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# JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Monday, December 5, 2016

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on Austria's presidential election on Sunday, saying that former Green Party member Van der Bellen, who has shown tolerance for immigrants, won the race and Norbert Hofer of the Freedom Party conceded defeat. The network said the results will affect not just Austria but all of Europe because nearly half of the Austrian public voted for the "far-right" Freedom Party. Other top news included reports on the Chichibu Night Festival on Sunday and Tokyo Governor Koike's dispute with Tokyo Olympic Organizing Committee President Mori over the venue for volleyball events for the 2020 Olympics.

Lead items in national papers included a sharp increase in murder and suicide connected to problems with elderly care,



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Panasonic's buyout of a major European auto parts manufacturer, Japan-Russia negotiations on "joint economic activities" in the disputed Northern Territories, and a declassified British government telegram sent to its embassies abroad in 1946 expressing doubts about the part of the 1945 Yalta Agreement by the U.S., UK, and Soviet Union that Russia has cited to justify its post-WWII occupation of the Northern Territories.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Kishida meets with Putin, Lavrov**

All weekend papers reported from Moscow on Foreign Minister Kishida's meetings with President Putin on Friday and Foreign Minister Lavrov on Saturday, during which they talked about the issues to be discussed during the Russian leader's planned visit to Japan later this month, including the Northern Territories dispute and Japan's economic support for Russia. The Japanese minister and President Putin agreed to make mutual efforts to ensure that the upcoming summit in Japan with Prime Minister Abe will be a success. After his meeting with Kishida, Lavrov told the press that it will not be easy to close the gap over the territorial dispute and that being overly optimistic will make it more difficult to resolve the issue. However, he expressed hope for progress on the proposed launch of "joint economic activities" on the contested islands in the upcoming summit.

The papers wrote that the two Russian officials made it clear that their foremost priority for the upcoming summit is to enlist economic support from Japan, projecting that it will probably be difficult for Abe to draw Russian concessions.

Sunday's Sankei claimed that Russian hardliners, including Lavrov, are hesitant to make any concessions on the territorial dispute, noting that Kishida has had trouble establishing a rapport with his Russian counterpart. According to the report, Lavrov decided last month that President Putin would participate in a Tokyo economic forum on Dec. 16 apparently in a bid to prevent him from holding extended talks with Abe on the territorial dispute in Yamaguchi on Dec. 15. The Japanese side is displeased that Lavrov and other Russian diplomats are trying not to stay in Yamaguchi overnight on Dec. 15 since it apparently represents Russian hardliners' attempt to sabotage the Putin-Abe summit.

Sunday's Yomiuri front-paged the disclosure by several GOJ sources that it was PM Abe, not President Putin as previously believed, who first proposed the idea of launching "joint economic activities." According to the daily, Abe proposed the idea in his summit with Putin in Sochi in May. But today's Mainichi claimed that the two governments have been discussing the idea for more than a year, including the establishment of a special economic zone and the launch of joint venture businesses. However, because the GOJ has insisted that Japanese jurisdiction should be observed when conducting joint economic activities, no tangible progress has been made in the talks thus far.

### **USG took issue with Abe-Trump meeting**

Today's Tokyo Shimbun published a Kyodo piece on the disclosure by a source involved in U.S.-Japan relations that the Obama administration conveyed to the Japanese government its opposition to the Abe-Trump meeting before it took place in New York on Nov. 17 by saying: "Mr. Trump is not yet the president. We don't want Japan to do something that is unprecedented." The Japanese side reportedly asked for understanding by saying it would be an informal meeting and that Abe would decline a dinner invitation from the President-elect. The article claimed since the White House was not satisfied with the Japanese explanation, President Obama did not agree to hold a summit with Abe on the margins of the APEC leaders' meeting in Peru on Nov. 20 and chose to have a very brief conversation instead to express displeasure. The source said President Obama has been critical of the Japanese leader's foreign policy, including his accelerated overtures toward Russia, and that National Security Advisor Susan Rice was the strongest opponent of the Abe-Trump meeting.

### **Trump taps another former general for key cabinet post**

All Saturday morning papers took up President-elect Trump's decision to appoint James Mattis, the former head of the Central Command, as secretary of defense, with Yomiuri saying that the GOJ is anxious to learn more about him since he has apparently shown little interest in the security situation in the Asian-Pacific region. On Mattis's appointment, Defense Minister Inada said: "Regardless of who becomes my U.S. counterpart, I would like him to understand the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance. I hope to build good relations with him." The daily added some GOJ officials are optimistic about the next U.S. defense chief already being aware of the importance of the bilateral alliance since he was a former Marine general. An unnamed MOD official said: "All U.S. generals and admirals attach importance to the U.S.-Japan alliance. Secretary Mattis wouldn't dare to propose a cutback of U.S. forces in Japan."

