造された、be subject to: ~を被る、対象となる)
- 13) Meanwhile, the Japan Federation of Bar Associations claims that only a limited number of countries, such as Norway, have newly enacted anti-conspiracy laws for the purpose of ratifying the U.N. treaty, which was adopted to crack down on organized cross-border crimes such as human trafficking, narcotics trading and money laundering. (cross-border crime: 国境を越えた、narcotics: 麻薬)
- 14) Japan’s Diet approved the treaty in 2013, but was unable to ratify it without a law covering criminal conspiracy.
- 15) As of December, 187 countries and regions have signed the treaty. 【Japan Times | 2017-03-21】

### ☆Ice breaker for active discussion

1. Are you pro or against the anti-conspiracy bill? Why?
2. Why does Japan take a long time to ratify the international treaty?
3. Do you think this bill could limit the rights of expression of ordinary citizens?
4. How would the Japanese people benefit from the new bill?
5. Make sentences using the following words: conspire, procure, retaliation, forged and backlash.