



Morning Alert - Monday, November 28, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on a meeting on Sunday between the Tokyo government, the GOJ, the Tokyo Olympic Committee, and the International Olympic Committee on the venues for volleyball, swimming, and rowing/canoe races for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. TV Asahi reported on Tokyo Governor Koike's plan to reevaluate the Tokyo tourism promotion logo and uniforms for volunteer guides adopted by her predecessor. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports that Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu won the NHK Trophy on Sunday.

Top stories in national dailies included a GOJ plan to place a 1.5 million-yen income cap on spousal tax deductions (Asahi); research results showing that excessive consumption of tuna by pregnant women may affect their babies due to methyl mercury contamination (Mainichi); discussions on the construction of three facilities for the Tokyo Olympics (Yomiuri); and Japanese companies' efforts to promote telecommuting (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

Kishida to hold talks with Putin

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that the governments of Japan and Russia are making final arrangements for Foreign Minister Kishida to hold talks with President Putin on Dec. 2 in St. Petersburg ahead of a meeting with Foreign Minister Lavrov on Dec. 3 in Moscow. The papers

speculated that Kishida will hold in-depth discussions with Putin on a peace treaty and economic cooperation ahead of the Russian leader's talks with Prime Minister Abe on Dec. 15.

Russia deploys missiles on Northern Territories

All Wednesday papers reported that the Russian military has deployed two types of surface-to-ship missiles on the islands of Kunashiri and Etorofu off Hokkaido, noting that Moscow apparently intends to move forward with the militarization of the Northern Territories irrespective of rapprochement with Japan and the election of Trump. The papers said the move may be based on the judgment that the disputed islands are a critical platform for territorial defense in the Asia-Pacific.

In a related development, Saturday morning's Asahi and Tokyo Shimbun wrote that Defense Minister Inada commented during a Lower House Security Committee meeting on Friday on Russia's deployment of missiles in the Northern Territories by saying that in theory Abashiri and other areas in northeastern Hokkaido fall within the range of the missiles. Inada also said the deployment is probably intended to support activities in waters from the Russian Far East to Hokkaido by the Russian Pacific Fleet, including nuclear-powered submarines in the Sea of Okhotsk.

Japan, Russia to enhance coordination against China's advancement into Arctic Ocean

Thursday's Sankei wrote that Japan and Russia are set to step up their security coordination to counter China's moves to dispatch its warships into the Arctic Ocean via the Sea of Okhotsk, noting that the MSDF and Russian Navy are likely to conduct search and rescue training in January for the first time in over two years. Prime Minister Abe and President Putin are expected to discuss this topic when they meet in Japan next month.

Japan, ROK conclude defense information accord

All Thursday papers reported that Japan and South Korea signed a bilateral general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) in Seoul on Wednesday, quoting Foreign Minister Kishida as saying: "This is very significant because it is expected to allow the two countries to exchange security information more smoothly and swiftly." According to Yomiuri, a GOJ source welcomed the pact by saying: "The accord has completed the establishment of a triangular relationship in which the U.S., Japan, and South Korea can share military intelligence." The U.S. is pleased with the agreement because it will expand bilateral missile defense cooperation between Tokyo and Washington to include Seoul.

Under the accord, the scope of intelligence to be shared between Tokyo and Seoul will be expanded greatly, including human intelligence on the DPRK collected by South Korean operatives. South Korea expects to receive Japanese intelligence on DPRK submarines collected by spy satellites. Although Japan is hoping to obtain information to support operations for noncombatant evacuation and logistical support for the U.S. military in the event of a contingency on the Korean Peninsula, an

SDF official projected that South Korea will only provide Japan with intelligence on North Korea because the two countries “have different views toward China and Russia.”

Vietnam cancels construction of nuclear plant by Japan, Russia

Most Wednesday papers reported on the Vietnamese parliament’s decision on Tuesday to cancel the planned construction by Japan and Russia of a nuclear plant in southeastern Vietnam due to cost issues, noting that this is a major setback for the Abe administration’s policy of exporting nuclear energy technology as part of Abenomics. Hanoi reportedly decided to cancel the plan because a safety review that was conducted in response to the Fukushima nuclear accident showed that the construction may cost twice as much as the original estimate.

