



Morning Alert - Monday, October 3, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on Typhoon Chaba, which is expected to approach Okinawa this evening. NTV led with a report on Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu, who became the first skater to perform a quadruple loop on Friday. TBS carried a follow-up report on the finding that the cost of the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games will exceed three trillion yen. Fuji TV led with a follow-up report on a Japanese woman who was found dead in Vancouver on Wednesday. TV Asahi gave top play to a report that 17-year-old amateur golfer Nasa Hataoka won the Japan Women's Open Golf Championship on Sunday.

Main front-page items in national papers included the UK's plan to officially announce its decision to leave the EU by next March; a GOJ plan to improve training for top athletes so they can win medals in the 2020 Olympics; and the police failure to announce the number of officers who were relieved from duty last year for misconduct.

SECURITY

Top U.S. diplomat in Okinawa stresses great contribution made by U.S. military

Jiji filed a report on Friday's interview with Naha-based CG Ehrendreich, who said that he is convinced that the U.S. military in Okinawa is making contributions to the security of the two nations, regional stability, peace, and prosperity. He underscored that the U.S. and its allies, including Japan, need to be prepared for all possible contingencies and emerging threats in the face of escalated provocations by North Korea. The U.S. diplomat also explained that the U.S. military in Okinawa is making important contributions in the Asia-Pacific region in such areas as disaster response and humanitarian assistance.

GOJ to expedite helipad construction for prompt reversion of Northern Training Area

Yomiuri wrote today that the GOJ is set to accelerate the ongoing helipad construction in the Northern Training Area with the goal of completing it this year, a few months earlier than originally scheduled. The GOJ hopes to ensure the expedited return of part of the training area as agreed upon 20 years ago and obtain local understanding for the FRF initiative off Camp Schwab by reducing the base-hosting burden in a tangible way. The GOJ and the police are expected to use tougher measures to constrain the protestors putting up physical resistance to the helipad construction.

Director of Okinawa government office in Washington gives up on obtaining proper visa

Saturday morning's Sankei took up the disclosure on Friday by a senior official of the Okinawa prefectural government that although the director of its Washington office, Hideo Henzan, has given up on obtaining an appropriate visa for his lobbying activities in the U.S. capital, he is expected to continue to working there with his present business visa. LDP prefectural assembly members are reportedly seeking to have Henzan testify before the legislature based on the judgment that his visa is inappropriate for his activities in Washington.

Inada refuses to withdraw past remarks on Japan acquiring nuclear weapons

Saturday morning's Tokyo Shimbun reported that during a Lower House Budget Committee session on Friday, Defense Minister Inada refused to heed repeated demands from an opposition lawmaker to retract remarks that she made in 2011 in a magazine interview that Japan should study the possibility of going nuclear. Inada stated instead: "Right now I don't think Japan should possess nuclear weapons.... I respect the three non-nuclear principles and will do my best to help achieve a world without nuclear weapons."

U.S. to propose establishment of global rules on military drone exports

Saturday morning's Mainichi reported on the disclosure by an unnamed high-ranking State Department official on Thursday that the U.S., Germany, and others plan to issue a joint statement on Oct. 5 on the establishment of a multinational panel next year tasked with establishing international rules on drone exports with the goal of ensuring transparency in the transfer and use of military UAVs. A total of 33 nations have already committed to joining the panel. The official reportedly expressed "optimism" about Japan's membership.

SDF put in difficult position on mounting calls for women's empowerment in military

Sunday's Sankei wrote that reluctance remains strong within the SDF to PM Abe's call for promoting more women in the belief that women's empowerment could undermine operational effectiveness. In response to Abe's strong criticism last month of the top SDF brass for "male chauvinism," the SDF leadership is looking to reduce the scope of missions where women are currently prohibited from

participating. However, many officials still consider it difficult to assign female personnel to certain duties, such as on submarines due to the lack of privacy in long-term underwater operations or the infantry because women lack the stamina required to engage in close combat with enemy troops. However, the SDF is aware of the necessity to tap more women because maintaining a robust military organization is becoming increasingly difficult due to the rapid decline in the number of young people.

