



Morning Alert - Friday, August 26, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks led with reports that four more minors were arrested early this morning for their alleged involvement in the killing of a teenage boy in Saitama last Friday. Fuji TV led with a report on powerful Typhoon Lionrock, which may make landfall in Japan early next week.

Front-page items in Friday's national papers included a GOJ proposal to submit this fall a bill criminalizing "conspiracy"; ANA's plan to cancel some 300 flights through late September to repair engines on Boeing 787s; updates on a major earthquake in Italy; and the arrest of four Japanese men, including a doctor, on suspicion of illegally selling prescription drugs to Chinese tourists.

POLITICS

GOJ puts together new conspiracy legislation

Asahi led with a story on the Abe administration's plan to enact legislation intended to criminalize conspiracy. Pointing out that similar bills were submitted to the Diet three times under the Koizumi administration but that they were all scrapped in the face of strong criticism from the opposition and the public on account of broad investigative discretion to be given to law enforcement authorities, the daily said that under the newly compiled legislation, the scope of conspiracy and the targets of investigation will be narrowed so as to deflect any criticism. The administration is eyeing to enact the bill on "premediated organized crimes including terrorism" by underscoring the need to ensure public safety ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

In a separate piece, the paper said since Japan is the only G8 country which has not yet signed the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and a conspiracy bill needs to be passed for

ratification, the GOJ wants to enact the bill quickly by capitalizing on its high public support and the Tokyo Olympics based on the assessment that the nation is now receptive to such legislation in view of recent terrorist attacks around the world.

Maehara to run in DP leadership race

All papers wrote that former FM Maehara told DP lawmakers close to him that he will seek the party presidency in the September election, noting that since other politicians are unlikely to run in the race, he will face off with Acting President Renho, who already enjoys strong support from a number of party lawmakers. However, her recent remark calling President Okada a “bore” has caused a stir, with some voicing concern that the gaffe may have adverse effects on her candidacy. Maehara is hoping to enlist the endorsement of conservative members who are critical of the present leadership’s policy of deepening election collaboration with the Japanese Communist Party.

Top LDP official endorses “female emperor”

Most papers took up yesterday’s press remarks by LDP Secretary General Nikai, who stressed that a woman should be allowed to assume the imperial throne. He said: “At a time when women are active in many fields, prohibiting a woman from assuming the imperial throne cannot be acceptable.” The dailies said this remark may cause controversy within the ruling party since many party legislators are committed to maintaining unbroken male lineage.

In a related story, Nikkei took up Nikai’s appointments of key officials, explaining that in tapping LDP Diet members for posts in charge of controversial issues such as the TPP and constitutional reform, he selected lawmakers who appear to be “neutral.” The top LDP official tapped former Education Minister Ryu Shionoya as chairman of the Lower House special committee on the TPP based on the judgment that the opposition camp will not object to this appointment since Shionoya has only a tenuous connection to the agricultural lobby.

Extraordinary Diet session to be convened on Sept. 26

Mainichi claimed that the GOJ and the ruling coalition have decided to convene the Diet session on Sept.26 out of deference to the largest opposition DP, which plans to hold a party presidential election on Sept. 15.

INTERNATIONAL

Senior GOJ official meets with Chinese premier

All papers reported from Beijing that Shotaro Yachi, Secretary General of Japan’s National Security Secretariat, paid a courtesy call on Premier Li on Wednesday, during which the Chinese leader expressed hope for improving ties with Japan by saying: “It is necessary to put Sino-Japanese relations back on normal track as soon as possible.” The Japanese diplomat reportedly conveyed Japan’s concern about the escalated patrol operations of Chinese public ships near the Senkakus.

The papers speculated the Chinese welcomed Yachi's visit as a chance to obtain Japan's cooperation for hosting a successful G20 summit in Hangzhou in early September. Both sides are now expected to start full consultations to arrange a meeting between PM Abe and President Xi on the margins of the G20 conference. Yomiuri projected, however, that even if a bilateral summit is realized, Beijing will probably not take concrete steps to ease tensions in the East China Sea.

SLBM launch rattles South Korea

Yomiuri wrote from Seoul that the impact of North Korea's successful SLBM launch on Wednesday has reverberated across South Korea, noting that calls are mounting among ROK military officials and journalists for conducting a review of existing and planned missile defense systems. Some are even demanding enhanced coordination with Japan since the SDF has extremely high capabilities to detect and track down submarines.

Japan, Australia agree to hold 2+2 meeting this year

Most papers took up yesterday's defense ministerial meeting in Tokyo between Japan and Australia, noting that DM Inada and her Australian counterpart Payne reached a consensus on a range of issues, including holding a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting later this year, updating the existing bilateral acquisition and cross servicing agreement (ACSA), and taking a concerted approach toward China's maritime push in the South China Sea.

SECURITY

Okinawa budget to be curtailed

Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ decided yesterday to trim central government subsidies and grants for Okinawa in FY2017 by 14 billion yen to about 321 billion yen, speculating that the cut is intended to hold Governor Onaga in check on account of his opposition to the FRF construction off Camp Schwab. It added that some officials are worried that the reduction may boomerang by prompting the Okinawa leader to become even more confrontational. Mainichi ran a similar story, quoting an unnamed senior Okinawa official as saying: "The cut is truly regrettable."

SOCIETY

LGBT make up 8% of workforce

Asahi published the results of an Internet survey conducted by the Japanese Trade Union Confederation Rengo showing that 8% of working men and women aged 20 to 59 said they are LGBT. Some 23% said they have witnessed harassment against LGBT in their offices. Many respondents mentioned a "lack of understanding of diversity in the workplace."



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