



Morning Alert - Tuesday, July 18, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the heavy rain in Niigata and Fukushima prefectures over the weekend. NTV and Fuji TV reported that the temperature in Tokyo reached 35 degrees Celsius on Sunday. TBS led with a report that the latest poll by the Washington Post and ABC News found that President Trump's approval rating dropped to 36%, the lowest rating at the six-month mark of any president in the postwar era. TV Asahi gave top play to a report that the latest ANN poll found that public support for the Abe cabinet plunged to 29.2%, down 8.7 points from last month.

There were no papers published this morning due to a press holiday.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Hagerty approved as U.S. ambassador to Japan

All Saturday papers reported on the Senate's approval on Thursday of President Trump's nomination of William Hagerty as the next ambassador to Japan. Describing the ambassador-designate as a successful business consultant and investor who is very knowledgeable about Japan, the papers wrote that he is expected to play a key role in trade negotiations with Japan. Asahi speculated that Hagerty will be a tough negotiator in talks with Tokyo.

Yomiuri wrote that although Ambassador-designate Hagerty's diplomatic skills remain to be seen, he is expected to make efforts to strengthen security cooperation with Japan. The paper also wrote that since Hagerty worked on President Trump's transition team, he has close ties with the President, Secretary of State Tillerson, and other senior members of the administration. The paper added that Hagerty and his wife have four children and that he is involved in the Boy Scouts of America.

Nikkei wrote that the selection of Hagerty as the next ambassador to Japan is in line with Tokyo's wish for someone with a strong connection to the White House to take up the post. However, the paper wrote that Hagerty may place tough demands on Japan in order to achieve the Trump administration's goal of expanding Japan's investment in the U.S. and reducing the U.S. trade deficit with Japan.

Pointing out Hagerty's lack of diplomatic experience, Asahi wrote that it remains to be seen whether he will be able to exercise leadership in addressing security issues in East Asia, including North Korea's nuclear and missile development and China's maritime advancement.

Sankei speculated that close coordination with the GOJ in responding to North Korea's nuclear and missile programs will be the most pressing task for the new ambassador.

### **U.S., Japan may convene 2+2 meeting in late September**

Saturday morning's Mainichi wrote that the governments of the U.S. and Japan are making arrangements to hold in late September a 2+2 meeting of their foreign and defense ministers that was originally planned for last week. The paper quoted an unnamed GOJ source as saying that the U.S. side has expressed reservations about the idea of holding a 2+2 meeting ahead of the envisaged cabinet reshuffle in Japan on Aug. 3 and that this was one of the reasons for the postponement of the planned 2+2 meeting because both Foreign Minister Kishida and Defense Minister Inada may leave the cabinet.

### **GOJ to draw up action plan for grassroots exchanges with local governments in U.S.**

Monday's Nikkei wrote that as part of its effort to strengthen Japan's relations with the U.S., the GOJ has drawn up an action plan to deepen grassroots exchanges with local governments in the U.S. The GOJ plans to organize seminars and other PR events hosted by Japanese consulates in areas where many Japanese firms are doing business, such as Illinois and Indiana, in order to demonstrate their contributions to the local economy. The paper speculated that this is aimed at preventing trade friction with the U.S. in view of President Trump's strong concern about the trade deficit with Japan.

### **U.S. probes Chinese firm over trade with North Korea**

Saturday morning's Yomiuri gave top play to a report from Washington saying that the Trump administration has launched an investigation into a Chinese trading company in Dandong, Liaoning Province, over illicit dealings with North Korea. Washington plans to impose financial sanctions on the company if it finds sufficient evidence to prove the allegations. The paper wrote that following a move to impose sanctions on a Chinese firm for the first time in late June, the Trump administration is increasing its pressure on Beijing.

### **Japan calls for China to stop oil exports to North Korea**

Monday's Sankei front-paged a report saying that it has learned from several sources connected to Japan-China relations that the GOJ has urged the Chinese government several times to suspend its exports of petroleum products, including crude oil and gasoline, to North Korea. According to the paper, Japan made the request to such senior Chinese officials as Six-Party Talks Chief Negotiator Wu Dawei, Deputy Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou, and State Councilor Yang Jiechi when they visited Tokyo in April and May. However, the Chinese officials did not provide specific responses to Japan's requests.

### **Chinese ships enter Japanese waters north of Kyushu for first time**

Monday's Sankei wrote that two China Coast Guard ships briefly entered Japanese waters around the Tsushima Islands in Nagasaki Prefecture and the Okinoshima Islands in Fukuoka Prefecture on Saturday. The Japan Coast Guard said that this was the first confirmed entry by Chinese government vessels into the area. Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, vessels from any country have the right to sail through territorial waters as long as they do not harm the safety of the countries concerned. The paper wrote that although the Japan Coast Guard has not indicated whether it considered their presence to be "an intrusion into territorial waters," it requested the ships leave the area.

### **Abe vows support for Jordan**

All Saturday morning papers wrote that during a meeting with Jordanian Prime Minister Mulki on Friday in Tokyo, Prime Minister Abe pledged 1.4 billion-yen in financial support for a water infrastructure improvement project aimed at helping Jordan manage an influx of Syrian refugees. The two leaders also agreed that their nations will launch negotiations on a bilateral investment agreement.

