



Morning Alert - Thursday, October 27, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most broadcasters led with reports on a meeting between visiting Philippine President Duterte and PM Abe on Wednesday evening. NHK speculated the GOJ will continue to work closely with the Philippines as the leaders confirmed the importance of peacefully resolving the South China Sea issue based on the rule of law. The network said, however, that the Philippine president continued to make extreme remarks against the U.S., adding that it remains to be seen whether Japan will be able to pursue stronger trilateral cooperation between the U.S., Japan, and the Philippines.

Nikkei and Sankei gave top coverage to reports on the Abe-Duterte meeting, while other papers led with reports on the Sendai District Court's order to Ishinomaki City and Miyagi Prefecture to pay a total of about 1.4 billion yen in damages to the families of 23 elementary school students who died in the tsunami in 2011, judging that the city-run school failed to evacuate the children appropriately.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe, Duterte agree to resolve South China Sea issue by rule of law

All papers gave top or front-page play to reports on talks between Prime Minister Abe and Philippine President Duterte at the Kantei on Wednesday, during which the two leaders agreed to cooperate in resolving territorial disputes in the South China Sea peacefully and in accordance with international law. Abe and Duterte reaffirmed their agreement during a joint press conference afterward and issued a joint statement.

Asahi wrote that Duterte told Abe that his nation is in agreement with the U.S. and Japan on its response to the international arbitration tribunal ruling on the South China Sea by saying that it is impossible to take a position other than the court ruling and that the Philippines will always be on Japan's side. However, Duterte gave consideration to China by saying that the issue should be discussed sometime in the future but now is not the time to do so. According to a briefing by a Japanese official, Abe stressed the importance of the U.S. presence for Asian security, and Duterte expressed his intention to maintain diplomatic ties with the United States. The paper wrote that although the Philippine leader responded positively to Abe's call to maintain their nations' trilateral cooperation with the U.S., it remains to be seen whether Duterte will keep his word because he has been making contradictory statements concerning the Philippines' relations with the U.S. Duterte expressed his intention to maintain a military alliance with the U.S. on Oct. 24, but stated in a speech at a JETRO-hosted forum on the Philippine economy in Tokyo on Oct. 26 that he wants foreign troops out of the Philippines within two years.

Mainichi wrote that Duterte expressed the view during the meeting that the tribunal ruling on the South China Sea is binding. The paper wrote that Duterte's expression of his intent to respect the rule of law in the South China Sea demonstrated his opportunism. Although Japan will try to work with the Philippines on the South China Sea issue, it remains to be seen whether Tokyo will be able to achieve success because it is difficult to ascertain the true intention of Duterte, who aims to please both China and Japan.

Yomiuri wrote that Abe stressed the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and called for the Philippines' cooperation during his meeting with Duterte out of concern that regional security could be undermined if Duterte further strengthens relations with China. The paper wrote that although Duterte stated that he will be on Japan's side on the South China Sea, it remains to be seen whether he will alter his anti-U.S. attitude in the future. The paper speculated that Duterte expressed his intention to strengthen ties with both Japan and China in order to win economic cooperation from both nations. Nikkei expressed a similar view.

Nikkei delved into the reasons behind the anti-U.S. sentiment of Duterte, who stated in his speech in Tokyo on Wednesday that he wants foreign troops leave the Philippines in two years.

Japan pledges economic and other assistance to Philippines

All papers reported that during a meeting with Philippine President Duterte, Abe pledged Japan's economic assistance to the Philippines, including yen loans for agricultural business promotion and peace-building on the island of Mindanao, where Duterte long served as the mayor of Davao. The two nations also agreed that Japan will provide two large patrol ships to the Philippines through yen loans and will lease the MSDF's TC-90 training aircraft to Manila. Asahi pointed out that Abe did not

mention the human rights issues in the Philippines connected with Duterte's antidrug campaign that have prompted concerns from the U.S. and the UN.

U.S., Japan, ROK confirm cooperation against North Korea

Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida held talks with Deputy Secretary of State Blinken and South Korea's First Vice Foreign Minister Lim at MOFA on Wednesday. The officials agreed that the U.S., Japan, and the ROK will work together to apply additional pressure on North Korea through UNSC and unilateral sanctions. Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama held a separate bilateral meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Lim on Wednesday and agreed on the importance of steadily implementing the Japan-ROK agreement on the comfort women.

ECONOMY

Concern, expectations expressed at local hearings on TPP agreement

Most papers reported on public hearings on the TPP agreement that were held on Wednesday in Hokkaido and Miyazaki. Farmers expressed concern over the TPP agreement's possible impact on Japan's agriculture, but manufacturers expressed expectations for a possible increase in exports of their products. The Lower House Special Committee on TPP plans to hold sessions on Thursday and Friday to seek early approval of the TPP legislation.

