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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All broadcasters and most papers gave extensive top play to reports on the first day of the Japan-Russia summit in Yamaguchi on Thursday, quoting Prime Minister Abe as telling reporters after the meeting: “We spoke in private for about 95 minutes.... We had candid and in-depth discussions on visa-free travel to the islands [Northern Territories] by former Japanese residents, joint economic activities on the four islands to be conducted under a special framework, and the issue of a peace treaty.”

## INTERNATIONAL

### PM Abe, President Putin hold summit talks in Yamaguchi

#### Abe, Putin agree to start discussions on “joint economic activities” on Northern Territories

All papers reported that during their 95-minute one-on-one meeting, Prime Minister Abe and President Putin agreed to commence consultations by working-level officials on launching “joint economic activities” in the Northern Territories under a “special system.” The details of the “special system” are reportedly unclear although the papers speculated that the Japanese side envisions that it will be compatible with the nation’s legal system. According to a Russian briefing, the joint economic activities will be carried out “based on Russian statutes” and cover such areas as fishery, medicine, tourism, and the environment. A joint statement on this matter will probably be released upon conclusion of the summit talks in Tokyo today. The papers said that following the Tokyo talks, the two leaders will probably announce 30 economic cooperation initiatives in eight fields. The

Russian side also claimed that the issue of sovereignty over the contested islands was not brought up during yesterday's talks.

### **Consensus forged on promoting security cooperation**

Meanwhile, during a separate meeting with additional participants, including Foreign Ministers Kishida and Lavrov, the Japanese and Russian leaders agreed to deepen bilateral security dialogue by possibly convening a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting in the near future. They also agreed to apply greater pressure so as to dissuade North Korea from pursuing nuclear and missile development. The premier called for Moscow to take a constructive approach toward Syria and Ukraine. In response, Putin apparently voiced displeasure with Japan's sanctions over the situation in Ukraine. Yomiuri wrote that although Japan is anxious to promote security dialogue with Russia with the goal of holding China in check, Tokyo's rapprochement with Moscow on the security front may draw criticism from the U.S. and Europe. Sankei conjectured that Moscow is also interested in deepening security collaboration with Tokyo to drive a wedge into the U.S.-Japan alliance. The Russian leader reportedly expressed reservations about the U.S.'s plan to enhance missile defense capabilities in the region.

### **Moscow insists on pursuing joint economic activities under Russian laws**

All papers projected that Japanese and Russian officials will begin working out details on "joint economic activities under a special system," noting that solutions have to be found for such issues as how to process Japanese people's entry to the islands, regulations, taxation, and a dispute settlement mechanism associated with business and trade activities. They conjectured that it will not be easy for Japan to agree on the details given that Moscow has little intention to compromise on its sovereignty to allow joint economic activities to be carried out under Japan's legal system. Nikkei suspected that the Japanese side may be envisioning the creation of a "special zone" where neither Japanese nor Russian laws will be enforced, although even in the proposed special zone the issue of sovereignty will emerge when dealing with such matters as traffic violations.

### **Russians stress "no room" for discussing territorial dispute**

Most papers wrote that the Russian side apparently made it clear during yesterday's talks that it will not compromise on the sovereignty of the Northern Territories. Asahi speculated that a remark made by Secretary General Yachi of the National Security Secretariat to his Russian counterpart in November that Japan might allow the U.S. military to station troops on the disputed isles if they are reverted may have prompted Moscow to harden its position that there is no territorial dispute with Tokyo in the first place. While explaining that the recent deployment of ground-to-ship missiles on two of the four contested islands shows that Moscow considers the isles to be the forefront of its national defense, Asahi said Russia may not be as eager to seek political and economic

rapprochement with Japan now that the next U.S. administration is inclined to improve bilateral relations and the low oil prices that have dealt a blow to the Russian economy will probably be corrected following the recent landmark OPEC agreement to reduce petroleum production. Yomiuri said since President Putin is very popular among the Russian people on account of his patriotic foreign policy, he probably will not be able to make concessions on the territorial dispute with Japan. Nikkei quoted a Russian cabinet minister who accompanied Putin as saying: "No progress will be made on the territorial negotiations without tangible achievements for the Russian people on the economic front."

### **Japanese corporate activities to pick up momentum in Russian Far East**

Sankei forecast that more Japanese enterprises will consider investing in the Russian Far East because the two governments are likely to agree on improving the enforcement of Russian regulations on Japanese businesses during the talks in Tokyo today. The daily said the Russian side is hoping for greater Japanese investment in order to offset the rapidly-growing Chinese economic presence in the region.

### **ROK opposition candidate calls for renegotiation of comfort women pact**

Nikkei reported from Seoul on a press conference yesterday by former Chairman Moon Jae-in of the ROK's Democratic Party, during which he called for new negotiations with Tokyo in order to "clarify Japan's legal responsibility and apology" over the comfort women issue. The leading candidate in the anticipated presidential election stressed that he cannot accept the bilateral comfort women accord negotiated a year ago by the Park administration.

## **SECURITY**

### **Governor Onaga lodges protest over Osprey accident**

All papers reported on a meeting between Okinawa Governor Onaga and Defense Minister Inada in Tokyo yesterday, during which the governor filed a strong protest against the recent Osprey mishap and demanded the withdrawal of the tilt-rotor planes from MCAS Futenma. The Okinawa leader also asked for the cancellation of a planned ceremony to commemorate the return of the Northern Training Area on Dec. 22. He also took up the comment made by Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson expressing the view that people should be thankful that the incident did not damage any homes or people in Okinawa, insisting that the remark exposed the U.S. military official's "occupier mentality." In response, the cabinet minister pledged GOJ efforts to obtain information on the accident from the U.S. military so as to obtain assurances about the safety of the aircraft. Onaga told the press afterward: "I would like to examine the central government's response carefully....If the reversion ceremony is held as planned, the anger in Okinawa will grow."

Tokyo Shimbun wrote in its lead article that LDP lawmakers expressed concern about Gen. Nicholson's comment and a number of incidents and mishaps involving U.S. military planes, including an FA-19 crash off Shikoku on Dec. 7.

### **Nuclear disaster response drill held at Yokosuka**

Thursday evening's Tokyo Shimbun reported that earlier in the day, some 270 Japanese and U.S. officials, including those from the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Embassy, took part in an emergency response drill at Yokosuka Naval Station based on the scenario of a powerful earthquake hitting the region. The participants engaged in various training sessions, such as measuring the radiation on the base in the event of a disruption in power supply and evacuating from the installation in case of tsunami. Yokosuka Mayor Yoshida told the press afterward that the drill was meaningful.

## **POLITICS**

### **Diet session to be convened in late January**

Mainichi front-paged an idea emerging within the Abe administration and the ruling coalition on convening an ordinary Diet session either on Jan. 20 or 23 following PM Abe's envisaged four-nation tour of Southeast Asia in mid-January. The paper added in a separate piece that the administration is likely to prepare legislation in the upcoming Diet session on countermeasures against gambling addiction, which sponsors of the recently-enacted integrated resort law admit has not been properly addressed. The daily also wrote that the GOJ plans to double the number of cabinet bureaucrats charged with drafting a separate bill on the implementation of casinos to about 40 so that it can be submitted to the Diet in the autumn next year.