



Morning Alert - Tuesday, September 13, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the finding that Tokyo government officials in charge of relocating Tsukiji Fish Market to Toyosu knew that not enough clean soil was used to fill in the foundation of the new fish market. Most commercial networks also led with reports on the soil problem at new Toyosu fish market.

Major front-page items in national dailies included follow-up stories on the recent DPRK nuclear test; the launch of a GOJ panel tasked with promoting a “fourth industrial revolution” focusing on artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things; and a Justice Ministry plan to establish clear rules regarding the custody of minors following divorce.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, U.S, South Korea bracing for another DPRK nuclear test

All papers highlighted growing speculation that North Korea may detonate another nuclear device in the near future at the same site where its fifth nuclear test was conducted last Friday. The U.S., Japan, and South Korea plan to step up coordination in preparation for escalated provocations by the North. The U.S. military will deploy B-1 bombers to South Korea today, while the USS Ronald Reagan will probably take part in joint exercises with South Korea next month. A South Korean Defense Ministry spokesperson acknowledged on Monday the need to sign a general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan as part of bilateral efforts to address the missile threat posed by the DPRK.

In a related front-page article, Asahi claimed that North Korea notified China of last week's nuclear test in advance, saying: "The U.S. and South Korea are about to take a surgical step toward North Korea. It is necessary to perform a nuclear test as a countermeasure."

Japan, Russia agree to deepen coordination for adopting UN motion against DPRK

Most papers wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida spoke by phone with Russian FM Lavrov yesterday to discuss North Korea's latest nuclear test and missile launches. They agreed to enhance coordination so that the UN Security Council will be able to adopt a strong sanctions resolution against the DPRK based on the shared recognition that the nuclear test poses a serious threat to regional peace and stability. While noting that Kishida also spoke by phone with his French counterpart, Yomiuri said he is hoping to speak Chinese FM Wang as well in order to enlist Beijing's support for an additional resolution.

Chinese patrol ships enter Japan's territorial waters around Senkakus

Mainichi wrote that four Chinese coast guard boats intruded into the nation's territorial waters in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands on Monday, speculating that the move was made in protest of the fourth anniversary on Sunday of the nationalization of the outcrops by the Japanese government. The GOJ lodged a protest against the first intrusion in almost three weeks. Noting that four Chinese patrol boats have been operating in the area since early September, the article speculated that the Chinese are escalating their provocations to establish a fait accompli. Sankei pointed out that a total of 518 Chinese government ships have entered Japan's territorial waters around the remote islets in the past four years.

Chairperson of Russia's upper house to visit Japan

Nikkei wrote that Chairperson Matviyenko of Russia's Federation Council will visit Japan in late October for bilateral parliamentary exchange, noting that since the politician is close to President Putin, the GOJ is hoping to boost momentum for bilateral cooperation with the ultimate goal of resolving the Northern Territories dispute. She is expected to pay a courtesy call on PM Abe. Two Russian deputy prime ministers will also visit Japan in the autumn.

In a related development, Yomiuri's latest public opinion poll showed that 66% of respondents approved of PM Abe's efforts to resolve the Northern Territories dispute through greater economic assistance to Russia, but more than 70% were pessimistic about the prospects for resolving the dispute in the near future.

Abe to meet with Fidel Castro

Yomiuri reported on the disclosure by a GOJ source that PM Abe is likely to meet with Cuban President Raul Castro and his elder brother former President Fidel Castro when he visits Havana in late September. The prime minister is expected to convey the GOJ's readiness to cancel two-thirds

of the debt that Havana owes Tokyo, or 120 billion yen, with the goal of promoting economic cooperation with the Caribbean state.

SECURITY

SDF aircraft to be mobilized for transporting heavy machinery to build helipads

Tokyo Shimbun wrote that GSDF CH-47 helicopters will be used starting today at the earliest to airlift heavy equipment and construction materials to the Northern Training Area for helipad construction on account of continued protests by base opponents.

Abe urges senior SDF officers to abandon male chauvinism

Sankei wrote that in yesterday's remarks delivered to high-ranking SDF officials at the Defense Ministry, PM Abe criticized the absence of females among the top brass. "The highest hurdle is the organization's deep-seated, male-centered work style," he said. "This must be changed completely." Pointing out that there are many generals and admirals in the U.S. and European militaries, Abe strongly called for women's empowerment within the SDF by saying: "There is no reason that Japan cannot do the same."

ECONOMY

Envoys of TPP member states affirm commitment to rejecting renegotiations

Mainichi and Tokyo Shimbun took up yesterday's meeting by representatives of the 12 TPP member states, including Ambassador Kennedy and TPP Minister Ishihara, at the U.S. Ambassador's Residence, highlighting that the envoys confirmed that there will be no renegotiation of the regional free trade deal. Tokyo Shimbun took up a comment by an unnamed Cabinet Office official, who said the fact that the two U.S. presidential candidates are opposed to the TPP accord shows that it is a "good deal for Japan." The GOJ is keen to obtain parliamentary endorsement of related legislation in the upcoming Diet session to demonstrate that there is no room for renegotiation.

POLITICS

Cabinet support rises above 60%

Yomiuri front-paged the results of its latest public opinion poll that put support for the Abe cabinet at 62%, up 8 points from a month ago, and nonsupport at 29%, down 1 point. The daily attributed the rise to the public's appreciation for the administration's efforts to increase international coordination to deal with North Korea's nuclear test last week. Asahi's survey put support for the premier at 52%, up four points from a month ago, and nonsupport at 29%. Both surveys showed that about 70% were sympathetic to the idea of allowing not only Emperor Akihito but also his successors to abdicate.

SCIENCE

G7 health ministers agree to cooperate in combating infectious diseases, dementia

Monday evening's Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that the health ministers of the G7 nations adopted the "Kobe Declaration" to strengthen mutual cooperation in preventing the spread of infectious diseases and treating dementia. The participants welcomed the efforts by the WHO and other organizations to put together a manual for procedures to respond to outbreaks of Ebola and other infectious diseases, and agreed to draft action plans for supporting dementia patients and caregivers.

Int'l entity adopts motion calling for closure of domestic markets for elephant ivory

Monday evening's Nikkei ran a Kyodo report saying that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) on Saturday adopted a resolution calling on the governments of countries, in which there is a legal domestic market for elephant ivory to make legislative and regulatory efforts to shut down such markets. However, Japan and Namibia voted against the resolution. Although they called on the organization to make amendments to the draft resolution, their requests were turned down. The adoption represents increased criticism of Japan and other nations over the smuggling and poaching of elephant ivory.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Kennedy attends Japanese sake tasting ceremony

Yomiuri wrote that Japan's First Lady Akie Abe hosted a ceremony in Tokyo on Monday evening to introduce Japanese sake using pesticide-free rice grown in her husband's hometown of Shimonoseki, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Ambassador Kennedy took part in the event since she was invited to Yamaguchi by Mrs. Abe to participate in rice planting last summer.

