


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most TV networks led with reports on the terrorist attack in Barcelona yesterday. All national papers except Sankei gave top play to the U.S.-Japan 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting held in Washington on Thursday at which the participants affirmed greater security collaboration to rein in North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Hagerty arrives in Japan

Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei, as well as all broadcasters, reported that Ambassador Hagerty and his family arrived in Tokyo yesterday, quoting him as telling the press at Narita Airport: "The unshakable bonds, 'Kizuna,' between the U.S. and Japan are the cornerstone of peace, prosperity, and freedom in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States is committed to our deep and strong alliance with Japan." Commenting on North Korea's ceaseless provocations, the Ambassador stated: "Our partnership with Japan is ironclad and our ability to defend ourselves becomes even stronger as we work more closely together....I don't see any options being taken off the table by the United States." He added that pressure on North Korea will continue to mount until the Kim regime "begins to dial back their rhetoric." He also reportedly expressed hope for enhancing the trans-Pacific economic relationship by capitalizing on his business experiences in Japan.

Nikkei said attention will be paid to whether the GOJ will be able to coordinate closely with the beleaguered Trump administration through the good offices of Ambassador Hagerty, who was tapped by President Trump, who expects him to fully utilize his extensive business dealings with Japanese companies to reduce the U.S. trade deficit with Tokyo. It added that Ambassador Hagerty will meet with Prime Minister Abe today. Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ hopes the Ambassador will

capitalize on his close bond with President Trump to serve as an “intermediary” with the U.S. administration, which is expected to step up pressure on Japan to rectify the bilateral trade imbalance. It added that the Ambassador will submit his credentials to the Emperor later this month.

SECURITY

U.S., Japan to continue enhancing pressure on North Korea

All papers gave prominent front- and inside-page play to the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee meeting held in the U.S. capital on Thursday, after which the assembled officials issued a joint statement confirming a bilateral policy of stepping up pressure on North Korea. While condemning in the “strongest terms” North Korea’s recurring provocations and development of nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities, Secretary of State Tillerson, Secretary of Defense Mattis and their Japanese counterparts also reaffirmed the alliance’s commitment to the security of Japan through its full range of capabilities, including U.S. nuclear forces.

U.S., Japan confirm North Korean threat has entered a new phase

NHK reported this morning on the “2+2” meeting held for the first time under the Trump administration, saying that that U.S. and Japanese foreign and defense ministers pointed out in a joint statement released after the meeting that the threat of North Korea’s nuclear and missile development has “entered a new phase” and “concurred on continuing to pressure North Korea, in cooperation with other countries, to compel it to take concrete actions to end its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.” The four ministers also “called on the international community to comprehensively and thoroughly implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions including the newly adopted Resolution 2371” and said they “strongly encourage China to take decisive measures to urge North Korea to change its course of action.”

The network said the four ministers also reaffirmed that the U.S. will continue to provide a “nuclear umbrella” to Japan, quoting Secretary of Defense Mattis as saying at a joint press conference: “As President Trump noted in February, the United States’ commitment to defend Japan through the full range of military capabilities is unwavering.” In addition, the network said the ministers issued guidance on the roles of the two nations. The guidance mentions Japan’s intention “to expand its role in the Alliance” to “ensure seamless Alliance responses” and U.S.’s continuing commitment “to deploying its most advanced capabilities in Japan.” Under the guidance, the two nations will reportedly accelerate implementation of the 2015 Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation and pursue additional types of cooperation under Japan’s Legislation for Peace and Security, and explore new and expanded activities in various areas, such as Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR), training and exercises, research and development, capacity building, and the joint/shared use of facilities.

An NHK reporter said it was a great achievement for the GOJ that the four ministers agreed on increased pressure on North Korea in the first “2+2” meeting held under the Trump administration and the newly reshuffled Abe cabinet. He added that Tokyo was also able to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan, quoting FM Kono as saying: “It was meaningful to reaffirm the strong commitment of both nations toward regional peace and stability.” Another reporter said from Washington that the Trump administration welcomes the fact that both the U.S. and Japan were able to call on China to take measures against the North given that Washington believes China is not fulfilling its role. Noting that Secretary Tillerson referred to the possibility of holding dialogue with the North at the press conference while Secretary Mattis warned that there is also a military option, the reporter said although their remarks seem to conflict, a prominent national paper in the U.S. views that the two secretaries are playing “good cop” and “bad cop.” The reporter also said the Trump administration wants Japan’s expanded role in security in return for U.S. commitment to the defense of Japan, adding that some within the U.S. government are even hoping that Japan purchases American military equipment or weapons. The reporter said that while seeking a peaceful resolution, the GOJ is planning to prepare for any contingency in light of North Korea’s increasing threats, adding that it plans to come up with concrete plans while assessing the challenges of securing financial resources and public understanding.

