



Morning Alert - Wednesday, November 29, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks led with extensive reports saying that North Korea fired a ballistic missile toward the Sea of Japan at around 3:18 a.m. today. NHK said the missile reached an altitude of more than 4,000 km and fell within Japan's EEZ, about 250 km west of Aomori Prefecture, at around 4:11 a.m. The networks said this is the first missile launch in about 10 weeks. The network said no damage has been reported as a result of the missile launch.

Top stories in national dailies included the Finance Ministry's acknowledgement of the existence of an audio tape on a land sale deal with Moritomo Gakuen school operator (Asahi); the acknowledgement by the Japan Atomic Energy Agency that decommissioning was not considered in designing the Monju prototype fast-breeder reactor (Mainichi); a plan by the Tokyo Olympics organizing committee to launch a new council to share information with Paralympics sports associations (Yomiuri); a surge in chip businesses worldwide due to the growing demand for their use in the Internet of Things products (Nikkei); and an interview with Kim Hyon-hui, a former North Korean agent responsible for bombing Korean Air Flight 858 in 1987, who claims that Megumi Yokota is still alive (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

GOJ officials comment on North Korean missile launch

NHK quoted PM Abe as telling reporters this morning: "North Korea has once again fired a ballistic missile. Considering the flight trajectory, it could be an ICBM. The government continuously tracked the missile and took appropriate measures to deal with the crisis. We can never accept such a reckless action that tramples on the strong commitment of the international community to resolve the matter peacefully. We lodged a strong protest with North Korea, and will ask the UNSC to hold an

emergency session. The international community needs to unite and completely implement the sanctions measures. We will not yield to any provocation and will maximize pressure on North Korea. We will continue to maintain a high-level alert under the robust U.S.-Japan alliance to protect the people and their daily peaceful lives.” The network also reported that DM Onodera told reporters that the missile can be regarded as an ICBM.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga said at a press conference this morning: “We can never accept North Korea’s repeated provocations, and we lodged a strong protest with North Korea. There is no bright future for North Korea without resolving the issues of the abductions and nuclear and missile development. We strongly urged North Korea to change its policies. We will continue to make all-out efforts to collect and analyze information, and should we obtain any new information that needs to be disclosed, we will swiftly do so.”

Meanwhile, NHK said President Trump stressed to the press at the White House that the U.S. will continue to maximize pressure on North Korea. The President was quoted as saying: “It is a situation that we will handle. Nothing changed....We take it very seriously.” The network also said that the President and PM Abe held a telephone conference at about 6:35 a.m.

South Korea believes North may announce completion of nuclear program within a year

Asahi and Nikkei wrote that South Korea’s Unification Minister Cho Myung-gyon told reporters at the foreign correspondents’ club in Seoul on Tuesday that North Korea may announce the completion of its nuclear program within a year, as the DPRK is developing its nuclear capabilities faster than expected. The minister also said that there is a danger of an unforeseen event leading to war because the channel of dialogue with Pyongyang has been completely cut off.

Abe asks Yamaguchi to hand letter to Chinese president

Mainichi and Nikkei wrote that during his meeting on Tuesday with Komeito Chief Representative Yamaguchi, who will be visiting Beijing on Thursday, Prime Minister Abe handed him a letter addressed to Chinese President Xi. The papers speculated that in the letter Abe calls for Xi’s cooperation in realizing a trilateral summit between Japan, China, and South Korea at an early date.

SECURITY

U.S. military aircraft transfer to Iwakuni proceeding

Yomiuri wrote that 15 of the U.S. military’s 61 carrier-borne airplanes, including FA18 Super Hornets, arrived at MCAS Iwakuni from Naval Air Facility Atsugi on Tuesday. The paper wrote that the transfer, which is part of the U.S. military’s forces realignment in Japan, is a specific step to reduce noise pollution in populated areas surrounding Atsugi. Noting that MCAS Iwakuni will become one of the largest air bases in the Far East with the deployment of about 120 aircraft after the completion of the aircraft relocation, the paper speculated that the U.S. military is strengthening the functions of

Iwakuni in view of the increasingly harsh security environment in East Asia owing to China's military expansion and North Korea's nuclear and missile programs.

Defense Ministry to set up unit to monitor space

Nikkei wrote that the Ministry of Defense plans to establish a new SDF unit tasked with monitoring space by 2022. The paper wrote that the unit will set up radar in Yamaguchi Prefecture to monitor space debris and any unusual movements of satellites to protect Japanese satellites and share information with the U.S. military and JAXA.

Two U.S. Marines arrested on charge of using fake credit card

Fuji TV reported this morning that two U.S. Marines stationed in Okinawa were arrested on charges of using a fake credit card at a department store in Shibuya, Tokyo, and buying clothes worth about 100,000 yen at the end of last month. The network said the two suspects admitted the charges and told the police that they came to Tokyo to celebrate Halloween.

ECONOMY

Japan to maintain safeguard on beef imports

Nikkei wrote that the Ministry of Finance has decided on a plan to maintain a safeguard measure against beef imports in fiscal 2018. Japan imposed the measure in August in response to an increase in the volume of frozen beef imports from the United States and other nations. The paper wrote that although attention was being focused on whether Japan would abolish the mechanism in response to criticism from the U.S. and calls from the U.S. beef industry and the Secretary of Agriculture to immediately lower the tariff, Tokyo has decided to maintain the mechanism because the U.S. did not exert strong pressure on Japan over the agriculture sector at the summit meeting in Tokyo in November.

SCIENCE

Japan to accept fact-finding mission on whaling

Asahi and Mainichi wrote that the standing committee for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as CITES or the Washington Convention, agreed at its meeting in Geneva on Monday on the recommendation to Japan to accept a fact-finding mission on Japan's hunting of sei whales in the North Atlantic. During the meeting, representatives of the United States and other nations argued that Japan's whaling is for commercial purposes and thus violates convention rules, but Japan countered by saying that it is for scientific purposes. However, the GOJ will likely accept the recommendation. The CITES secretariat will probably send a mission to Japan by October 2018. Pointing out that this was the first time for Japan's catch of sei whales to be an official item on the CITES agenda, the paper wrote that the international community is becoming increasingly critical of Japan's whaling.

In a related story, Asahi wrote that the Australian branch of the environmental activist group Sea Shepherd posted on Tuesday on its website a video of Japan's whaling in the Southern Ocean in 2008 that was filmed by the Australian government. Sea Shepherd issued a statement criticizing the Australian government for long suppressing the footage out of concern for diplomatic relations with Japan.

SOCIETY

GOJ to invite same-sex couples to official receptions

All papers wrote that Foreign Minister Kono stated at a Lower House Budget Committee meeting on Tuesday that he has instructed his ministry to invite guests to receptions he will be hosting, including one to celebrate the Emperor's birthday in December, regardless of whether they are legally married or in a civil union with a same-sex partner. Kono made the remarks in response to a question from an opposition lawmaker, who took up the issue following LDP General Council Chairman Takeshita's remarks to fellow LDP lawmakers on Nov. 23 that he is opposed to the idea of inviting same-sex partners of state guests to banquets to be hosted by the Emperor and the Empress. Asahi wrote that attention had been focused on how the GOJ will respond to the issue. Prime Minister Abe also made a comment saying that he would like to invite state guests with same-sex partners to banquets he will be hosting.

POLITICS

LDP to hold annual convention in March

All papers wrote that the LDP decided at its General Council meeting on Tuesday to hold its annual convention in Tokyo on March 25. Although the party has held annual conventions in January in the past, it decided on the March date in view of Prime Minister Abe's upcoming foreign travel in January.

