



Morning Alert - Monday, May 1, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

NHK gave top play to a report on the heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula, saying that the MSDF destroyer Izumo will perform for the first time today the new duty of escorting a U.S. vessel that is involved in operations to defend Japan. TBS, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi led with North Korea's failed missile launch on Saturday, saying that the subway system in Tokyo temporarily halted service. NTV led with a report on the start of the Golden Week holidays in Japan, saying about 400,000 people will travel overseas during the holidays.

Mainichi and Yomiuri gave top play to reports on the defense minister's order to the SDF to carry out operations to protect a U.S. ship, while Asahi led with a report on President Trump's first 100 days in office. Nikkei gave top coverage to a report on the recovery of spending by foreign tourists visiting Japan, and Sankei led with a report on work-style reform in Japan.

INTERNATIONAL

North Korea launches ballistic missile

All Sunday papers front-paged reports on what appeared to be a failed ballistic missile launch by North Korea on Saturday morning. Although the type of the missile has not yet been determined, the South Korean military said that the projectile apparently flew for a few minutes, reached a maximum altitude of 71 km, and landed on North Korean territory. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said at a news conference that the missile probably landed in North Korea after flying 50 km. The U.S. media quoted American officials as saying that it was probably a KN-17 ballistic missile. Noting that the Pyongyang test-fired the missile only a few hours after a UNSC ministerial meeting hosted by the

U.S. Secretary of State, the papers speculated that the DPRK was expressing its determination not to give in to pressure from the U.S., which has deployed the USS Carl Vinson Strike Group to waters near the Korean Peninsula. However, the papers also conjectured that Pyongyang decided not to conduct another nuclear test or test-fire an ICMB in order to avoid provoking the U.S. and China excessively.

President Trump criticizes North Korea

President Trump strongly criticized the DPRK by saying in a Twitter post: "North Korea disrespected the wishes of China & its highly respected President when it launched, though unsuccessfully, a missile today. Bad!" Asahi wrote that the President referred to China by name in order to emphasize the need for Beijing to exercise its influence over the DPRK.

Abe calls missile test "totally unacceptable"

Prime Minister Abe stated during a news conference in London on Saturday that the missile launch by Pyongyang was totally unacceptable because it posed a serious threat to Japan. Abe added that the GOJ will make utmost efforts to secure the safety of the nation by working closely with the U.S. Referring to the USS Carl Vinson Strike Group's deployment to waters near the Korean Peninsula, Abe welcomed the Trump administration's policy of putting all options on the table. The premier expressed a negative view about the idea of resuming the Six-Party Talks despite Russian President Putin's desire to do so by saying that North Korea has taken no specific actions to abandon its nuclear arms and has instead been repeatedly staging provocations. Abe added that China's actions with regard to North Korea are very important and Japan will watch closely to see how Beijing responds.

DPRK testing unity of global community

Nikkei conjectured that the Kim regime tried to take advantage of the differences between the U.S. and China in responding to North Korea and is testing the unity of the international community because China, Pyongyang's greatest supporter, is insisting on dialogue over pressure.

GOJ responds quickly

Yomiuri wrote that although the GOJ does not usually convene NSC meetings or hold news conferences when North Korea stages relatively minor provocations, it acted unexpectedly swiftly this time. An NSC meeting was held and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga held unscheduled news conferences on Saturday morning, saying that these moves were intended to assure the nation that the launch would have no direct impact on Japan.

Train services temporarily suspended after missile launch

Tokyo Metro temporarily suspended services on all of its subway lines for ten minutes from 6: 07 a.m. on Saturday following North Korea's failed missile launch at around 5:30 a.m. This was the first time for the subway operator to take such a precaution to confirm the safety of its passengers and trains. JR West suspended operation of the Hokuriku Shinkansen Line for 11 minutes. However, JR East and JR Central did not halt operations of their Shinkansen or regular train services.

Secretary Tillerson urges UNSC to step up pressure on North Korea

All Saturday papers ran front-page reports on remarks made by Secretary of State Tillerson at a UN Security Council ministerial meeting on Friday, during which he stressed the need to impose additional sanctions on the DPRK by saying that the threat of a North Korean nuclear attack on Japan or South Korea is "real" and it is only a matter of time before North Korea develops the capability to strike the U.S. mainland. The Secretary urged China to exercise its influence over the DPRK. However, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang responded by saying that the key to solving the North Korean issue does not lie in the hands of China and that it is not realistic to expect one country to be responsible for solving the problem. Foreign Minister Kishida stressed the need to implement UNSC resolutions completely and stringently.

