



Morning Alert - Wednesday, January 11, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report on the forecast for heavy snow and blizzards in Hokkaido and Tohoku today, cautioning that transportation could be disrupted. NTV, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi led with reports that a deputy editor at major publisher Kodansha was arrested on Tuesday on charges of murdering his wife. TBS reported that Tokyo Governor Koike said she hopes her new political group will obtain a majority of seats in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election this summer.

Most national dailies gave top play to reports on a proposal being discussed within the GOJ for Crown Prince Naruhito to ascend the throne on Jan. 1, 2019. Nikkei led with a report on a plan by GE to use for its commercial aircraft jet engine parts a new silicon carbide fiber produced by two Japanese firms.

INTERNATIONAL

Toyota's \$10 billion investment plan seen as response to pressure from Trump

Most papers reported on Toyota's announcement on Monday that it will invest \$10 billion in the U.S. over the next five years. Nikkei wrote that both American and Japanese automakers are apparently rushing to demonstrate their contributions to the U.S. economy ahead of Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20, explaining that private firms are responding to pressure from Trump to invest in America and create jobs there.

Asahi wrote that Japanese chemical and electronic manufacturers that operate plants in Mexico share the automakers' concern. Keidanren Chairman Sakakibara told reporters that he plans to visit the U.S. in the spring or later to convey the message that the free trade system is important for the

U.S. Meanwhile, Sankei wrote that on Tuesday Finance Minister Aso expressed approval of Toyota's major investment in the U.S.

Secretary Kerry mulls mediating between Japan, ROK over comfort woman statue

Asahi wrote that in an attempt to resolve the current impasse between Japan and South Korea over a statue symbolizing the comfort women in front of the Japanese Consulate in Busan, Secretary of State Kerry and other senior USG officials may hold teleconferences with their Japanese and ROK counterparts separately or trilaterally in the form of farewell greetings ahead of Jan. 20. The paper noted that Vice President Biden separately spoke by phone with Prime Minister Abe and ROK Prime Minister Hwang on Friday and urged them to resolve the issue through dialogue.

Japan, ROK jittery over Chinese military moves

Asahi wrote that Japan and the ROK are becoming increasingly concerned about moves by the Chinese military after eight Chinese military planes flew over the Tsushima Strait on Monday. The paper speculated that the flight was intended to display Chinese military's air capabilities and was politically motivated, as China has criticized South Korea's plan to deploy the THAAD missile system.

Japan, Ireland agree on close economic cooperation

Most papers wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida held a meeting with his Irish counterpart Flanagan on Monday in Dublin, during which the two officials agreed that their nations will work closely together in view of the possible negative impact of the UK's departure from the EU. They also agreed that the two nations will work together to seek an early agreement on a Japan-EU EPA.

SECURITY

Inada to visit Guam

Most papers wrote that Defense Minister Inada stated at a news conference on Tuesday that she will visit Guam on Jan. 12-13. Nikkei wrote that the primary purpose of her visit is to confirm progress in preparations for the Marines' transfer to Guam from Okinawa that will start in the early 2020s. In addition, the defense minister plans to visit Andersen Air Force Base in Guam to observe the THAAD missile defense system deployed there. Concerning the possibility of the SDF introducing the system in the future, Inada stated that the ministry has no concrete plan at this stage, but installing the system might be a way to reinforce Japan's missile defense capabilities.

In a related development, Inada commented on North Korea's claim that it is ready to launch an ICBM, saying that she does not believe Pyongyang is that far along in its missile program.

ECONOMY

Japan to be allowed to establish commercial flight routes through Yokota RAPCON

Tuesday evening's Tokyo Shimbun gave top play to a report saying that it has learned from a GOJ source that Japan will be allowed to establish new commercial flight routes through part of the U.S.-controlled airspace over Tokyo called the Yokota Radar Approach Control (RAPCON) in order to increase the number of international arrival and departure slots at Haneda Airport. According to the paper, the U.S. has already approved the plan in working-level negotiations between the two nations. The paper also wrote that Washington and Tokyo will hold further discussions on the details of the plan, including whether the latest move will eventually lead to the United States' partial return of the airspace.

