

Shedding light on the Kobe killer's mind

Investigations of the series of brutal murders in Kobe ended July 25, and the suspect, a 15-year-old junior high school boy, was sent to family court.

District prosecutors said in a statement that the murders were committed willfully, while the family court put the boy in a juvenile detention house.

Editorials unanimously expressed hope that the court would clarify the motives and backgrounds of the crimes, and stressed the need for information disclosure. However, most expressed reservations about revision of the Juvenile Law.

Kobe Shimbun

"Although the suspect was sent to family court, nobody believes the incident has been 'resolved.' There are still many questions left unanswered."

Gifu Shimbun

"It is impossible to prevent the recurrence of juvenile crime without clarifying the motives. It is also impossible to write specific prescriptions for the boy's protection and rehabilitation."

Hokkaido Shimbun

"One wonders whether the suspect has serious character

flaws or mental problems. The boy had a taste for horror books and videos. How does this relate to the murders? The course should shed light on the dark corners of the boy's mind."

Yomiuri Shimbun

"In order to ensure true protection and rehabilitation it is important, first and foremost, that the suspect acknowledge the facts and realize his responsibility for what he did."

Sanyo Shimbun

"A mental examination by experts, however long it may take, is needed in order to find out why he acted the way he did." (The family court decided Aug. 4 to detain the boy for 60 days for a close mental checkup.)

Mainichi Shimbun

"The Juvenile Law says hearings should be held behind closed doors. This is because open hearings could hamper rehabilitation. In this case, however, information that may be of use to society should be disclosed."

Kyoto Shimbun

"The incidents have created enormous shocks and great social unease. Disclosure of accurate information

will help ease the shocks and unrest. It will also deepen public understanding of juvenile crime and help prevent recurrences."

Nihon Keizai Shimbun

"There is talk that the Juvenile Law should be updated. Many people also emphasize the need for spiritual education in school. In order to discuss these issues, however, the public must be well informed about them."

Sankei Shimbun

"The case has raised serious questions about the present Juvenile Law. The law should be improved, considering that society is becoming more complex and that vicious juvenile crimes are on the rise."

Saga Shimbun

"The boy is still a suspect. Much remains unknown about the crimes he allegedly committed. It is premature to discuss specific legislative changes."

Kochi Shimbun

"We must first analyze what happened and then compare analysis results to ordinary cases of juvenile delinquency."

Asahi Shimbun

"If there is any procedural

inconvenience, for example, the law should be discussed from the broad perspective with prudence and patience."

Chunichi-Hokuriku Tokyo

Chunichi

"It is too early to conclude that the Juvenile Law as it stands has been rendered impotent by the Kobe killings. We should not jump to a conclusion."

Kanagawa Shimbun

"If there are a few minors with a sick mind, that is the fault of adults. It is time to review the Juvenile Law. But we should not make haste."

Fukui Shimbun

"Juvenile crime is not only becoming more serious but also spreading among younger children. Adults should rethink the social environment surrounding the children."

Kahoku Shimpō

"We must pay greater attention to the social background of the growing incidence of juvenile crime. Society as a whole should work out solutions."

This is a translation of a "Survey of Editorials" (Shimen Tenbo) from Shinbun Kyokaiho, a weekly publication of the Newspaper Publishers and Editors Association of Japan.