



Morning Alert - Wednesday, July 12, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK continued to report on the damage from the heavy rainfall in the Kyushu, while TV Asahi noted one week has passed since the record rainfall hit the region. NTV led with a report that a former chief of a nursery center was arrested on charges of killing a baby by giving her a liquid that contained salt in 2015. TBS reported on obstacles to Tokyo Governor Koike's plan to move the fish market from Tsukiji to Toyosu. Fuji TV gave top play to a report on the first trial hearing of a former town official in Shiga who was arrested for misappropriation of taxpayer money.

Top stories in national dailies included a GOJ plan to revise the Labor Standards Law in response to Rengo's request to introduce an overtime system called "white-collar exemptions" (Asahi); China's continued effective control of the South China Sea islands (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to step up its cybersecurity measures by establishing a new organization to gather information about cyberattacks on key infrastructure facilities (Yomiuri); the results of a survey conducted by the National Audit Office of China showing that around 90% of leading Chinese state enterprises show evidence of improper accounting (Nikkei); and Tokushima University researchers' development of a new drug for the treatment of breast cancer (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japanese, ROK envoys to Six-Party talks discuss North Korea

Asahi and Nikkei wrote that the chief negotiators for the Six-Party Talks from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea held talks on Tuesday in Singapore as a follow-up to the summit meeting of their leaders held last week on the sidelines of the G20 summit. The papers wrote that the chief

negotiators, including Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun, discussed measures to step up sanctions on North Korea in response to its ICBM test and agreed to urge China and Russia to play more constructive roles. Asahi wrote that the U.S. envoy called for Japanese and South Korean cooperation for its “secondary boycott” on China.

Abe asks Xi to suspend oil exports to North Korea

Nikkei wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that Prime Minister Abe urged Chinese President Xi to halt oil exports to North Korea at their bilateral meeting held on the margins of the G20 summit on July 8. Abe reportedly told Xi that it is important to strengthen the pressure on North Korea and that he wants China to play a more constructive role. However, Xi stressed China’s position of placing importance on dialogue with Pyongyang and expressed opposition to unilateral sanctions by saying that China is doing its part to uphold UN sanctions, referring to the suspension of coal imports from North Korea.

GOJ protests ROK support for adding comfort women issue to Memory of the World Register

Tuesday evening’s Yomiuri wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga commented on remarks made on Monday by Chung Hyun Back, South Korea’s minister of gender equality and family, during which she expressed the Moon administration’s intention to support the ongoing efforts by citizens’ groups to have documents related to the comfort women included in UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register. Suga stated during a press briefing that Seoul’s intention could run counter UNESCO’s mission and purpose of fostering friendship and mutual understanding among its member countries. Foreign Minister Kishida separately told the press that Japan has lodged a protest with the South Korean government over the issue.

According to this morning’s Asahi, a spokesperson at South Korea’s foreign ministry endorsed Chung’s statement by saying that the Moon administration will make efforts to pass the truth of the comfort women issue to the next generation as a lesson of history.

Japan, Russia mull regular service between Hokkaido, Northern Territories

Mainichi wrote that the governments of Japan and Russia are discussing the idea of establishing regular service between seaports in Hokkaido and the Northern Territories as part of their efforts to promote joint economic activities on the islands. The two nations plan to discuss the idea at their vice-ministerial meeting to be held in August in Moscow.

China detains 35 Japanese in phone scam at Tokyo’s request

Nikkei wrote from Beijing that Chinese authorities took 35 Japanese nationals into custody in Fujian Province on suspicion of bank-transfer fraud and reported the arrests to Japan on July 3. The arrests may help Japan investigate phone scam groups operating in China. The 35 were detained after Japan’s National Police Agency requested assistance. The case may constitute the unmasking of the largest Japanese bank-transfer fraud group in China.

SECURITY

Inada pledges efforts to ensure safety at Iwakuni

Nikkei wrote that Yamaguchi Governor Muraoka conveyed to Defense Minister Inada on Tuesday his prefecture's agreement to accept the plan to transfer carrier-borne aircraft from Atsugi to Iwakuni. Inada told the governor in reply that the GOJ will make utmost efforts to take measures against noise pollution and ensure the safety of local communities.

GOJ confirms return of land used for Camp Hansen

Asahi, Mainichi, and Sankei wrote that the GOJ confirmed at a cabinet meeting on Tuesday that a 107-hectare parcel of land that had been used for Camp Hansen in Nago, Okinawa, was returned to Japan on June 30. It is part of a 162-hectare piece of land whose return was agreed upon at the U.S.-Japan Joint Committee in 2013. A 55-hectare parcel of the land was already returned to Japan in 2014.

U.S. begins operating new helipads at Northern Training Area

Tokyo Shimbun front-paged a report saying that the Defense Ministry's Okinawa bureau confirmed on Tuesday that the U.S. military has begun operations at new helipads in the Northern Training Area in Okinawa. According to the ministry, two Ospreys separately landed and took off from two of the three areas where a total of four helipads were constructed last year.

ECONOMY

TPP chief negotiators to discuss future of accord

Asahi wrote that the 11 TPP member states' chief negotiators will hold a two-day meeting starting today in Hakone, Kanagawa Prefecture, to discuss how to effectuate the agreed-upon accord at an early date even without U.S. participation. The paper wrote that Japan is hoping that its EPA agreement with the EU will prompt the U.S. to reconsider its withdrawal from the TPP because the EPA will likely make European products more competitive than U.S. products in the Japanese market. However, the TPP partners may ask Japan to lower its tariffs to the levels agreed with the EU. Mainichi wrote that although Japan is hoping to pave the way for effectuation of the TPP agreement by year end by making only minimum amendments to the existing accord, differences exist among the TPP partners. Nikkei ran a similar report.