


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Thursday, January 11, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, NTV, and TBS gave top play to reports on heavy snowfall in Shikoku and Kyushu. TV Asahi led with a report on a teleconference between President Trump and ROK President Moon on Wednesday, during which the President reportedly said that there will be no military action while the North-South talks are going on. Fuji TV reported that a man was arrested for sending more than 200,000 threatening emails to a popular voice actress over the last few years.

Top stories in national dailies included a plan by the Japanese and British governments to provide public-private loans for Hitachi's nuclear plant project in the UK (Asahi); South Korean President Moon's comment on the comfort women agreement with Japan in his New Year's press conference (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to introduce a new missile intercept system with "engage on remote" capability (Yomiuri); the growing presence of Google and Amazon at the annual CES trade show in Las Vegas (Nikkei); and the likelihood that Prime Minister Abe will not attend the opening ceremony of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics on Feb. 9 (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump, South Korean President Moon speak by phone

Mainichi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei front-paged reports from Seoul saying that according to the office of the South Korean president, President Moon spoke by phone with President Trump on Wednesday. According to a briefing by the South Korean presidential office, President Trump told his South Korean counterpart that the United States will not take any military action against North Korea so long as inter-Korean dialogue continues and expressed his openness to holding talks with North Korea at the appropriate time and under the right circumstances. Yomiuri wrote that President

Moon briefed President Trump on the outcome of the recent discussions between North and South Korea on Jan. 9 and thanked the U.S. leader by saying that his policy toward North Korea has helped make the talks with the North possible.

The four papers wrote that President Trump also told his ROK counterpart that the United States will send a delegation led by Vice President Pence to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, which will open on Feb. 9. Yomiuri wrote that several U.S. media outlets reported on Wednesday that the Vice President also plans to visit Japan. Yomiuri speculated that Vice President Pence will probably meet with Prime Minister Abe and other Japanese officials to discuss North Korea and confirm strengthened U.S.-Japan coordination.

South Korean leader calls for Japan to take additional actions on comfort women issue

All national dailies reported on a New Year's press conference held by South Korean President Moon on Wednesday. Concerning the 2015 comfort women agreement with Japan, the ROK leader expressed his intention not to seek renegotiation of the accord by saying that it is "undeniable" that the two nations concluded an official agreement. However, Moon added that the "erroneous knot" with Japan over the comfort women issue must be untied and that the victims could forgive Japan and the issue could be resolved completely if Japan were to accept the truth, offer a sincere apology to the victims, and work with the international community to prevent a recurrence.

Asahi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as commenting at a news conference on Wednesday on Moon's remarks by saying that Japan cannot accept the South Korean leader's call for Tokyo to do more to settle the comfort women issue and that it is necessary for both countries to steadily implement the final and irreversible agreement.

Concerning South Korea's overall relations with Japan, President Moon reportedly stated that South Korea will make efforts to improve its ties with Japan by keeping history-related issues separate from future-oriented cooperation with Tokyo.

With regard to South Korea's relations with the North, the ROK leader reportedly said that he is prepared to hold a meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un if certain conditions are met. However, Moon added that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula that was declared by the North and South in 1992 is Seoul's basic position and it cannot concede on this. Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that Moon added that South Korea will work more closely with the international community, including the United States, China, and Japan.

U.S. official comments on North Korea's plan to send delegation to PyeongChang

Wednesday evening's Asahi wrote that concerning North Korea's agreement at the recent inter-Korean talks to send a delegation to the PyeongChang Olympics, Under Secretary for Public

Diplomacy and Public Affairs Goldstein reportedly stated at a news conference on Tuesday that any move that could lead to easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula might constitute a positive development. Yomiuri ran a similar report.

Foreign Minister Kono plans to visit China

Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that Foreign Minister Kono is making arrangements to visit China around Jan. 28 to hold talks with his Chinese counterpart Foreign Minister Wang. If realized, this will be the first visit to China by a Japanese foreign minister since former Foreign Minister Kishida visited the nation in April 2016. The paper speculated that Kono plans to discuss with Wang specific measures for cooperation with China and the possibility of Premier Li visiting Japan to participate in an envisaged trilateral summit between Japan, China, and South Korea.

SECURITY

State Department notifies Congress of plan to sell new interceptor missiles to Japan

Wednesday evening's Mainichi wrote that on Tuesday the State Department approved a plan to export Standard Missile-3 Block IIA missiles to Japan and notified Congress of the decision. The paper wrote that this is the first time for the State Department to approve the export of this type of missile to Japan and that the department reportedly stressed the significance of the decision by saying that this will contribute to enhancing the MSDF's ability. The paper wrote that under the deal, the United States plans to sell four SM-3 Block IIA missiles and Mk-29 missile launchers at an estimated total of \$133.3 million. Yomiuri ran a similar report.

PACOM commander, defense minister hold talks

All national dailies in their Wednesday evening editions reported on talks held between the Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, Adm. Harry Harris, and Defense Minister Onodera in Honolulu on Tuesday. Asahi and Nikkei wrote that according to Onodera, Adm. Harris commented on the postponement of joint military exercises between the United States and South Korea during the PyeongChang Winter Olympics by saying that there is no change in the plan to conduct the drills after the Olympics.

According to Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri, Adm. Harris and Minister Onodera also discussed the recent incidents involving U.S. military helicopters in Okinawa. Asahi reported that at the outset of the meeting that was open to the press, Onodera called for safe aircraft operations and the admiral said it is regrettable that the aircraft incidents occurred in Okinawa. The paper wrote that Adm. Harris reportedly added that the number of U.S. military aircraft accidents has been on the decline since 2016 and that he is satisfied that the pilots managed to land the aircraft in safe places in response to emergencies. Mainichi wrote that Onodera told reporters after his meeting with the U.S.

Pacific commander that it is important to land an aircraft in a safe place as soon as possible to run safety checks rather than to continue flying after a warning light comes on.

In a related development, this morning's Mainichi wrote that Okinawa Vice Governor Tomikawa lodged a protest with the defense and foreign ministries on Wednesday over the latest incidents involving U.S. military helicopters.

