

Obuchi's coma leads to search for new successor

TOKYO (AP) — Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi was on life support Monday after a stroke, leaving the Japanese government to grapple with a leadership crisis and the possibility of dissolving the Cabinet and finding a successor.

Despite assurances from officials that Japan would not veer from its economic and political course, speculation was rife that Obuchi's illness could plunge Japan into turmoil and possibly lead to early elections.

However, the political establishment appeared to be moving quickly to name a successor to the prime minister, with media reports saying the Cabinet could resign as early as this week so a new one can be formed. With that as a possibility, it appeared likely that Chief Cabinet Secretary Mikio Aoki, who took over as acting prime minister on Monday, would be able to keep the government together until then.

There was also public anger over the way the government handled the news of Obuchi's illness, waiting nearly 24 hours to announce that he had been hospitalized and leaving the public in the dark about the seriousness of his condition for 12 more hours.

Aoki defended the government's actions.

"When the prime minister went to the hospital initially, all he said was he wasn't feeling well," Aoki said. "We never thought things would turn out this way."

Tokyo's private TBS television network quoted unidentified doctors late Monday as saying that Obuchi was clinically brain dead.

The prime minister's office said it could not confirm the report, and officials at Tokyo's Juntendo University Hospital were unavailable late Monday.

Who will succeed Obuchi?

After Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi was placed on life support Monday as a result of a stroke, the Japanese government is grappling with a leadership crisis and the necessity of finding a successor.



Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi



Mikio Aoki, 65
Chief Cabinet secretary
▶ Named acting prime minister on Monday.
▶ Worked early in his political career for Noboru Takeshita, a Liberal Democratic Party power broker, who eventually became prime minister in the late 1980s.
▶ Named chief Cabinet secretary by Obuchi last October.



Yohei Kono, 63
Foreign minister
▶ First elected to parliament in 1967.
▶ Graduate of Waseda University.
▶ President of the LDP in 1993.
▶ Deputy prime minister in 1994.
▶ Considered one of his party's top foreign policy experts.



Yoshiro Mori, 62
LDP leader
▶ First elected to parliament in 1969.
▶ Graduate of Waseda University.
▶ Served 10 terms in parliament.
▶ Held a number of party and government positions, including Construction Minister and Minister of International Trade and Industry.

Source: Compiled from AP wire reports

Wm. J. Castello/AP

Obuchi, 62, was hospitalized early Sunday after complaining of fatigue. His condition deteriorated rapidly, and Aoki announced on Monday that Obuchi had suffered a stroke and was in a coma. He was put on a respirator. His wife, Chizuko, was reportedly at his side.

President Clinton praised Obuchi. "He has been a good friend to me personally, he's been a good friend of the United States," Clinton told reporters.

Aoki is seen as well-connected in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. However, party leaders were expected to look at other candidates for a nominee to replace Obuchi. Whoever is selected would likely win the approval of parliament, which is controlled by the LDP.

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Serb leader arrested for war crimes

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) —

U.N. prosecutors rejoiced as the most senior war crimes suspect to date was arrested Tuesday in Bosnia and brought for trial, galvanizing their crusade to bring the architects of the Balkan "ethnic cleansing" campaigns to justice.



KRAJISNIK

Momcilo Krajisnik, a close ally of former

Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, was arrested at his home in Pale by French NATO troops who witnesses said forced open his door before dawn. Yugoslavia's state-run Tanjug news agency said Krajisnik was led away in his pajamas and bare feet.

Krajisnik is charged with every war crime on the Yugoslav tribunal's statute, including genocide, in an indictment filed secretly by Chief Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte in February so as not to let the suspect know prosecutors were on his trail.

The indictment, unsealed charges Krajisnik with being the strategist, along with Karadzic, behind the Bosnian massacres aimed at carving a wholly pure Serb state out of Bosnia. It catalogs dozens of destroyed villages and the massacres of hundreds as well as naming 11 prison camps where non-Serbs were detained and executed or deported.

Conviction would mean a life sentence for Krajisnik, 55. He is expected to appear before the court this week.

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