



Morning Alert - Friday, February 2, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks led with reports on the snowfall in the Tokyo area since last night.

Top stories in national dailies included follow-up reports on a fire in Sapporo in which 11 people died (Asahi, Mainichi); a plan by Kyoto University to admit 17 rejected applicants following the discovery of an error on the entrance exam (Yomiuri); moves by financial institutions to provide extended services for post-retirement years (Nikkei); and the decision by the Court of Arbitration for Sport to nullify the lifetime bans on 28 Russian athletes from the Olympics over alleged doping (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Special Representative Yun comments on North Korea

Nikkei wrote that Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun commented on the U.S. response to North Korea at a press gathering on the sidelines of a conference in Tokyo on Thursday by reportedly saying that although military action is an option, he does not believe it is "close." The paper wrote that Yun reportedly said that channels of communication are open. The paper also wrote that while welcoming inter-Korea dialogue as a significant development, the U.S. official reportedly pointed out that any dialogue between the United States and the DPRK should lead to denuclearization.

U.S., Japanese chief negotiators for Six-Party Talks to meet

Sankei wrote that MOFA announced on Thursday that Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi will meet with Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun in Tokyo on Feb. 6. The two officials are their nations' chief negotiators for the Six-Party Talks. The paper conjectured that they will probably confirm strengthened cooperation in responding to North Korea.

Economic advisor to ROK president comments on Japan-ROK relations

Nikkei front-paged a recent interview with Kim Hyun-chul, an economic advisor to South Korean President Moon. The paper wrote that since this year marks the 20th anniversary of the 1998 Japan-ROK Joint Declaration, Kim expressed hope that the two nations will issue a “new joint declaration” in October. Concerning the comfort women issue, the official reportedly said the ROK government will not make additional requests of Japan.

UN chief taps Japanese scholar to head disaster reduction office

Asahi and Sankei wrote that UN Secretary General Guterres announced on Wednesday his appointment of former Japanese diplomat Mami Mizutori as his special representative for the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. Mizutori is currently the executive director of the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures in Britain’s University of East Anglia.

PM Abe meets with UAE minister

Yomiuri wrote that Prime Minister Abe held talks with UAE State Minister Al Jaber, who doubles as the chief executive officer of Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, at the Kantei on Thursday. The paper speculated that the prime minister asked the minister to renew Japanese firms’ oil-field contracts with the UAE that are set to expire in March. Economic and Trade Minister Seko was also present at the meeting.

SECURITY

U.S. antiballistic missile test apparently fails

All national dailies except Nikkei wrote that the Missile Defense Agency of the Department of Defense announced on Wednesday that it conducted a test involving an SM3 Block IIA interceptor missile in Kauai, Hawaii. Asahi wrote that although the agency has not yet announced the results of the test, GOJ sources speculate that the test failed. According to the sources, the agency reportedly informed the Ministry of Defense following the test that it could not confirm whether the missile hit the target. Several U.S. media outlets reported that the test was unsuccessful. Asahi noted that the United States and Japan began jointly developing the SM3 Block IIA in 2006 and that the U.S. government has expressed its intention to sell four of these missiles and related equipment to Japan for about 14.5 billion yen. The paper also wrote that Japan intends to deploy the missile in the Aegis Ashore system it plans to procure in fiscal 2023. Sankei cited a CNN report saying that the Department of Defense said it has not announced the results of the test because of the sensitivity surrounding North Korea’s participation in the upcoming PyeongChang Olympics.

Mainichi quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling a regular news conference on Thursday that he has not received a report on the test and that the GOJ is making inquiries.

Naha court says former U.S. base worker must pay damages for woman’s death in 2016

NHK reported on its website on Thursday evening that the Naha District Court approved the claim for damages filed by the bereaved family of a woman who was killed by former U.S. civilian worker Kenneth Shinzato in Uruma, Okinawa, in 2016. Shinzato was sentenced to life imprisonment last December. The network said the woman's family had filed for compensation using a system that enables crime victims and their families to seek redress from defendants in criminal trials, adding, however, that Shinzato submitted to the court a document stating that he does not have the ability to pay. If no objection is filed with the court within two weeks, the family is planning to request through the Okinawa Defense Bureau that the GOJ and USG pay the damages in accordance with the SOFA.

