



Morning Alert - Thursday, January 25, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports on the cold weather along the coast of the Sea of Japan due to the arrival of the coldest air system in several years. The networks said the temperature in Tokyo fell to minus four degrees Celsius for the first time in 48 years.

Top stories in national dailies included Prime Minister Abe's plan to visit South Korea to attend the opening ceremony for the PyeongChang Olympics and hold talks with President Moon to urge South Korea to implement the comfort women accord (Asahi); Abe's statement in the Diet that he hopes for extensive Diet discussions on constitutional amendment (Mainichi); a plan by Japan and China to reach an agreement to resolve the issue of overlapping pension insurance premium payments by their citizens working in each other's country (Yomiuri); a plan by the Health and Labor Ministry to delay by one year the implementation of work-style reform measures for small- and mid-sized companies (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

Prime Minister Abe to visit South Korea

All national dailies reported on Prime Minister Abe's plan to visit South Korea to attend the opening ceremony for the PyeongChang Winter Olympics and hold bilateral talks with President Moon. Asahi noted that LDP lawmakers are divided over whether Abe should visit South Korea despite the Moon administration's negative stance on the 2015 comfort women accord. The paper wrote that although the premier said he will urge South Korea to sincerely implement the accord in his talks with President Moon, it remains to be seen whether Abe will be able to achieve concrete results. Yomiuri wrote that although the premier decided to visit South Korea to give priority to trilateral coordination

with the United States over North Korea, it remains to be seen whether the visit will help improve ties between Tokyo and Seoul.

Nikkei speculated that Abe took the view of the United States into account. The paper claimed that according to a GOJ source, the USG reportedly suggested to the Japanese side that it consider having the prime minister visit South Korea in view of the situation in North Korea. The suggestion was reportedly made following President Trump's telephone conversation with President Moon on Jan. 10, during which he told the ROK leader that the United States will send a delegation headed by Vice President Pence to the PyeongChang Olympics.

Japan notifies UN of suspected ship-to-ship transfer involving North Korean tanker

Asahi wrote that the GOJ announced on Wednesday that it has reported to a UN Security council panel on sanctions on North Korea a suspected ship-to-ship transfer of goods between North Korean and Dominican Republic-flagged tankers in the East China Sea in violation of UN sanctions. According to the joint announcement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense, a JMSDF P-3C patrol ship spotted the two vessels sailing alongside each other in the early hours of Jan. 20 and Japan decided to notify the UN of its strong suspicion of a ship-to-ship transfer. The GOJ shared the information with the United States, South Korea, and other relevant nations. Yomiuri and Sankei ran similar reports, adding that MOFA posted on its [website](#) photos of the alleged transfer taken by a JMSDF plane.

MOFA provides LDP with information on comfort women statues overseas

Asahi wrote that MOFA reported at an LDP meeting on Wednesday that a total of 15 statues symbolizing the comfort women have been erected in the United States and three other nations. According to the MOFA data, such statues have been installed at 12 sites in six states, including New Jersey and California, as well as Canada, Australia, and Germany. MOFA also reported that seven local assemblies in the United States have adopted resolutions related to the establishment of comfort women statues. According to the paper, some of the LDP participants expressed the opinion that it is necessary for Japanese embassies and consulates to urge local communities not to approve moves to establish such statues.

Foreign Minister Kono says Japan to provide support for Palestinian refugees

Asahi wrote that at his meeting with Director-General Krähenbühl of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) at MOFA on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Kono reportedly said that Japan wants to do as much as it can to support Palestinian refugees. The paper wrote that in response to the UNRWA director's request for financial assistance, Kono reportedly expressed Japan's intention to provide support by saying that activities of the UNRWA contribute to stability in the Middle East.

SECURITY

GOJ calls for measures to prevent unscheduled landings by U.S. military helicopters

All national dailies ran follow-up reports on a U.S. military helicopter's precautionary landing at a municipal heliport on Tonaki Island in Okinawa. Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe stated at a Lower House plenary session on Wednesday that he fully understands the feelings of the people of Okinawa and takes the issue seriously. Asahi wrote that Governor Onaga visited the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the U.S. Embassy on Wednesday to lodge a protest. Sankei wrote that the governor called for thorough investigations into the cause of the incident and effective measures to prevent a recurrence at his meetings with LDP Secretary General Nikai, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Sugita, and Deputy Chief of Mission Young.

LDP to lodge protest with U.S. over unscheduled landings by military helicopters

NHK reported on its website on Wednesday that LDP Secretary General Nikai told Prime Minister Abe at the Kantei in the morning that the LDP intends to lodge a protest with the U.S. over the unscheduled landings by U.S. military helicopters in Okinawa and called on the GOJ to respond resolutely. According to the network, Nikai told the premier: "The people of Okinawa are concerned and it is important for us to show them our support. We must lodge a protest with the U.S. side. I want the government to respond in a resolute manner." Nikai later told reporters: "As a ruling party, the LDP is charged with diplomacy along with the government, and will respond in sync with the government. I conveyed our stern position to Prime Minister Abe. He completely understood."

