

BULLETIN

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JAPAN/JAPON

- Foreign Minister Nakayama has proposed that the annual ASEAN Post Ministerial Consultations (ASEAN-PMC) be transformed into a regular forum on regional political-security matters. He told the opening session of the ASEAN-PMC that each year, senior officials should discuss regional security issues. Several ASEAN ministers responded negatively to Nakayama's proposal and said it requires further study.

- Les mouvements se précisent à l'intérieur du PLD et du gouvernement pour la préparation d'un projet de loi créant un corps japonais de participation à une opération de type "casques bleus." A l'intérieur du gouvernement sera créée prochainement une cellule de préparation chargée de mettre au point les détails du projet de loi qui sera soumis à la prochaine session extraordinaire de la Diète.

- Kyodo quoted Vice Foreign Minister Takakazu Kuriyama's statement that Japan wants China to join the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) group and would like a joint meeting between Chinese leaders and their G-7 counterparts.

- According to an unconfirmed government source, Tokyo will reject a proposal from the Russian Federation for an informal trade treaty to promote bilateral coastal trade and liberalize air routes.

- Nihon Keizai's survey of capital spending by Japanese companies in North America shows that expenditures are down 16.9% this year, the third consecutive year of decline.

- The securities scandal that implicated the "big four" brokerage houses in a variety of payoffs and connections to organized crime has now spread to more than 30 smaller securities firms.

- MITI revealed a plan to establish a "super research centre" next spring to develop high technology for use by industry. The centre will be intended for research in the pure sciences, including atomic-level engineering technology. MITI says research results will be shared with all interested countries.

- Kyodo reports the Japanese government and the business community will establish a foundation to treble the number of foreign "trainees" working in Japan. Trainees will be placed in firms affected by the labour shortage.

- Media sources claim MITI negotiators have agreed to expand the MOSS (market-oriented, sector specific) talks on auto parts to include discussions on how to increase sales of US-made autos in Japan.

- According to Kyodo, MITI has increased JETRO's import staff, and instructed the Export-Import Bank and the Japan Development Bank to increase loans for imports and foreign investment. MITI is also trying to simplify quarantine and customs clearance procedures as requested by the US and EC.

- Toyota announced an Australian joint venture with GM which involves building a A\$ 450 million assembly plant equipped with the latest in robots and automation in Melbourne.

- M. Tanabe a remporté l'élection pour la présidence du parti socialiste en devançant son adversaire M. Ueda. La marge de victoire de M. Tanabe est inférieure à ce qui était considéré comme indispensable à l'établissement d'une autorité incontestable pour M. Tanabe. C'est en effet, avec 56% des suffrages exprimés, la marge de victoire