



Morning Alert - Friday, June 30, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

NHK and NTV gave led with the forecast for heavy rains in the Kyushu and Chugoku regions. TBS led with a follow-up report on Defense Minister Inada's controversial remarks made in a stump speech for an LDP candidate for the Tokyo assembly election. Fuji TV and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that former Education Minister Shimomura denied that his office received illegal donations from Kake Gakuen.

Top stories in national dailies included Shimomura's denial of a media report that his political fund-managing organization received 2 million yen from Kake Gakuen (Asahi); a health ministry plan to allow doctors to remotely see patients seeking to quit smoking (Mainichi); U.S. plans to impose sanctions on a Chinese firm over its illegal trade with North Korea (Yomiuri); survey results showing that half of Japanese doctors do not think it's possible to continue providing medical care through the nation's universal health coverage (Nikkei); and concerns expressed by a Georgia state house member about the installation of a comfort women statue at a public park in his state (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japan to discuss missile defense against North Korea at 2+2 meeting

Nikkei wrote that the U.S. and Japanese governments are making arrangements for holding a 2+2 meeting of their foreign and defense ministers in Washington on July 14, speculating that response to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs will be a key item on the agenda. The paper also conjectured that the two nations will confirm that the pressure on the DPRK should be increased and

that Washington and Tokyo should enhance their missile defense capabilities and expand joint exercises between the U.S. military and the SDF.

The paper added that the two nations will probably discuss such issues as Futenma relocation, the South China Sea, and the application of Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty to the Senkaku Islands.

McMaster says North Korean threat is “much more immediate”

NHK and Fuji TV reported on Thursday that National Security Advisor McMaster delivered a speech in Washington on Wednesday in which he expressed a strong sense of crisis over North Korea. According to NHK, McMaster said “the threat is much more immediate now” and that the U.S. will not hold talks with North Korea that could lead to further acceleration of its nuclear and missile development. He was also quoted as saying: “There's recognition that there has to be more pressure on the regime. I think what you'll see in coming days and weeks are efforts to do that.” He also reportedly said President Trump has instructed him “to prepare a range of options, including a military option,” while noting that nobody wants to take a military option and that the U.S. will continue to make diplomatic efforts to resolve the matter peacefully. McMaster also reportedly called for China to make further efforts. Asahi and Sankei published similar stories this morning.

In a related development, Yomiuri gave top play to a report saying that the USG has decided to impose financial sanctions on a Chinese company and individuals that have illegal dealings with North Korea. Kyodo News reported that the U.S. on Thursday blacklisted a Chinese company and two Chinese individuals for their ties to North Korea's weapons development and accused a Chinese bank of laundering money for the sanctions-hit country, quoting Treasury Secretary Mnuchin as saying that the punitive measures are aimed at “maximizing pressure on the government of North Korea until it abandons its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.”

Japan, China agree to continue efforts to avoid unintended clashes in East China Sea

All papers reported on the first session held on Thursday in Fukuoka of two-day high-level talks between Japan and China on maritime issues, including the establishment of a “maritime and aerial communication mechanism” and joint gas field development in the East China Sea. The two nations agreed to continue making efforts to install a hotline between their defense officials with the aim of preventing unintended confrontations in the region's waters and skies. Tokyo and Beijing also agreed to promote exchanges between defense and coast guard officials and hold the next meeting in China by the end of this year. Asahi wrote that according to several sources connected to the talks, whether the Senkaku Islands should be covered by the envisaged communication mechanism is a key issue for bilateral discussions because Japan is concerned that the mechanism may send to China the message that its military vessels are allowed to enter waters surrounding the Senkakus as long as it gives prior notification to Japan.

Nikkei quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling a news conference on Thursday that China is a very important neighbor of Japan's and that Tokyo is hoping that the maritime talks will increase bilateral trust and cooperation.

Japan to seek trilateral summit with China, ROK in November or December

Mainichi wrote that Japan has decided to reschedule its trilateral summit with China and South Korea planned for July to November or December with the hope that the summit will provide Tokyo momentum to improve its ties with Beijing and Seoul. The GOJ is looking to reschedule the summit for late in the year because China will probably hold the National Congress of the Communist Party in October. Nikkei quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling a news conference on Thursday that the government is making arrangements for hosting the summit at an appropriate time this year.

Abe to hold bilateral talks with Putin, Xi on sidelines of G20

Yomiuri wrote that an advisor to President Putin told Itar-Tass on Thursday that the president plans to hold a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Abe on the sidelines of the G20 summit slated for Germany on July 7-8.

The paper also wrote that the Chinese government announced on Thursday that it is making arrangements for President Xi to hold bilateral talks with foreign leaders including Prime Minister Abe on the margins of the G20 summit. If realized, Abe and Xi will hold a bilateral meeting for the first time since the APEC summit in Peru in November 2016.

U.S. to tighten security checks for U.S.-bound international flights

Sankei ran an extensive inside-page report on the announcement on Wednesday by Homeland Security Secretary Kelly that the U.S. will tighten security screening on all commercial flights bound for the U.S. to combat the threat of terrorism. The new measures will probably affect around 2,000 flights and 325,000 passengers per day using some 280 airports in 105 nations. According to the Ministry of Transport, 11 airlines including Delta, JAL, and ANA operate about 540 direct flights to the U.S. per week departing from seven airports and around 10.82 million passengers use these flights per annum. The paper wrote that the airlines and airport operators are concerned about additional burden related to the new security measures and have begun discussing preparations for them.