



Morning Alert - Thursday, December 14, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that Rakuten will file a request with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication for authorization to become Japan's fourth cell-phone carrier sometime next year. NTV and TV Asahi led with reports on the incident in which a window fell from a U.S. military helicopter onto an elementary school playground near MCAS Futenma. TBS reported on the cold weather in Japan, while Fuji TV led with a report that a battery charger suddenly caught fire at Tokyo Metro's Ginza Station on Wednesday.

Top stories in national dailies included a Hiroshima High Court decision to revoke a lower court decision and order the suspension of operations at the No. 3 nuclear reactor at the Ikata Nuclear Power Plant in Ehime Prefecture (Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri); Rakuten's plan to become Japan's fourth mobile carrier (Nikkei); and Osaka's decision to end its sister-city relationship with San Francisco (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary Tillerson indicates readiness for dialogue with North Korea

All papers reported on remarks made on Tuesday in Washington by Secretary of State Tillerson in which he stated that the United States is ready to hold its first meeting with the DPRK without preconditions. Asahi wrote that despite the message conveyed by the Secretary, it remains to be seen how the situation will play out, quoting White House Press Secretary Sanders as telling the press that there has been no change in President Trump's views about North Korea. Asahi also quoted Special Representative for North Korea Policy Yun as telling a senior MOFA official in Tokyo that it is necessary for Pyongyang to take specific actions toward denuclearization in order to hold

dialogue. The papers quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling reporters that the U.S. and Japanese leaders are one hundred percent in agreement on their response to North Korea. Nikkei wrote that the statement by the Secretary has created a stir because it could indicate a shift in the Trump administration's stance that North Korea's suspension of provocations is a precondition for dialogue. The paper also wrote that the GOJ is worried that following Secretary Tillerson's remarks there could be a breach in the coalition against the DPRK led by the United States and Japan.

Osaka decides to end sister-city relationship with San Francisco

Sankei led with a report saying that in response to San Francisco's installation of set of statues with an inscription describing comfort women as "sex slaves" in a public place, the city government of Osaka decided at an executive meeting on Wednesday to end its sister-city-relationship with San Francisco. However, in response to the death of San Francisco Mayor Edwin Lee on Tuesday, Osaka plans to notify San Francisco of its decision after a mayoral election is held there in June.

President Xi forgoes speaking at 80th anniversary of Nanjing massacre

All papers reported on a memorial ceremony held in Nanjing on Wednesday for the victims of the 1937 massacre carried out by the Imperial Japanese Army in Nanjing. Although President Xi attended the ceremony for the first time in three years, he did not deliver a speech. Pointing out that it is unusual for President Xi not to deliver remarks at an important state event, the papers speculated that Xi chose not to give a speech out of consideration for the improvement in China's relations with Japan.

SECURITY

Window falls from U.S. military helicopter onto Okinawa school playground

All papers reported that a window fell from a Futenma-based CH-53E helicopter onto the playground of an elementary school adjacent to MCAS Futenma on Wednesday morning. According to the local police, the metal-framed window, weighing about 7.7 kilograms, dropped on the ground only 13 meters away from where some 60 students were participating in physical education class. Although a fourth grader was hit in the arm by gravel thrown up as the window frame struck the ground, he was not injured. State Minister of Defense Yamamoto held a meeting with USFJ Commander Martinez at the Defense Ministry on Wednesday. According to Yamamoto, the USFJ suspended flights of all 13 CH-53Es in Okinawa for safety checks. Asahi claimed that the GOJ cannot file a strong protest with the U.S. because Japan depends on the U.S. for surveillance of North Korea. Yomiuri wrote that protests against U.S. bases will likely increase in Okinawa in response to the recent spate of accidents involving U.S. military aircraft, speculating that this may hinder the GOJ's efforts to move forward with the FRF construction at Henoko aimed at removing the danger at Futenma.

ECONOMY

U.S., Japan, EU issue joint statement against unfair trade practices

Asahi wrote that the United States, Japan, and the EU issued a joint statement on Wednesday saying that they will work more closely together to combat unfair trade practices by third countries. The statement was finalized by USTR Lighthizer, Japan's Trade Minister Seko, and European Commissioner for Trade Malmstrom on the margins of a WTO ministerial meeting held in Buenos Aires. The paper conjectured that the statement was intended to press emerging economies to abide by WTO rules with China's excessive production in mind. The paper also speculated that the move is aimed at keeping the United States, which is becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the WTO, involved in the multilateral framework.

