



Morning Alert - Thursday, October 19, 2017

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact TokyoMATT@state.gov.

HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that four climbers who had gone missing on Mt. Asahidake in Hokkaido were rescued yesterday. NTV led with a report that an ASDF F-4 fighter caught fire right before taking off from Hyakuri Base in Ibaraki on Wednesday. TBS, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi reported that a powerful typhoon is approaching Japan, saying that it may hit the Kanto region early next week.

Most national papers led with the opening of the Chinese Communist Party convention in Beijing on Wednesday. Other main front-page items included the passing of former Toshiba and Japan Post President Nishimuro at the age of 81.

POLITICS

Voters prefer CDPJ to Party of Hope

Asahi front-paged the results of its latest public opinion survey showing that more voters are inclined to support the Constitutional Party of Japan (CDPJ) than the Party of Hope in the general election scheduled for this Sunday. Asked which party they will vote for in proportional representation, some 34% chose the LDP, down 1 point from two weeks ago, followed by the CDPJ at 13% (up 6 points) and the Party of Hope at 11% (down 1 point). The paper underscored that voters who are critical of the Abe administration appear to be split among the CDPJ, the Party of Hope, and the Japanese Communist Party. Support for the Abe cabinet was 38%, down 2 points, while nonsupport was 40%, up 2 points. Slightly over half of respondents expressed hope for the premier to step down.

Japanese youths complacent about status quo

Nikkei delved into Japanese teens' attitude toward the general election based on the results of its recent public opinion poll, saying they appear to be more conservative and less interested in the upcoming race than the older generation. Support for the Abe cabinet was 52% among local youths aged 18 and 19, almost 15 points higher than average. The percentage of teenage voters who said they plan to cast ballots in the Oct. 22 election was lower than any other age group. The paper speculated that young Japanese may be complacent about the status quo because of the favorable employment situation.

INTERNATIONAL

Top diplomats of U.S., Japan, ROK agree to step up pressure on DPRK

Most papers reported from Seoul on yesterday's meeting among the vice foreign ministers of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea, at which they agreed to apply maximum pressure on North Korea and strongly press China and Russia to rein in the defiant regime's nuclear and missile development. According to Yomiuri, Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan hinted at the possible use of military options by telling the press afterward: "Diplomatic means will be given top priority.... However, it is necessary to prepare for all scenarios." The U.S. diplomat also stressed that the three partners' goal is to have Pyongyang come to the negotiating table without preconditions. Japan's Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama said the three officials held "in-depth discussions" on how to ratchet up the pressure.

Sugiyama held a bilateral meeting with his South Korean counterpart on the sidelines, and urged the Moon administration to abide by the 2015 bilateral comfort women agreement.

In a related story, Asahi wrote that MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi will visit Moscow to attend an international conference that begins today, speculating that he may try to meet with a senior DPRK diplomat in charge of North American affairs who is also expected to participate.

ROK displeased with President Trump's Asian tour itinerary

Sankei took up growing criticism from South Korean media outlets about the travel itinerary for President Trump's Asian tour, explaining that they are displeased that the President will only stay in Seoul for two days but will be in Tokyo and Beijing for three days each. The South Korean media described the U.S. leader's itinerary as "ROK passing."

Philippine leader to visit Japan

Yomiuri wrote that final arrangements are being made for Philippine President Duterte to visit Japan in late October for a summit with Prime Minister Abe, who is hoping to strengthen coordination with Manila to keep China's militarization of the South China Sea in check in cooperation with the U.S. The two leaders are also likely to affirm the importance of enforcing UN economic sanctions on North Korea.

ECONOMY

U.S. may shift trade target to Japan if NAFTA renegotiations fail

Sankei took up the rupture of the NAFTA renegotiations among the U.S., Canada, and Mexico in the latest weeklong round held in Washington, speculating that President Trump may be inclined to unilaterally withdraw from the regional free trade pact if he thinks the renegotiations are going nowhere. The daily said the U.S. leader may then target Japan in his efforts to expand export opportunities for U.S. companies given that he needs to deliver tangible achievements on the trade front ahead of the midterm election next year. The article wrote that although Japanese officials have assumed that the Trump administration is too preoccupied with sealing new trade deals with the NAFTA partners, China, and South Korea to focus on Japan, they are now concerned that USTR may be prompted to shift the focus of its personnel and other resources to opening up the Japanese market. This apprehension was compounded by recent remarks made by Vice President Pence, who voiced “strong interest” in bilateral FTA negotiations during the latest economic dialogue session that was held in the U.S. capital.

Japan put back on U.S. foreign exchange watch list

Sankei wrote that the U.S. Treasury Department released its semi-annual currency report on Tuesday, noting that Japan was once again put on its currency “monitoring list” along with China, South Korea, Germany, and Switzerland. This was the fourth time for Japan to be put on the watch list. The Treasury report took issue with Japan’s large trade surplus with the U.S., calling for Tokyo to make efforts to correct the trade imbalance. The daily suspected that President Trump may increase pressure on Tokyo on the trade front when he visits Japan next month.

Senior DOE official mentions probable extension of U.S.-Japan nuclear energy pact

Yomiuri and Mainichi took up remarks made yesterday in Tokyo by Deputy Secretary of Energy Brouillette, who suggested that the Trump administration will heed Japan’s request for extending the bilateral nuclear energy accord. He was quoted as saying: “There is no reason for renegotiation to conduct a review.” This was reportedly the first time for a senior USG official to refer to the automatic extension of the agreement that expires next summer.

SECURITY

Okinawa unhappy with resumption of helicopter flights

Asahi, Sankei, and Tokyo Shimbun reported on Okinawa’s strong reaction to the resumption of CH-53E flight operations yesterday, quoting Governor Onaga as telling the press: “The central government is not capable of doing anything. I feel it is futile [to deal with the government] because it cannot respond to our protests.” In response to the resumption, the Okinawa leader reportedly called for the first time for the removal of the six helipads in the Northern Training Area.



JMI JAPAN MEDIA
HIGHLIGHTS