


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Tuesday, November 15, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports that a major road near JR Hakata station was reopened this morning after being closed off due to a giant sinkhole. TBS led with a report on President-elect Trump's first TV interview after his victory. TV Asahi reported on Trump's appointment of Reince Priebus as White House chief of staff and Stephen Bannon as chief strategist. Fuji TV reported that a 1-year-old boy was found unconscious with his head in a ditch at a nursery in Fukuoka on Monday.

Main front-page items in national papers included President-elect Trump's appointment of his chief of staff and chief strategist, Prime Minister Abe's Diet remarks yesterday on Japan's host nation support for the U.S. military, a GOJ plan



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to give the green light today to “rush to the rescue” operations by SDF members bound for South Sudan, and Seoul prosecutors’ moves to question President Park tomorrow concerning her personal confidant’s alleged involvement in state affairs.

SECURITY

Abe cautious about paying more for hosting U.S. troops

Yomiuri led with remarks at the parliament on Monday by Prime Minister Abe, who commented on repeated calls by President-elect Trump for Japan to pay more for stationing U.S. forces in Japan by saying: “Both nations benefit from the U.S. military presence in Japan. They are here not only here to defend Japan. They also protect U.S. interests by playing an important role in maintaining peace in the Asia-Pacific region.... The financial burden should be borne appropriately by both nations.” The daily took the remarks to mean that the GOJ is reluctant to increase its host nation support.

Yomiuri also took up the disclosure yesterday by Democratic Party lawmaker Nagashima that Trump’s security advisor Michael Flynn effectively told him that Japan should increase its defense spending. The Japanese politician quoted Flynn as saying in Tokyo in October: “Japan’s defense budget has remained almost unchanged despite its concern about the threats posed by North Korea and China. This is wrong.”

In a related piece, Yomiuri wrote that according to its latest public opinion survey, some 68% of Japanese said Japan’s host nation support should be maintained at the present level, while 24% it should be reduced. Only 5% said it should be increased. Almost three out of five expressed “anxiety” about bilateral relations with Washington under the next U.S. administration, with 62% saying that the election of Trump was “not good.” About 58% said his presidency will have adverse effects on the Japanese economy and national security.

Trump tones down rhetoric on Japan, South Korea going nuclear

Monday evening’s Yomiuri front-paged a story on a tweet by President-elect Trump taking issue with a New York Times article claiming that he said during the campaign that more nations should acquire nuclear weapons. Trump wrote in his message: “How dishonest are they. I never said this!” While quoting him as saying in an interview in March that Japan’s possession of nuclear weapons is not a bad idea for the U.S., the paper wrote that the incoming U.S. leader apparently chose to

withdraw the remarks condoning the possession of nuclear weapons by Japan, South Korea, and other nations in view of strong criticism.

ECONOMY

Abe acknowledges “considerable difficulty” in effectuating TPP

All Monday evening papers took up remarks made at the Diet by Prime Minister Abe, who acknowledged that the effectuation of the TPP agreement has become “extremely difficult” following the election of Donald Trump. He went on to say: “The TPP will be completely finished unless Japan demonstrates its determination to approve it... I don’t think it is completely finished. The TPP will be significant in helping develop the Asia-Pacific region.” On his scheduled meeting with the President-elect in New York on Nov. 17, the premier said: “I would like to explain my thoughts on free trade. I would also like to have candid discussions not just on trade but also on security.”

This morning’s Asahi said the Abe administration is still hopeful that the President-elect will change his mind about the TPP because the Republican Party supports free trade in principle. Some Japanese officials are encouraged by the fact that Trump tapped Reince Priebus as his chief of staff because he has strong connections with the Republican congressional leadership. Mainichi quoted an unnamed senior MOFA official as saying: “There is a possibility that the Trump administration may approve the TPP in about a year.” The daily said that PM Abe met with American investor Wilbur Ross, one of Trump’s economic advisors, during his visit to New York in September

TPP summit to be held in Peru

Several papers highlighted remarks at the Diet on Monday by PM Abe, in which he projected that the leaders of the TPP member states will hold a summit on the margins of the APEC leader’s meeting that will begin in Lima on Nov. 19. He said: “I would like to call global attention to the significance of the TPP together with other leaders by forging a consensus on making additional efforts to complete domestic procedures quickly.” Nikkei added that a TPP trade ministerial conference will also be convened in the Peruvian capital a day before.

Three out of four foreign firms keen to expand investment in Japan

Yomiuri published the results of a JETRO survey of foreign enterprises based in Japan that showed more than 75% of respondents said they plan to increase investment and employment in Japan in the next five years. Most of them regarded the Japanese market as lucrative on account of its size, excellent infrastructure, and high-quality R&D.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, ROK reach consensus on pact to protect integrity of shared defense intelligence

All papers reported that working-level officials of Japan and South Korea held talks in Tokyo yesterday and reached a consensus on signing a bilateral general information of military information agreement (GSOMIA) this year in order to counter North Korea's repeated provocations. The dailies stressed, however, that it remains unclear whether the ROK government will be able to go ahead with officially concluding the agreement due to the scandal engulfing President Park. Although the signing of the pact does not require parliamentary endorsement, it still has to be approved by the cabinets of the respective governments. Sankei said South Korean opposition parties reacted strongly to yesterday's consensus. Yomiuri wrote that the consensus became possible thanks to the strong leadership of the embattled ROK president, noting that the agreement was sealed at a speed that surprised even the GOJ, which has been eager to sign a GSOMIA with Seoul.

Cabinet to approve “rush to the rescue” operations in South Sudan

All papers reported that the GOJ plans to officially approve today plans to allow SDF personnel bound for South Sudan on a UN peacekeeping mission to conduct “rush to the rescue” operations designed to assist UN officials and aid workers if they come under attack. The SDF members will also be allowed to defend their living quarters in cooperation with “collocated” foreign troops. Mainichi said although the GOJ is hopeful that the Japanese personnel will actually not be asked to conduct rush to the rescue operations since they belong to an engineering battalion, the UN regards them as soldiers capable of defending themselves and others without foreign assistance.

AMBASSADOR

Kishida takes Ambassador Kennedy out to dinner in Asakusa

Yomiuri reported that Foreign Minister Kishida took Ambassador Kennedy out for an *okonomiyaki* dinner in Asakusa on Tuesday evening to celebrate her 59th birthday on Nov. 27. The paper speculated that the two officials may have exchanged views on the bilateral alliance under the incoming Trump administration, adding that she is expected to step down next January.