



Morning Alert - Friday, December 9, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that a bill to impeach South Korean President Park is expected to be put to a vote today. NTV and TV Asahi led with reports on the controversial bill to legalize casinos in Japan, with TV Asahi saying that the bill is likely to be enacted on Dec. 14. Other top news included a report that Princess Masako turns 53 today.

Top stories in national dailies included a decision by the Supreme Court to overrule an earlier high court ruling that ordered the state to suspend nighttime and early morning flights by SDF aircraft at the Atsugi Air Base in Kanagawa Prefecture due to noise pollution by acknowledging the “highly public” nature of SDF flights. Another top story was the ruling coalition’s approval of its tax reform plan for fiscal 2017, which includes raising the income threshold for spousal tax deductions.

INTERNATIONAL

Ben Rhodes says Abe expressed intention to visit Pearl Harbor in Hiroshima in May

Asahi wrote that it has learned from an interview with Ben Rhodes, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting, that Prime Minister Abe expressed to President Obama his intention to visit Pearl Harbor when they visited Hiroshima in May. Rhodes was quoted as saying in an interview in Washington on Wednesday that the premier has expressed eagerness to visit Pearl Harbor during his meetings with the President on the margins of international conferences in the past few months and that Abe conveyed his decision to visit Hawaii to the President in Peru in November. Rhodes reportedly added that Washington and Tokyo worked carefully to arrange the visits to Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor as two separate events

to be decided on independently by the President and the prime minister. The White House official said President Obama will stress the need to maintain the U.S.-Japan alliance as the cornerstone of security in the Asia-Pacific region during his speech in Hawaii and that Abe's visit to Pearl Harbor will convey to Asia the positive message that it is possible to prevent historical issues from becoming impediments or causing strain in relations with other nations.

Suga comments on 75th anniversary of Pearl Harbor attack

Yomiuri reported on remarks made to the press by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga concerning the 75th anniversary of the Pearl Harbor attack. The cabinet spokesman said: "This is an important opportunity to renew our resolve to never repeat the tragedy of war and reaffirm the value of reconciliation." Suga added that Japan will strengthen its alliance with the U.S. and contribute to the peace and stability of the world.

U.S., Japan, ROK to hold several security meetings

Asahi wrote that the U.S., Japan, and South Korea are planning to hold several security and other meetings in the next few weeks before the Obama administration comes to an end in order to reconfirm their policy toward North Korea and China and deepen their trilateral cooperation ahead of the launch of the Trump administration on Jan. 20. The three nations plan to hold in Seoul meetings of their chief representatives to the Six-Party Talks on Dec. 13, vice defense ministers on Dec. 16, and vice foreign ministers in early January.

Japan-China-ROK summit likely to be postponed

Most papers wrote that it has become likely that a planned summit meeting this year between the leaders of Japan, China, and South Korea will be postponed due to difficulty in scheduling ROK President Park's visit to Japan. Japan had pursued the possibility of hosting the summit on Dec. 19-20. Several GOJ officials on Thursday indicated that it will be difficult to hold the summit and the foreign ministry spokespersons of South Korea and China expressed similar views on Thursday.

Abe, Iranian foreign minister discuss implementation of nuclear agreement

Asahi wrote that Prime Minister Abe held talks with visiting Iranian Foreign Minister Zarif on Thursday and welcomed Iran's nuclear agreement with the U.S. and Europe. Zarif said in reply that Iran is steadily implementing the deal.

Nikkei reported on Zarif's remarks at a symposium hosted by the Japan Institute of International Affairs on Thursday, during which he stated that the nuclear agreement, which benefits not only the United States but also the entire international community, should be respected. The paper interpreted this remark as a message to President-elect Trump, who during his election campaign called for abolishing the nuclear deal.

ECONOMY

TPP bills to be enacted today

Most papers wrote that the TPP ratification and related bills will be enacted today after being approved at an Upper House plenary session in the afternoon. Prime Minister Abe stated at a meeting of the Upper House Special Committee on the TPP on Thursday that he will continue to patiently urge the U.S. to ratify the TPP agreement by finalizing the domestic process in Japan.

