



Morning Alert - Friday, October 14, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks and several national papers gave top play to reports that this year's Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan. Other main front-page stories included the death of Thailand's King Bhumibol Adulyadej; the postponement of the planned merger between Idemitsu Kosan Co. and Showa Shell; and an interview with Tokyo Governor Koike, during which she said temporary facilities to be built for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics should be used for reconstruction in Tohoku after they are dismantled.

SECURITY

USMC Osprey to conduct test flight in Saga

Asahi carried a prominent inside-page article on the disclosure by several GOJ sources regarding an agreement reached between the Defense Ministry and the U.S. military to arrange a test flight by a USMC MV-22 Osprey in Saga Prefecture in November with the goal of obtaining local consent for the proposed deployment of Ospreys by the GSDF at Saga Airport. The test flight was proposed to Defense Minister Inada by Governor Yamaguchi, who has been cautious about hosting the fleet of 17 tilt-rotor aircraft that the ministry hopes to station there beginning in FY2019. An unnamed senior MOD official said: "It is necessary to dispel the image that the Osprey is dangerous and to make local people understand that it is no different from a regular helicopter."

In an accompanying article, the daily said support for the Saga deployment is gradually growing among local government officials and residents, including fishermen who own land adjacent to the airport. The paper added, however, that local residents are concerned that accepting the GSDF

Ospreys will lead to use of the airport by U.S. military aircraft for training purposes. PM Abe told the Diet yesterday that Futenma-based Ospreys may in fact conduct drills in Saga Prefecture.

U.S. Ospreys to participate in GSDF parade

Tokyo Shimbun reported on the disclosure by GSDF Chief of Staff Okabe on Thursday that two USMC Ospreys will fly to GSDF Camp Asaka in Tokyo on Oct. 23 to participate in a military parade. The U.S. aircraft will reportedly conduct a “celebratory flight” upon the conclusion of the event. The purpose of the Osprey flight is to call attention to the strong U.S.-Japan alliance and the safety of the tilt-rotor airplane.

Residents call for cancellation of NTA helipad construction

Tokyo Shimbun wrote that several people who live near the Northern Training Area in Okinawa held a press conference at the FCCJ in Tokyo yesterday to call for understanding for their campaign to thwart the ongoing helipad construction. One of the residents said: “We cannot live in peace because precious nature is being destroyed for the military of another country.”

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, Russia hold strategic dialogue

Several papers reported on the Japan-Russia strategic dialogue convened in Moscow on Thursday for the first time in 44 months, noting that Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama and his Russian counterpart agreed to hold such talks annually. They reportedly exchanged views on the Northern Territories dispute, Japan’s economic assistance for Russia, North Korea’s missile and nuclear development, Syria, and other regional issues. The Japanese diplomat told the press afterward: “I explained that the Abe administration is attaching more importance to the bilateral relations than ever.” Nikkei wrote that by holding consultations repeatedly on outstanding security issues in which Moscow is strongly interested, Tokyo hopes to win Russian concessions on the territorial dispute.

Japan refuses to pay UNESCO dues

Asahi and Mainichi wrote that the GOJ has withheld the payment of some \$38 million in UNESCO dues for this year perhaps in protest of the UN entity’s decision last year to add Nanjing Massacre documents to its Memory of the World Register. A senior MOFA official told an LDP committee yesterday that the dues have not been paid this year. The ministry has underscored the need to “scrutinize” UNESCO projects before making the payment. Former UNESCO Director General Matsuura criticized this GOJ approach as “poor judgment.”

ROK parliamentary panel chairman calls for “nullification” of comfort women pact

Asahi wrote that the chairman of the South Korean parliamentary committee on diplomacy demanded on Thursday the cancellation of the Japan-ROK comfort women agreement, the disbanding of the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation, and renegotiation with Tokyo for a new

deal on the historical dispute. In response to strong protests lodged by ruling panel members against this “one-sided” remark, the chairman, who is from the largest opposition party, expressed regret.

In a related development, Nikkei wrote that ROK Foreign Minister Yun told the parliament yesterday that Prime Minister Abe hurt the feelings of the Korean people by dismissing the idea of sending letters of apology to the comfort women by saying it is “out of the question.” The South Korean official called for “additional efforts for measures to win the hearts and minds” of the victims.

ECONOMY

Diet debate on TPP bill to start

All papers wrote that the ruling coalition and the opposition bloc agreed yesterday to begin parliamentary deliberations on the GOJ-sponsored TPP legislation on Friday. The paper noted that the ruling camp insisted strongly on this schedule in response to the Kantei’s resolve to pass the legislation during the current term so as to prompt the Obama administration to obtain congressional endorsement of the regional free trade accord before it steps down in several months. Yomiuri speculated that it might not be very difficult to enact the bills because the third-largest opposition party, Nippon Ishin no Kai, is basically supportive of them.

POLITICS

LDP calls its draft on constitutional revision “historical document”

Mainichi wrote that the ruling LDP has decided to consider its draft constitution written in 2012 as a “formal, historical document of the time” with the goal of encouraging the opposition bloc to engage in serious parliamentary discussions on constitutional amendment. Some opposition parties have demanded that the ruling party “withdraw” the draft, which they claim includes “reactionary” clauses, so that debate on constitutional revision can be started from scratch. By calling the draft a “formal, historical document,” the LDP leadership hopes to please both the ultra-conservative lawmakers in the party and the opposition camp.