



Morning Alert - Thursday, June 15, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

Most networks and all the papers led with reports on the likely passage of the anti-conspiracy bill today despite strong resistance from the opposition parties. NHK reported later that the bill was enacted at 7:46 this morning. Asahi and Tokyo Shimbun front-paged photos of a rally in opposition to the bill held yesterday evening in front of the Diet building. Mainichi wrote that according to the organizer, some 3,000 people participated in the rally.

TBS led with a report on a fire that engulfed a 24-story apartment building in London on Wednesday, killing at least 12 people.

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary Tillerson discloses plan to hold security dialogue with China

Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Sankei wrote that Secretary of State Tillerson stated at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Tuesday that the U.S. and China will hold a high-level security dialogue next week in Washington to discuss how to deal with North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Yomiuri speculated that the dialogue will be held on June 21 and that the U.S. plans to ask China to apply additional pressure on the DPRK. The paper quoted the Secretary as saying that the U.S. will work with other nations to restrict supplies of crude oil, petroleum fuel, and other basic needs to North Korea, adding that such efforts would be ineffective without cooperation from China and Russia.

U.S., Japan to hold 2+2 meeting in July

Yomiuri wrote that the governments of the U.S. and Japan have decided to hold a 2+2 meeting of their foreign and defense ministers in Washington in mid-July, speculating that how to respond to North Korea, including defense against its missiles, will be the major topic on the agenda for their discussions. The paper also conjectured that the two nations will confirm their plan to move forward with the FRF construction at Henoko and may discuss Japan's host nation support for U.S. forces.

North Korea releases detained American student

All papers reported on Tuesday's release of Otto Warmbier, an American student who had been detained in North Korea for more than a year, focusing on Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun's direct involvement in the rescue of the U.S. citizen by visiting Pyongyang. Yomiuri speculated that although this was the first direct contact between Washington and Pyongyang under the Trump administration, it appears unlikely to develop into their direct talks on North Korea's nuclear and missile programs because the U.S. maintains a policy of not accepting dialogue with the DPRK unless it agrees on denuclearization and apparently acted out of humanitarian motives. Nikkei expressed a similar view, but added in a report from Seoul that there is speculation that Special Representative Yun discussed the nuclear and missile programs when he visited Pyongyang.

SECURITY

U.S., Japan discuss extended deterrence

Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the governments of the U.S. and Japan held a session of their regular talks on extended deterrence at MOFA on Wednesday. The two governments have held such talks twice a year since 2010 and this was the first session under the Trump administration. Yomiuri and Sankei speculated that the two nations discussed how to respond to North Korea's nuclear and missile development.

LDP recommends SDF acquire cyberattack capability

Asahi wrote that the ruling LDP's Research Commission on Security has put together draft recommendations on Japan's defense capabilities that include the idea of the Defense Ministry and the SDF acquiring cyber offense capabilities. The party is hoping that the recommendations will be reflected in the next medium-term defense program for the five years beginning fiscal 2019. Nikkei added that the draft recommendations also call for the introduction of the Aegis Ashore ballistic missile defense system.

ECONOMY

Japan, EU engaged in intensive discussions on EPA

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that Japan and the EU are discussing in their EPA talks the idea of eliminating tariffs on Japanese auto exports within around ten years after the effectuation of an EPA. The paper speculated that the EU has proposed the idea to urge Tokyo to make concessions on its farm imports and that their talks will likely make major progress if the two sides agree on the auto tariffs. However, Mainichi wrote that Japan has been asking the EU to eliminate its tariffs on Japanese auto exports within five years of the conclusion of an EPA. The paper wrote that although there are major differences between the two parties over the issue because the EU has been insisting on tariff elimination within ten years, Tokyo plans to urge the Europeans to accept its request based on the fact that they agreed on a five-year period at the FTA negotiations with South Korea.

Yomiuri added that Japan is considering the idea of setting a new ceiling for the import at low tariff of butter and fat-free milk equivalent to 30,000 tons of raw milk a year in order to urge the EU not to press for lifting tariffs on cheese.

Nikkei wrote that the LDP has begun intensive discussions on domestic measures to prepare for an EPA with the EU, including subsidies for dairy farmers, who will likely be affected directly from increased imports of European products.

EDUCATION

Foreign students steer clear of U.S. due to Trump administration's immigration policy

Sankei ran a Washington-dated story saying that there is concern in the U.S. that the number of foreign students choosing to study in the U.S. has been decreasing. The paper speculated that the image of the Trump administration's "exclusionary" immigration policy is behind the drop in the number of foreign students.

According to a report released in April by five associations of American universities, about 38% of some 300 colleges in the U.S. said in a survey that there was a decrease in the number of foreign students who applied for admission in fall 2017. The schools reported that people from the Middle East, China, and India make up the majority of such students.