Other papers said because Trump has tapped former generals such as National Security Advisor-designate Michael Flynn to occupy key administration posts, the incoming Republican administration is likely to take a hawkish approach to security and foreign policies. Asahi voiced concern that civilian control of the military may be weakened under the Trump administration. Sankei gave special attention to the fact that neither Flynn nor Mattis have ever held military positions in Asia.

Nikkei separately highlighted Trump's renewed criticism of NAFTA and pressuring Indiana-based air conditioning equipment manufacturer Carrier not to move a plant to Mexico. The daily said although his appointment of two Wall Street financiers as treasury and commerce secretaries had indicated that Trump may take a "pro-business, pragmatic" economic approach, the latest moves showed that the next U.S. leader is apparently inclined to take a protectionist trade policy.

### **China displeased by Trump's phone conversation with Taiwanese leader**

All weekend papers reported extensively on President-elect Trump's telephone conversation with the Taiwanese president. They emphasized that no U.S. president or president-elect has spoken by phone with a Taiwanese leader since 1979 and that the Chinese government has expressed strong displeasure. The dailies speculated that Trump's "provocative" gesture indicates that his foreign policy may not be constrained by conventional diplomatic thinking, projecting that his administration may extend overtures toward not just to Taiwan, but also nations such as Russia, North Korea, and the Philippines toward which the Obama administration has been taking a critical line. The papers expressed concern that Trump's "unconventional" diplomacy may frequently rattle the international community.

### **Japan hesitant to recognize China as "market economy"**

This morning's Yomiuri wrote that Japan, the U.S., and European countries are unlikely to recognize China as a "market economy" as defined by the WTO on account of its protectionist approach, predicting that trade friction may emerge between Beijing and the Western nations as a result. China has insisted that it should be granted "market economy" status starting on Dec. 11 because when China joined the WTO officially in 2001, Beijing accepted that the country would be treated as a "non-market economy" for 15 years.

### **U.S., South Korea impose tougher sanctions on North Korea**

Saturday papers reported that the U.S. and ROK governments on Friday announced their decisions to apply more stringent unilateral sanctions against North Korea in order to punish it for conducting a nuclear test in September. The U.S. designated more than 20 DPRK entities and individuals, including Air Koryo and four firms that dispatch workers overseas, for asset freezing. The two nations chose to take a tougher approach toward Pyongyang in coordination with Japan to prevent North Korea from earning foreign currency for its nuclear and missile development.

According to Nikkei, the Kantei is very pleased with the additional round of sanctions adopted by the U.S., South Korea, and the UN Security Council. Asahi wrote that although Japan at one point considered "secondary sanctions" to target entities of third-countries that do business with North Korea, it chose not to adopt such draconian steps to avoid making it more difficult to resolve the abduction issue.

## **POLITICS**

### **LDP determined to enact casino bill during current Diet session**

All Saturday morning papers reported that the integrated resort bill aimed at legalizing casinos cleared a Lower House committee on Friday, noting that the Abe administration is strongly committed to enacting the bill before the current Diet session ends on Dec. 14. The ruling LDP plans to have the bill passed in a Lower House plenary session on Tuesday for additional discussions at the Upper House Cabinet Committee starting on Dec. 8. Pointing out that the Upper House panel is chaired by a Democratic Party lawmaker, Yomiuri projected that the LDP may try to usurp that role by submitting a no-confidence motion against the chairman if he sabotages deliberations.

Asahi said PM Abe and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga are strong proponents of the legislation, which has also been promoted by the opposition Japan Innovation Party (JIP). The Osaka-based party has endorsed the administration's key agenda items for the current Diet session, including the TPP and pension reform legislation, with the goal of ensuring the swift enactment of the casino bill as well as the government's support for Osaka's bid to host a World Expo in 2025 and the construction of a maglev rail system between Nagoya and Osaka. The papers said junior ruling partner Komeito is being put in an awkward position in light of growing rapprochement between the LDP and the JIP. Although many Komeito politicians are against the casino bill, the party leadership decided reluctantly to accept the LDP's plan to pass it during the current Diet term so as to drive a wedge between the LDP and the JIP.