Japan to introduce new missile defense platform

All papers highlighted MOD’s decision to procure from the U.S. an Aegis Ashore system to boost the nation’s missile defense capability to counter the rapid advancement of North Korea’s ballistic missile technologies. Pointing out that two such batteries each fitted with updated SM3 interceptors will be able to cover the entire Japanese archipelago, Yomiuri said the ground-based MD equipment is more cost-effective than the THAAD system. It added that the introduction of Aegis Ashore will greatly reduce the burden on the MSDF, which deploys four Aegis-equipped destroyers around the clock in preparation for possible DPRK missile tests.

Noting that MOD also plans to create a “space unit” within the ASDF to enhance monitoring of space debris in cooperation with the U.S. military, Asahi speculated that these Japanese moves are in line with the Trump administration’s policy of asking its allies to take on a greater defense burden and selling more American defense hardware to customers overseas.

U.S. military leader to hold talks with Abe today

Most papers said Prime Minister Abe plans to receive a courtesy call today from Chairman Dunford of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, projecting that the two officials are expected to confirm enhanced security cooperation to deal with North Korea’s continued provocations.

INTERNATIONAL

ROK leader says victims of forced labor entitled to seek compensation from Japan

All papers took up yesterday's press conference by South Korean President Moon, during which he said Korean victims of forced labor in Japan during WWII retain the right to claim compensation from companies. As not only the GOJ but also previous ROK governments have long considered that the issue of reparations regarding wartime forced labor was settled when the two sides signed in 1965 a pact connected to wartime compensation, MOFA lodged a protest against the Moon administration over the president's remarks. Pointing out that three cases concerning compensation for forced labor are being deliberated at the South Korean Supreme Court, the papers expressed concern that the political leader's latest comment may influence the top court's judgment. The Moon administration may condone the Supreme Court's possible decision to order Japanese firms to pay compensations to the victims.

Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that the Abe administration is displeased with what one official called Seoul's attempt to "move the goalpost," explaining that Tokyo is dismayed about the Moon administration's move which places a damper on bilateral ties at a time when greater bilateral and trilateral unity with the U.S. is warranted to deal with North Korea's provocations. Given that the number of victims of forced labor is far larger than the Korean "comfort women," some GOJ officials are worried that bilateral relations will be shaken as Japanese enterprises may be ordered by South Korean courts to pay a huge amount of redress.

Kono may visit Russia this year

Nikkei speculated that arrangements are underway for Foreign Minister Kono to visit Moscow in November or December to attend a bilateral governmental committee meeting on economy and trade. The top Japanese diplomat is also likely to hold talks with Foreign Minister Lavrov and other senior Russian government officials to discuss the Northern Territories dispute. There has emerged a separate idea to have Kono accompany Prime Minister Abe when he travels to Vladivostok in early September.

POLITICS

Public hearing on casino legislation held in Tokyo

Asahi wrote that the GOJ on Thursday convened a public hearing in Tokyo regarding a planned bill to implement integrated resorts featuring casinos, noting that the session exposed a deep schism between proponents and opponents of gambling. Some participants expressed doubts about the effectiveness of proposed measures to deal with gambling addiction, while others welcomed the legislation based on the assessment that casinos will help revitalize local economies by attracting tourists and creating jobs. Eight additional hearings will be held across Japan this month.

Nikkei also reported on the hearing, adding that some local governments are eager to host gambling facilities to rejuvenate moribund local economies. It also noted that Japanese amusement companies and major U.S. casino operators are pinning hopes on the GOJ's early selection of cities

to host integrated resorts, adding that Jason Hyland, the former Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy, was recently appointed chief Japanese representative of MGM Resort International.

