



Morning Alert - Tuesday, September 6, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on heavy rain in Hokkaido and called for caution against landslides. NTV led with a report that prices for vegetables have increased due to damage from recent typhoons. TBS gave top play to a report that North Korea fired three ballistic missiles into waters off Hokkaido on Monday. TBS and TV Asahi reported that a memorial ceremony was held on Tuesday for the late TV personality and lawmaker Kyosen Ohashi. All papers led with the summit between Prime Minister Abe and Chinese President Xi in Hangzhou on Monday.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe, Xi agree to promote dialogue

All papers wrote that Prime Minister Abe and President Xi agreed to deepen mutual dialogue to improve bilateral ties at their first meeting in almost 17 months. During the session that lasted approximately 30 minutes, the two leaders agreed to accelerate talks on launching at an early date a bilateral communication mechanism designed to head off inadvertent confrontations between the two militaries. They also agreed to hold consultations between working level officials in Hiroshima next week concerning the joint development of underwater gas fields in the East China Sea. Regarding China's patrol operations in the Senkaku vicinity, Abe urged Xi to exercise restraint. He also pressed Xi to refrain from militarizing the South China Sea and abide by international law so as not to alarm China's neighbors.

The papers explained that although Abe and Xi agreed to improve bilateral ties, there is still mutual distrust between them over the Senkakus and other issues, with Yomiuri pointing out that neither of them was smiling. Speculating that China chose to take a soft line toward Japan for the time being

with the goal of concluding the G20 summit successfully, they projected that the “détente” between Tokyo and Beijing will perhaps be short-lived because China is determined not to make any concessions on its “core interests.”

DPRK launches three missiles into Japan’s EEZ off Hokkaido

All dailies wrote that North Korea fired what appeared to be three Rodong medium-range ballistic missiles yesterday and all of them landed inside Japan’s exclusive economic zone west of Hokkaido after traveling about 1,000 km. PM Abe said during the G20 summit in Hangzhou that the DPRK provocation poses a grave threat to regional security and urged the assembled leaders to respond resolutely. The articles conjectured that the launch was timed to coincide with the G20 summit to play up the reclusive regime’s resolve to pursue nuclear and missile development.

The fact that all the missiles apparently landed in the same location in the Sea of Japan points to “steady improvement” in DPRK missile technology, according to Defense Minister Inada. Yomiuri wrote that Japan will be required to upgrade its interception capabilities to address the possibility of a surprise launch of multiple missiles by North Korea.

Abe, Putin agree to expedite territorial talks

All Saturday morning papers reported heavily on the summit between Prime Minister Abe and Russian President Putin in Vladivostok on Friday, during which they agreed to meet again in Peru in November on the margins of the APEC leaders’ meeting and in Yamaguchi Prefecture on Dec. 15 in order to accelerate talks on the Northern Territories dispute. Following the summit over dinner, which included an hour-long private session, the prime minister told the press that they held “in-depth discussions” on a peace treaty. During the summit, the premier reportedly outlined a package of economic assistance measures for Russia based on the bilateral accord reached in May on taking a “new approach” to peace talks. They also agreed to launch a bilateral consultation panel to promote energy cooperation.

Asahi said Abe appeared to be extremely anxious to resolve the decades-long territorial dispute by using economic assistance as leverage in order to leave a diplomatic legacy based on the judgment that the development of the Russian Far East is President Putin’s top policy priority. According to Yomiuri, the GOJ is hoping to achieve a breakthrough in the upcoming summit in December based on the assessment that during the transition to the next administration, Washington probably will not be critical of growing reconciliation between Tokyo and Moscow.

Russia, on the other hand, is apparently desperate to obtain economic cooperation from Japan. Putin has intensified his overtures toward Japan with the goal of ending Russia’s diplomatic isolation over the situation in Ukraine and offsetting its growing economic dependence on China. Pointing out that the Putin administration has steadily taken steps to cement its control over the four disputed islands, Sankei expressed concern that Russia may obtain economic aid from Japan without offering

anything in return. According to Nikkei, some Japanese companies are afraid to deepen their business involvement with Russia in view of the possibility of the U.S. reacting negatively. The paper also said Japanese business leaders are wary of undertaking major business deals with Russia in response to pressure from the government.

In a related story, Tuesday's Yomiuri highlighted press remarks in Hangzhou on Monday by President Putin, who said the sanctions that the GOJ is enforcing on Moscow over the situation in Ukraine "will not disrupt Russo-Japanese relations."

Abe proposes holding annual summits with Putin in Vladivostok

All Saturday evening papers reported on a speech made by PM Abe earlier in the day at an economic forum, during which he proposed that he and Putin meet annually in Vladivostok to assess progress on bilateral cooperation for economic development in the Russian Far East. The premier called for President Putin to normalize bilateral relations by concluding a peace treaty.

Poll: South Koreans become critical of comfort women accord with Japan

Several Saturday morning papers highlighted the results of a recent survey conducted in South Korea that pointed to the local people's critical assessment of the comfort women accord with Japan. Some 63% called for renegotiation of the agreement intended to resolve the historical dispute "finally and irreversibly," up five points from a previous poll taken immediately after the accord was reached last December. The Koreans were apparently dissatisfied with progress on the implementation of the pact. Some 76% were opposed to removing the comfort women statue from in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul.