In a related development, the papers wrote that Secretary Tillerson, Japanese Foreign Minister Kishida, and ROK Foreign Minister Yun held a trilateral meeting ahead of the UNSC ministerial. The three officials reportedly agreed to respond resolutely to North Korea's nuclear and missile development.

USS Carl Vinson enters Sea of Japan

All Sunday papers ran front-page reports saying that the USS Carl Vinson Strike Group passed through the Tsushima Strait in Nagasaki Prefecture and entered the Sea of Japan on Saturday on the way to waters off the Korean Peninsula after completing joint exercises with MSDF vessels. Carrying photos of the Carl Vinson, the papers wrote that several dozen fighter jets were parked on the flight deck of the ship and that transport and other aircraft were seen taking off from the carrier.

U.S., Japan deepened ties during President Trump's first 100 days in office

Saturday's Yomiuri wrote that as President Trump entered his 100th day in office on Saturday, Prime Minister Abe has developed a strong relationship of trust with President Trump and is strengthening Japan's security cooperation with the U.S., including coordination in dealing with North Korea. However, while welcoming the current close ties with Washington as "entering a new golden age since the time when former President Bush and former Prime Minister Koizumi developed close relations," the GOJ is concerned that the Trump administration may strengthen its demands on trade in the future because it is very dissatisfied with U.S. trade with Japan. Mainichi ran a similar report,

speculating that Abe has tried to urge the Trump administration to maintain its involvement in the Asia-Pacific to counter China's growing presence in the region.

Kishida and Turkmenistan leader agree to cooperate in resolving North Korean issues

Monday's Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida visited Turkmenistan on Sunday and held talks with President Berdimuhamedov. This was the first time for a Japanese foreign minister to visit the nation. The two officials agreed that Japan and Turkmenistan will work together to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear and missile programs, and Kishida called on the nation, which has diplomatic relations with the DPRK, to fully implement the UNSC resolutions.

Kishida has now visited a total of 50 nations since he became foreign minister in December 2012. The paper said Kishida is probably one of the most widely traveled foreign ministers.

Majority of Japanese support tougher sanctions on North Korea

Monday's Nikkei reported on the results of its joint weekend public opinion survey with TV Tokyo. Asked how the international community should respond to North Korea's nuclear and missile development, 51% of respondents said it should step up sanctions, 30% said the problem should be resolved through dialogue, and 14% said military action should be taken. Concerning the U.S.'s increasing pressure on Pyongyang, including a show of military force, 51% welcomed it, while 40% disapproved of it. By gender, 61% of men and 37% of women expressed approval of the U.S. show of force.

PM Abe, U.K. Minister May discuss economic, security cooperation

All Saturday papers reported on a meeting between Prime Minister Abe and his British counterpart May on Friday in London, during which the two leaders agreed that Japan and the UK will continue to strengthen their economic cooperation even after Britain's withdrawal from the EU. Abe and May also agreed that their nations will work together closely in dealing with North Korea's nuclear and missile development and China's increasing activities in the South and East China Seas.

In a related development, Sunday's Yomiuri wrote that during their bilateral talks on Friday in London, Prime Minister Abe and his British counterpart May discussed the possibility of their nations holding discussions on a bilateral FTA after Britain leaves the EU.

Japanese, Chinese foreign ministers agree to continue high-level talks

Sunday's Nikkei wrote that Foreign Minister Kishida and his Chinese counterpart Wang held a bilateral meeting on Friday in New York and agreed to continue high-level talks between Japan and China to improve their ties by resolving outstanding issues in view of the 45th anniversary of their diplomatic relations this year.

ROK group to erect memorial to Koreans subjected to forced labor in Japan

Saturday's Nikkei wrote that a South Korean civic group plans to erect statues honoring those subjected to forced labor under Japanese rule beside the comfort woman statues in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul and the Japanese Consulate General in Busan as well as another location on Aug. 15, the day on which South Korea commemorates the end of Japanese rule. An official at South Korea's Foreign Ministry stated on Friday that it is not desirable to erect statues near diplomatic mission in light of the protection of foreign missions and diplomatic protocol and practice. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga stated earlier in the day that Japan has lodged a protest with the ROK government through a diplomatic channel.

SECURITY

Defense minister issues first order to SDF to protect U.S. military vessel

Sunday's Asahi gave top play to a report saying that it has learned from several GOJ sources that Defense Minister Inada issued an order to the SDF to protect a refueling ship of the U.S. Navy that is expected to provide fuel to U.S. military vessels engaged in surveillance activities against North Korea's ballistic missile launches. The order was based on Japan's security laws enacted in 2015 that enabled the SDF to protect U.S. military vessels at any time (in peacetime), and this was the first time for such an order to be issued since the laws were enacted. The source said that the MSDF's escort ship Izumo will leave Yokosuka on Monday, meet a replenishment vessel of the U.S. Navy to waters off the Boso Peninsula, and escort it to waters off Shikoku. The refueling ship may provide supplies to vessels of the USS Carl Vinson Strike Group. According to the source, the Abe administration had originally planned to issue the order during the SDF's joint exercises with the U.S. military, but decided to do so as part of an actual operation.

