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# JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Tuesday, November 28, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports that an advisory body to the Japan Sumo Association agreed on Monday on the need for “extremely harsh punishment” for grand champion Harumafuji over his assault of a junior wrestler.

Main front-page items in national papers included a GOJ policy on assisting with China’s “One Belt, One Road” trade promotion initiative, proposed income tax reforms for FY2018, and the GOJ’s acknowledgement at the Diet yesterday of the existence of an audio tape of conversations held in May last year between Finance Ministry bureaucrats and Moritomo Gakuen officials apparently on the subject of a discount for the state property later sold to the school operator.

## INTERNATIONAL

### DPRK ready to launch ballistic missile

Sankei front-paged the disclosure by several GOJ sources that Japan has detected signals pointing to North Korean preparations to fire a ballistic missile, quoting an unnamed senior GOJ official as saying: “There are signs. But we can’t say definitely that North Korea will launch a missile, since there were similar signals in the past.” The GOJ remains on high alert, bracing for a possible launch in the near future. Mainichi ran a similar story, quoting a GOJ source as saying: “A missile could be launched within a few days.” The daily added, however, that the signals in question may be related to seasonal training performed by the DPRK Army.

### GOJ to assist firms in China’s “One Belt, One Road” initiative

Yomiuri led with the GOJ's planned contributions to China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) initiative. Japan is likely to support the initiative in such sectors as the environment and product distribution. Specifically, Tokyo is expected to assist Japanese and Chinese companies in financing solar and windmill power generation projects and the construction of industrial complexes in Southeast Asian countries bordering the Chinese-proposed economic Silk Road. The GOJ is hopeful that its willingness to back President Xi's key economic development initiative will further improve ties with Beijing and elicit its cooperation in reining in North Korea's nuclear and missile ambitions. Tokyo is also keen to realize a proposed trilateral summit in Japan with China and South Korea in the near future. However, the GOJ is cautious about assisting the development of harbor facilities in the OBOR initiative since China is anxious to expand its maritime presence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean.

### **Japan, China to hold maritime talks in Shanghai in December**

Nikkei reported that the GOJ and the Chinese government have agreed to convene a senior officials' meeting on maritime issues in Shanghai in early December, projecting that coast guard representatives will join officials from the two nations' foreign and defense ministries to discuss how to avert an inadvertent clash over the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea.

### **Kono to visit Middle East next month**

Mainichi wrote that Foreign Minister Kono is likely to visit Bahrain to deliver a speech at the annual Manama Dialogue on regional security to be held in the Bahraini capital from Dec. 8 - 10. He will also travel to the region in late December for separate discussions with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian National Authority President Abbas on Middle East peace. The top Japanese diplomat may add Turkey to his regional itinerary.

Nikkei ran a similar story, noting that Kono will visit New York in mid-December to attend a UN Security Council meeting and call for stronger sanctions on North Korea as Japan is set to assume the council presidency next month. It added that since Japan's Security Council membership expires on Dec. 31, the GOJ is afraid that Tokyo's opinions may not be sufficiently reflected in council deliberations on the DPRK next year and later. Hence Kono is expected to urge the reform of the UN body so as to expand the number of permanent members to include Japan.

## **SECURITY**

### **ROK reluctant to deepen security cooperation with U.S., Japan out of deference to China**

Asahi took up the disclosure by several sources involved in U.S.-South Korea relations that the venue for a meeting of top brass from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea held in late October was changed to Hawaii from Seoul due to opposition by the Moon administration, which was told by the Chinese that the ROK government should not deepen military cooperation with Washington and Tokyo if it wants to improve ties with Beijing. The daily speculated that the Moon administration

elected to avoid hosting the session attended by JCS Chairman Dunford and his two counterparts out of deference to China. Seoul was also hesitant about proposed trilateral naval training involving three U.S. aircraft carriers earlier this month.

### **GOJ to use government planes when evacuating Japanese from South Korea**

Sankei highlighted remarks made at the Diet yesterday by Foreign Minister Kono, who said the GOJ may have to mobilize government planes and vessels for evacuating Japanese nationals from South Korea in the event of a contingency involving North Korea. He stressed that the GOJ will consider tapping SDF aircraft and warships in noncombatant evacuation operations if the use of commercial vessels proves difficult. He added that Japan might help evacuate citizens from other nations in a crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

## **POLITICS**

### **Minority activists call for apology over LDP politician's remarks on same sex partners**

Asahi took up a statement released on Monday by a group of sexual minority activists demanding LDP Executive Council Chairman Takeshita apologize for and retract his remarks expressing opposition to the invitation to the same sex partner of a state guest to a dinner hosted by the Emperor and the Empress. It denounced the senior lawmaker's statement as a declaration that same sex couples are inferior to opposite sex couples.

The daily added that the opposition camp took issue with a series of controversial remarks made recently by ruling party Diet members, including former Minister of Regional Revitalization Yamamoto, who commented on a fellow LDP politician known for his active exchanges with African nations by saying: "Why does he like blacks to that extent?" Opposition officials criticized Yamamoto for being "ignorant of human rights."

## **SCIENCE**

### **Concern raised about Japan's hunting of sei whale in Pacific**

Tokyo Shimbun ran a Kyodo story from Geneva on the beginning on Monday of a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (Washington Convention), noting that a number of participants raised opposition to Japan's scientific whaling of sei whales in the northwestern Pacific. They harbored doubts about whether Japan's program is "scientific" as claimed by the GOJ. Japanese representatives dismissed criticism by emphasizing that Japan's catch has not affected the sei whale population. This was reportedly the first time for a Washington Convention session to address Japan's hunting of sei whales.

## **AMBASSADOR**

### **Ambassador Hagerty calls U.S.-Japan ties "stronger than ever"**

Tuesday's Tokyo Shimbun reprinted on page 6 an interview with Ambassador Hagerty that was first published in the November 26 edition of Chunichi Shimbun. In the interview the Ambassador was quoted as saying that the relationship between the United States and Japan is stronger than ever following President Trump's successful trip to Tokyo earlier this month.

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