



Morning Alert - Friday, January 19, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a follow-up report on an incident in which a Niigata train with 430 passengers on board was stuck in heavy snow for nearly 15 hours last Thursday. NTV and TV Asahi led with reports that sumo grand champion Kisenosato withdrew from the New Year Grand Sumo Tournament. TBS reported on the bankruptcy of a health product company called Japan Life. Fuji TV reported that a university student in Tokyo was arrested for stabbing to death his father yesterday.

Top stories in national dailies included a projection by the Land Ministry that some 360,000 land plots could be damaged if a magnitude 7.3 earthquake were to occur beneath Tokyo (Asahi); a plan by the Fair Trade Commission to protect freelance workers from companies' unfair demands (Yomiuri); U.S. firms' increasing investment and employment in response to tax reform by the Trump administration (Nikkei); and a plan by the Japanese abductees' families to call on the International Criminal Court to prosecute North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for human rights violations (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, Australia to deepen defense cooperation

All national dailies reported on Australian Prime Minister Turnbull's visit to Japan on Thursday. At their bilateral talks, Prime Minister Abe and his Australian counterpart reportedly agreed to deepen security and defense cooperation between their nations through increased joint exercises by the SDF and the Australian military. Abe and Turnbull confirmed a plan to accelerate negotiations on a new security pact stipulating the legal status of military personnel in each other's nations. The two leaders agreed to ratchet up the pressure on North Korea to the maximum level. The prime ministers reaffirmed their shared goal of pursuing a "free and open Indo-Pacific" and agreed to promote quadrilateral cooperation with the United States and India in this regard. Ahead of their bilateral

talks, Abe escorted Turnbull to the GSDF Narashino Camp in Chiba Prefecture and let him attend an NSC meeting. On the economic front, Abe and Turnbull agreed to work closely to seek the early effectuation of a TPP agreement by the 11 member states.

SECURITY

U.S. military helicopters reportedly fly over school in Okinawa, Marines deny account

Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, Sankei and Tokyo Shimbun reported in their city news sections and Mainichi on its front page that the Ministry of Defense announced on Thursday that it had confirmed that three helicopters belonging to the U.S. Marine Corps allegedly flew over the Futenma Daini Elementary School adjacent to MCAS Futenma on Thursday. This is the same school where a window fell onto the playground from a U.S. military helicopter on Dec. 13, 2017. The school had just conducted an evacuation drill on Thursday to prepare for the possibility of such incidents occurring again. Asahi wrote that Defense Minister Onodera reportedly told the press that the ministry's onsite witnesses and footage from cameras installed at the school had confirmed that two AH-1 attack helicopters and one UH-1 multipurpose helicopter flew over the school at around 1:25 p.m.

But according to Mainichi, Nikkei, Sankei, and Tokyo Shimbun, the Marines in Okinawa released a statement saying that based on pilot interviews and radar tracking data, no Marine Corps aircraft had flown over the school. Yomiuri wrote that according to a GOJ source, the Marines have denied the reports of aircraft flying over the school.

Onodera reportedly said that he lodged a protest with Maj. Gen. Charles Chiarotti, deputy USFJ commander. Nikkei quoted Onodera as reportedly saying: "Flights should not have occurred over the school right after the drill was conducted. I conveyed the anger of Okinawa and the entire Japanese nation to the U.S. side." Asahi quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as reportedly saying at a regular press briefing on Thursday that Japan will continue to ask the U.S. side to make efforts to avoid flying over the school, while Sankei quoted him as saying that it was very regrettable.

Top navy officers from U.S., Japan, India, Australia discuss Indo-Pacific security

Asahi and Nikkei wrote that the top officers of the navies of the United States, Japan, India, and Australia, including Adm. Harris, PACOM Commander, and Adm. Kawano, Chief of Staff of the SDF Joint Staff, held talks in New Delhi on Thursday on the security of the Indo-Pacific region. This was reportedly the first time for the four nations to hold a meeting of their top navy officers.

LDP providing full support for its candidate in Nago mayoral election

Asahi wrote that the LDP is making intensive efforts to support its candidate for the Feb. 4 Nago mayoral election in which the military bases in Okinawa will likely become a major campaign issue. The party is sending its senior officials to Okinawa to support the candidate in view of the importance

of this election as a prelude to the autumn gubernatorial election in which Governor Onaga, who opposes the FRF construction at Henoko, will likely seek reelection.

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