



Morning Alert - Wednesday, June 7, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports that a 38-year-old mother and her two children were found dead in their home in Fukuoka on Tuesday. Police are reportedly investigating the incident as a murder case. TBS and TV Asahi led with follow-up reports on the Kake Educational Institution scandal, while Fuji TV gave top play to a report on the strong performance by Japanese table tennis players at the World Table Tennis Championships in Germany.

Top stories in national dailies included a follow-up report on the Kake Educational Institution scandal (Asahi); regional banks' outstanding loans to apartment owners (Mainichi); the results of a study showing that half of those with pre-dementia-stage cognitive impairment have recovered (Yomiuri); plans by Japan's three leading mobile service providers to begin offering 5G wireless communication to customers in 2020 (Nikkei); and Ando Hazama Co.'s alleged submission of falsified receipts for decontamination work (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Japanese, Vietnamese leaders share concern over South China Sea, discuss TPP

Asahi reported on a meeting between Prime Minister Abe and his Vietnamese counterpart Nguyen Xuan Phuc on Tuesday at the Akasaka Palace state guesthouse in Tokyo. The two leaders shared deep concern about China's increasing activities in the South China Sea and issued a joint statement calling for the countries involved to refrain from unilateral actions including militarization. Abe and Phuc also expressed in the joint statement strong concern over North Korea's nuclear and missile development.

Concerning the TPP, Mainichi wrote that although Abe expressed Japan's intention to move forward with discussions on "TPP 11," the Vietnamese leader simply stated that he would like to work closely with Japan on the TPP and RCEP. The paper noted that Hanoi is cautious about the idea of implementing the TPP without U.S. participation. Nikkei ran a similar report.

Japan, Philippines confirm importance of rule of law in South China Sea

Sankei reported on Foreign Minister Kishida's meeting with Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Cayetano on Tuesday at the Iikura Guest House in Tokyo, during which the two officials confirmed the importance of the rule of law in the South China Sea in view of China's militarization of the region and agreed that their nations will cooperate in resolving the issue.

In a related story, Mainichi wrote that Special Advisor to the Prime Minister Kawai disclosed on Tuesday that Philippine President Duterte, who postponed his scheduled trip to Japan this month due to the escalating conflict with Muslim separatists in the southern Philippines, will likely visit Japan in the fall.

China welcomes Abe's interest in One Belt, One Road initiative

Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson stated during a regular press briefing on Tuesday that Beijing welcomed Prime Minister Abe's remarks on Monday expressing Japan's readiness to cooperate with China's One Belt, One Road initiative. The spokesperson said that the initiative could be a new platform for Japan and China to achieve mutually beneficial cooperation and common development.

Nikkei wrote that there have been signs of improvement in relations between Tokyo and Beijing lately. The paper speculated that one of the reasons for this positive trend is the change in policy toward China by President Trump, who has toned down his criticism of Beijing after his meeting with President Xi in April. The paper wrote that there is growing concern within the GOJ that Japan will be left behind unless it rebuilds its channels with Chinese leaders. The daily also conjectured that growing concern over North Korea's repeated missile and nuclear tests has influenced Tokyo's attitude toward Beijing because China wields influence over Pyongyang as its key supplier of oil. However, the East China Sea and other issues remain sources of conflict between Japan and China, and the Xi administration remains distrustful of the Abe administration, which attaches importance to Japan's alliance with the U.S. and friendly ties with Taiwan.

ECONOMY

LDP to set up taskforce on EU-Japan EPA

Mainichi and Nikkei wrote that the LDP decided on Tuesday to establish a taskforce on Japan's negotiations on an economic partnership agreement with the EU. The taskforce will discuss the envisaged accord's potential impact on domestic industry in preparation for reaching a basic

agreement ahead of the G20 summit in Germany in early July. Former Agriculture Minister Koya Nishikawa was selected to chair the taskforce.

POLITICS

LDP to focus on four areas in crafting constitutional amendment proposals

All papers reported on a plan by the ruling LDP to focus on four areas in crafting proposals for amendments to Japan's postwar Constitution. The party will propose the draft amendments to the Diet in an ordinary diet session in 2018. The four areas will include explicit reference to the SDF in Article 9, free higher education, dealing with national emergencies, and electoral district changes for the Upper House. At a meeting on Tuesday, Okiharu Yasuoka, chair of the LDP's constitutional reform panel, said he would like to draw up the party's concrete proposals by the end of the year. To expedite the process, the LDP has increased the number of senior members who will play a leading role in the discussions from 9 to 21. The party will seek to achieve a broad consensus by consulting with Komeito and inviting former Defense Minister Ishiba, who has been negative toward Abe's proposal to mention the SDF in Article 9, to be a core member of the panel.