JCG to increase personnel, boats for Senkaku surveillance

Yomiuri reported today that the Japan Coast Guard is planning to step up patrol operations in the vicinity of the Senkaku Islands in view of escalated Chinese provocations, noting that the number of personnel and patrol ships assigned to nearby Miyako Island will be increased four-fold in FY2018 to about 200 and 12, respectively. Local fishermen reportedly welcome the JCG's greater commitment to defending the outcrops.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan to provide Russia with advanced medical technology, postal delivery expertise

Saturday morning's Nikkei gave top coverage to a draft package of economic assistance measures for Russia that was drawn up by the GOJ as part of its efforts to resolve the Northern Territories dispute, explaining that the administration is considering providing infrastructure expertise on advanced medical devices and equipment to speed up postal delivery. The comprehensive measures will also include assistance for Japanese firms investing in Russia and the relaxation of visa requirements for Russians traveling to Japan. Noting that Japan's economic cooperation is meant to address "structural problems" unique to Russia, such as the short life expectancy and obsolete housing, the daily said several cabinet ministers, including Foreign Minister Kishida, plan to visit Russia this year to work out the details.

Abe meets with deputy Russian premier

All papers reported this morning that PM Abe held talks with visiting Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dvorkovich in Kyoto on Sunday and expressed his strong hope for delivering progress on bilateral peace treaty negotiations by resolving the Northern Territories dispute when President Putin visits Japan in December. Abe reportedly expressed hope that Putin's trip will be an opportunity to advance Russo-Japanese relations by producing accomplishments in a wide range of areas, such as politics and economy.

Putin continues to be tough negotiator on Northern Territories

Sunday's Nikkei carried a column by senior writer Akita, who speculated that Russian President Putin may try to settle the four-island Northern Territories dispute once and for all by returning the two smallest islets. According to the writer, although Prime Minister Abe is fully aware of the Russian

leader's intention, he is still serious about pursuing territorial negotiations based on the judgment that forging amicable ties with Moscow is imperative in addition to enhancing security ties with Washington to counter China's growing presence. The columnist warned that Putin may not be very eager to join hands with Tokyo in order to deal with China because he is hesitant to create adversarial relations with Beijing.

Japan irritated by ROK's demand for letter of apology from PM Abe

Saturday morning's Yomiuri wrote that the Abe administration is displeased by a demand made by the ROK Reconciliation and Healing Fund for a letter of apology to be sent to the comfort women from Prime Minister Abe, given that such an idea was not included in the bilateral comfort women accord sealed late last year. Some GOJ officials view the demand as an attempt by Seoul to "move the goal posts." An unnamed senior MOFA official was quoted as saying that sending such a letter is not being considered.

Japan having difficulty setting up additional consulates in China

Yomiuri reported this morning that the Chinese government has been refusing to grant permission for Japan to open consulates in Xi'an and Wuhan for almost four years probably on account of the aggravated bilateral ties triggered by Japan's nationalization of the Senkaku Islands in September 2012. The lack of progress on China's plan to move its consulates in Nagoya and Niigata to other locations in the same cities due to local opposition has also apparently affected Beijing's position on Japan's desire to establish consulates in the two Chinese towns.

Japan, China to resume environmental dialogue for first time in five years.

Nikkei reported on Monday that the governments of Japan and China are looking into resuming discussions at the bilateral "Joint Committee on Environmental Protection" next year, explaining that bilateral dialogue on the environment has been suspended since Japan's nationalization of the Senkakus four years ago. The two parties are expected to discuss Japan's technical assistance for dealing with pollution in China.

Japan, India to sign civil atomic cooperation pact

Kyodo reported on Friday that when Indian Prime Minister Modi visits Japan in mid-November for a summit with Prime Minister Abe, the two governments are likely to sign a civil nuclear energy cooperation accord that will enable Japan to export nuclear power technology to India. This will be the first time for Japan to sign such a pact with a non-NPT state.

Sanctioned DPRK mushrooms imported to Japan

Sunday's Sankei gave top coverage to the finding that matsutake mushrooms produced in North Korea have been imported and put on the market in Japan since late September. Although imports of such products are prohibited under GOJ sanctions, they have been shipped to Japan labeled as having come from China. Noting that more than 150 tons of North Korean mushrooms may be

imported this month, the daily speculated that the Kim regime may use some of the \$15 million in expected sales for nuclear development.

POLITICS

Pro-revision force likely to maintain two-thirds majority in snap election early next year

Sunday's Tokyo Shimbun speculated that while some LDP and Komeito officials are cautious about PM Abe's purported desire to dissolve the Lower House in early January for a snap election out of concern that the ruling coalition may not be able to win as many seats as it did in the December 2014 race, the so-called pro-constitutional revision force that includes the Japan Innovation Party would still control a two-thirds majority in the lower chamber even if it lost a total of 23 seats. Since several independent lawmakers of the Lower House take a positive stance on constitutional amendment, the daily claimed that Abe may be eager to undertake a political gambit early next year to obtain a renewed public mandate.

