



Morning Alert - Monday, January 23, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that Ozeki Kisenosato is likely to become the first Japanese sumo wrestler to be promoted to yokozuna in 19 years. Other networks led with reports on President Trump's inauguration and the large-scale anti-Trump demonstrations held across the U.S. and the world.

Main front-page items in national papers were President Trump's decision to hold a summit meeting with British Prime Minister May on Jan. 27 and the anti-Trump demonstrations held in Washington, D.C., and around the world on Sunday.

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump sworn in, pledges "America First"

All national dailies over the weekend gave extensive top and inside-page play with color photos to the inauguration of President Trump on Friday, saying that he pledged in his inaugural address to put America first in his foreign and economic policies. All Sunday papers also highlighted President Trump's announcement on his first day in office to withdraw from the TPP and renegotiate NAFTA, and his signing of an executive order aimed at rolling back Obamacare. Sunday's top headlines were: "Trump rolls out 'America First' policies on first day in office" (Asahi), "Trump shifts to 'America First'" (Nikkei), and "Trump prioritizes U.S. interests over international cooperation" (Mainichi), "Trump announces U.S. withdrawal from TPP" (Sankei and Yomiuri). Mainichi wrote that given that it has now become clear that the U.S. has shifted to national particularism, the world has entered an "era of unprecedented instability." Most Sunday papers carried the full transcript of

President Trump's inaugural address both in English and Japanese. Mainichi wrote on Sunday that unlike previous U.S. presidents who spoke of noble principles during their inaugural addresses, President Trump chose to eschew such rhetoric and express his intention to focus solely on American interests. The paper wrote that his indicating that the U.S. will no longer seek "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" will be a major turning point for the world.

GOJ wary of Trump's "America First" policies

Saturday evening's Mainichi wrote that the GOJ and the ruling parties were alarmed by President Trump's reiteration of his "America First" message during his inaugural address and his announcement of the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP. Although the GOJ and ruling parties had anticipated such remarks, they have become increasingly concerned that the U.S. may shift away from the principle of international cooperation. The paper quoted LDP Vice President Komura as telling reporters: "I think Mr. Trump is smart, so he should understand that if every country only thinks about its own interests, it will be a disaster for the global economy, including the U.S." Komura also expressed his intention to closely monitor what Trump's "America First" policies will entail. An LDP official also reportedly expressed alarm by saying: "Former President Obama said the U.S. is no longer the world's policeman. Is Mr. Trump going to withdraw the U.S. from the international arena?" A MOFA official also expressed concern that the overall picture of the Trump administration's policies remains unclear. Meanwhile, a GOJ official welcomed President Trump's statements on making America great again, by saying: "A strong United States is important for the Asia-Pacific. Japan will cooperate." The paper said the GOJ is eager to arrange a summit between the two leaders at an early date to confirm the importance of the alliance.

Japan forced to review trade strategy following U.S. decision to withdraw from TPP

All Sunday papers reported that following President Trump's formal announcement on the U.S.'s withdrawal from the TPP, Japan will need to review its trade policy centered on the TPP. Mainichi wrote that the current framework of the TPP has effectively collapsed. While the GOJ is planning to accelerate talks on other trade deals, the paper said negotiations are not going smoothly and rebuilding Japan's trade strategy is likely to take time. Saturday evening's Nikkei also wrote that although the GOJ is planning to continue to try to persuade the U.S. to change its policy on the TPP in summit meetings, it is unlikely that President Trump will change his mind. The paper said that while the GOJ is planning to promote the RCEP and an EPA with the EU in the meantime, its trade strategy will not be successful in boosting Japan's economic growth unless Japan builds a solid trade relationship with the U.S., its largest trade partner. The paper added, however, that Japan lacks effective measures to persuade President Trump to change his mind.

Today's papers reported on a statement issued by the Australian government expressing disappointment with the official decision by the U.S. to withdraw from the TPP. Australia is seeking to hold discussions with other TPP members to find ways to effectuate the regional free trade accord

without the participation of the U.S. On the TPP, Foreign Minister Kishida said yesterday that Japan will explain to the Trump administration the “strategic significance and concrete benefits” of U.S.-led free trade.