Monday's Mainichi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, Sankei, and Tokyo Shimbun ran similar front-page reports speculating that the arrangement is aimed at demonstrating strong U.S.-Japan cooperation in view of the threat posed by North Korea. Mainichi wrote, however, that concern may emerge that the GOJ will implement the laws without careful discussions by highlighting the danger of the North Korea threat. Tokyo Shimbun also expressed concern that "integration" between the U.S. military and the SDF could be accelerated, arguing that the SDF's operations to protect U.S. ships poses a risk because war could break out during the operations.

GOJ says Japan capable of responding to DPRK chemical attack

Saturday's Asahi and Nikkei wrote that the GOJ approved at a cabinet meeting on Friday a written response saying that if North Korea were to mount chemical weapons such as sarin gas on a ballistic missile, the chemicals could be neutralized by heat if the SDF shot it down with a PAC-3 interceptor.

U.S., Japan, UK, France to conduct first joint naval exercises

Saturday's Mainichi wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on Friday that the SDF will conduct joint exercises with the U.S., the UK, and France, from May 3 through 22 off Guam and in

waters near neighboring locations. These will be the first drills involving the four nations. Sunday's Sankei ran a similar report speculating that the drills are aimed at putting pressure on North Korea and keeping China's maritime activities in the South and East China Seas in check.

Japan, Israel to strengthen cooperation in cyber defense

Monday's Nikkei wrote that the governments of Japan and Israel will enhance their cooperation in cybersecurity. The two nations plan to conduct joint cyber defense exercises and promote coordination between Japanese and Israeli companies that specialize in cybersecurity. The two governments plan to reach an agreement on the issue at their bilateral economic dialogue to be held in Jerusalem on May 3, in which Economy and Trade Minister Seko will participate.

Okinawans mourn death of woman killed by U.S. base worker

Friday evening's Mainichi, Nikkei, and Tokyo Shimbun ran reports on the first anniversary of the killing of an Okinawa woman by Kenneth Franklin Shinzato, a former Marine and civilian employee at Kadena Air Base. People mourning the woman's death visited the site of the incident in Onna Village on Friday. The head of the Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau was among the visitors. Okinawa Governor Onaga told a news conference that he has renewed his resolve to address the issue of accidents and incidents related to the concentration of U.S. bases in Okinawa.

ECONOMY

ITC to investigate Toyota, other companies for possible patent violations

Sunday's Yomiuri wrote that the U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) announced on Friday that it will launch an investigation into auto parts used by 25 auto and autoparts makers, including Toyota and Honda. The investigation will be based on a complaint filed in March by Intellectual Ventures, a private firm specializing in patents and intellectual property, alleging that components used for electric motors for vehicles produced by these companies infringed on a patent owned by a U.S. company. The ITC plans to complete the investigation within 45 days. The paper wrote that if the ITC discovers violations, it will become difficult for the auto manufacturers to sell their vehicles in the U.S.

Minister Ishihara discusses TPP with Canadian counterpart

Saturday's Nikkei wrote that Minister in charge of Economic Revitalization Ishihara spoke by phone with Canadian Trade Minister Champagne on Friday. Ishihara expressed to the Canadian official Japan's readiness to take the lead in discussions at a TPP chief negotiators' meeting to be held in Canada on May 2-3. Champagne reportedly responded that Canada will cooperate with Tokyo.

In a related story, Monday's Yomiuri wrote that although Japan plans to take the lead in discussions with its TPP partners at the upcoming meeting, there are differences between the 11 TPP members over the future of the accord. The paper wrote that although China and ASEAN nations have

expressed their eagerness to reach an agreement by the end of this year on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which involves 16 East Asian nations including Japan and South Korea, Japan is hesitant about the idea out of concern that the RCEP, whose market liberalization requirements are lower than the TPP's, would set trade and investment rules in Asia by entering into force ahead of the TPP agreement.

LDP's Nikai says Japan may join AIIB

Saturday's Yomiuri wrote that LDP Secretary General Nikai told Hong Kong's Phoenix TV in Beijing on Friday that there is a possibility that Japan will participate in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in the future. Nikai also stated that Japan will fully cooperate with China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative to create a massive economic zone.

