



Morning Alert - Tuesday, September 27, 2016

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

Most networks continued to carry updates on the death of a patient at a Yokohama hospital after being given an IV solution containing a foreign substance. Another patient at the same hospital reportedly died recently of poisoning caused by the same foreign substance. NTV led with a report on an announcement by NASA that Europa, Jupiter's largest moon, is possibly venting water plumes, which might mean that extraterrestrial life could be found there.

Top items in national dailies included the death of two patients at a Yokohama hospital by poisoning and Prime Minister Abe's key policy speech at the Diet yesterday.

## POLITICS

### Abe delivers key policy speech at parliament

All papers gave front-page coverage to PM Abe's key policy speech, during which he called for the swift ratification of the TPP, accelerated implementation of Abenomics, and intensive discussions on constitutional amendment. Yomiuri highlighted his remarks on constitutional amendment and the Northern Territories, pointing out that his language on the two issues was more forceful than before, perhaps reflecting his strong desire to leave a "historic legacy" as he is becoming more confident about staying in office for an extended period. On relations with Russia, Abe said: "I will put an end to the abnormal situation in which there is no peace treaty by resolving the territorial dispute... Negotiations will be expedited."

Asahi said the Abe administration chose not to submit controversial legislation other than the TPP and the supplementary budget to the current parliamentary session, indicating that the prime

minister may be trying to “play it safe” for the time being in order to maintain his high approval rating in preparation for the possible dissolution of the Lower House in January for a snap election. The administration is arranging major diplomatic events for the premier in December, including a trip to Abe’s hometown in Yamaguchi by Russian President Putin and a trilateral summit with China and South Korea in Tokyo, with the goal of calling greater public attention to Abe’s diplomatic leadership.

Pointing out that the prime minister used the word “future” 18 times in his speech, Nikkei speculated that he may be eager to stay in his post through 2020 when Tokyo hosts the Olympics. Abe may be hoping to have the LDP change its internal rules on the party president’s time in office so he can serve beyond the expiration of his current term in September 2018 by winning a major victory for the LDP in the next general election early next year.

### **DP to step up pressure on Abe administration ahead of October by-elections**

All dailies wrote that Democratic Party President Renho is expected to up the ante against the Abe administration in the extraordinary Diet session in order to derail its key policy agenda items, including the 2016 supplementary budget and the TPP legislation, with the goal of defeating the LDP candidates in the Lower House by-elections in Tokyo and Fukuoka on Oct. 23. In addition to calling for extended deliberations on the budget and TPP bills, the opposition leader is likely to address scandals involving cabinet ministers, including Okinawa Affairs Minister Tsuruho, who was recently fined for speeding. The largest opposition party is also set to thwart the ruling party’s moves to accelerate parliamentary discussions on constitutional amendment by demanding that the LDP withdraw its controversial draft proposal that was put together in 2012.

In a related development, most dailies wrote that the DP is insisting that the GOJ-sponsored TPP legislation be resubmitted following the discovery of three mistakes in the Japanese translation of the trade pact. There are 15 additional mistakes in the bills, including redundancies. Mainichi and Sankei noted that the opposition is determined to block the TPP bills by taking issue with the lack of transparency in imported rice trade that has come to light recently.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **U.S. imposes financial sanctions on Chinese company, individuals**

Several papers took up an announcement by the Treasury Department on Monday that the financial assets in the U.S. of one Chinese firm and its owner and three other Chinese individuals were frozen on account of their involvement in the shipment to North Korea of materials that could be used for uranium enrichment. Treasury’s Acting Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Adam Szubin reportedly said: “The action exposes a key illicit network supporting North Korea’s weapons proliferation.... The department will take forceful action to pressure North Korea’s proliferation network.” According to Asahi, this is the first time for the USG to impose sanctions on a

Chinese enterprise in connection with North Korea's nuclear development. Similar punitive measures may be applied to other Chinese firms. By cracking down on Chinese corporations suspected of abetting Pyongyang's pursuit of nuclear ambitions, Washington is anxious to close the "loopholes" in UN sanctions on the Kim regime.

### **Leaders of Japan, China, ROK to meet in Tokyo in December**

Mainichi asserted that arrangements are being made for PM Abe, Chinese Premier Li, and South Korean President Park to assemble in Tokyo in early December for a trilateral meeting to discuss North Korea, the regional economy, and other issues of mutual concern. This will be the first summit of its kind to be convened in Japan in more than five years.

In a related development, most papers wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida and former Chinese Foreign Minister Tang met in Tokyo yesterday and affirmed mutual efforts to realize the proposed trilateral summit this year. They also reaffirmed that disputes over the Senkaku Islands should be resolved through dialogue.

## **SECURITY**

### **U.S., Japan renew ACSA**

All papers wrote in inside-page articles that Foreign Minister Kishida and Ambassador Kennedy signed an updated bilateral acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) on Monday, explaining that the pact for the exchange of logistical support, supplies, and services was upgraded to reflect Japan's comprehensive security laws that enable the provision of ammunition and other materiel to the U.S. military even in peacetime. Defense Minister Inada and USFJ Acting Commander Chiarotti sat in on the signing event held at MOFA.

In response to Kishida's statement that the new accord is important to enhance the deterrence of the U.S.-Japan alliance, the Ambassador said: "It is indispensable for effective cooperation between the U.S. military and the SDF." If the renewed pact is approved by the Diet, it will go into effect by year's end at the earliest. Asahi projected, however, that the opposition bloc will call for careful deliberation of ACSA legislation by demanding detailed GOJ explanations of the scope of the logistical support to be provided to the U.S. military by the SDF.

