



Morning Alert - Wednesday, October 4, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All TV networks and most national papers led with the initial list of candidates to be fielded by the Party of Hope in the general election on Oct. 22.

POLITICS

Party of Hope releases list of candidates

All dailies reported extensively on the Party of Hope's announcement on Tuesday of its initial list of candidates for the upcoming Lower House election, noting that out of the 192 candidates, 110 are from the Democratic Party. Yomiuri claimed that some voters will not be impressed by the list because many prominent DP lawmakers have chosen not to join the new party. According to Asahi, only about half of the politicians who had planned to run as DP candidates were included in the list. The Party of Hope, which is headed by Tokyo Governor Koike, decided not to field candidates in nine single-seat districts where the Komeito party plans to field their own candidates, perhaps in a bid to obtain Komeito's cooperation in running the Tokyo metropolitan assembly because Koike's Tomin First party lacks a single majority in the legislature.

The Party of Hope has also decided not to field candidates in districts where LDP politicians who are believed to be close to Koike plan to run, including the districts of former Defense Minister Ishiba and Minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Noda. On the other hand, the new party plans to field candidates in districts where the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ) is also expected to field them. The Party of Hope is likely to endorse several dozen more candidates in the coming days to demonstrate that it is serious about clinching a majority of the 465 seats up for grabs.

Meanwhile, Mainichi predicted that some 50 politicians will run as CDPJ candidates across the country. According to Nikkei, CDPJ leader Edano said on Tuesday that his party will not field candidates in constituencies where former DP members plan to run as Party of Hope candidates or independents. Asahi said some 30 DP officials, including former Prime Minister Noda and former DP President Okada, will probably run as independents, partly in response to Koike's policy of demanding that party candidates endorse in writing the controversial comprehensive security laws, which the largest opposition has long been insisting are "unconstitutional."

LDP optimistic about election prospects

Sankei wrote that the ruling LDP appears to be growing increasingly optimistic about the prospects for the snap election in view of the "balkanization" of the opposition bloc, believing that anti-Abe administration voters will be divided between the Party of Hope, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, and other opposition parties. The turmoil associated with the launch of the two new political groups was a welcome development for LDP politicians, especially those in metropolitan areas who have been concerned about the possible emergence of a single, viable opposition party. Prime Minister Abe, however, cautioned party officials yesterday against becoming overly optimistic and stressed the importance of waging a vigorous campaign.

In a related story, Nikkei said Prime Minister Abe, Komeito Chief Representative Yamaguchi, and other senior ruling officials have repeatedly brought up the Abe administration's "resolute response" to the escalated tension on the Korean Peninsula in campaign speeches in an attempt to play up its crisis control capabilities at a time when the voters' attention is focused the turbulence associated with the establishment of two new opposition parties. The ruling officials are reportedly keen to play up the administration's "firm grip on power" in contrast to the opposition camp's apparent failure to manage its own affairs by capitalizing on growing public concern about national defense triggered by North Korea's relentless provocations.

INTERNATIONAL

Suga comments on whereabouts of Las Vegas shooter's girlfriend

Sankei took up the disclosure by police authorities in Las Vegas that they believe the girlfriend of the suspect of Sunday's shooting massacre is currently in Tokyo. Although she has been cleared of any involvement in the crime, the Las Vegas police still reportedly plan to question her once she returns to the United States. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga commented on the woman's whereabouts yesterday by telling the press: "The government is not aware of it." Several Japanese police sources said separately that she is not currently in Japan and that the Las Vegas authorities may have received inaccurate information.

DPRK limits gasoline supplies for public

Asahi took up the disclosure by a North Korean source that beginning in September, gasoline supplies for the North Korean public have been strictly limited, probably in response to the latest UN

sanctions resolution, noting that only vehicles owned by the government, the military, and the ruling Workers' Party are allowed to be refueled. The U.S. and Japan have reportedly confirmed through satellite imagery that cars are no longer lining up at gas stations across the nation. The Kim regime is believed to be trying to stockpile as much imported petroleum as they can for possible military contingencies.