Most papers stressed that the bill was put to a vote after less than six hours of deliberations and that such concerns as countermeasures against gambling addiction and the economic benefits of casinos have not been sufficiently addressed. Nikkei said American casino operators, including MGM Resort International, are anxious to make inroads into Japan because significant business growth is unlikely at home. The paper said that the Abe administration views casinos as an important tool for boosting the economy based on the assessment that the number of foreign tourists to Japan may plunge after the Tokyo Olympics in 2020. Yomiuri said given that the effectuation of the TPP has become practically inconceivable due to Trump's rejection of the pact, Abe appears to be counting on casinos to boost the Japanese economy. Noting that the GOJ will prepare a separate bill to implement the integrated resort law in about a year, Mainichi projected that casinos will be opened in about five locations across Japan.

In a related story, Yomiuri front-paged the results of a public opinion survey that put support for the legalization of casinos at 34%, up 10 points from two years ago, and opposition at 57%, down 6 points. About 65% of women were against the legalization of casinos.

## **SECURITY**

## **U.S. defense chief to visit Japan**

Several Saturday morning papers focused on the DOD announcement on Thursday that Defense Secretary Carter will visit Japan on Monday for talks with Defense Minister Inada the next day, with Mainichi speculating that the two officials will discuss such issues as narrowing the scope of the civilian component covered by the SOFA. The paper also projected that the two governments are keen to play up the importance of the trans-Pacific alliance ahead of the inauguration of the Trump administration in January.

## **U.S. bases still concentrated in Okinawa**

On the 20th anniversary of the U.S.-Japan SACO agreement on Friday, Asahi wrote on Saturday that Okinawa continues to shoulder a heavy base-hosting burden, as the implementation of the accord's key element of returning MCAS Futenma is still elusive. As a result of the planned return of the Northern Training Area in late December, the land occupied by the U.S. military in the southernmost prefecture will be reduced by 17%. However, the island prefecture will still host 71% of U.S. installations across Japan in terms of acreage, down only 3%. Noting that the agreed-upon return of Naha Military Port and Makiminato Service Area has also run into difficulties, the paper said many Okinawa residents feel that the SACO agreement has had done little to reduce their base-hosting burden.

## **NTA return ceremony to be held in Nago, Okinawa**

Saturday morning's Sankei wrote that the GOJ and the USG are planning to hold a Northern Training Area reversion ceremony at Bankoku Shinryokan Okinawa Resort MICE Facility in Nago City on Dec. 22, noting that the location was the main venue of the G8 summit in 2000. Today's Nikkei wrote that Parliamentary Vice Minister for Defense Wakamiya on Sunday met with the mayors of Higashi and Kunigami, where the NTA is located, and asked for their understanding for the ongoing construction of helipads at the training area.

## **Two Marines arrested in Okinawa for DUI**

Today's Asahi wrote that two Marines belonging to Camp Foster were apprehended separately on Sunday in Chatan Town and Okinawa City on charges of driving under the influence of alcohol, saying that both suspects have denied the allegations.

## **Fuji Heavy Industries selected to perform maintenance on Japanese Ospreys**

Saturday morning's Nikkei wrote that the Defense Ministry has decided to tap Fuji Heavy Industries as the maintenance service provider for the MV-22 Ospreys that the GSDF plans to procure in FY2018.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Dark cloud looming over two JR Central high-speed rail projects in U.S.**

Saturday morning's Nikkei wrote that JR Central is concerned that the inauguration of the Trump administration may complicate its plans to export shinkansen high-speed rail systems to the U.S. East Coast and Texas. Although U.S. government support is essential for the two public works projects, the incoming Republican administration is set to pursue an "America-first" approach and may oppose the adoption of the Japanese transportation technology that was promoted under the Obama administration. Texas Central Partners, which is promoting the Texas project, is also reportedly running into difficulty raising funds for the billion-dollar project. However, Sunday's Asahi took up remarks made to Japanese journalists by Texas Central Partners CEO Timothy Keith, who stressed that the incoming Trump administration is "extremely positive" about the project.

## **SOCIETY**

### **NHK likely to elect new president**

Most Saturday morning papers wrote that former Mitsubishi Corp. Vice President Ryoichi Ueda will probably be elected as the next NHK president. Since Ueda is currently a member of the broadcaster's board of governors and known as "a man of integrity," he is viewed to be well-qualified to succeed Katsuto Momii, who has been repeatedly criticized for making controversial remarks.

### **President Obama sends letter of gratitude to Hiroshima**

Most Saturday morning papers published a copy of the letter sent to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum by President Obama in which he reflected on his trip to the atomic bombed city in May and expressed gratitude for the materials on atomic bombing that the museum presented to him and his wife. President Obama wrote in the letter dated Nov. 21: "We have a shared responsibility to look directly into the eye of history and ask what we must do differently to prevent such suffering from ever happening again."

