



Morning Alert - Friday, November 17, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All broadcasters continued to give top play to the alleged case of assault by sumo grand champion Harumafuji, saying that Tottori police are planning to question him on a voluntary basis as early as today.

Top stories in national dailies included Japan Atomic Power's use of part of its reserves for decommissioning aged nuclear reactors for building new ones (Asahi); the Chinese government's acknowledgement that a train's earlier-than-scheduled departure contributed to the 1988 fatal crash with another train (Mainichi); the Japanese Fair Trade Commission's on-site inspection at Airbnb (Yomiuri); the Finance Ministry's planned proposal to the ruling coalition to increase the tax burden on high income earners (Nikkei); and an interim report put together by a panel on Japan of the UN Commission on Human Rights that calls for Japan's apology and compensation for the former comfort women (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump stresses achievements of Asia trip

All Thursday evening papers reported on President Trump's remarks at the White House on Wednesday, during which he stated: "America's renewed confidence and standing in the world has never been stronger than it is right now.... In Asia, our message was clear and well received: America is here to compete, to do business, and to defend our values and our security.... On each trip, I have worked to advance American interests and leadership in the world.... America is back. And the future has never looked brighter."

Concerning Japan, the President stated: "Prime Minister Abe and I agreed on our absolute

determination to remain united to achieve the goal of denuclearized North Korea.... Japan committed to shouldering more of the burden of our common defense by reimbursing costs borne by American taxpayers, as well as by making deep investments in Japan's own military. This will include purchases of U.S. advanced capabilities – from jet fighters to missile defense systems worth many, many billions of dollars – and jobs for the American worker.”

Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that although a senior USG official had indicated that the President would decide whether to put North Korea back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism at the end of his Asia trip, he did not refer to the issue in his address on Wednesday.

President Trump comments on China's decision to send special envoy to DPRK

Asahi wrote that President Trump commented on Chinese President Xi's decision to send a special envoy to North Korea on Friday by saying on Twitter: “China is sending an Envoy and Delegation to North Korea – A big move, we'll see what happens!” The paper noted that the President stated in his remarks at the White House on Wednesday: “President Xi pledged to faithfully implement United Nations Security Council resolutions on North Korea and to use his great economic influence over the regime to achieve our common goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.” Yomiuri speculated that the President will probably decide whether to put North Korea back on the list of state sponsors of terrorism after gauging the outcome of the Chinese mission's visit to Pyongyang. Nikkei wrote that the President is now watching closely to see whether China will fulfill its promise to apply more pressure on North Korea.

Abe to visit Malaysia, Singapore, UAE

Asahi wrote that arrangements are being made for Prime Minister Abe to visit Malaysia, Singapore, and the UAE in January next year, speculating that the premier will promote Japan's exports of shinkansen high-speed railway technology to Malaysia and Singapore and support the renewal of Japanese firms' oil concessions in the UAE through direct talks with the leaders of these nations.

Foreign Minister Kono speaks by phone with Aung San Suu Kyi on Rohingya issue

Nikkei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono spoke by phone with Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi Thursday and expressed Japan's readiness to support the Myanmar government's efforts to improve the situation surrounding Rohingya Muslims, including the move to return them to their homes in Rakhine State.

SECURITY

PM Abe, PACOM Commander Harris confirm closer cooperation

Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Sankei reported on Prime Minister Abe's meeting with visiting PACOM Commander Harris at the Kantei on Thursday, saying that the two officials confirmed close cooperation between the U.S. and Japan in dealing with North Korea. Abe reportedly expressed

Japan's readiness to deepen its close cooperation with the U.S. to further enhance the deterrence of the U.S.-Japan alliance. Referring to the recent joint drills held between three U.S. aircraft carriers and MSDF escort ships in the Sea of Japan, Adm. Harris stated that the two nations demonstrated close coordination. Yomiuri wrote that Adm. Harris held separate meetings with Defense Minister Onodera and Foreign Minister Kono later in the day.

Defense Minister Onodera to visit Hawaii to see Aegis Ashore

Yomiuri wrote that Defense Minister Onodera is making arrangements for visiting Hawaii next January to view the Aegis Ashore system there. According to the paper, Onodera told visiting PACOM Commander Harris on Thursday that he would like to meet with the admiral again in Hawaii at an early date.

Top Marine in Okinawa warns of threat posed by North Korea

Sankei wrote that Okinawa Area Coordinator Nicholson told reporters at Camp Courtney in Okinawa that the threat posed by North Korea to the people of the U.S. and Japan is real. The paper wrote that Lt. Gen. Nicholson called for understanding for the base burden in Okinawa by reportedly saying that the U.S.-Japan alliance has contributed to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region and that it is necessary for the U.S. military to maintain readiness through training to ensure the regional stability and prosperity.

Defense Ministry to revise explanation about safety of Osprey

Asahi wrote that in response to the recent data showing the MV-22 Osprey's high accident rate, the Ministry of Defense has begun revising its explanation of the aircraft in a brochure because its earlier claim that the accident rate of the Osprey is at the same level or lower than the rates of other Marine aircraft has lost validity as a result of the recent data. The ministry created the brochure in June 2012 as reference material ahead of the aircraft's deployment to MCAS Futenma in October 2012.

Environment Ministry's surveys of U.S. bases suspended since 2014

Tokyo Shimbun gave top play to a report saying that it was learned from documents provided by the Okinawa prefectural government in June that the Environment Ministry's onsite surveys to check for environmental pollution at U.S. bases in Japan have been suspended since 2014 even though the ministry had been conducting such surveys since 1978. The paper wrote that the ministry has not disclosed the suspension to the public and did not respond when asked whether there had been a request from the U.S. to suspend the surveys. The paper added, however, that such municipalities as Sagami-hara and Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture and Sasebo in Nagasaki Prefecture conduct their own surveys after obtaining permission from the U.S. bases. Mainichi ran a similar report saying that the residents of Okinawa are becoming increasingly concerned about possible pollution at bases in their neighborhoods.

Former Okinawa U.S. base worker denies intent to kill local woman

All Thursday evening papers reported on the opening of a lay judge trial for Kenneth Franklin Shinzato, a former U.S. civilian base worker accused of assaulting and killing a 20-year-old woman in Uruma, Okinawa, in April last year. During the hearing held at the Naha District Court on Thursday, he denied that he intended to murder the woman but admitted to the charges of rape resulting in death. Mainichi wrote that attention will be focused on the judgment to be handed down by the lay judges in Okinawa. This morning's Asahi and Mainichi ran detailed reports of the first court hearing.

SCIENCE

Japan urges U.S. to reconsider withdrawal from Paris Agreement

Thursday evening's Nikkei wrote that Environment Minister Nakagawa told the paper that he held a meeting with a U.S. delegation to COP23 on the sidelines of the conference held on Wednesday in Bonn, Germany. Although the minister said earlier that he would urge the U.S. to reconsider its decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement, he told the paper on Wednesday that he was told by the U.S. delegation that the United States will not participate in the Paris Agreement unless conditions favorable for the U.S. are established. Meanwhile, Nakagawa announced Japan's plans to launch the "Ibuki II" greenhouse gas observation satellite in fiscal 2018. Yomiuri wrote that Nakagawa officially announced Japan's readiness to host a plenary session of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scheduled for May 2019.

