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# JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Friday, August 25, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the heavy rainfall in the Tohoku and Hokuriku regions today. NTV led with a report on a primary school teacher in Okinawa who verbally abused her pupils. TV Asahi reported on updates on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal. TBS gave top play to a report on the upcoming Ibaraki gubernatorial election. Fuji TV led with a report on a political allowance scandal involving Kobe city assembly member Hashimoto.

Top stories in national dailies included a planned review of the GOJ's quake disaster management plans (Asahi); plans for a police investigation into the sale of umbilical cords (Mainichi, Yomiuri); an METI plan to urge realignment of oil refinery firms (Nikkei); and Foreign Minister Kono's expression of displeasure to his South Korean counterpart over the ROK's handling of the wartime forced labor issue (Sankei).

## SECURITY

### Onodera discusses North Korea with U.S. strategic commander

Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that Defense Minister Onodera held talks with Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command Hyten at his office on Thursday and confirmed U.S.-Japan cooperation in responding to North Korea. Mainichi wrote that General Hyten, who was visiting Japan after inspecting the joint U.S.-ROK military exercise Ulchi-Freedom Guardian, told Onodera that his visits to Japan and South Korea, during which he confirmed cooperation with these nations, will send an important message to North Korea, adding that the U.S. will fulfill its extended deterrence to Japan and South Korea. Yomiuri added that in view of the recent incidents involving the 7th Fleet destroyers, Onodera asked the general to ensure safe operation of U.S. warships.

## **Chinese bombers fly to point off Kii Peninsula**

Nikkei and Sankei wrote that the Ministry of Defense said on Thursday that it has confirmed that six Chinese H-6 bombers flew over the Miyako Strait between the main island of Okinawa and Miyako Island and reached a point off the Kii Peninsula on Thursday. The ASDF responded by scrambling fighters, but the Chinese bombers did not violate Japanese airspace. According to the ministry, this was the first time for Chinese military aircraft to fly this route.

## **Russia expresses displeasure at Japan's plan to introduce Aegis Ashore**

Mainichi wrote that a spokesperson at Russia's Foreign Ministry on Thursday criticized Japan's plan to introduce Aegis Ashore by saying that "if deployed, the system would pose a missile threat to the region."

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Japan to impose sanctions on Chinese, other firms**

Mainichi and Nikkei wrote that the GOJ has decided to freeze the assets of four Chinese and two Namibian companies, one Chinese individual, and one North Korean individual as part of its unilateral sanctions against North Korea based on the belief that these entities and individuals are involved in helping Pyongyang export coal and send workers to other countries. The GOJ will officially approve the measure at a cabinet meeting today.

### **Kono urges South Korea to deal with forced labor issue appropriately**

Sankei gave top play to a report saying that during his talks with his South Korean counterpart in Manila early this month, Foreign Minister Kono expressed displeasure over the ROK government's handling of the issue of forced labor during WWII and urged Seoul to deal with the issue in an appropriate manner.

### **Japan expresses concern over Russia's designation of special economic zone**

Sankei front-paged a report saying that Japan has expressed concern over Russia's designation of Shikotan Island, part of the Northern Territories, a special economic zone by saying that the move will have a negative impact on the planned joint economic activities by Japan and Russia. According to the paper, then-Foreign Minister Kishida had expressed Tokyo's concern in talks with First Deputy Prime Minister Shuvalov in Tokyo in July.

### **MOFA to seek increased budget for ODA**

Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that MOFA presented to the ruling LDP on Thursday a plan to seek 767.5 billion yen for its budget for fiscal 2018. The figure is 10.8%, or 74.9 billion yen more, than this year's budget. The increased budget request includes 489.7 billion yen in Official Development Assistance (ODA), up 55.4 billion yen, or 12.7%, from this year. The papers wrote that although Foreign Minister Kono has been insisting that Japan should reduce its ODA, he will withhold his personal views. The papers wrote that with China's maritime advancement in mind,

MOFA plans to use its increased ODA funds for stepping up Japan's assistance to Southeast Asian nations for their efforts to enhance their maritime security capabilities. In addition, Japan plans to open an embassy in Belarus in view of Russia's growing influence in the region.

### **Environment ministers from Japan, China, ROK discuss regional, global issues**

Asahi wrote that environmental ministers from Japan, China, and South Korea kicked off their two-day meeting in South Korea on Thursday. During their bilateral meeting, Minister Nakagawa and his South Korean counterpart agreed to work together to implement the Paris Agreement. The three nations plan to discuss such issues as the serious air pollution in China at their talks today.

### **Komeito chief to visit Russia**

Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the Komeito party announced on Thursday that its chief representative Yamaguchi will visit Moscow and St. Petersburg on Sept. 12-18 for talks with senior government and parliamentary officials.

### **U.S. sailors who participated in Operation Tomodachi seek damages for exposure to radiation**

Tokyo Shimbun front-paged a report saying that Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) announced on Thursday that about 150 U.S. nationals residing in the U.S., including sailors who participated in Operation Tomodachi, have filed a suit for damages against TEPCO and a U.S. company. The suit seeks \$5 billion in compensation for exposure to radiation from the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. The plaintiffs are seeking the establishment of a compensation fund to cover medical treatment and other costs. According to TEPCO, the lawsuit was filed at a federal court in California. The utility said that it will examine the details of the claim and respond appropriately after receiving documents on the lawsuit.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Taiwanese leader expresses desire to join TPP**

Asahi and Nikkei wrote that during her meeting with the head of the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association on Thursday, Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen said she hopes Taiwan joins the TPP.

## **AMBASSADOR**

### **Ambassador Hagerty asks Twitter for suggested travel spots to "rediscover" Japan**

The Japan Times reported that the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo is asking Twitter users to suggest places in Japan for new U.S. Ambassador William Hagerty and his family to visit. Amb. Hagerty, who arrived in Tokyo last week, has expressed his admiration for Japan's people and culture on several occasions. He has mentioned his personal connection to the country, having spent three years in Japan back in the late 80s and early 90s while working for the Boston Consulting Group. It's been a busy week for Amb. Hagerty, highlighted by a meeting with Prime Minister Abe and lunch with

Foreign Minister Kono. Still, he and his family found time between official engagements to explore the capital during their first weekend here.

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