



Morning Alert - Wednesday, November 1, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports that at least eight people were killed when a man drove a truck down a bike path in Lower Manhattan on Tuesday afternoon, saying that the suspect was taken into custody. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio reportedly called the incident a “cowardly act of terror.” Other networks and most newspapers led with reports on the arrest of a 27-year-old man in Zama, Kanagawa, who admitted to killing and dismembering nine people.

ECONOMY

Imports of Australian beef soar

Asahi highlighted Ministry of Finance data on foreign beef imports in September, noting that the volume of frozen Australian beef surged by 76% from the previous year, while that of American beef increased by 20.6%. The daily attributed the large difference to the safeguard that has been in place for American beef since August, suspecting that the temporary tariff increase from 38.5% to 50% may have slowed down U.S. beef imports. The article projected that the latest statistic is bound to prompt the Trump administration to renew its calls for Japan to conduct a review of the emergency import restriction mechanism.

Keidanren leader to meet with Commerce Secretary Ross

Tuesday evening’s Nikkei said Keidanren Chairman Sakakibara plans to hold talks with Commerce Secretary Ross in Washington on Wednesday and exchange views with him on the bilateral economic dialogue and cooperation between the two nations in various business sectors. The Japanese businessman is also expected to explain corporate Japan’s contributions to the U.S. economy, such as direct investment and job creation. The daily added that since the U.S. official

may accompany President Trump on his upcoming trip to Japan, attention is focused on whether the Secretary will mention to Sakakibara the necessity of a trans-Pacific FTA.

New Zealand seeks modification of TPP's trade dispute settlement mechanism

Most papers focused on the ongoing meeting in Chiba Prefecture among the TPP chief negotiators, noting that although New Zealand has agreed under its new Labour Party prime minister to a swift effectuation of the regional free trade pact, it has called for a revision of the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) clause on the grounds that the provision would put domestic enterprises at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their foreign rivals. Sankei said that since the new New Zealand government appears to have abandoned its previous position of seeking renegotiation of the TPP, the 11 member states may now be able to agree on its early effectuation when their leaders meet on the sidelines of the upcoming APEC summit in Vietnam.

INTERNATIONAL

North Korea moves missile platforms almost daily

Asahi reported on the disclosure by a military source based in Seoul that North Korea has been relocating several mobile missile launchers daily since mid-October, speculating that the Kim regime may be trying to confuse and exhaust reconnaissance and surveillance operations by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. According to the source, multiple platforms equipped with ballistic missiles have been moved from one location to another almost daily, although no signs have been detected of an imminent launch. The daily added that since the Chinese strongly pressured the Kim regime not to stage provocations during the Communist Party's Congress in mid-October, the chances are relatively high that Pyongyang may elect to launch a missile in the near future.

Japan pleased with UNESCO's decision not to put comfort women on Memory of World list

Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that the GOJ is extremely pleased with the decision not to inscribe documents related to the comfort women in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register, quoting an unnamed senior government official as saying: "It represents an all-out effort by Japanese diplomacy." The articles projected that Tokyo is likely to step up its diplomatic campaign to prevent the international cultural body from addressing divisive subjects that may cause rifts between its member states. However, the ROK government appears to be determined to continue its diplomatic efforts to have the documents listed. Noting that the ROK government strongly supported the application for the listing that was filed by a consortium of civic groups from eight nations, including China, Nikkei said Tokyo is distrustful of the Moon administration's diplomatic posturing on the matter.

China, ROK agree to improve ties

All papers took up a joint announcement made yesterday by the governments of China and South Korea regarding a mutual agreement on improving the bilateral ties that have soured following

Seoul's decision to allow the deployment of THAAD platforms by the U.S. military. Presidents Moon and Xi will reportedly hold a bilateral summit on the margins of the upcoming APEC leaders' meeting in Vietnam to reaffirm reconciliation.

Sankei said Beijing is anxious to drive a wedge into the trilateral partnership of the United States, Japan, and South Korea ahead of President Trump's East Asia trip. Nikkei wrote that China was successful in getting South Korea to distance itself from the U.S.-Japan camp, which insists on a hard line toward North Korea. On the other hand, Asahi claimed the growing rapprochement between China and South Korea may make it easier for Prime Minister Abe to arrange a trilateral summit in Japan later this year since the cooled relations between Beijing and Seoul have been a stumbling block.

POLITICS

Democratic Party elects new leader, but remains divided

All papers reported that the Democratic Party elected former Senior Vice Health Minister Kohei Otsuka president on Tuesday, noting that although he was chosen without contest, there is still a rift between liberal-minded party lawmakers and their conservative colleagues. The liberal-leaning politicians are worried that the new leader may move to split the party, as he is thought to be more sympathetic toward the Party of Hope than the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ). Otsuka, a former official at the Bank of Japan, dismissed such concerns and stressed the importance of building mutual confidence among the three opposition parties by saying: "The Party of Hope, the CDPJ, and our party must cooperate to unseat the LDP administration."

POTUS-VISIT ITEMS FROM AFTERNOON ALERT

- [Senior police official surveys security situation around U.S. Embassy](#) (Asahi)