



Morning Alert - Thursday, September 8, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All broadcasters gave top play to reports that Typhoon Namtheun was downgraded to a low-pressure system early this morning, causing unstable atmospheric conditions over the Kanto region. Major front-page items in national papers included yesterday's summit between Prime Minister Abe and ROK President Park and a GOJ plan to enact a special measures law to allow Emperor Akihito to abdicate in the near future.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe, Park confirm commitment to steadily implement comfort women accord

All papers reported that Prime Minister Abe and President Park met in Vientiane, Laos, yesterday and confirmed their mutual commitment to implementing the comfort women agreement without fail and enhancing coordination with the U.S. to deal with North Korea's nuclear and missile development. In response to the premier's request for the swift removal of the comfort women statue from in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, the ROK leader simply stated that it is important to enforce the agreement steadily.

Yomiuri wrote that although there are still issues that need to be resolved, Abe and Park agreed to take a "future-oriented" approach to strengthening their ties. The paper said reconciliation between Tokyo and Seoul is picking up momentum as the two leaders exchanged opinions almost every day in the past week on the margins of international conferences in Vladivostok, Hangzhou, and Vientiane. Asahi said although the two leaders are apparently becoming important partners in the face of continued DPRK provocations, South Korea is still hesitant to sign a general security of

military information agreement (GSOMIA), which is indispensable for sharing intelligence on DPRK missiles. Nikkei filed a similar story.

Abe meets with Asian leaders

Most papers wrote that PM Abe held talks with Australian PM Turnbull, Indian PM Modi, and other Asian leaders who were assembled in Laos for the East Asia Summit. Abe and Turnbull agreed to urge China to comply with the July ruling by the Permanent Court of Arbitration dismissing Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea. They also agreed to apply greater pressure on North Korea. Abe and Modi agreed to deepen bilateral and trilateral security cooperation with the U.S. in view of China's maritime advancement.

Nikkei said Abe cautioned ASEAN against taking a soft line toward China in his meeting with the leaders of the ten ASEAN states on Wednesday, by saying: "We welcome greater communications between ASEAN and China, but such dialogue should be premised on maintaining restraint and the demilitarization of the South China Sea." Abe expressed deep concern about what he called China's "unilateral attempts" to alter the status quo in the South and East China Seas in the past several months.

In a meeting with Burmese Foreign Minister Aung Sun Suu Kyi, Abe explained Japan's aid commitment and urged her to visit Japan at an early date. The Japanese leader also held talks with Vietnamese PM Phuc and conveyed Tokyo's plan to provide patrol boats so that Vietnam can enhance its naval security against China's maritime advancement.

DPRK missile threat growing rapidly

Yomiuri reported that North Korea is steadily improving its ballistic missile capabilities, as the three missiles that were fired on Monday all landed in the same area of the Sea of Japan. The Kim regime appears determined to accelerate the development of an array of ballistic missiles that can be used for surprise attacks based on the assessment that the Obama administration is unlikely to take countermeasures before stepping down next January.

Japan, Russia agree to expedite talks on development in Russian Far East

Mainichi wrote that METI Minister Seko held talks with a visiting Russian cabinet minister on Wednesday and agreed to accelerate bilateral talks for the industrial development of the Russian Far East. The Japanese official stressed that President Putin's planned trip to Japan in December will present a great opportunity for further development of Russo-Japanese relations. Sankei ran a similar story, adding that Seko will visit Moscow in early November for additional talks with the Russian official.

Japan hosts four-party economic talks in West Bank

Asahi wrote that Japan sponsored four-party ministerial talks by the Palestinian government, Israel, and Jordan in the West Bank on Wednesday with the goal of expediting the economic development

of the Palestinian territories. This was the fifth time for the “Corridor for Peace and Prosperity” initiative to be hosted by the Japanese government.

POLITICS

Renho waging solid campaign for DP presidency

Mainichi claimed that Acting DP President Renho appears to be leading the pack in the party’s presidential campaign, speculating that she is likely to win a majority of votes from both parliamentarians and rank-and-file party members in the first round. The paper said former Foreign Minister Maehara and Deputy Diet Affairs Chairman Tamaki are expected to do their utmost to prevent Renho from winning a majority in the first round so that they can team up in a run-off to defeat her.

In a related story, Asahi wrote that in interviews with the press on Wednesday, all the DP presidential candidates voiced opposition to the GOJ-sponsored TPP legislation. They criticized the Abe administration for not offering enough information on the TPP negotiations while citing the two U.S. presidential candidates’ refusal to embrace the regional free trade accord. Acting President Renho said: “The TPP will not take effect unless the U.S. ratifies it. It would be a waste of time for the Japanese legislature to deliberate the bill ahead of the U.S.”

Autumn Diet session to last through end of November

Sankei and Nikkei said the ruling coalition is hoping to end the upcoming extraordinary Diet session in late November so that it will not affect PM Abe’s diplomatic schedule, including Russian President Putin’s trip to Japan in mid-December and a proposed tripartite summit by Japan, China, and South Korea. However, given that the Abe administration is determined to enact the TPP legislation in the next Diet session, some ruling officials project that it might be extended through December. As for the proposed GOJ legislation to make conspiracy a crime, Komeito officials expressed a cautious view on Wednesday by saying the bill is unlikely to be enacted.

SECURITY

Obama’s top aide negative about “no first use” policy

Asahi took up remarks made on Tuesday by Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes, who expressed a negative view about the Obama administration adopting a policy of no first use of nuclear weapons. He said: “Our security commitment [to U.S. allies] is rock-solid. We will continue this policy.” Rhodes reportedly underscored that the U.S. is committed to defending Japan and South Korea under its “nuclear umbrella.”



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