Japan, China discuss communication mechanism for preventing incidents

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that defense officials from Japan and China held talks at the Defense Ministry on Friday on the implementation of a communication mechanism for preventing incidents at sea and in the air, noting that it was the first meeting on the topic in 17 months. The two nations agreed to continue discussions on the matter and plan to hold the next session in Beijing.

Japan, China agree to expand cooperation on environmental conservation

Most Sunday papers wrote that Economic Minister Seko and Chairman Xu Xiaoshi of China’s National Development and Reform Commission agreed in Beijing on Saturday to expand cooperation between Japan and China on environmental and energy conservation, including human resources development in the sector. During a public-private forum, companies of the two countries signed a total of 28 agreements on new projects. Yomiuri wrote that China is hoping to utilize Japan’s advanced environmental protection technology in order to address its serious air and water pollution, while Japan is seeking business opportunities in cooperation with China.

Japan scrambles fighters after Chinese military planes fly over strait in Okinawa

Sunday’s Sankei wrote that Japan scrambled fighter jets on Saturday after six Chinese military planes flew over the Miyako Strait between the main island of Okinawa and Miyako Island. The Chinese aircraft did not intrude into Japan’s territorial airspace. Japan has been carefully monitoring Chinese activities in the region because a similar incident occurred in September.

UNSC plans to limit North Korea’s coal exports in new sanctions resolution

Most Sunday papers wrote that the UN Security Council will begin discussing as early as Nov. 28 a new sanctions resolution on North Korea that will include a cap on North Korea’s coal exports. The papers wrote that the new resolution is intended to close loopholes in the previous sanctions, and the U.S. and China have largely agreed on the draft. The council will discuss the details of the draft resolution and try to reach an agreement within a week.

Blank North Korean passports seized at Haneda

Thursday's Sankei led with the finding that customs authorities at Haneda Airport seized in April about 100 blank passports issued by North Korea that a senior official of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon) attempted to bring into the country upon returning from Pyongyang via Beijing. Because Chongryon is a de-facto DPRK embassy that issues passports to Korean nationals, it is suspected of smuggling passports bearing no names, photos, or other information into Japan in the past.

UN human rights expert pledges efforts to resolve abductions

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that UN Special Rapporteur on North Korea Tomas Ojea Quintana said at a news conference in Tokyo on Friday that he will provide support in resolving the issue of North Korea's abduction of Japanese nationals. Quintana, who will submit a report on North Korea's human rights violations to the UN Human Rights Council next March, expressed hope to seek China's cooperation in addressing the issue.

Abe offers condolences on Fidel Castro's death

All Sunday papers reported on the death of former Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Prime Minister Abe offered his condolences on Saturday and called Castro a "prominent leader." Abe met with Castro in Havana in September when he became the first Japanese prime minister to visit Cuba. The papers also highlighted Castro's visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in 2003.

Japan, UK to conclude ACSA

Monday's Yomiuri wrote that the governments of Japan and the UK are making arrangements to hold a 2+2 meeting of their foreign and defense ministers next January in London and conclude an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) to allow their armed forces to provide logistical support to each other. The agreement will allow Japan to provide ammunition in line with its new security legislation. Japan is hoping to confirm cooperation with the UK in dealing with China's advancement in the South China Sea and North Korea's nuclear and missile development during the 2+2 meeting.

SECURITY

Defense Secretary Carter to visit Japan on Dec. 5

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that it has learned from a GOJ source that the governments of the U.S. and Japan are making final arrangements for Secretary of Defense Carter to visit Japan on Dec. 5. The paper wrote that the Pentagon chief plans to hold talks with Defense Minister Inada and discuss Futenma relocation and the review of the scope of the civilian component under the SOFA during his visit to Japan.

