



Morning Alert - Thursday, October 13, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks led with reports on an extensive power outage in Tokyo on Wednesday afternoon caused by a fire at a TEPCO facility in Niiza, Saitama, which affected about 580,000 households in Tokyo. Fuji TV gave top play to a report that a group of Keio University students allegedly sexually assaulted a teenager, saying that the students belong to a group organizing the university's beauty contest. The contest was cancelled this year due to other scandals involving the group.

All national dailies gave top play to the power outage in Tokyo or the announcement of a business tie-up between Toyota and Suzuki.

INTERNATIONAL

Inada holds talks with U.S. Marines commander

Sankei and Tokyo Shimbun wrote that Defense Minister Inada held talks with General Neller, commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, at the Defense Ministry on Wednesday. Sankei wrote that the two officials agreed on the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and confirmed continued cooperation between the U.S. and Japan in dealing with North Korea. Tokyo Shimbun wrote that the defense minister and the commander confirmed cooperation in the construction of helicopter landing zones in the Northern Training Area in Okinawa in order to realize the partial return of the facility. Inada told Neller that the GOJ is making diligent efforts and requested the continued cooperation of the U.S.

Putin may visit Tokyo after Yamaguchi

Mainichi wrote that the Japanese and Russian governments are making arrangements for President Putin to visit Tokyo on the day after his trip to Nagato, Yamaguchi Prefecture, where he plans to hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Abe in mid-December. According to a source connected to Japan-Russia relations, a visit to Tokyo is being discussed because the Russian business leaders who will accompany Putin to Japan are hoping to hold meetings with their Japanese business counterparts in Tokyo. Yomiuri ran a similar story saying that arrangements are being made for Abe to hold talks with Putin in Yamaguchi on Dec. 15 and in Tokyo on Dec. 16, and for the two leaders plan to hold a joint press conference in Tokyo.

Japan protests China's unilateral gas field development in East China Sea

Wednesday evening's Nikkei front-paged a report saying that China has been continuing its unilateral gas field development in the East China Sea even after the Japan-China summit meeting in China on Sept. 5, at which the two nations agreed to hold discussions toward resuming the talks on joint development. The GOJ has confirmed signs of new natural gas production at two drilling platforms this month, and MOFA posted on its website pictures of the platforms. MOFA Director for the Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Kanasugi lodged a protest with the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo on Wednesday. This morning's Yomiuri ran a similar report saying that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga stated at a news conference on Wednesday that Japan will continue to call on Beijing to halt its unilateral development in the region and resume talks on joint development.

Trump advisor comments on need for discussions on cost of hosting U.S. forces

Nikkei reported on its interview with Michael Flynn, a foreign policy advisor to Donald Trump, in Tokyo on Oct. 12. The former head of the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency expressed a negative view about Trump's idea of withdrawing U.S. troops from Japan, but stated that it is necessary to reexamine "the cost of security." When asked about the U.S.-Japan alliance, Flynn said that the bilateral alliance is critical for the security of Asia and that Trump believes the alliance will continue in the future.

GOJ to delay until November decision on new mission for SDF in South Sudan

Yomiuri and Mainichi wrote that the GOJ has decided to delay until November its decision on whether to assign SDF personnel participating in the UN mission in South Sudan the new duty of rescuing UN staff and other civilians in the event they come under attack. The GOJ originally had planned to make the decision by the end of this month because the current SDF deployment period will end on Oct. 31, but it decided to postpone the decision to more carefully assess the security situation in South Sudan and progress in training for SDF personnel to be sent there. The GOJ plans to obtain cabinet approval this month only for the extension of the deployment period for the SDF. Defense Minister Inada plans to observe the training for SDF members on Oct. 23 or later.

Japan to mention Obama's Hiroshima visit in draft UNGA resolution on nuclear disarmament

Asahi wrote that the GOJ has decided to include praise for the visits to Hiroshima by President Obama and G7 foreign ministers this year in its draft resolution to be submitted to the First Committee of the UN General Assembly that discusses disarmament and international security. Although the move is intended to gain support for the resolution from the U.S., UK, and France, which abstained from the voting on last year's resolution, it remains to be seen whether these nations will support the resolution this year because differences between nuclear powers and nonnuclear nations are deepening over how to proceed with nuclear disarmament and this year's resolution will again mention the inhumane nature of nuclear weapons. According to the paper, the draft resolution will include the wording "welcoming the recent visits by political leaders to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, in particular, the visit to Hiroshima by the President of the United States." A GOJ source was quoted as speculating that it would be difficult for the U.S., UK, and France not to agree with a resolution referring to visits by their leaders.

SECURITY

GOJ expands scope of cybersecurity protection to include nine additional entities

Most papers wrote that the GOJ decided at a meeting of its cybersecurity strategy task force on Wednesday to extend the scope of its monitoring for cyberattacks to include nine public entities, among them the Japan Pension Service, which experienced a major leak of personal information. Previously, the scope of monitoring only covered government ministries and agencies. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said at the meeting that the GOJ will steadily implement measures to defend key organizations from cyberattacks.

ECONOMY

Lawmakers aim to pass casino legislation in current Diet session

Most papers wrote that a group of bipartisan lawmakers held a meeting on Wednesday to confirm their plan to seek to pass casino legislation during the current Diet session. Legislators from the LDP, the Democratic Party, the Komeito party, and Nippon Ishin no Kai as well as the governor of Osaka and vice governors of Hokkaido and Nagasaki participated in the meeting. Asahi and Sankei wrote that Komeito is still reluctant to support the legislation out of concern for gambling addiction, but Mainichi and Nikkei wrote that the party has expressed a flexible stance.

Abe positive about idea of opening farm work to foreigners

Sankei and Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe expressed a positive view about the idea of allowing foreign workers to work in the agricultural sector in special economic zones at a Lower House Budget Committee meeting on Wednesday. The premier announced a plan to submit relevant legislation to the ordinary Diet session next year to expedite discussions on the matter,

saying that accepting foreign workers is one of the remaining key challenges to structural reform in Japan.

POLITICS

DP leader hopes to visit U.S. after presidential election

Nikkei wrote that Democratic Party President Renho conveyed her wish to visit the U.S. after the U.S. presidential election in November during her meeting with Ambassador Kennedy at the Embassy on Wednesday. Renho told reporters afterward that it may become necessary to exchange views with various people depending on the results of the election.

SCIENCE

Scientists confirm plastics pollution in Antarctic waters (The Asahi Shimbun)