GOJ making arrangements for U.S.-Japan summit early next month

Several papers reported that following the inauguration of President Trump, the GOJ is making final arrangements for a bilateral summit as early as the first weeks of February, adding that Deputy Prime Minister Aso is expected to accompany Prime Minister Abe. Yomiuri wrote that Aso’s attendance has been requested by the U.S. side as a counterpart to Vice President Pence, saying that the Japanese side has responded positively to the request since it will help build a relationship of trust between the two nations. Vice President Pence and Deputy Prime Minister Aso may hold a separate meeting, with the Japanese side hoping that the Aso-Pence relationship will help deepen communication between the two nations. Mainichi wrote that the Japanese side is hoping to urge the U.S. to continue to engage in the Asia-Pacific region in order to maintain the regional balance centered on the U.S. at the summit, given that the overall picture of the new administration’s Asia policy remains unclear and Trump and his cabinet nominees have made remarks contradicting one another at times.

In a follow-up report, Yomiuri said this morning that some GOJ officials are disappointed with President Trump’s decision to hold summits first with British Prime Minister May and then Mexican President Pena Nieto, wondering if Washington is neglecting Tokyo even though PM Abe has been eager to become the first foreign leader to meet with the new U.S. President in the hope of calling global attention to the close trans-Pacific alliance.

Meanwhile, National Security Advisor Flynn spoke by phone with Secretary General Yachi of the National Security Secretariat yesterday and told him: “Japan is an important ally. The President is looking forward to meeting and exchanging opinions with the prime minister.”

Several Monday papers took up yesterday’s remarks on a Sunday talk show by Foreign Minister Kishida, who said that when Abe meets with President Trump in the near future, the premier would like to obtain assurances that the Republican administration will maintain the Obama administration’s position that the Senkaku Islands fall under the scope of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. Nikkei quoted an unnamed senior MOFA official as saying: “The prime minister needs to go through the items that have been taken for granted in bilateral relations and confirm them one at a time with the new President.”

PM Abe sends congratulatory message to President Trump

All Saturday morning papers reported that Prime Minister Abe sent President Trump a congratulatory message on Saturday, in which he said he “looks forward to ensuring the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific and tackling global issues together.” The premier also stressed in his

message that “the role of the U.S.-Japan alliance, based on universal values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, has become increasingly important.” The premier also expressed hope to swiftly hold a summit with President Trump.

DM Inada expresses hope to hold telephone conference with new defense secretary

Saturday morning’s Sankei reported that Defense Minister Inada said at a press conference on Friday that she hopes to have the opportunity to hold a telephone conference with new Secretary of Defense James Mattis as early as possible. She reportedly stressed the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance and expressed hope to “thoroughly exchange views on Japan’s position and the regional situation surrounding Japan.”

Trump’s inauguration causes Japanese to become pessimistic about bilateral relations

Today’s Mainichi front-paged the results of its latest public opinion survey over the weekend, finding that some 56% predicted that U.S.-Japan relations will deteriorate under President Trump, up 11 points from last month. Only 5% projected that the bilateral ties will improve, while almost 30% said there will be hardly any change.

SECURITY

U.S. helicopter makes emergency landing on Ikejima in Okinawa

This weekend’s papers all carried inside-page reports saying that a U.S. Marine AH-1 attack helicopter belonging to the Futenma base made an emergency landing on a farm road on Ikejima, Okinawa, at about 7:40 p.m. on Friday due apparently to the malfunctioning of its transmission. The helicopter carrying two crew members was not damaged and nobody was injured. The papers wrote that Okinawa Defense Bureau chief Nakajima visited the site on Saturday morning and lodged a protest with Colonel Scott Conway, external affairs director of the U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa, by saying that the incident “has caused anxiety among local residents.” Conway reportedly responded by saying that it is “extremely regrettable” and the U.S. will provide information on the incident to the Japanese side. According to the papers, the helicopter left the site for the Futenma base on Saturday morning.

Okinawa governor arranging to meet with Chief of Staff-designate Priebus

Saturday morning’s Sankei reported that Okinawa Governor Onaga is making arrangements to meet with Reince Priebus, whom President Trump has nominated as his chief of staff, when he visits the U.S. at the end of this month. The paper said if the meeting is arranged, Priebus will be the highest ranking incumbent U.S. official for Onaga to meet, adding that the governor is expected to call for the cancellation of the current plan to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko.