Okinawa agrees to allow land-based construction work at Camp Schwab

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that the GOJ and the Okinawa Prefectural Government held their fourth working-group meeting on Futenma relocation at the Kantei on Friday with the participation of Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Sugita and Vice Governor Ageda. The prefecture agreed to allow the GOJ to resume the suspended work to construct two barracks at Camp Schwab based on the judgment that it is not directly related to the landfill work at Henoko. The GOJ accepted the prefecture's request to allow fishing boats and other vessels to pass through waters that are restricted due to the Henoko landfill work.

Inada comments on SDF mission in South Sudan

Thursday's Asahi published an interview with Defense Minister Inada on the ongoing SDF peacekeeping operations in South Sudan. As for "rush to the rescue" operations, the defense chief dismissed the possibility of Japanese personnel assisting foreign troops in danger because SDF personnel are performing "engineering" tasks. "Foreign troops should be protected by South Sudanese and UN troops," she said. The minister also emphasized that the Japanese peacekeepers would be withdrawn if a situation occurred in which they were unable to leave their camp in Juba for engineering work for extended periods due to intense combat between the government and opposition forces.

MOD to launch taskforce on THAAD missile defense platform

Friday's Asahi reported that the Defense Ministry plans to establish a panel charged with looking into the possibility of deploying a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense platform in Japan, such as an "Aegis ashore" system. The team, which will be headed by Parliamentary Vice Minister Wakamiya, will conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the platform. Sunday's Nikkei ran a similar report.

Defense Ministry to launch first communications satellite

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on Friday that it will launch its first communications satellite from Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima Prefecture on Jan. 24. The launch is part of the ministry's efforts to promote integrated operations by the three branches of the SDF through a high-speed and high-capacity communications network. The ministry plans to launch two more communications satellites by the end of fiscal 2020. [Kyodo News](#) filed a similar report.

Defense Ministry's communication network suffers cyberattack

Monday's Sankei and Tokyo Shimbun wrote that they have learned from several sources connected to the Ministry of Defense that the ministry discovered in September that the defense information infrastructure jointly used by the ministry and the SDF had suffered a cyberattack through unauthorized access to computers at the National Defense Academy and the National Defense Medical Collage. Although the details of the damage are not known, it appears likely that internal information about the GSDF was stolen.

GOJ to compile supplementary budget to enhance missile defense against DPRK

Sunday's Yomiuri gave top play to a report saying that the GOJ has decided to put together a third supplementary budget for fiscal 2016 worth as much as one trillion yen, including 200 billion yen to enhance Japan's missile defense against North Korea. The GOJ plans to use the money to purchase an upgraded PAC-3 surface-to-air missile system and related equipment.

ECONOMY

TPP effectively killed by Trump's announcement

All Wednesday papers took up President-elect Trump's statement on Monday declaring his intent to withdraw the U.S. from the TPP when he takes office on Jan. 20. The announcement flew in the face of the APEC's declaration a day earlier calling for the need to counter "all types of protectionism" and Prime Minister Abe's press remarks a few hours earlier saying that the TPP would be "meaningless without U.S. participation." This development came as a shock to Abe because the TPP constitutes a key component of Abenomics and is viewed as an economic tool for reining in China's growing presence in the Asia-Pacific region.

The GOJ still intends to obtain Diet approval of the TPP quickly so as to press other member states to follow suit with the goal of swaying the Trump administration to endorse it in the future. Japan is extremely cautious about the idea of forging a bilateral FTA with the U.S. as it would probably be forced to make greater concessions on agricultural trade than under the TPP. Some GOJ officials are concerned that Trump may choose to "rattle" Japan again by following through with his pledge to call on Japan to pay more for stationing U.S. troops in Japan.

