



Morning Alert - Friday, January 12, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All TV networks gave top play to reports that a JR train has become stranded in Niigata due to heavy snow, noting that about 400 passengers have been confined to the train for over 12 hours.

Top stories in national dailies included the Defense Ministry's announcement that an MSDF patrol ship and plane spotted a Chinese naval ship and a foreign submarine believed to be Chinese in Japan's contiguous waters near the Senkaku Islands (Mainichi, Yomiuri); North Korea's potential use of virtual currency "mining" to launch a cyberattack (Sankei); Indian automakers' rise in the world auto market (Nikkei); and municipalities' efforts to address the shortage of elderly care facilities (Asahi).

INTERNATIONAL

Submarine believed to be Chinese spotted near Senkakus

All national dailies reported on a Defense Ministry announcement on Thursday that an MSDF patrol plane and ship detected an unidentified submerged submarine operating in the contiguous zone near Miyako Island on Wednesday afternoon and detected it again on Thursday morning in the contiguous zone near Taisho Island in the Senkakus. The MSDF also spotted a Chinese frigate sailing near Taisho Island on Thursday. The papers said the submarine appeared to be Chinese, with Yomiuri saying its course was almost identical to the frigate's. The vessels did not enter Japan's territorial waters and left the contiguous zone on Thursday afternoon.

Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama summoned Chinese Ambassador to Japan Cheng Yonghua to the Foreign Ministry to file a protest and express Tokyo's grave concern. Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga reportedly stated at a news conference on Thursday that Japan is seriously concerned because this

is a move that unilaterally raises tensions. However, Suga added that there is no change in Japan's position of improving ties with China and that Tokyo urges Beijing not to undermine the trend toward improvement in bilateral relations.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang reportedly said at a press briefing on Thursday that there is no reason for China to be criticized for conducting activities in waters near its territory. However, he added that Beijing is paying close attention to the positive signs by Japan for improving its ties with China.

Abe to kick off trip to Baltic, East European nations

Yomiuri wrote that Prime Minister Abe will visit Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania from Jan. 12 through 17. Abe will be the first Japanese prime minister to visit these nations. The paper speculated that in addition to strengthening bilateral ties with these nations, Japan is hoping that the premier's visit will help strengthen international pressure on North Korea because all of these nations other than Estonia have diplomatic ties with the DPRK. In Estonia, Abe will probably discuss cooperation in cybersecurity with Prime Minister Ratas because NATO's cyber defense center is located there. Nikkei ran a similar report.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit Myanmar, UAE, Canada

Nikkei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono left Japan on Thursday to visit Myanmar, the UAE, and Canada. Kono plans to hold talks with State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi in Myanmar on Friday and attend a foreign ministerial meeting on North Korea in Vancouver on Jan. 16. The paper speculated that the foreign minister will express Japan's concern over the Myanmar government's dealing with the Rohingya Muslims.

Japan may host 2019 G20 summit in Tokyo or Osaka

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the GOJ is considering the idea of hosting a G20 leaders' meeting in 2019 either in Tokyo or Osaka in June. The paper wrote that Prime Minister Abe plans to announce the venue and schedule by the end of February after studying the security and lodging capabilities of the candidate cities. According to the paper, although Aichi and Fukuoka prefectures have expressed interest in hosting the event, the GOJ has probably concluded that they do not have enough hotel rooms.

SECURITY

Onodera surveys Aegis Ashore battery in Hawaii

All national dailies reported in their Thursday evening editions on Defense Minister Onodera's tour of the Pacific Missile Range Facility on the Hawaiian island of Kauai on Wednesday to observe the Aegis Ashore platform operated there by the U.S. military. Asahi and Nikkei wrote that Onodera held talks with DOD Missile Defense Agency Director Samuel Greaves and confirmed close cooperation between the United States and Japan for Tokyo's early procurement of the Aegis Ashore system.

Friday morning's Asahi, Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei ran follow-up reports saying that Onodera expressed hope that the Aegis Ashore system that Japan plans to introduce will be able to intercept cruise missiles as well as ballistic missiles. Yomiuri speculated that the defense minister made this remark with China's development of long-range cruise missiles in mind.