SDF to carry out tabletop exercises for defending U.S. vessels

Saturday morning's Asahi reported that the MOD's Joint Staff office announced on Friday that it will conduct its first ever tabletop exercises for the SDF to defend U.S. vessels, which became possible at the end of December based on the new security legislation. The exercises will be jointly conducted on Jan. 23 to 27 by the Ground, Maritime, and Air SDF and will be held biannually. According to an MOD official, the exercises will be based on the scenario of the SDF providing logistical support for the U.S. military in a situation in which Japan could come under attack, such as a clash between China and Taiwan.

ASDF fighters scramble 883 times from April to December in 2016

Several papers reported on an MOD announcement that ASDF fighters were scrambled 883 times during the third quarter of FY2016, from April to December in 2016. The number was up 56% from the same period in 2015. The papers said 644 of the flights, or about 73%, were in response to Chinese aircraft. ASDF jets were also scrambled 231 times against Russian aircraft.

U.S., Japan, South Korea conduct exercises in preparation for DPRK's ICBMs

Saturday morning's Sankei reported that the South Korean navy announced on Friday that the U.S., Japan, and South Korea began from Aegis-equipped vessels at sea exercises to detect and track North Korean ballistic missiles. The exercises will reportedly continue until Jan. 22. The paper said the three nations are strengthening their security against the DPRK's ICBMs, which the North Korean leader claims are in the "final stage" of development.

POLITICS

PM Abe delivers policy speech, vows to strengthen U.S.-Japan alliance

All Saturday morning papers reported that Prime Minister Abe delivered a policy speech in the Diet on Friday to mark the start of the ordinary Diet session, during which he expressed hope to further strengthen the alliance with the U.S. under the Trump administration. Nikkei said the premier started his speech with a message to incoming President Trump, in which he said the alliance "has been, is now, and will continue to be the cornerstone of Japan's diplomatic and security policies" and that this is an "unchangeable principle." The premier also said that he plans to "visit the U.S. as soon as possible to further strengthen the bonds of the alliance with the new President." Noting that any friction in the U.S.-Japan alliance could enable North Korea or China to take more provocative actions, the paper said the premier expressed hope that the U.S. administration will continue to engage in maintaining the international order by stressing that "both the U.S. and Japan have a responsibility to demonstrate the importance of tolerance and the power of reconciliation, and work together for the peace and prosperity of the world."

Anti-Onaga mayor reelected on Miyako Island

All papers reported today that incumbent Mayor Shimoji, who is backed by the Abe administration, prevailed in Sunday's mayoral election on Miyako Island, Okinawa, noting that the reelected politician has been critical of Okinawa Governor Onaga and supportive of the GOJ's plan to deploy GSDF units on the remote island to counter China's maritime advancement. Onaga supported one of the three defeated candidates.

ECONOMY

Japan, EU fail to bridge gaps in EPA talks

Saturday evening's Nikkei reported that the chief negotiators' meeting for EPA talks between Japan and the EU ended on Friday, saying that they failed to narrow the gaps between the EU, which is calling for market liberalization of dairy products, and Japan, which is calling for the elimination of tariffs on vehicles. While Japan and the EU are hoping to reach a broad agreement sometime early this year, concern is emerging that the negotiations may become prolonged.

EDUCATION

Number of Japanese studying in U.S. to decline under Trump administration?

Friday evening's Asahi published a story on growing hesitancy among some Japanese students about studying in the U.S. on account of President Trump's messages on Muslims and illegal immigrants that they feel undermine their image of the U.S. as a "free and tolerant" country. According to the daily, the number of Japanese students wishing to study in the U.S. dropped some 4% last year at one Japanese study abroad support agency, as opposed to 33% and 13% increases in those hoping to study in Australia and Canada, respectively. An agency official conjectured that Trump's extreme remarks may have discouraged some youths from choosing America as a study abroad destination. The U.S. Embassy reportedly emphasized the USG's commitment to encouraging more Japanese students to come to the U.S. by saying: "The relationships between Americans and Japanese who have spent time learning about each other's countries and cultures are the heart of the U.S.-Japan alliance"
