



Morning Alert - Thursday, September 15, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report that the Democratic Party will hold an election to select its new leader today. Most commercial networks led with reports that pools of “mysterious” water were found in the underground space beneath the buildings of the new fish market under construction in Toyosu.

Major front-page items in national dailies included a GOJ plan to decommission the Monju fast-breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture; a Health Ministry panel's interim report on the suspect in a mass murder that occurred in July at a Kanagawa facility for disabled people; and soil issues at the new fish market in Toyosu.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, China to coordinate in adopting sanctions resolution against DPRK

All papers wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida and Chinese FM Wang spoke by phone last night and agreed to take a concerted approach toward adopting an additional punitive resolution against North Korea at the UN Security Council. The Chinese official reportedly expressed a positive stance toward Kishida's call for Beijing to take a constructive role as a permanent council member in responding to Pyongyang's latest nuclear test.

Noting that the Chinese minister also conveyed a similar view to the South Korean foreign minister on Tuesday, the dailies expressed hope for expedited discussions at the UN body for putting together a sanctions resolution at an early date. But Asahi expressed doubts about whether Beijing will really endorse a strong resolution against Pyongyang, explaining that Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul are hoping to close “loopholes” in the existing sanctions, which were permitted as a result of

marathon negotiations at the UN between the U.S. and China conducted after North Korea detonated a nuclear device in January.

Diet panels approve protest motions against North Korea

Several papers wrote that the Foreign Affairs Committees of both houses of the Diet unanimously approved resolutions on Wednesday denouncing North Korea for conducting a fifth nuclear test. They called for the GOJ to exercise international leadership so that the UN Security Council can adopt an additional punitive resolution.

LDP mulling enhancing unilateral sanctions

Sankei wrote that the ruling LDP is discussing measures to impose tougher sanctions on North Korea, speculating that it is likely to propose to the GOJ expanding the scope of officials of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon) whose reentry to Japan will be prohibited after visiting North Korea. The ruling party may also ask the administration to lobby the U.S. to put the Kim regime back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

SECURITY

DM Inada to visit U.S.

Most papers wrote that Defense Minister Inada will depart for the U.S. today, noting that she will then travel to South Sudan before returning to Japan on Sept. 18. Pointing out that the defense minister has already traveled to Djibouti and toured many SDF bases across Japan since assuming her post in early August, Mainichi said she is anxious to overcome her lack of expertise in defense and foreign affairs by gaining field experience quickly. The paper added that Inada has “played it safe” as the nation’s defense chief by toning down her conservative rhetoric so as to cement her position as a potential successor to PM Abe.

Top LDP official anxious to repair ties with Okinawa

All papers took up a meeting held yesterday between LDP Secretary General Nikai and Okinawa Governor Onaga in Naha, noting that the top LDP politician pledged to make efforts to support local economic development. According to Sankei, the governor welcomed Nikai’s willingness to hold dialogue with the island prefecture, which is markedly different from the Abe administration’s hardline approach toward the governor over Futenma relocation. The daily highlighted concern by some party officials that the veteran LDP lawmaker’s pro-dialogue line may cause a schism with the central government, as Nikai did not mention the GOJ’s commitment to moving forward with FRF construction off Camp Schwab.

High court to issue ruling on Henoko landfill permit

Nikkei reported that the Naha Branch of the Fukuoka High Court is expected to issue a ruling tomorrow on the dispute between the central government and Okinawa over the legality of Governor

Onaga's rescindment of the landfill permit for FRF construction that was originally granted by former Governor Nakaima. Although both sides are reportedly confident about winning the case, Onaga will perhaps remain defiant even if he is defeated. He may take additional administrative measures to delay the relocation, such as a "withdrawal" of the landfill permit, which is legally different from "rescindment." The governor can withdraw the permit by citing a "change in situation" after it was issued. In contrast, Onaga rescinded the permit on account of "administrative flaws" when it was granted by his predecessor. The Okinawa leader may also refuse to approve changes to the FRF construction plan.

Most young Americans ignorant of U.S. obligation to defend Japan

Tokyo Shimbun printed a Jiji story on the result of a public opinion poll taken in May by the Council on Foreign Relations showing that only 28% of American university students and recent college graduates aged 18 to 26 were aware that the U.S. has a treaty obligation to protect Japan if it is attacked. The corresponding figures for Canada, South Korea, and Turkey were 47%, 34%, and 14%.

POLITICS

Renho likely to become new DP leader despite citizenship controversy

All papers reported on the Democratic Party presidential election to be held this afternoon, projecting that Acting President Renho will win a majority in the first round despite the issue of her dual citizenship. Yomiuri wrote that attention is already being paid to whether Renho will heed departing President Okada's wish for her to retain Secretary General Edano, who has been closely involved in the current leadership's policy of deepening electoral cooperation with the Japanese Communist Party.

Extraordinary Diet session to run through Nov. 30

Asahi front-paged a story saying that the upcoming extraordinary Diet session, to be convened on Sept. 26, will run through Nov. 30, noting that the GOJ's top priority will be to pass the TPP legislation and a supplementary budget bill for pump-priming. The administration will carefully determine the timing for submitting a bill to make conspiracy a crime since the controversial legislation may disrupt parliamentary deliberations on the TPP bill.

SCIENCE

Japan, China to cooperate in preventing ivory trade

Wednesday evening's Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ has decided to share investigative information about trade in ivory from African elephants with China and other Asian nations in order to prevent

the illegal export of ivory from Japan in view of the growing popularity of ivory in China and elsewhere. The GOJ also plans to step up surveillance of trade via the Internet.

