


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Friday, November 18, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks led with reports on the first meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President-elect Trump at the Trump Tower in New York starting at 7 a.m. Japan time. NHK said although the Trump side proposed a dinner, the Japanese side is likely to turn down the request given that PM Abe's counterpart is still President Obama. An NHK reporter said the meeting will be focused on building bonds rather than talking about specific policies, adding that PM Abe is planning to give Trump a set of golf clubs as a present since they both enjoy playing golf. The reporter also said the premier is likely to explain that the bilateral alliance is essential for peace and stability in Asia and stress the importance of a fair free trade system



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such as the TPP.

Main front-page items in national papers included the planned meeting between Abe and Trump, yesterday's discussions at the Lower House Commission on the Constitution, and an update on the scandal engulfing South Korean President Park.

ECONOMY

APEC ministerial conference begins in Peru

All papers reported on the opening of this year's APEC ministerial conference in Lima on Thursday, noting that attention is focused on whether or not the participants will be able to come up with measures to curb the protectionist sentiments triggered by Brexit and the election of Donald Trump. Although Foreign Minister Kishida, who is attending the conference with Economic Minister Seko, is expected to underscore the importance of the TPP, Asahi explained that some countries are looking to effectuate the agreement "without the U.S."

On the TPP, Nikkei said Prime Minister Abe may try to sway President-elect Trump to embrace it by underscoring that Japan is prepared to support U.S. infrastructure projects so as to increase jobs for Americans and that the TPP is necessary to prevent China from taking the initiative in establishing global trade rules in the future. Meanwhile, most papers wrote that Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen moved on Thursday to suspend administrative work to obtain parliamentary approval of the TPP on account of the Obama administration's decision not to seek congressional endorsement of the regional free trade pact.

Calls mounting in U.S. for bilateral FTA with Japan

Asahi reported on mounting calls in the U.S. for seeking a bilateral FTA with Japan in view of President-elect Trump's opposition to the TPP. Senator Hatch, who is a strong proponent of the TPP, reportedly said on Wednesday that given the President-elect's opposition to it, "an agreement with Japan would be an alternative." During a press conference in Tokyo yesterday, Iowa Governor Branstad voiced hope for a bilateral economic partnership accord between the U.S. and Japan. However, the GOJ is negative about the idea, with an unnamed senior METI official saying: "If we start such negotiations now, we would just end up rekindling trade conflict. We will absolutely not do that."

Japanese automakers wary of Trump's position on NAFTA

Yomiuri reported that Japanese car manufacturers are paying close attention to the incoming Republican administration's policy on NAFTA since President-elect Trump insisted on renegotiating the pact during the presidential campaign. They are afraid that they will need to review their marketing strategies for the region since they operate assembly lines in Mexico because NAFTA allows them to export vehicles assembled there to the U.S. tariff-free.

Japan eager to seal EPA with EU

Most papers reported that the GOJ convened a taskforce meeting on Thursday to affirm the Abe administration's policy of reaching a rough accord on sealing a free trade deal with the EU this year with the goal of resurrecting the TPP, whose effectuation appears to be becoming difficult following the election of Donald Trump. Yomiuri wrote that by signing an EPA with the EU at an early date, Japan is keen to demonstrate its commitment to free trade out of fear that more nations will be prompted to adopt a protectionist approach in response to President-elect Trump's opposition to the free trade accord in the Asia-Pacific region.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. media divided over Trump's approach toward Senkakus

Yomiuri wrote that some U.S. media outlets, including the National Interest and Fortune, suspect that President-elect Trump may not agree with the Obama administration's position that the Senkaku Islands are covered by the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. However, the New York Post predicted that if Rudolph Giuliani or John Bolton is tapped as secretary of state, the Trump administration may express an even stronger security commitment to the disputed outcrops since both of them are known to take a hardline toward China.

Trilateral summit by Japan, China, ROK scheduled for December

Asahi claimed that final arrangements are being made by Japan, China, and South Korea to convene a trilateral summit to be attended by PM Abe, Premier Li, and President Park in Tokyo on Dec. 19-20. The ROK government has reportedly informed the GOJ that President Park is planning to attend the session. According to a diplomatic source, the Chinese leader's Tokyo visit will be premised upon Park's participation.

Payments disbursed to former comfort women

Several papers reported from Seoul on an announcement made by the Reconciliation and Healing Foundation on Thursday that it has disbursed lump sum payments to 23 of the 46 former comfort women who were confirmed to be alive when Japan and South Korea signed a pact about a year ago to launch the fund. Since 29 of the 46 women have expressed support for the accord with Tokyo, the remaining six will also be offered the payments shortly. The foundation is expected to urge the rest of the former comfort women to embrace the agreement.

SECURITY

Inada to visit Guam in mid-December

Mainichi claimed that Defense Minister Inada is likely to visit Guam on Dec. 11-12 and observe the U.S. military's THAAD platform with the goal of strengthening bilateral missile defense cooperation to counter North Korea's provocations. The defense minister hopes to call attention to Tokyo's policy of continuing to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance under the Trump administration and its commitment to reducing the base-hosting burden on Okinawa by steadily moving forward with the planned transfer of Marines to the Pacific island.

More than half of NTA to be returned on Dec. 22

Yomiuri and Tokyo Shimbun took up the disclosure by a GOJ source that the USG will officially return more than half of the Northern Training Area in Okinawa on Dec. 22 and that a ceremony will be held in Okinawa probably two days before that. Ambassador Kennedy and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga are expected to attend. As a result of the return, the land area occupied by the U.S. military in the island prefecture will be reduced by about 17%. The land will be returned to the landowners in about a year at the earliest.

POLITICS

LDP decides not to insist that Constitution was “imposed” on Japan

All papers reported on yesterday's resumption of debate on the Constitution at a Lower House commission for the first time in almost 18 months, during which the LDP participants apparently toned down the party's narrative that the nation's supreme law was “imposed” on Japan by the U.S. occupation authorities when it was framed right after WWII perhaps with the goal of forging a national consensus for constitutional revision. However, the opposition viewed this approach as an attempt to deceive the public, with most opposition panelists reiterating their views against revising the Constitution by claiming that PM Abe has insisted for years on the need for an amendment on the grounds that it was imposed on Japan by the U.S.