Nikai to play crucial role in legalizing gambling

Sunday's Nikkei published a column on casino legislation that has been stalled in the Diet for almost two years. The paper noted that proponents of the bill are hoping that LDP Secretary General Nikai will use his close bonds with senior officials of the Komeito party, which is strongly opposed to gambling, to convince them of the importance of the legislation for tourism promotion in preparation for the Tokyo Olympics. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga is also expected to lobby the junior ruling party to help enact the legislation. Pointing out that the Japan Innovation Party led by Osaka Governor Matsui is the strongest supporter of the bill, the daily said the party may try to seek concessions from Komeito by hinting that it may field candidates in selected electoral districts to defeat Komeito incumbents in the next general election.

Support for Renho disappearing within DP

Sankei wrote today that more Democratic Party lawmakers are turning their back on new leader Renho on account of her controversial appointment of former PM Noda as secretary general. Noda is viewed among many party members as the villain who triggered the demise of the DPJ. The daily asserted that some 90 out of 147 DPJ parliamentarians are taking a critical stance toward the present leadership, which commands support from the remaining 60 or so politicians.

Democratic Party needs to make "right turn"?

Nikkei's executive editor Serikawa argued in his Monday column that the Democratic Party needs to take a more conservative line to unseat the LDP over the long term in the belief that deepening electoral cooperation with the Japanese Communist Party would end up alienating conservative voters, whose support is critical for candidates of the largest opposition party to defeat their LDP rivals in single-seat districts. He said DP politicians must win, in addition to 90% of DP supporters

and 60% of nonaffiliated voters, some 30% of self-proclaimed conservative voters, many of whom are poised to support the LDP, so as to prevail in rural constituencies. The author explained that DP candidates backed by the JCP won in many of single-seat districts in eastern Japan in the July Upper House election primarily because the LDP support base was split there between two conservative candidates. The writer said the DP should take a “soft conservative” line given that moderate conservative politicians are rapidly losing clout within the LDP under the hawkish leadership of PM Abe.

ECONOMY

Japanese envoy voices concern about U.S. presidential candidates’ opposition to TPP

Sunday’s Nikkei reported from Washington on a press conference on Friday by Japanese Ambassador to the U.S. Sasae, who commented on the opposition to the TPP voiced by U.S. presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump by saying the negative views expressed by the two candidates have compounded protectionist sentiments in the U.S.

GOJ panel anxious to reform raw milk distribution

Sunday’s Yomiuri reported on ongoing discussions by a GOJ panel regarding the proposed liberalization of raw milk distribution. The paper noted that the academics and business representatives on the panel are calling for an end to the monopoly on milk distribution by organizations designated by the Agriculture Ministry. Since dairy farmers who choose not to rely on the “designated organizations” are not entitled to receive central government subsidies, these organizations have effectively monopolized raw milk distribution. However, LDP lawmakers who rely on farm votes are strongly opposed to the idea of ending the designation system in view of the looming possibility of a snap election early next year.

GOJ to compensate farmers for lost revenue

Saturday evening’s Nikkei wrote that the Agricultural Ministry is considering implementing a scheme in which qualified farmers will be compensated for 85% of their average annual income calculated from revenue over the past five years if their income drops by 60% due to the effectuation of the TPP and the elimination in 2018 of the rice acreage reduction program resulting in a drop in prices for domestic agricultural products.

SCIENCE

Paris accord on climate change likely to take effect in November

Most Saturday morning papers front-paged the EU’s decision to approve next week the Paris accord on global warming, noting that the landmark international pact to address climate change is likely to

take effect in November since India is also expected to ratify it shortly. The dailies underscored that Japan's parliamentary approval is lagging behind and expressed concern that the country might be excluded from a UN meeting to establish rules for the pact's implementation that will begin in Paris in early November because participation is premised on ratification. According to Yomiuri, a GOJ source was surprised by what he called the "speedy" approval by the EU and India.

UN panel adopts motion calling for closure of domestic markets for ivory trade

All papers reported that the signatories of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) unanimously adopted a resolution on Sunday calling for the shutdown of domestic ivory markets that "contribute to poaching or illegal trade" in order to protect the elephants in Africa that are on the verge of extinction. The papers noted that the GOJ is insisting that the motion does not apply to Japan, quoting a senior METI official, who took part in the CITES conference in Johannesburg, as saying: "The adopted resolution is not calling for Japan to close its domestic market. Since Japan's market is strictly managed, it does not 'contribute to poaching or illegal trade.'" Japanese traders are reportedly pleased with the wording of the motion.

