



Morning Alert - Thursday, September 14, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TBS, and Fuji TV gave top play to reports that a three-year-old girl died after eating food bought last month at a local deli hit by an E. coli bacteria outbreak. TV Asahi led with reports on the extremely heavy rain in Miyakojima in Okinawa brought by Typhoon Talim. NTV led with a report that a four-year-old girl and her mother were stabbed at an apartment in Osaka on Wednesday evening, saying that the mother died and the girl was seriously injured.

Top stories in national dailies included the Nuclear Regulation Authority's conditional permission to TEPCO to restart two idle reactors at its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Plant in Niigata Prefecture (Asahi); a clerical error made by the Health Ministry in pension payments (Mainichi, Yomiuri); an interview with Volkswagen CEO Mueller, during which he disclosed a plan to sell 1.5 million electric vehicles in China in 2025 (Nikkei); and a possible plan by the Trump administration to strengthen its unilateral sanctions on North Korea (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump may play golf with Abe in Japan

Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the GOJ has sounded out the USG about the idea of President Trump playing golf with Prime Minister Abe when he visits Japan probably on Nov. 4-6. The paper speculated that the proposed "golf diplomacy" is intended to demonstrate the two leaders' close ties. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a news conference on Wednesday that the President agreed during his meeting with the prime minister in February to visit Japan by the end of this year, but the specific timing for his visit is still under discussion.

Nikkei wrote that attention will be focused on whether President Trump will be able to demonstrate the U.S. presence in Asia through his response to such issues as North Korea and the South China Sea during his planned tour of the region in November.

U.S. eyes further unilateral sanctions, including penalties on Chinese firms

Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri wrote that President Trump expressed dissatisfaction with the latest UN Security Council sanctions resolution on North Korea by saying on Tuesday that it is only “a small step.” The papers speculated that Washington will continue to step up the pressure on Pyongyang by imposing additional unilateral sanctions, including financial sanctions on Chinese banks.

Asahi wrote that calls for further sanctions on China and Russia may emerge in the U.S. Congress in the future if these nations are found to be illicitly engaging in coal or oil trade with North Korea.

In a related development, Nikkei wrote that China may have suspended textile trade with North Korea in late August even before Monday’s adoption of the UNSC sanctions resolution.

Ambassador Hagerty comments on U.S. response to North Korea

Mainichi wrote that Ambassador Hagerty commented, during a speech he delivered in Tokyo on Wednesday, on the United States’ response to North Korea following the UN Security Council’s adoption of a new sanctions resolution on North Korea by reportedly saying that there will be no change in the Trump administration’s goal of seeking the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through continuing diplomatic efforts and economic sanctions.

TBS also reported early this morning that the Ambassador attended a luncheon hosted by the America-Japan Society on Wednesday and said that the U.S.-Japan security alliance is more important than ever given the threat posed by North Korea which is continuing its nuclear and missile development. The Ambassador was quoted as saying: “Our number one priority is the security alliance with Japan.” The network said the Ambassador stressed that the bilateral relationship is closer than ever before and that the two nations will work closely toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. He also reportedly expressed his hope to focus on economic and people-to-people relationships between the two nations and called for bringing more women into the workforce in Japan.

Japanese diplomat lodges protest with North Korea official over nuclear test

All papers reported that MOFA announced on Wednesday that Deputy Director General of the Bureau of Asian and Oceanian Affairs Namazu lodged a protest with North Korea’s Deputy Director General for North American Affairs Bureau Choe Kang Il over North Korea’s nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches during a conversation at an international conference in Switzerland on

Wednesday. The Japanese diplomat called on Pyongyang to comply fully with UN Security Council resolutions and allow all of the Japanese abductees detained in North Korea to return home as soon as possible.

In a related development, Yomiuri wrote that although former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Evans Revere was at the same conference attended by Choe, the U.S. Mission in Geneva said that the USG did not have any official contact with the North Koreans as the USG was not involved in the conference.

Brother of Japanese abductee calls for U.S. cooperation

NHK reported this morning that Takuya Yokota, the brother of Japanese abductee Megumi Yokota, visited the U.S. for the first time since the start of the Trump administration and attended a symposium held in Washington on Wednesday. Yokota was quoted as saying at the symposium: "My sister was abducted by North Korean agents in 1977, 40 years ago, while she was on her way home from school. She was 13 years old. She has been held in custody for 40 years.... I believe that applying pressure when negotiating with North Korea will lead to resolving the issue.... I hope that you make all-out efforts to put North Korea back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism." The network said the symposium was also attended by the family of an American man believed to be abducted by North Korea in 2004, and the family said that they also hope that Japan and the U.S. will work closely to resolve the abduction issue. The network said Yokota met with senior USG officials and members of Congress prior to the symposium and called for U.S. cooperation.

Ambassador Hagerty meets with Tokyo Governor Koike

NHK's metropolitan news reported on Tuesday evening that Ambassador Hagerty and Tokyo Governor Koike met at the Tokyo Metropolitan Government earlier in the day and agreed to promote people-to-people exchanges between the two nations. The governor was quoted as telling the Ambassador: "As the governor of Tokyo, I am happy to welcome you as an Ambassador who is well-versed in Japanese affairs." The network said that Governor Koike asked the Ambassador and Embassy staff to visit schools in Tokyo to help educate students in preparation for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, and the Ambassador responded by saying that he values people-to-people exchanges between Japan and the U.S.

SECURITY

MSDF ships refuel U.S. Aegis ships engaged in vigilance operations in Sea of Japan

Nikkei front-paged a report saying that it has learned from several GOJ sources that MSDF supply vessels have been providing fuel to U.S. Aegis ships about once a month since April at the U.S. military's request. The U.S. ships are operating in the Sea of Japan and elsewhere to observe North Korea. This is the first such operation by the MSDF under the 2015 security legislation that allows Japan broader defense cooperation with the U.S. The paper speculated that the operation is

intended to enhance deterrence against North Korea by promoting peacetime cooperation between the U.S. military and the SDF.

Special Advisor Kawai says time has come to consider possessing ballistic missiles

TBS reported this morning that Prime Minister Abe's Special Advisor on Foreign Policy Katsuyuki Kawai delivered a speech in Washington on Wednesday, during which he stressed that it is time to seriously consider having the SDF possess ballistic missiles. According to the network, Kawai said it is necessary to face the fact that the security situation surrounding Japan "has clearly moved to another level." He was also quoted as saying: "I believe that the time has arrived to seriously consider the possibility of the Self-Defense Forces possessing intermediate-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles in order to defend the peace and prosperity of Japan."

ECONOMY

TPP Minister Motegi agrees with four Asian nations on accelerating TPP negotiations

Mainichi wrote that Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi, who is also in charge of Japan's participation in the TPP, agreed with the ambassadors of Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei on Wednesday to accelerate negotiations on a "TPP 11" pact. The paper wrote that during a separate meeting with Ambassador Hagerty on the same day, Motegi expressed hope that the U.S. and Japan will develop a relationship that will benefit both nations through bilateral economic dialogue.

Toshiba to proceed with negotiations with U.S.-Japan-South Korea group on chip unit

All papers wrote that Toshiba Corp. said on Wednesday that it has signed a memorandum of understanding with a consortium of U.S., Japanese, and South Korean firms led by Bain Capital to continue intensive negotiations over the sale of its chip unit after talks with a group led by Western Digital stalled.