



Morning Alert - Friday, January 26, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks gave top play to reports that Japan has been hit by a cold snap, with temperatures in parts of Hokkaido dropping to minus 31 degrees Celsius. Fuji TV led with a report that a former sumo wrestler is claiming that a senior colleague punched him in the face and broke his jaw four years ago, but the stable master chose not to disclose the incident.

Top stories in national dailies included an estimate by the Health Ministry that more than 1 million people will probably need home healthcare services in 2025 (Asahi); a report by the Japanese Federation of Bar Associations that the number of lawyers in Japan has exceeded 40,000 for the first time (Mainichi); GOJ plans to promote deregulation to foster promising startups (Yomiuri); and a Health Ministry plan to expand childcare services for sick children to support working parents (Nikkei).

ECONOMY

President Trump suggests U.S. might reconsider a Pacific trade deal, if it were “substantially better”

Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei reported online that President Trump reportedly said on Thursday that his administration would consider rejoining the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal if the United States is able to strike a “substantially better” agreement. “I would do TPP, if we made a much better deal than we had,” President Trump was quoted as telling CNBC in an interview in Switzerland. NHK, TBS, Fuji-TV, TV Asahi, and TV Tokyo aired similar reports this morning.

Economic revitalization minister plans to submit TPP approval bill to current Diet session

Nikkei wrote that Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi told an LDP taskforce on the TPP on Thursday that the GOJ is planning to submit to the current Diet session a bill to approve the TPP agreement that is expected to be signed by 11 nations in March. The GOJ will seek to pass the bill and approve the accord by June to pave the way for effectuating it in 2019.

INTERNATIONAL

LDP lawmakers express opposition to Abe's planned visit to South Korea

All national dailies wrote that a group of LDP lawmakers led by Upper House member Hirofumi Nakasone, who chairs the LDP Special Mission Committee on Restoring Honor and Trust in Japan, visited Prime Minister Abe at the Kantei on Thursday to convey their opposition to his plan to visit South Korea to attend the opening ceremony for the PyeongChang Olympics. The prime minister reportedly responded that while he is in South Korea, he will urge President Moon to steadily implement the 2015 comfort women agreement. According to the papers, during the committee's joint meeting on Wednesday with the LDP Foreign Affairs Division, all of the participants expressed opposition to Abe's visit by saying it could send the wrong message to South Korea and the international community.

Abe meets with abductees' families

Asahi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that Prime Minister Abe held a meeting with the families of the Japanese abductees and their supporters at the Kantei on Thursday. In response to a request from the families to bring all the abductees back home by the end of this year, Abe reportedly said that he will strive to resolve the issue in cooperation with the international community by calling on other nations to deepen their understanding of the abduction issue and implement the sanctions resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council.

South Korea lodges protest against Tokyo museum related to disputed islands

Mainichi ran a Kyodo report saying that the South Korean Foreign Ministry issued a spokesman's statement on Thursday calling on Japan to immediately close the museum opened in Tokyo on Thursday for the display of items related to the Senkaku Islands and the Liancourt Rocks (known as Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea). The statement said that the move is an unwarrantable claim to territory inherent to South Korea.

SECURITY

Abe comments on defense capabilities of Japan

Yomiuri wrote that during interpellations at plenary sessions of both Diet chambers on Thursday, Prime Minister Abe reportedly stated that he will strive to strengthen Japan's defense capabilities by improving the quality of the SDF's equipment in order to secure the lives and property of the Japanese people in view of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. The premier also reportedly said that Japan will maintain transparency in introducing long-range cruise missiles and

Aegis Ashore platforms so as not to raise concerns among its neighbors. When asked whether the introduction of the Aegis Ashore system and other equipment will cause Japan to review its exclusively defense-oriented policy or possess the capability to attack enemy bases, Abe reportedly stated that the exclusively defense-oriented policy is a basic principle of the nation grounded in the spirit of the Constitution and that he has no intention to change the division of roles between the United States and Japan under which Japan depends on the capabilities of the United States to attack enemy bases. Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei ran similar reports.

