
 **JAPAN MEDIA
HIGHLIGHTS**

Morning Alert - Wednesday, August 24, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and Fuji TV gave top play to reports that according to South Korea's Yonhap News, North Korea launched a submarine-launched ballistic missile in the Sea of Japan at about 5:30 a.m. today, saying that the South Korean military is currently collecting information. NTV, TBS, and TV Asahi led with reports that actor Yuta Takahata was arrested on Tuesday on charges of sexually assaulting a female hotel employee.

Top stories in national dailies included a Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare plan to introduce a prior permission system for admission to daycare centers (Asahi); the Israeli military's deployment of vehicles with fully automated driving systems (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to double the staff of a counterterrorism intelligence-gathering unit (Yomiuri); the expansion of electronic payment services via smartphones in China (Nikkei); and a plan for organizational changes to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Chinese foreign minister makes first visit to Japan under Xi leadership

All papers wrote that Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi arrived in Tokyo on Aug. 23 to attend a trilateral meeting with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts. This is first time for a Chinese foreign minister to visit Japan since the launch of the Xi administration in 2012. Wang told reporters upon his arrival at Haneda on Tuesday evening that although there have been many media reports about the East China Sea, half of them are intentionally stirring up the issue. However, Wang added that China will prevent the situation from deteriorating through dialogue with Japan. Asahi wrote that

Wang feels strong dissatisfaction with Japan's continued calls on Beijing to accept the international arbitration ruling on the South China Sea in July.

The papers wrote that the Japanese and Chinese foreign ministers apparently held informal talks after a dinner hosted by Kishida for Wang and their South Korean counterpart Yun Byung Se on Tuesday, speculating that Kishida and Wang discussed bilateral issues, including the Senkaku Islands.

Japan, ROK to seek forward-looking relations

Mainichi wrote that the GOJ hopes to demonstrate improved ties between Japan and South Korea at their foreign ministerial meeting in the view that the two nations have entered a new era of forward-looking relations following their agreement on the comfort women issue last year. Kishida and Yun will probably confirm close coordination against North Korea's nuclear and missile development. In a related development, most papers wrote that the GOJ is set to approve at a cabinet meeting today the disbursement of 1 billion yen to the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation for former comfort women. Kishida plans to inform Yun of the cabinet approval of the contribution during their bilateral talks today.

Another Japanese indicted over spying allegations in China

Mainichi ran a Jiji story from Beijing saying that another of the four Japanese arrested by Chinese authorities for alleged spying has been indicted. The man was detained in May 2015 in Liaoning Province, close to China's border with North Korea. He was the third of the four to be indicted. The four Japanese were arrested by Chinese authorities from last year to early this year.

IAEA says North Korea reprocessed spent nuclear fuel

Yomiuri wrote that the IAEA said in a report for its annual board of governors meeting in September that it is highly likely that North Korea had been reprocessing spent nuclear fuel at its Yongbyon nuclear facility until early July.

Inoki plans to visit North Korea

Sankei wrote that Upper House member Antonio Inoki is planning to visit North Korea in early September with the hope of meeting with senior members of the Workers' Party of Korea. The visit by the former professional wrestler is intended to promote exchanges between Japan and North Korea through sports at a time when relations between the two nations have deteriorated due to Pyongyang's missile tests and suspension of a reinvestigation into the abductees.

SECURITY

Inada visits USS Ronald Reagan in Yokosuka

Mainichi and most other papers wrote that Defense Minister Inada visited the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan at the U.S. Navy base in Yokosuka on Aug. 23 and held talks with Vice Admiral Joseph Aucoin, the 7th Fleet commander, aboard the ship. The two officials agreed on the importance of the rule of law in the East and South China Seas. Inada's visit to the U.S. aircraft carrier was intended to demonstrate the strong U.S.-Japan alliance in response to Chinese government ships' repeated intrusions into Japanese waters near the Senkaku Islands. Inada and the U.S. commander also confirmed enhanced cooperation with South Korea over the DPRK's launches of ballistic missiles. Inada told reporters after her tour of the Ronald Reagan that the visit reminded her of the strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance and deterrence of a U.S. aircraft carrier. Ahead of her visit to the U.S. naval base, the defense minister toured the helicopter-carrier Izumo at the MSDF base in Yokosuka.

Okinawa media union protests forcible removal of reporters

Tokyo Shimbun wrote that a group of media labor unions in Okinawa Prefecture issued on Aug. 23 a statement of protest after two reporters from Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times were forcibly removed by riot police while covering protest demonstrations near the helipad construction site at the Northern Training Area. The statement said that the act is unacceptable as it violates the foundation of freedom of the press.

SCIENCE

Sea Shepherd agrees to stop obstructing Japan's whaling vessels

All papers reported on an agreement reached between Japan's research whaling organizations and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SS) on a court-mediated settlement in the U.S., under which the environmental group will permanently stop obstructing Japan's research whaling fleet. Although the Japanese side is relieved by the news, the SS's branches in such nations as Australia and the Netherlands are set to continue their anti-whaling activities because the settlement only covers the U.S. branch. The international community's criticism of Japan's research whaling remains strong despite the latest agreement with SS.

POLITICS

Shionoya to be tapped as chairman of Lower House TPP committee

Asahi and several other papers wrote that the LDP decided on Aug. 23 to appoint former Education Minister Ryu Shionoya as chairman of the Lower House special committee on the TPP. Nikkei wrote that the GOJ hopes to enact TPP legislation during an extraordinary Diet session to be convened in September by replacing Koya Nishikawa, who triggered an opposition boycott in the previous Diet session over his plan to publish a book detailing the TPP negotiations. The GOJ envisages passing the TPP legislation in the Lower House ahead of the U.S. presidential election on Nov. 8.

