



Morning Alert - Thursday, October 20, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, NTV, and TBS led with reports that visiting IOC President Bach met with Prime Minister Abe on Wednesday and proposed holding some of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic events in the disaster-hit areas to contribute to the reconstruction efforts. Other top news included a report that the organizers of a photo contest in Aomori have decided to withdraw their revocation and award a top prize for a picture of a teenage girl who later committed suicide because of bullying.

Main front-page news in national papers included the ruling LDP's decision to change the current rule on the term of its president; IOC President Bach's meeting with PM Abe; and Empress Michiko's written interview with the Imperial Household Agency press club, during which she disclosed that Emperor Akihito has been consulting with Crown Prince Naruhito and Prince Akishinomiya about his desire for abdication.

POLITICS

Opposition boycotts Diet debate on TPP due to farm minister's controversial remarks

All papers reported that the largest opposition Democratic Party and the second-largest Japanese Communist Party boycotted Wednesday's parliamentary deliberations on the TPP legislation in protest of a controversial comment made by Agriculture Minister Yamamoto, who suggested on Tuesday the need to "railroad" the GOJ-sponsored bills. According to Sankei, junior ruling partner Komeito party is extremely displeased with Yamamoto's gaffe, given that an LDP lawmaker on the Lower House special committee on the regional free trade pact was replaced in late September for

making a similar comment. Komeito leaders demanded the administration and the ruling LDP to “tighten discipline” among their officials. Minister Yamamoto hence offered an apology at the special committee Wednesday evening.

Although the two opposition parties may continue boycott in order to demand the resignation of the minister, the Abe administration has little intention to heed it. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga dismissed the call by telling the press on Wednesday afternoon: “This is not something that warrants the resignation of a cabinet minister.” While the administration is still determined to pass the legislation at the Lower House this month, Nikkei painted a bleak picture, adding that the controversy will probably have adverse effects on the deliberations of other key legislation, such as one for ratifying the Paris Agreement on global warming.

Term of LDP presidency likely to be extended up to nine years

All papers wrote that the ruling LDP has informally decided to revise the existing rule that prohibits its president from serving more than two consecutive three-year terms, noting that Vice President Komura is now given authority to choose either three consecutive three-year terms or the elimination of the restriction altogether. The elder politician will probably select the first option on the grounds that “some kinds of restrictions are necessary to prevent one president from serving indefinitely.” Projecting that the LDP will make an official decision in March next year, the papers said PM Abe would be able to serve through September 2021 at the longest.

In an accompanying piece, Yomiuri speculated that Komura is likely to decide on the three consecutive three-year terms option in order to nip in the bud potential discontent that may be unleashed as a result of the selection of the other option because former Minister for Regional Revitalization Ishiba, FM Kishida, and others are anxious to assume party presidency in the future. Asahi wrote that the proposed extension was endorsed quickly without substantive discussions among LDP politicians, noting that the absence reflects Abe’s overwhelming presence within the ruling party. Nikkei noted that the prime minister will be able to take on his signature policies of revising the Constitution and resolving the Northern Territories dispute more patiently.

SECURITY

Okinawa leader upset about derogatory remarks made by riot policemen from Osaka

Most papers reported that two riot policemen dispatched from Osaka separately hurled abusive language toward base opponents in Okinawa. They told the activists protesting against the helipad construction at the Northern Training Area on Tuesday: “Idiots. Dojin,” and “Shinajin,” a derogatory reference to Chinese. According to Asahi, several hundred riot policemen from Osaka, Tokyo, and four other prefectures are currently being mobilized to ensure the safety around the NTA. Okinawa

Governor Onaga was enraged by the discriminatory language, telling the press yesterday: "This is unforgivable. They completely lack respect to local residents." CCS Suga expressed regret by saying that the language was completely inappropriate. The National Police Agency on Wednesday instructed prefectural police across the nation to enforce thorough ethical education for policemen. Tokyo Shimbun said riot policemen deployed around the NTA have used dirty language against protestors, noting that the latest episodes represented deep-seated prejudice held against Okinawa among some police officials. The daily denounced the police, which are tasked with cracking down on hate speech, for "running amok."

Meanwhile, several papers wrote that Okinawa Governor Matsui, who apparently viewed the scenes captured in video tapes that were uploaded on YouTube, commented on the controversy on his Tweeter account by saying: "Admittedly, the expressions are inappropriate. However, I've learned that Osaka policemen were doing their utmost to carry out duties faithfully. Thank you for your work away from home." This tweet has received criticism.

Osprey noise to be monitored in Kisarazu next week

Tokyo Shimbun reported on the announcement made yesterday by the Acquisition, Technology & Logistics Agency that two Futenma-based Ospreys will fly into GSDF Camp Kisarazu on Oct. 24 to compare their noise with that emitted by GSDF CH-47 helicopters. It will be the first time that the tilt-rotor planes will travel to the city. The agency will arrange for Kisarazu Mayor Watanabe and other local officials to take a test-ride of the Osprey with the goal of obtaining their greater understanding for the Japanese installation performing regular maintenance of the U.S. aircraft.

INTERNATIONAL

Putin to visit Japan as "distinguished guest on working visit"

Yomiuri reported on the MOFA announcement on Wednesday that Russian President Putin will travel to Japan in December as a "distinguished guest on a working visit," noting that under this condition, the Russian leader will be accorded the "simplest treatment." The daily explained that this arrangement is because Russia is still subject to G7 sanctions over Ukraine.

In a related story, the same daily also wrote that senior GOJ and Russian government officials with the rank of bureau director general will hold talks in Moscow next week to discuss bilateral cooperation in the financial sector, such as proposed loans for Russia by Japanese financial institutions.

Meanwhile, Sankei claimed in its lead item that the Japan Bank for International Cooperation is planning to offer \$600 million in syndicated loans in coordination with two European banks to help Russian energy giant Novatek develop LNG platforms in the Arctic. Noting that a signing ceremony

will be held shortly, the daily said this project may become one of key economic cooperation initiatives between Japan and Russia.

Japan to offer to Malaysia secondhand patrol boats

Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ has decided to provide Malaysia with two used patrol boats next year with the goal of assisting the Southeast Asian country in enhancing maritime defense in the South China Sea. The formal pledge will be made when Malaysian PM Najib visits Tokyo in mid-November. Kuala Lumpur has been requesting for the provision of large-size patrol boats in order to deal with China's naval advancement.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Kennedy hosts luncheon for award winners

Sankei reported briefly in its city news section that Ambassador Kennedy on Wednesday threw a luncheon for the winners of the Praemium Imperiale, a global arts prize awarded annually by the Japan Art Association, and other distinguished guests. American film director Martin Scorsese and Harvard University Professor Susan Pharr were among the participants.

