


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Monday, November 21, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that South Korean President Park's personal confidant and two former aides were indicted for abuse of authority in connection with a political corruption scandal on Sunday. TBS reported on demonstrations against President Park in South Korea. NTV led with a report that the Nippon Ham Fighters participated in a parade in Sapporo on Sunday celebrating their Nippon Series victory. TV Asahi reported that President-elect Trump is being criticized by the U.S. media for having his daughter and her husband attend his meeting with Prime Minister Abe. Fuji TV led with a report that a car carrying Princess Kiko and her son Prince Hisahito was involved in an accident.

Lead items in national dailies included a



meeting between Prime Minister Abe and Russian President Putin and the TPP summit in Lima, Peru, on Saturday on the sidelines of the APEC leaders' meeting. The indictment of ROK President Park's confidant and two former aides also received prominent front-page coverage.

INTERNATIONAL

PM Abe meets with President-elect Trump

All Saturday morning papers gave prominent front- and inside-page play to Thursday's meeting in New York between Prime Minister Abe and President-elect Trump, highlighting Abe's remarks to the press afterward saying that he forged a relationship of trust with the next U.S. leader and they agreed to meet again at a mutually convenient time. Yomiuri said the GOJ is hoping to arrange a formal summit between them in February at the earliest, with an unnamed high-ranking MOFA official saying that the next meeting will test the prospects for the trans-Pacific alliance over the next four years. Abe reportedly told his aides afterward: "Mr. Trump was completely different from the person we saw and heard during the campaign. He knows a lot about Japan."

The papers said, however, that Abe stopped short of disclosing the details of what they discussed in the meeting. Asahi claimed the Trump side asked the Japanese side not to reveal the details in order to prevent Trump's comments from being misinterpreted. According to Nikkei, an unnamed senior Japanese diplomat said Abe did not give a detailed briefing to the press based on the judgment that the relationship of trust between them would collapse quickly if the Japanese side disclosed the details of an unofficial summit.

Nikkei said the fact that the meeting lasted almost 90 minutes showed that the two leaders were able to establish a good rapport. The paper claimed that the meeting was successful because it probably prompted world leaders such as Russian President Putin and Chinese President Xi to wonder what the incoming U.S. leader discussed with the Japanese premier. The daily added the meeting went against conventional diplomatic protocols because Trump's daughter Ivanka and her husband were present, possibly because Ivanka is knowledgeable about Japan. The paper also noted that the President-elect apparently did not seek advice from the State or Defense Departments before meeting with the prime minister, which is also quite unusual.

Yomiuri conjectured that Abe apparently chose not to bring up concrete issues such as host nation support and the TPP during the meeting in order to prioritize building a relationship of trust,

projecting that the GOJ is prepared to spend several years if necessary to persuade the Trump administration to endorse the TPP since it is indispensable for Abenomics. The article claimed that the GOJ sought the Obama administration's understanding for Abe's meeting with Trump by explaining that they would not hold in-depth policy discussions. Sankei cautioned the GOJ against becoming too optimistic about the prospects for bilateral relations under the Trump administration, because Trump apparently seems to have no qualms about changing his tune overnight and his friendly attitude toward Abe may change abruptly if he decides it runs counter to his "America-first" approach.

Most papers delved into the President-elect's motive for meeting the Japanese leader at this juncture, speculating that he may be anxious to dispel concerns held by U.S. allies and other partners in Europe and Asia that he is unpredictable and his administration may conduct a drastic review of U.S. ties with them. Mainichi said by hosting the leader of a key ally before assuming office, the President-elect hoped to send the message that his administration will pursue realistic diplomacy. Asahi wrote that Trump might have viewed his meeting with Abe as simply a photo opportunity to make himself appear "presidential," rather than an occasion to call attention to his foreign policy.

Sunday papers reported on mounting criticism by the U.S. media of the President-elect for allowing his daughter and son-in-law to participate in his meeting with PM Abe. Many American outlets did not use the photos of the meeting that were released by the Japanese government.

