



Morning Alert - Friday, December 2, 2016

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact TokyoMATT@state.gov.

Please fill out our short online [Readership Survey!](#)

HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to the weather forecast for today, saying that storms and blizzards are expected in northern Japan. Most networks led with reports on the announcement that “kamitteru (superhuman behavior)” was selected as the top buzzword of the year. The term is linked to the Hiroshima Carp’s victory in the Central League championship.

Lead items in national papers included a GOJ estimate of a decline in tax revenue in FY2016 (Mainichi), the probable enactment of the casino legislation this year (Sankei), Canon’s decision to enter the rocket business (Nikkei), and a GOJ plan to expand spousal tax deductions (Yomiuri).

INTERNATIONAL

Aso holds talks with representative of secretary of commerce-designate

Sankei and Nikkei wrote that Deputy Prime Minister Aso met with a representative of Secretary of Commerce-designate Wilbur Ross in Tokyo yesterday and received a letter from the renowned businessman saying that cooperative relations between the U.S. and Japan are important. Aso and the unidentified representative reportedly exchanged views on Abenomics and the Trump administration’s economic policy. The papers said the meeting was intended to build mutual trust between the Abe and the incoming Republican administration, adding that it was arranged because Ross had cancelled a scheduled trip to Japan following his appointment as commerce chief.

Sankei took up a remark made by Ross on Fox News that “the TPP is not going to happen.” Ross also underscored that the Trump administration will seek bilateral arrangements with trade partners. Nikkei reported on remarks made at the Diet on Thursday by Prime Minister Abe, who expressed a cautious view about forging a bilateral FTA with the U.S. by saying: “Administrative procedures will become burdensome if Japan concludes trade arrangements with other nations individually. It would greatly inconvenience small businesses.”

GOJ to strengthen unilateral sanctions on DPRK

Most papers wrote that the GOJ will make a decision today on imposing tougher sanctions on North Korea by expanding the scope of DPRK organizations and individuals whose financial assets will be frozen and of officials of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon) prohibited from reentering Japan after traveling to North Korea. The articles said Tokyo plans to take harsher punitive measures in coordination with the U.S. and South Korea to head off Pyongyang’s provocations, adding that Washington and Seoul will make corresponding decisions in the near future.

Putin voices hope for further development of Russo-Japanese relations

All papers reported on Russian President Putin’s state of the union address yesterday, in which he vowed to strengthen ties with Japan by saying: “I would like to see a qualitative improvement in Russia-Japan relations.” He welcomed Japan’s eight-point economic package by saying that the Japanese leadership is trying to deepen economic bonds with Moscow.

In a related story, all papers said Foreign Minister Kishida left for Moscow last night for talks with Putin and Foreign Minister Lavrov to lay the groundwork for the Russian leader’s visit to Japan in mid-December. Kishida is expected to hold talks with Lavrov on the proposed “joint economic activities” on the Northern Territories and visa-free visits to the contested islands by Japanese.

Abe meets with Singaporean leader

All papers wrote briefly that Prime Minister Abe met with visiting Singaporean President Tony Tan on Thursday and affirmed mutual coordination to effectuate the TPP swiftly.

POLITICS

Casino legislation likely to be enacted

All papers reported on a tug of war between the ruling coalition and the opposition camp concerning the LDP’s plan to put the casino bill to a Lower House committee vote today, noting that junior ruling partner Komeito is sharply divided within over whether to support it. Because Komeito Diet members failed to forge a consensus on the proposed vote yesterday, they chose to task the leadership with making a final decision. Sankei claimed that the Komeito leadership has informally decided to endorse the legislation in order to prioritize its relations with the LDP, which is determined to enact it

during the current Diet session in the belief that the bill to legalize gambling may be shelved indefinitely if it is not passed this year. An unnamed senior Komeito official said: “Given our partnership with the LDP, it is difficult for us to say no.”

Asahi said Komeito will probably not oppose today’s vote in order to prevent the LDP from deepening its partnership with the Osaka-based Japan Innovation Party that has stressed the importance of casinos in a bid to host the 2025 World Expo in Osaka. A senior Komeito official said: “The LDP is trying to strike a balance between the Komeito and the Japan Innovation Party.” The paper projected that the Democratic Party will probably abstain from today’s vote.

SECURITY

Futenma relocation still elusive

Yomiuri wrote that today marks the 20th anniversary of the signing of the landmark SACO agreement between the U.S. and Japan that called for the reversion of 11 facilities, including MCAS Futenma, the return of which appears to be elusive due to strong local opposition. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told the press yesterday: “The most important element is to move the installation, which is regarded as the most dangerous in the world, to the Henoko area. We would like to move forward while providing explanations to local residents.” Noting that the SACO final report mentioned the return of a total of 5,000 hectares of U.S. facilities, the daily said almost 90% of them will have been returned if the bulk of the Northern Training Area is returned later this month as planned.

In a related piece, Sankei wrote in a front-page report that the Defense Ministry plans to resume FRF construction work at Camp Schwab on around Dec. 10 by transporting sand and other construction materials to the U.S. base. As for the construction of helipads at the NTA, the paper claimed that the ministry is expected to start cutting down trees today around the platforms for the final phase of construction in preparation for a reversion ceremony on Dec. 22.

GOJ to earmark 5.1 trillion yen for defense budget

Sankei and Mainichi wrote that the Abe administration is likely to increase defense spending for FY2016 by about 50 billion yen to about 5.1 trillion yen, the highest amount ever, to better prepare the SDF for China’s rapid arms expansion and North Korea’s continued provocations. While speculating that the planned increase is perhaps meant to address President-elect Trump’s repeated calls during the presidential campaign for Japan to pay more for the stationing of U.S. troops, Sankei said the nation’s military spending will continue to remain below 1% of its GDP.

MOD selects U.S. aircraft as next-generation inspection plane

Sankei and Nikkei wrote that the Defense Ministry announced yesterday that it has chosen the Cessna Citation 680A produced by Textron Aviation as Japan’s next-generation inspection aircraft

charged with checking radio waves and performing other aviation-related functions at SDF bases. The ministry plans to purchase three of the planes at a cost of about \$30 million each.

SOCIETY

President Obama sends letter of appreciation to Hiroshima peace museum

Sankei wrote that the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum received on Friday a letter from President Obama in which he expressed gratitude for the books on atomic bombing that it presented to him and his wife. In the letter, which was dated Nov. 21, the U.S. leader reportedly reiterated his resolve to pursue a world without nuclear weapons.

Board members negative about reelecting NHK chief

Asahi claimed in its lead story that it will probably be extremely difficult for NHK President Momii to stay in his post beyond his present term that expires next month because some of the board governors in charge of appointing the NHK president are negative about the idea of allowing him to remain in his post. Pointing out that 9 of the 12 governors have to give consent to the selection of the broadcaster's president, the papers said some members are highly skeptical about Momii's leadership over the past three years, as evidenced by a number of controversial remarks made by the former businessman. An unnamed high-ranking ruling party official said: "It is certain that Momii will not be reelected."

