



Morning Alert - Monday, January 29, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports that the Financial Services Agency is planning to order Coincheck, a Tokyo-based cryptocurrency exchange, to improve its business operations after it about 58 billion yen worth of NEM virtual money was stolen by hackers. TBS and TV Asahi led with reports that Georgia-born sumo wrestler Tochinoshin won his first-ever title in the grand tournament on Saturday. Fuji TV reported on a series of sumo scandals.

Major front-page stories in national dailies included Foreign Minister Kono's visit to Beijing on Sunday, the kickoff for the Nago mayoral election campaign in Okinawa, and follow-up reports on the alleged theft of cryptocurrency on Coincheck.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Japan, China agree to seek reciprocal visits by their leaders

All national papers on Monday reported extensively on yesterday's foreign ministerial meeting between Japan and China held in Beijing, during which Foreign Minister Kono and his counterpart Wang agreed to make arrangements for Prime Minister Abe and President Xi to visit each other's capitals. In the first trip to China in 21 months by Japanese foreign minister, Kono called for "full-scale improvement" in bilateral ties. In response, Wang said the "improvement and development of bilateral relations will serve the interests of both nations."

The two ministers exchanged views on the situation in North Korea, China's maritime advancement in the East China Sea, and China's "One Belt, One Road" trade promotion initiative. Although they agreed to make additional efforts to launch the agreed-upon bilateral defense communication mechanism to avoid inadvertent clashes between their militaries in the East China Sea, Wang

dismissed Kono's request for China to take measures to prevent a recurrence of the recent incident in which a submerged Chinese submarine was operating near the Senkakus.

Kono later met with Premier Li and asked him to visit Japan this year to attend a proposed trilateral summit with South Korea. The Chinese official promised to give positive consideration to the invitation. The Japanese minister told the press afterward that he sensed that Beijing has a strong desire to improve Sino-Japanese relations.

Yomiuri wrote that Tokyo and Beijing are both very interested in jumpstarting bilateral relations, opining that the Abe administration needs China's cooperation to defuse the tension on the Korean Peninsula and to boost business prospects for Japanese companies by capitalizing on President Xi's Belt and Road initiative. According to the daily, the Xi administration's attachment of importance to Tokyo was evidenced by the fact that Premier Xi met with Kono on Sunday since the Chinese leader rarely receives courtesy calls from foreign officials on the weekend. Asahi said relations between Tokyo and Beijing finally appear to be thawing, although deep differences still remain with regard to the Senkakus. Mainichi wrote that Beijing elected to improve ties with Japan following the Abe administration's decision to support President Xi's Belt and Road initiative. Sankei projected that improvement in Tokyo-Beijing relations will eventually reach its limit on account of the deep schisms over the Senkakus and historical perceptions.

### **Leaders of Japan, South Korea to hold summit on Feb. 9**

All national dailies on Saturday reported that sources disclosed on Friday that Prime Minister Abe will meet with his South Korean counterpart Moon on the afternoon of Feb. 9, ahead of the opening ceremony for the PyeongChang Olympics. According to Sankei, the summit will take place at a hotel near the venue of the opening ceremony. Nikkei wrote that the premier is expected to call on South Korea to implement the comfort women agreement and confirm cooperation to apply pressure on the North. Asahi said Abe is also expected to meet with Vice President Pence on Feb. 7 in Tokyo to confirm policies on North Korea.

### **Japan, France hold "two plus two" meeting**

All national papers on Saturday and Sunday reported that the foreign and defense ministers of Japan and France held a "two plus two" meeting in Tokyo on Friday. Yomiuri wrote that the two sides reached a broad agreement on concluding an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) that would allow the SDF and the French military to share defense supplies, and agreed to commence a joint study on technology to detect mines buried at the bottom of the sea. The ministers also agreed to maximize pressure on North Korea and oppose any unilateral actions that would increase tension in the East and South China Seas. The paper also wrote that the two governments plan to examine ways to realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific region."

### **French President Macron to visit Japan this year**

Sunday morning's Nikkei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono held a strategic dialogue with visiting French Foreign Minister Le Drian on Saturday, saying that the two ministers agreed to arrange

French President Macron's first visit to Japan sometime this year. Kyodo reported that the two countries are aiming to have the visit take place by the summer. Nikkei said they also agreed to work together on ratifying the Japan-EU EPA at an early date. They also reportedly confirmed the need to maximize pressure on North Korea and fully implement the UNSC sanctions resolutions. The paper added that Prime Minister Abe is considering visiting France for the opening ceremony for Japonism 2018 to be held in France in July. Mainichi carried a similar story.

### **Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko to visit to Hawaii in June**

NHK reported this morning that Prince Akishino and Princess Kiko are expected to make an official visit to Hawaii in June to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first arrival of Japanese immigrants to Hawaii. According to the network, the couple will leave Japan in early June and stay in Hawaii for about a week, during which they will attend a ceremony on June 7.

