



Morning Alert - Tuesday, October 3, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks and national papers led with the shooting massacre that occurred during an outdoor country music festival in Las Vegas on Monday, in which 58 people were killed and more than 500 were injured. It was reportedly the deadliest mass shooting in modern U.S. history. The gunman was later found dead by police officers.

Prime Minister Abe reportedly sent a message to President Trump on Monday evening to denounce the heinous crime by saying: "We cannot tolerate such indiscriminate and massive shooting incident for any reason and I resolutely condemn it. Japan expresses its sincere solidarity with the Government of the United States and the people of the United States as they try to overcome this difficult time."

POLITICS

New liberal party founded

All papers gave prominent front-and inside-page coverage to the launch of a new liberal party called the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ) by Deputy Democratic Party President Edano, who told the press yesterday that a new group of liberal politicians is necessary to stop the Abe administration from running amok and that the policies to be promoted by the Party of Hope founded by Tokyo Governor Koike are incompatible with his and his likeminded DP colleagues' views. About 50 DP politicians, including former Prime Minister Kan, are expected to join Edano's new party. However, former PM Noda, former DP President Okada, and former Deputy DP Presidents Eda and Azumi said they will not take part in either the Party of Hope or Edano's party and will instead run in the election as independent candidates. The largest opposition party will consequently be split into three forces -- the Party of Hope, the CDPJ, and the independents.

The dailies said the general election will pit the ruling coalition of the LDP and the Komeito party against the Party of Hope, which has formed a partnership with the Japan Innovation Party, and the CDPJ, which will join hands with the Japanese Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party. Because the opposition bloc appears to be divided into two major groups, the chances are high that the ruling coalition will be able to maintain a majority in the Lower House. Asahi faulted DP President Maehara for undermining the formation of a single, viable anti-Abe force since he failed to deliver on his promise to convince Koike to accept all DP politicians irrespective of their political bent. The paper claimed that the DP leader's failure will help Abe to regain his "power monopoly."

Party of Hope losing momentum

Asahi and Yomiuri reported that some Party of Hope officials are becoming increasingly concerned that their party may not be able to command strong public support given that Governor Koike's moves to screen applications for membership to her new party from Democratic Party politicians strictly based on their views on constitutional revision and national security have apparently backfired by giving the impression that she is an arrogant leader. Her remark on Sept. 29 that some DP politicians will be "excluded" from her party has drawn strong criticism not only from DP legislators but also from political commentators and the public. The DP's largest supporter, Rengo (Japanese Trade Union Confederation), has informally decided against offering "institutional support" to the Party of Hope in the election campaign on account of Koike's "discriminatory" attitude toward liberal-minded DP lawmakers.

In related developments, several papers published interviews with Koike in which she ruled out the possibility of running in the general election by saying: "I've been saying that I won't run. There's no chance." The governor stressed that the Party of Hope will field at least 233 candidates in total, which would be sufficient to take the helm of the parliament. Yomiuri wrote that Koike's decision not to step down as governor to run for a parliamentary seat has dashed the hopes of many prospective party candidates, especially those from the Democratic Party, that she would campaign across the country as a potential new Japanese leader to galvanize a public which is increasingly dissatisfied with the Abe administration.

Meanwhile, several papers took up a policy agreement that the Party of Hope plans to make all of its politicians sign in order to run in the upcoming race as official party candidates. Among other things, the pact says that the party will strive to "properly" implement the comprehensive security laws and support a "realistic" security policy.

LDP releases election manifesto

All papers reported that the ruling LDP released a policy platform on Monday for the general election Oct. 22, in which it called for a constitutional amendment to make the existence of the SDF explicit in Article 9. The ruling party also pledged to make preschool education free for all children and higher

education free for students from low-income families. It also pledged Prime Minister Abe's renewed leadership in stepping up international pressure on North Korea.

Yomiuri wrote that in unveiling the policy manifesto, the ruling party was keen to play up the Abe administration's policy accomplishments on the foreign affairs and economic fronts in an apparent bid to counter Tokyo Governor Koike's strategy of highlighting the "fresh and clean" image of her Party of Hope.

SECURITY

MSDF conducted joint training with U.S. aircraft carrier

Nikkei wrote that an MSDF destroyer carried out joint training with the USS Ronald Reagan off Okinawa from Sept. 29 through Oct. 1. The daily reported separately that the nuclear flattop made a port call on Hong Kong on Monday for the first time in three years. Pointing out that the Chinese rejected a port visit to Hong Kong by the USS John Stennis last April, the article speculated that Beijing chose to allow the Ronald Reagan to visit this time in order to highlight its concerted approach with Washington in dealing with the DPRK.

Asahi ran a similar story, quoting Commander Marc Dalton of Task Force 70 as telling the press upon arrival in the Chinese territory: "We are responsible for defending the interests and security of the United States and its allies." While quoting the admiral as also saying that the aircraft carrier will conduct "scheduled operational training," the paper predicted that the carrier strike group will probably head toward the Korean Peninsula for joint practice with the South Korean navy to counter North Korea.