Nikkei said the incoming U.S. administration may not intend to uphold President Obama's "rebalance to Asia" policy, raising concern that China may pursue its maritime interests in the South and East China Seas more aggressively based on the view that Trump's decision to withdraw from the TPP is a sign that Washington will reduce its engagement with Asia. The paper also projected that President-elect Trump will take a hardline approach in seeking a bilateral deal, triggering trade friction with foreign partners. Yomiuri conjectured that China is bound to capitalize on the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP to seize the initiative in rulemaking for global trade and creating a new economic order in the Asia-Pacific region by promoting the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

Abe comments on TPP and Trump

All Friday morning papers reported on remarks made at the Diet on Thursday by Prime Minister Abe, who said he is "not confident" that Japan's ratification of the TPP will prompt the Trump administration to alter its position on the trade deal. Asked by Democratic Party President Renho what made him feel the President-elect is a "trustworthy leader," the premier cited that the fact that Trump showed respect for President Obama despite his critical rhetoric during the campaign. Abe

dismissed Renho's demand to disclose what they discussed in New York by stressing that they promised not to reveal the details.

Economic minister says agreement on Japan-EU EPA may be concluded this year

Saturday's Sankei wrote that Economic Minister Seko stated at a news conference on Friday that it will be possible for Japan and the EU to reach a basic consensus on an economic partnership agreement by the end of this year because the two parties have identified the issues for the envisaged agreement through continued discussions. The paper wrote that Japan hopes to reverse growing protectionist sentiments around the world by concluding an EPA with Europe.

Japan to remove China's "most favored nation" status

Friday's Sankei gave top play to the Finance Ministry's decision to remove China and four other nations from a list of countries that receive "most favored nation" treatment for their imports on account of their rapid economic development. Noting that the Trump administration is also looking into adopting higher tariffs on Chinese imports and that China is bound to react strongly to such moves, the daily said Japan and the U.S. are putting more pressure on Beijing on the trade front. Nikkei ran a similar story highlighting the USG's decision not to designate China as a "market economy" as stipulated under WTO rules.

OPINION POLLS

Kyodo poll: 86% opposed to Japan's increase in host nation support

Most Monday papers reported on the results of a nationwide telephone survey conducted on Nov. 26-27 by Kyodo News, in which 60.7%, up from 53.9% in October, supported the Abe cabinet. This was the first time for cabinet support to top 60% in a Kyodo poll since October 2013. The disapproval rating was 30.4%.

When asked about Japan's host nation support, 86.1% of the respondents said it is not necessary for Japan to increase its spending, while 9.2% said it is. Concerning Japan's response to President-elect Trump's intention to withdraw from the TPP, 43.5% said Japan should move forward with ratifying the pact even if the U.S. withdraws, while 43.2% said it is not necessary for Japan to proceed.

As for the GOJ's plans to enhance economic cooperation with Russia in the hope of making progress in the talks on the Northern Territories, 53.2% were opposed to economic cooperation, while 36.6% were in favor of it. Concerning Prime Minister Abe's planned meeting with President Putin in December in Yamaguchi, 70% said they do not expect progress to be made on the territorial issue, while 27.3% said they do.

Nikkei poll: 56% do not welcome Trump as next U.S. president

Monday's Nikkei front-paged the results of a telephone survey conducted by Nikkei and TV Tokyo on Nov. 25-27, which showed that 56% of respondents said it was not good that Trump elected as U.S. president, while 20% said it was good. The paper speculated that Trump's inflammatory rhetoric during the campaign caused the Japanese public to respond negatively to his election. Breaking the responses down by gender, 62% of women were critical of Trump, compared with 51% of men.

As the President-elect seems to have adopted a more pragmatic approach to some areas since the Nov. 8 election, 46% said that U.S.-Japan relations are unlikely to change under the Trump administration, while 34% expect ties to deteriorate and 6% expect them to improve.

Concerning Trump's call on Japan to shoulder a heavier financial burden for maintaining the U.S. military presence in the nation, 51% said the current level of spending should be maintained, while 34% said Japan should reduce its spending and 5% said it should increase it.

The cabinet support rating was 58%, down 2 points from a month ago, while nonsupport stood at 30%, up 3 points.