## **SECURITY**

### **Nago mayoral election campaign kicks off**

All national papers on Monday took up the official kickoff of the campaign for the Nago mayoral race in Okinawa on Sunday, noting that anti-base mayor Inamine will go head to head with former municipal assembly member Toguchi, who was fielded by the LDP with the goal of unseating the incumbent. Okinawa Governor Onaga is campaigning hard to ensure the reelection of Inamine in the belief that his victory is critical to derailing the ongoing FRF landfill operation off Camp Schwab. As the Komeito party is backing Toguchi's bid, the election appears to be a "proxy war" between Onaga and the Abe administration. The dailies projected that the outcome will have a large impact on the defiant governor's bid to seek reelection in the fall and block the progress of the FRF construction.

### **U.S. service member arrested in Okinawa**

Today's Yomiuri wrote briefly that a U.S. Marine belonging to MCAS Futenma was arrested on Saturday night on assault charges, saying that the 28-year-old service member allegedly punched a local hotel clerk after entering the lobby. The suspect was reportedly intoxicated at the time.

### **Abe says U.S. nuclear deterrence necessary to deal with North Korea**

Saturday morning's Sankei reported that Prime Minister Abe said during an Upper House plenary session on Friday that "the GOJ has a responsibility to protect the lives and peace of its people at all costs" and stressed that "in addition to conventional weapons, it is essential to maintain the U.S. nuclear deterrence under the U.S.-Japan alliance." On the review of the National Defense Program Guidelines, Abe also reportedly said: "The utilization of new sectors, such as cyberspace and outer space, will become vitally important. It is not enough to only think about the conventional areas of land, sea, and air.... We need to not only strengthen ballistic missile defense but also seriously work on these new sectors."

### **Japan decorates ex-U.S. officials Gates, Hadley for boosting alliance**

Kyodo News reported that Japan has recognized former Defense Secretary Robert Gates and former National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley for their contributions to strengthening the bilateral alliance. In a decoration ceremony held in Washington on Thursday, Japanese Ambassador to the U.S. Sasae presented the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun to both Gates, 74, and Hadley, 70. Kyodo wrote that a message from Prime Minister Abe was read by an embassy official at the ceremony, saying that Japan remembers the assistance and disaster relief known as Operation Tomodachi that was provided under Gates' leadership in the wake of the devastating earthquake and tsunami that hit northeastern Japan in March 2011. "The people of Japan will never forget the dedication and support (shown) by the U.S. military under the leadership of Secretary Gates," said Abe in the message. Abe also hailed Gates' initiatives in pushing forward the realignment of the U.S. forces in Japan.

## ECONOMY

### **President Trump says he will consider rejoining TPP**

All national dailies extensively reported on Saturday morning on President Trump's speech at an annual meeting of the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland, on Friday, during which he said the U.S. might consider negotiating with TPP members either individually or as a group "if it is in the interests of all." Noting that President Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the TPP right after he took office last January, Asahi wrote that if the U.S. were to engage in multilateral trade agreements such as the TPP, it would mark a shift from the President's policy of focusing on bilateral trade deals. Sankei quoted a senior White House official as saying on Friday that there has been no change in the U.S. position of not participating in the current TPP and that "the President meant the U.S. would be ready to rejoin the TPP if the conditions were changed in favor of the U.S."

Mainichi said while the GOJ would welcome the possibility of the U.S. returning to the TPP, it is taking a cautious stance, quoting Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishimura as saying: "We need to determine his real intention." The paper also wrote that since President Trump indicated changing the TPP terms in favor of the U.S. as a condition for its return, the paper said renegotiating the deal would take a long time, quoting Nishimura as also saying: "The GOJ basically will not accept renegotiation." TPP Minister Motegi also reportedly told reporters: "The top priority is to put the TPP11 into effect."

### **Number of foreign workers in Japan reaches record high**

Saturday morning's Nikkei reported on an announcement by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare on Friday that the number of foreigners working in Japan as of the end of October 2017 was up 18% from a year before to 1,278,670, marking a record high for the fifth straight year. The paper said Japanese companies hired more foreign technical trainees and students, adding that many foreigners are working in industries with severe labor shortages.

## POLITICS

### **Senior Vice Minister Matsumoto resigns over heckling at Diet**

All Saturday morning national papers reported that Senior Vice Minister at the Cabinet Office Fumiaki Matsumoto submitted his letter of resignation to Prime Minister Abe on Friday to take responsibility for his heckling at a Diet session on Thursday in relation to the recent series of unscheduled landings by U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa. When Japanese Communist Party leader Shii was criticizing the GOJ over the incidents, Matsumoto reportedly jeered, "How many people died in the incidents?" Mainichi wrote that according to a GOJ source, PM Abe and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga made the decision to accept Matsumoto's resignation in order to minimize the damage on the upcoming Nago mayoral election on Feb. 4.

### **Poll shows increase in cabinet support**

Today's Nikkei front-paged the results of its latest public opinion poll that showed a five-point recovery of public approval of the Abe administration to 55% from the previous month. Asked which politician is best suited to become the LDP leader when the ruling party's presidential election is held in September, 35% chose Prime Minister Abe, followed by Principal Deputy Secretary General Shinjiro Koizumi (18%) and former Defense Minister Ishiba (17%).

### **Hiromu Nonaka, former chief cabinet secretary, dies at 92**

All Saturday morning national papers reported that Hiromu Nonaka, who served as chief cabinet secretary in the 1990s, died at the age of 92 on Friday at a hospital in Kyoto. Nonaka was known for his pacifist views.



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