



Morning Alert - Wednesday, May 24, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

All broadcasters gave top play to reports on the Manchester bombing, saying that among the 22 victims were an 8-year-old girl and many teenagers. The national papers gave prominent coverage to the bombing and the House of Representative's approval of the anti-conspiracy bill.

POLITICS

Anti-conspiracy bill clears lower chamber

All papers gave extensive coverage to the Lower House's approval of the GOJ-sponsored anti-conspiracy legislation on Tuesday, noting that the ruling coalition joined hands with opposition Nippon Ishin (Japan Innovation Party) to put the bill to a floor vote despite strong protests from other opposition parties led by the Democratic Party. Although the Upper House is expected to start deliberations on the controversial bill next Monday, enactment during the current Diet term appears difficult without extending the session. The Abe administration and the ruling coalition may extend the session through late July to ensure enactment.

Asahi, Mainichi, and Tokyo Shimbun stressed that the GOJ has thus far failed to address a range of problems with the legislation, such as whether or not ordinary citizens not affiliated with "organized crime syndicates" can be subject to it. On the other hand, other papers called for "cool-headed" debate at the parliament, underscoring that ordinary citizens will not be monitored or investigated unless there is solid proof of conspiracy and premeditation.

SDF chief voices "gratitude" for Abe's proposal on constitutional revision

Most papers took up SDF Joint Staff chief Kawano's remarks yesterday at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan. The admiral thanked Prime Minister Abe for his proposal to make the SDF's existence explicit in the language of the Constitution. He said: "It would be extremely welcome for the Constitution to set forth legal justification for the existence of the SDF." He stressed that he was expressing his "personal" opinion because making a comment on the Constitution in his capacity as the top SDF official would be inappropriate. Asahi and Mainichi found his remarks problematic since the SDF Law prohibits personnel from engaging in "political conduct."

INTERNATIONAL

Manchester blast reverberates across globe

All papers gave prominent front- and inside-page coverage to the Manchester bombing, focusing on the words of sympathy and condolence from around the world for the victims and their families. Noting that the ISIL has claimed responsibility for the deadly suicide bombing, the papers stressed the importance of reinforcing global unity to combat terrorism. While projecting that the war on terrorism will top the agenda in the upcoming G7 summit in Italy, the papers said it is very difficult to prevent a terror attack on a "soft target" by a "lone wolf."

Japan to tighten inspections of ships from or bound for DPRK

All papers highlighted yesterday's press remarks by Foreign Minister Kishida, who explained the GOJ's policy of enforcing stricter regulations on maritime cargo bound for and from North Korea. The minister said the GOJ will consider adopting a "catch all" system, under which cargo inspections can be undertaken aboard ships even if they are not suspected of transporting sanctioned items. Under the existing law, cargo inspections are possible only if ships are suspected of transporting prohibited goods as designated by UN Security Council resolutions.

Japan, China discuss North Korea

Several papers reported that yesterday MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi spoke over the phone with China's chief representative to the Six Party Talks Wu. The two diplomats reportedly agreed not to accept further provocations by the Kim regime.

Abe sent large delegation to Chinese forum as hedge against Sino-U.S. reconciliation

Nikkei delved into Prime Minister's decision to send to China's "One-Belt, One-Road" economic forum last week a large delegation led by LDP Secretary General Nikai, interpreting what it called the "all-Japan" delegation including the premier's top aide Imai as Abe's overture to Beijing as a hedge against possible rapprochement between the U.S. and China. The paper said although Abe and President Trump have successfully built strong personal bonds, the consensus in the Japanese government is that the U.S. leader is "unpredictable." Some GOJ officials are afraid that Washington may be inclined to take a soft approach toward Beijing in exchange for eliciting its cooperation on

North Korea. It added that PM Abe should take advantage of the coming G7 summit to keep President Trump on the side of nations sharing the universal values of democracy, freedom, and human rights so that the U.S. leader will not be tempted to sideline Japan in managing relations with China.

GOJ to dispatch to Sakhalin fact-finding team for “joint economic activities”

Yomiuri reported that the GOJ plans to send a team of GOJ officials and business people to Sakhalin on May 30 to work out details for the planned launch of “joint economic activities” in the Northern Territories. The delegation led by Prime Minister Abe’s special assistant Hasegawa will hold talks with Russian officials on the proposed economic initiative. A separate Japanese fact-finding mission will be dispatched to the disputed isles in late June or later.

ECONOMY

Toshiba chief to meet with Western Digital CEO over Toshiba memory

Mainichi wrote that Toshiba President Tsunakawa is expected to hold talks with Western Digital CEO Milligan today to iron out their differences over the Japanese electronics giant’s plan to deconsolidate its flash memory division. The two businessmen plan to discuss what Toshiba called the U.S. chip maker’s “sabotage” of the planned sale.

WTO chief embraces TPP without U.S. membership

Asahi ran an interview with visiting WTO Director General Azevedo on Tuesday, in which he welcomed the 11 TPP members’ moves to effectuate the regional free trade pact without U.S. participation on the grounds that it will help “rectify the distortion of world trade.” He expressed hope for Japan to exercise strong leadership for renewing global momentum toward trade liberalization amid rising calls for protectionism.

SECURITY

Municipal leaders call for suspension of midnight flights at Atsugi

Tokyo Shimbun reported that the mayors of Yamato and Ayase Cities, Kanagawa Prefecture, visited NAF Atsugi on Tuesday and urged the base commander not to fly aircraft late at night because noise pollution around the installation has become extremely severe since Saturday. Hundreds of complaints about the noise have been reportedly filed with the local governments. The commander reportedly stressed the importance of carrying out flight training late at night at this juncture.

