



Morning Alert - Tuesday, November 14, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that Prime Minister Abe and Chinese Premier Li met in Manila on Monday and agreed to deepen economic relations and strengthen cooperation in dealing with North Korea. All commercial networks led with reports that a man was arrested after engaging in an hour-long car chase in Ehime on Monday.

Top stories in national dailies included reports on the draft of a chairman's statement to be issued by the ASEAN nations (Asahi, Yomiuri); a North Korean soldier's defection to South Korea at Panmunjom on Monday (Sankei); a Health Ministry plan to lift a ban on blood product exports (Mainichi); and money easing policies being employed by central banks worldwide (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japanese, Australian leaders confirm firm unity

Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Sankei reported on a meeting held between President Trump, Prime Minister Abe, and Australian Prime Minister Turnbull on Monday in Manila. Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that the three leaders confirmed that their nations will continue to work closely to increase pressure on North Korea to the maximum level. While noting that the U.S. and Japan plan to strengthen cooperation with Australia and India based on their strategy of creating a "free and open Indo-Pacific," Mainichi quoted President Trump as saying that major progress is being made in cooperation with Japan and Australia, while Abe said that the three nations share universal values and strategic interests. Turnbull said that the three nations will respond to North Korea's reckless provocations in a unified manner. Meanwhile, diplomats from the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India confirmed their nations' cooperation based on freedom of navigation and other common rules during their discussions on the Indo-Pacific region in Manila on Sunday.

Abe, Li agree to improve Japan-China relations

All papers reported on a meeting held between Prime Minister Abe and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Manila on Monday, saying that the two leaders confirmed that Japan and China will further improve their bilateral relations ahead of the 40th anniversary next year of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty. The two leaders also agreed to make arrangements to hold a trilateral summit with South Korean President Moon, which Li is expected to attend, at an early date. The papers noted that Abe also held talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Vietnam on Saturday, claiming that the Japanese leader's unprecedented meetings with both Xi and Li in such a short period of time are a sign of improved ties between Tokyo and Beijing. Mainichi commented, however, that despite the leaders' intention to improve the bilateral relations, it appears unlikely that Tokyo and Beijing will be able to mend their ties quickly due to the thorny issues that still exist, such as China's unilateral gas field development in the East China Sea and its detention of eight Japanese nationals on espionage charges.

Poll: 67.6% say President Trump's Japan visit succeeded in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations

Sankei wrote that the results of its joint public opinion survey with Fuji-TV showed that 67.6% of respondents welcomed President Trump's visit to Japan last week as successful in strengthening U.S.-Japan relations. Some 63.2% welcomed the "complete agreement" between the President and Prime Minister Abe to apply maximum pressure on North Korea at their bilateral talks in Tokyo. The poll, which was conducted on Nov. 11-12, also showed that support for the Abe cabinet rose by 5.2 points to 47.2% from a month ago, while non-support dropped by 3.9% to 42.4%.

SECURITY

MSDF ships conduct joint drills with U.S. aircraft carriers

Monday evening's Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri wrote that three MSDF vessels and three U.S. Navy nuclear-powered aircraft carriers conducted joint drills in the Sea of Japan on Sunday. According to the Ministry of Defense, this was the first time for MSDF vessels to conduct exercises with three U.S. flattops simultaneously in the Sea of Japan. The ships that participated in the drills were the USS Ronald Reagan, USS Theodore Roosevelt, and USS Nimitz from the U.S. Navy and the MSDF escort ships Inazuma, Makinami, and Ise. SDF Joint Chiefs of Staff Kawano told reporters on Monday that the drills demonstrated to other nations, including North Korea, the strong bonds between the U.S. and Japan. Asahi wrote that the exercise was conducted to demonstrate the strong unity between the U.S. and Japan following the agreement reached between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe to apply maximum pressure on North Korea. According to a GOJ source, although the idea of holding trilateral exercises with South Korea was discussed, it did not take place due to a negative response from Seoul.

In a related development, this morning's Nikkei and Yomiuri wrote that four ASDF fighter jets conducted joint exercises with three U.S. Navy carrier-borne aircraft on Monday over the Sea of Japan.

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Hagerty holds talks with Okinawa governor

Most papers reported on Ambassador Hagerty's first meeting with Okinawa Governor Onaga at the governor's office on Monday. Asahi wrote that the governor expressed opposition to the plan to relocate the functions of MCAS Futenma to Henoko and called for reducing the base-hosting burden on Okinawa. The 40-minute meeting was open to the press. While saying that he understands the importance of the U.S.-Japan security arrangements, Onaga expressed his firm intention to continue to oppose the Henoko plan by saying: "Why are you going to carry out land reclamation in the beautiful sea where indigenous species live to build another new base in order to relocate the air base? The people of Okinawa are united in their determination never to allow the construction." In addition, the governor lodged a protest against the incident last year in which an Osprey made a crash landing in waters off Nago and the incident last month in which a U.S. military helicopter made a crash landing and burst into flames in Higashi Village. The paper wrote that while not directly referring to Futenma relocation, the Ambassador stated that given the threats posed by North Korea, he appreciates the Okinawan people's support for the U.S. military. He also said that the U.S. will reduce the impact of its military presence on the people of Okinawa while maintaining its deterrence.

Mainichi quoted the governor as saying: "Why are you going to build another base by carrying out land reclamation in the beautiful sea even though Okinawa has hosted many U.S. military bases over the past 72 years since the end of World War II? This is discrimination." The paper quoted the Ambassador as telling the governor that he will make efforts to reduce the impact of the U.S. military presence on Okinawa. Yomiuri wrote that Governor Onaga expressed opposition to the Henoko plan, which has been implemented based on an agreement between the U.S. and Japanese governments as the only option for Futenma relocation. Nikkei wrote that by referring to North Korea, Ambassador Hagerty called for Okinawa's understanding by explaining that the purpose of the relocation is to maintain readiness to respond to threats in the region. Tokyo Shimbun quoted the Ambassador as saying that hosting U.S. bases supports not only Japan but also the entire region.

TV Tokyo aired a similar report last night, noting that in reply to Onaga's remarks that U.S. military installations constitute the "largest hurdle" to Okinawa's economic development, the Ambassador pledged his utmost efforts to mitigate the impact caused by the presence of the U.S. military.

The Washington Post also reported on the Ambassador's meeting with the Okinawa governor, saying the new U.S. ambassador to Japan, William Hagerty, embarked on a careful visit to Okinawa Monday, meeting with the governor who wants the American military presence on the southern

island prefecture sharply reduced. Onaga took the opportunity to make his case to Ambassador Hagerty, complaining about the environmental impact of the construction at Henoko, particularly on sea life, and asking why Okinawa had to have the new base. “This is discrimination against Okinawa,” Onaga told the ambassador. In response, the Ambassador said that the United States had an agreement to reduce the military burden on Okinawa and alleviate some of the impact of hosting the bases.

ECONOMY

RCEP agreement unlikely this year

Monday evening's Asahi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that Trade Minister Seko told reporters following the conclusion of a ministerial meeting of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) that was held on Sunday in Manila that it appears very difficult at this point to reach an agreement by the end of this year. The papers wrote that the 16 nations participating in the negotiations were unable to narrow their differences on the elimination and reduction of tariffs.