Domestic reaction to Abe-Trump meeting

According to Saturday papers, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told the press on Friday that the meeting between President-elect Trump and PM Abe was a "wonderful, significant first step toward building a strong relationship of trust." LDP Secretary General Nikai praised Abe for conducting "proactive diplomacy" because no other world leaders have met with Trump yet. The LDP plans to send a team of lawmakers to Washington in the near future to assist the premier in deepening cooperation with the incoming Republican administration.

On the other hand, Democratic Party President Rehno said: "The premier is responsible for explaining to the public what he discussed with Mr. Trump because he must have talked about issues concerning national interests." The largest opposition party is set to press the premier to provide an explanation at the Diet. Even an unnamed senior LDP official said to Asahi: "The meeting resembled a vassal's pilgrimage to a feudal lord. I wonder if other countries viewed Japan as being overeager."

Abe holds talks with Putin in Lima

All Monday papers reported heavily on PM Abe's one-on-one summit with Russian President Putin in Lima, Peru, on Saturday, noting that they discussed progress on Japan's proposed eight-point economic assistance package for Russia and agreed to arrange a visit to Moscow by Foreign

Minister Kishida in early December for talks with his Russian counterpart Lavrov in preparation for Putin's trip to Japan in mid-December. Abe told the press afterward: "We had candid discussions.... We have not been able to seal a peace treaty for 70 years. Although a roadmap [for settling the Northern Territories dispute] is emerging, it is necessary to climb one mountain at a time. It is not easy to make a big leap."

All papers said Abe looked "solemn" after his summit with Putin, noting that this marked a sharp contrast to the smile he wore following his summits with the Russian leader in May and September. Some GOJ officials speculated that Putin may have not shown a flexible attitude on the dispute whereas others suspected that the premier was trying to rein in mounting expectations in Japan for major progress on the decades-long dispute when the two leaders meet in Japan next month.

While pointing out that Putin proposed "joint economic activities" on the four contested islands off Hokkaido, Asahi said this idea showed Moscow is attaching more importance to promoting bilateral economic cooperation than resolving the Northern Territories dispute. Abe reportedly did not comment on this proposal. The papers wondered if the Russian leader may be taking a "wait and see" attitude on the territorial dispute since he feels it may no longer be necessary to expedite rapprochement with Tokyo because the chances are high that Western sanctions against Moscow will be eased under the Trump administration. Sankei wrote that calls are growing in Russia for Putin not to make concessions on the dispute, speculating that the recent arrest of an economic minister who was closely involved in economic cooperation talks with Tokyo may indicate that advocates of a hardline against Japan are gaining clout in the Kremlin.

Japan, Australia to update ACSA

Sunday's Mainichi reported that coordination is underway between Japan and Australia on holding a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting in Tokyo in late December with the goal of renewing the existing bilateral acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) so that the SDF can provide the Australian military with ammunition when carrying out joint drills and international peacekeeping and disaster relief operations. The provision of arms became possible following the enactment of the comprehensive security laws. The two governments also hope to confirm the importance of deepening trilateral security coordination with the U.S. prior to Trump's inauguration in January.

SECURITY

Northern Training Area to be returned on December 22

Saturday morning's Asahi said the Okinawa Defense Bureau on Friday sent letters notifying landowners at the Northern Training Area that some 4,000 hectares of the gigantic training area will be reverted to Japanese administration on Dec. 22. While noting that the GOJ and the USG plan to hold return ceremonies in Tokyo and Naha on Dec. 20 and 22, respectively, the daily said Okinawa

Governor Onaga is likely to meet with Defense Minister Inada soon to ask the central government to conduct environment assessments at the helipads under construction based on the assumption that they will be used by the USMC Ospreys. The returned land will probably be handed over to the landowners in 2018 at the earliest.

GSDF members leave for South Sudan

All papers reported on Monday that a GSDF contingent of 130 personnel left Aomori yesterday for South Sudan, where they are expected to engage in UN peacekeeping operations. The papers noted that together with the 220 troops who will depart for the African nation later, the personnel will carry out engineering work through May 2017. They may be ordered to undertake “rush to the rescue” operations possibly involving the use of weapons, which SDF members have never used overseas.