## **SECURITY**

### **U.S. cooperates with Japanese investigation into Fitzgerald collision**

Sunday's Mainichi wrote that the U.S. 7th Fleet has told the paper that the U.S. is cooperating with Japan through the U.S. Coast Guard in the investigation into the collision involving the USS Fitzgerald in waters off the Izu Peninsula about a month ago. The paper quoted a 7th Fleet public affairs officer as saying that the U.S. Navy is cooperating closely with the Coast Guard, which leads investigations into accidents at sea, and is also cooperating with the Japanese and Philippine authorities through the Coast Guard. The paper wrote that it will probably be difficult for the Japanese side to conduct onsite investigations and interviews with the crew of the Fitzgerald, but the Japan Coast Guard plans to continue to patiently call for cooperation from the U.S. However, the U.S. Navy is making preparations to move the Fitzgerald to the U.S. mainland for repairs.

Nikkei reported that U.S. Naval Forces Japan published a photo of the Fitzgerald at the naval base in Yokosuka where it is undergoing emergency repairs.

## **Japan to introduce new air-to-ship missile for F-2 fighters**

Monday's Yomiuri gave top play to a report saying that the GOJ has decided to introduce from next fiscal year a new high-speed air-to-ship missile to be mounted on the ASDF's F-2 fighters. According to the paper, the Ministry of Defense will include several hundreds of millions of yen in its budget request for fiscal 2018 for the mass production of the missile. The paper wrote that this will be Japan's first domestically-produced supersonic missile and that the move is intended to keep the Chinese Navy's activities in the East China Sea in check.

## **GOJ to start additional seawall construction at Henoko**

Saturday morning's Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that the GOJ plans to start new seawall construction in the southwestern area of the landfill site off the coast of Henoko in September or later in preparation for pouring earth and sand into the water next summer. The GOJ claims that seawall work in the planned area does not require Governor Onaga's approval because there is not much coral in the area. The government first started seawall construction in the northern area of the landfill site where there is a lot of coral in late April, but temporarily suspended the work in early July because of the possibility of the work damaging the coral. In order to resume the seawall work in the area, it is necessary for the central government to obtain special permission from the Okinawa governor, but the governor has expressed his intention to block the work by withholding approval.

## **Defense ministry to begin preparations for returning Makiminato Service Area**

Sunday's Sankei front-paged a report saying that the Ministry of Defense will begin preparations in August for moving the functions of the Makiminato Service Area to the Kadena Ammunition Storage Area as part of the consolidation of U.S. military facilities located south of Kadena AB. The ministry will clean up part of the Kadena Storage Area that had been used by local residents without permission until April in preparation for constructing warehouses for the return of the Makiminato storage in about five years. The paper speculated that the central government is taking tangible steps to reduce the security burden on Okinawa, pointing out that the GOJ is also planning to hold a ceremony with Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga in attendance on Aug. 1 for the return of 4 hectares of land on the east side of MCAS Futenma.

## **Japanese airlines to tighten checks for explosives in response to U.S. request**

Saturday's Sankei wrote that in response to the U.S. request to enhance aviation security to counter terrorism, major Japanese carriers will start stepping up security measures for U.S.-bound flights from July 18 by randomly checking passengers' electronic devices for explosives before they board aircraft. The paper wrote that the new step may cause flight delays or other problems for passengers departing from Tokyo's Haneda and Narita airports as well as five other major airports in Japan that operate direct flights to the U.S.

## **Marines rescue Japanese woman on Mt. Fuji**

Monday's Sankei wrote that five Marines stationed in Okinawa rescued a Japanese woman who became incapacitated because of altitude sickness on Mount Fuji on July 3. The Marines fashioned

from T-shirts and walking sticks a stretcher on which they quickly carried the woman to a lower station where she could receive medical assistance.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Japanese steelmakers concerned about possible U.S. quotas, tariffs**

Saturday morning's Yomiuri wrote that Japanese steelmakers are becoming increasingly concerned about the idea of President Trump imposing restrictions on steel imports, such as quotas and high tariffs. The paper expressed concern that the U.S. may create trade friction with China, Japan, and Europe if it takes measures that might violate WTO rules. Nikkei ran a similar report.

### **Thermonuclear reactor chief hopes for continued U.S. involvement**

Sunday's Mainichi ran an interview with Director-General Bigot of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), during which he expressed concern over the Trump administration's negative view on the U.S.'s involvement in the project, including possible budget cuts. The ITER chief stated that he will try to convince Washington to continue to play a role in ITER. Bigot also said that the UK has informally told him that it intends to continue to participate in ITER even after its departure from the EU.

## **OPINION POLLS**

### **Cabinet support plunges to 29.9% in Jiji poll, 35.8% in Kyodo survey**

Saturday morning's Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that according to a public opinion survey conducted by Jiji Press on July 7-10, support for the Abe cabinet fell 15.2 points from a month earlier to 29.9%, sliding below 30% for the first time and marking the lowest level since Abe returned to power in December 2012. Nonsupport increased by 14.7 points to 48.6%. The papers wrote that the public's distrust of the prime minister over his explanation about his alleged favoritism toward Kake Gakuen is behind the drop in cabinet support.

Monday's Mainichi and Sankei reported on the results of a nationwide telephone survey by Kyodo conducted on July 15-16, which showed that the approval rating for the Abe cabinet fell 9.1 points from last month to 35.8%, the lowest level since Abe returned to power in 2012. The disapproval rating for the cabinet stood at 53.1%, up 10 points from June. Some 77.8% of respondents said they were not convinced by the government's denial of claims that Abe used his influence to secure approval for the establishment of a new veterinary department at a university run by a close friend. Among those who expressed disapproval, 51.6%, up 9.7 points, said they cannot trust the prime minister.

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