



Morning Alert - Thursday, March 23, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

Most broadcasters led with Wednesday's deadly terrorist incident in London, in which at least three persons were killed. The perpetrator reportedly plowed a vehicle into pedestrians and then attacked a police officer with a knife. The suspect was shot and killed by the police on the spot. The networks added that President Trump spoke by phone with British Prime Minister May, offering condolences and pledging "full cooperation and support" in bringing those responsible to justice.

TV-Asahi and TBS gave top play to sworn Diet testimony planned for today by the president of scandal-hit Moritomo Gakuen regarding the roles possibly played by Prime Minister Abe, his wife, and other politicians in connection with the substantial discount that the Osaka school operator obtained when purchasing state-owned land.

Top stories in national dailies included government discussions on the Emperor's possible abdication (Asahi, Sankei); a Chiba high school's preferential treatment for certain students in its entrance exam (Mainichi); survey results showing that only 9% of local assemblies disclosed receipts submitted by members for expense claims (Yomiuri); and planned collaboration between Toyota and NTT in developing self-driving vehicles ([Nikkei](#)).

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary Tillerson urges Korea to improve ties with Japan

Asahi wrote that it has learned from a source connected to U.S.-ROK relations that during his meeting with ROK Acting President Hwang in Seoul on March 17, Secretary of State Tillerson expressed concern over the recent stalemate in relations between Japan and South Korea and

voiced hope that the two nations will swiftly improve their ties. The paper speculated that the Secretary made the statement with the issue of the comfort woman statue in Busan in mind.

South Korea conducts oceanographic surveys in Japan's EEZ near Takeshima

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that South Korea conducted oceanographic surveys on April 9 and June 18 last year in Japan's EEZ near the Takeshima Islands (known as Dokdo in South Korea) for the first time in ten years. Seoul may have conducted the surveys in preparation for registering a Korean name for the seabed in the region with an international organization. Relations between Japan and the ROK became tense when Seoul made similar moves in 2006.

U.S., ROK agree to put additional pressure on North Korea

Nikkei wrote that Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun and his ROK counterpart Kim met on Wednesday in Seoul. They reportedly discussed issues related to North Korea and strongly condemned Pyongyang's ballistic missile launches in February and March, rocket engine test, and alleged involvement in the murder of Kim Jong Nam in Malaysia. The two officials agreed to apply additional diplomatic and economic pressure on the DPRK.

Abe tries to serve as bridge between U.S. and Europe

All papers ran reports on Prime Minister Abe's recent visit to Europe, during which he held bilateral talks with European leaders. Asahi wrote that Abe, who has developed close ties with President Trump, tried to demonstrate his efforts to serve as a "bridge" between the U.S. and Europe ahead of the G7 summit in May. However, Mainichi wrote that differences between the U.S. and Europe over such issues as refugees and free trade were made clear through Abe's meetings with the European leaders. Yomiuri expressed a similar view, saying that it remains to be seen whether the G7 nations will be able to deliver a unified message at their summit meeting because there appears to be a wide gap between the U.S. and Germany. Nikkei wrote that Japan is concerned that its diplomatic power will be weakened if the unity of the G7 is undermined.

Japan, Italy agree on need for G7 unity against protectionism

All Wednesday evening papers reported on Prime Minister Abe's meeting with his Italian counterpart Prime Minister Gentiloni on Tuesday in Rome, during which the two leaders agreed on the need for unity in the G7 in sending out a strong message against protectionism at their summit meeting to be held in Italy in May. Abe and Gentiloni also agreed that Japan and the EU will seek a broad agreement on an EPA at an early date. The two leaders also agreed that Japan and Italy will begin negotiations on the transfer of defense equipment and technology as part of their efforts to bolster bilateral cooperation in security and defense.

SECURITY

USFJ plans to conduct drone demonstration flight at Atsugi

Tokyo Shimbun wrote that it has learned from a Defense Ministry source that the USFJ is planning to conduct a demonstration flight of the Reaper unmanned aerial vehicle manufactured by General Atomics in the fall at the Atsugi Air Base in Kanagawa Prefecture or other sites. The paper speculated that the U.S. is considering deploying the drone in Japan.

ASDF fighters conduct joint drills with U.S. Air Force bomber

Mainichi wrote that the ASDF announced that six of its F-15 fighter jets conducted joint exercises with a Guam-based U.S. Air Force B-1 strategic bomber in the airspace over Kyushu on Wednesday. The paper speculated that the drills were aimed at sending a warning to North Korea.

MSDF commissions new helicopter carrier

Sankei wrote that the MSDF commissioned its new helicopter-carrying destroyer “Kaga” on Wednesday. The Kaga, which is one of Japan’s four helicopter carriers equipped with a large flight deck, will be used for such activities as surveillance against China. The paper wrote that it would be technically possible for Japanese and U.S. fighter jets to use the carrier if additional equipment were installed on it.

ECONOMY

GOJ may advise Toshiba not to sell semiconductor business to Chinese, Taiwanese firms

Asahi front-paged a report saying that the GOJ is considering advising Toshiba to cancel or reconsider the sale of its semiconductor unit if the conglomerate plans to sell its stake to Chinese or Taiwanese firms based on the Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law. The GOJ is hoping to prevent the transfer of Toshiba’s semiconductor technology out of concern that Japan’s national interests could be threatened if China obtains the technology. The GOJ is also concerned about the possibility of a Taiwanese company purchasing Toshiba’s chip business because many Taiwanese firms have plants in mainland China.