U.S., China ratify Paris climate change agreement

All Sunday papers reported extensively on a joint announcement by the U.S. and the Chinese governments that they have ratified the Paris climate change agreement, underscoring that the landmark pact designed to curb global warming is bound to take effect this year as a result of the two largest greenhouse gas emitters' renewed commitment to addressing climate change. Noting that that the two nations were previously reluctant to embrace the Paris agreement, the dailies said President Obama and Chinese President Xi chose to change course on the key global challenge as the U.S. leader wished to leave a diplomatic legacy while his Chinese counterpart hoped to highlight the country's determination to become a "responsible stakeholder." The dailies added that the agreement between Washington and Beijing will prompt the GOJ to ratify the Paris agreement in the Diet session this fall.

Meanwhile, President Obama and Xi were reportedly at odds over the South China Sea issue and the U.S. military's plan to deploy a THAAD missile defense platform in South Korea during their summit held in Hangzhou on Saturday.

U.S. media outlets report on kidnapped American man in Pyongyang

Monday's Sankei wrote that a number of U.S. media outlets, including CNN, have reported that David Sneddon, who went missing in China in August 2004, was apparently abducted and taken to North Korea by DPRK agents. Citing a Kyodo story that reported on remarks made by a representative of a South Korean activist group, the American news organizations claimed that he is married to a local woman, has two children, and is working in Pyongyang as an English teacher. Noting that a congressional motion has been submitted calling for the USG to start investigations into the Sneddon case, Sankei expressed hope that the surge in U.S. media interest in his case may have positive effects on Japan's desire to resolve the abductions of Japanese nationals.

Poll: Almost half of respondents oppose SDF missions to protect foreign troops

Monday's Mainichi front-paged the results of a public opinion poll showing that some 48% expressed opposition to allowing SDF troops on peacekeeping missions abroad to go to the defense of their foreign counterparts when they come under attack, while about 39% felt otherwise. Almost 60% were against the recent Tokyo-Seoul accord on Japan paying some 10 million yen in cash to each of the former comfort women, whereas 30% were in favor of it. Some 62% expressed hope for progress on the Northern Territories dispute following the recent summit between Abe and Putin.

POLITICS

Three candidates vying for DP presidency

All Saturday morning papers reported on the official kickoff of the Democratic Party's presidential election campaign on Friday, noting that Acting President Renho, former Foreign Minister Maehara, and Deputy Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tamaki officially declared their candidacy. Cooperation with the Japanese Communist Party in the next general election and constitutional amendment are expected to be the top campaign issues.

In a related story, Monday's Mainichi published the results of its latest public opinion survey showing that some 32% felt that Renho is the most qualified to be the next DP president among the three candidates, followed by Maehara at 19% and Tamaki at 4%. Almost 51% responded negatively to the largest opposition party pursuing election cooperation with the JCP.

Top LDP official comments on conspiracy legislation

Saturday morning's Asahi and Mainichi took up remarks made on a TV show on Friday by LDP Secretary General Nikai, who indicated that the Abe administration may submit to the Diet session in late September a bill to make conspiracy a crime. The senior ruling official stressed the importance of enacting such legislation in order to prevent terrorism in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. According to Tuesday's papers, Komeito Chief Representative Yamaguchi on Monday expressed support for submitting the legislation so as to prevent terrorism.

SECURITY

U.S.-Japan joint command post exercise to be held this winter

Saturday morning's Mainichi wrote that the GSDF plans to hold a joint command post exercise called Yamasakura with the U.S. Army and Marine Corps from Nov. 30 through Dec. 13 in Kumamoto Prefecture. The paper projected that the exercise will probably reflect the greater security role that the SDF is expected to play under the new security legislation.

SDF used alternate transportation method in Okinawa due to refusal by ferry crew

Yomiuri wrote that the GSDF was forced to use alternate methods to transport equipment and personnel from the main island of Okinawa to Ishigaki and other islands in Okinawa in response to North Korea's announcement of a missile launch in February this year because the union for crew members of a pre-chartered ferry refused to operate the ship on the grounds that private sector employees should not engage in "contingency operations." Noting that the use of chartered vessels has been viewed as an effective mean to transport personnel and weapons in emergencies in view of the shortage of transportation of capabilities by the SDF, the daily said the episode will force the Defense Ministry to reconsider this approach.

ECONOMY

TPP Minister Ishihara keen to affirm coordination with TPP members other than U.S.

Saturday's Sankei said TPP Minister Ishihara met with his New Zealand counterpart in late August to affirm the bilateral commitment to effectuating the TPP, explaining that he is likely to visit other TPP member states to restore momentum for the regional free trade deal amid growing uncertainty over whether the U.S. Congress will endorse it.

Deal to protect Pacific tuna falters due to schism between Japan, U.S.

Saturday morning papers wrote that Pacific states failed on Friday to reach an agreement to protect shrinking supplies of bluefin tuna, explaining that although Japan proposed invoking a catch limit, the U.S. expressed doubts about its effectiveness and called for stricter regulations. The dailies expressed concern that the establishment of a framework for controlling the marine resource is becoming increasingly elusive.