GOJ, developer close to deal on purchase of Mageshima

Saturday's Mainichi wrote that the GOJ and a Tokyo-based real estate company that owns Mageshima island in Kagoshima, which has been designated as a relocation site for field carrier landing practice by U.S. military aircraft, signed a basic agreement on Friday on the central government's purchase of the uninhabited islet. While both sides plan to conduct a land appraisal shortly to finalize the price, the GOJ reportedly thinks that the developer's initial quotation of over 10 billion yen is too high.

MOD to expand R&D subsidies for academia

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that beginning in FY2017, the Defense Ministry plans to expand the existing subsidy program for universities and research institutions to conduct defense-related R&D. While the highest amount for one such project is currently 30 million yen a year, the ministry is looking to increase the figure to several billion yen for a period of five years with the goal of encouraging scientists to develop basic technology that can be used for defense purposes in 20 to 30 years.

ECONOMY

TPP leaders reaffirm commitment to completing domestic procedures

All Monday papers reported that the leaders of the 12 TPP members held a meeting in Lima on Sunday at which they affirmed the free trade pact's strategic and economic importance and agreed to make additional efforts to complete domestic procedures for its effectuation. According to the dailies, Abe said “the TPP will be completely finished and protectionism will run rampant” if the members choose to forego their domestic procedures in view of the election of Trump. In response, President Obama pledged his administration's continued efforts to enlist domestic understanding for the trade deal. Sunday dailies took up a TPP trade ministerial conference held in Peru a day earlier, highlighting remarks made by USTR Froman, who said each country should decide on its own

whether to move forward with the TPP without U.S. participation or join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) orchestrated by China.

Yomiuri said the GOJ plans to lobby the incoming U.S. administration to endorse the TPP by enacting related legislation next month and completing EPA talks with the EU next month to make Washington realize that the U.S. will become isolated from global networks for trade liberalization. Sankei wrote that expectations are mounting among the TPP leaders for Abe to lobby President-elect Trump to embrace the TPP given that he was the first foreign leader to hold talks with the new U.S. president.

POLITICS

LDP reluctant to promote LGBT legislation

Sunday's Asahi wrote that the LDP appears to be failing to follow through with its pledge made during the July Upper House election campaign to enact legislation intended to deepen public understanding of sexual minorities in view of opposition raised by conservative-minded lawmakers. Defense Minister Inada spearheaded the ruling party's efforts to protect the human rights of LGBT individuals when she was policy research council chair last summer, but the initiative has lost steam because opponents capitalized on Inada's departure from the LDP post in August this year to step up their lobbying against the bill in the belief that it could lead to the legalization of same-sex marriage.

Diet may be extended through late December

Sunday's Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ and ruling coalition are set to extend the current Diet session by about 10 days until around Dec. 10 in order to ensure the passage of the TPP legislation, which will be possible on Dec. 9 even without a vote at the Upper House based on a constitutional clause. However, some ruling officials are calling for a longer extension possibly through late December so as to enact legislation to reform the pension system. Because the passage of the pension legislation will probably embolden the opposition bloc to step up its criticism, the daily projected that Prime Minister Abe may become reluctant to dissolve the Lower House for a snap election in the near future based on the assessment that the public may agree with the opposition's view on the pension legislation.

SCIENCE

COP22 participants agree to draw up rules for Paris climate accord in 2018

All Sunday papers reported on the conclusion of the COP22 conference in Morocco on Friday, explaining that the participants agreed to draft new rules in 2018 on reducing greenhouse gas emissions in line with the Paris Agreement on climate change. The dailies said with this global consensus, the landmark agreement mandating all signatories to reduce CO2 emissions picked up

momentum for implementation in 2020. The participating countries also agreed to take a concerted approach to preventing the Trump administration from withdrawing from the Paris Agreement based on the assessment that it would be irrelevant without U.S. participation.

