


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Wednesday, February 7, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on record snowfall in Fukui Prefecture. All commercial networks led with reports on the announcement yesterday that Princess Mako and her fiancée Kei Komuro will postpone their marriage until 2020.

Most national papers gave prominent top coverage to the global stock slide in Tuesday's trading.

VICE PRESIDENT PENCE



Vice President Pence arrives in Tokyo

All national dailies except Sankei reported that Vice President Pence arrived at Yokota AB last night and will hold talks with Prime Minister Abe today to reaffirm bilateral cooperation and trilateral coordination with South Korea in reining in North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. Pointing out that the Vice President will meet with ROK President Moon on Thursday, Asahi quoted a USG source as saying: "We would like to hold South Korea's conciliatory line in check by first confirming coordination with Japan in applying pressure on North Korea." Kyodo quoted an unnamed senior USG official as saying that the Vice President and PM Abe will make clear that the two nations are strongly committed to applying maximum pressure on Pyongyang.

Mainichi and Kyodo projected that the Vice President will visit the Defense Ministry this morning and survey the PAC-3 batteries currently deployed on its premises. While noting that the Vice President

will meet separately with Deputy Prime Minister Aso tonight, Mainichi explained that the talks will not be part of the bilateral economic dialogue.

Vice President Pence comments on North Korea

In reporting on Vice President Pence's arrival in Tokyo last night, all national dailies except Sankei took up remarks made to the press by Vice President Pence en route to Japan, during which he spoke about the heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula. The Vice President reportedly said: "We'll be ensuring that whatever cooperation that's existing between North and South Korea today on Olympic teams does not cloud the reality of a regime that must continue to be isolated by the world community... We will continue to isolate North Korea economically and diplomatically until they abandon their nuclear and ballistic missile ambitions." When asked about the possibility of communication with North Korean officials in PyeongChang, the Vice President said: "President Trump has said he always believes in talking, but I have not requested a meeting. We'll see what happens." Yomiuri took this remark to mean that Vice President Pence may agree to exchange ceremonial greetings with DPRK visitors.

According to Yomiuri, the Vice President visited a U.S. base in Anchorage, Alaska, on his way to Japan and observed missile defense platforms there in an apparent attempt to display the U.S. capability to shoot down North Korean ballistic missiles. He later told the press that America's defense against potential inbound missile attacks is "the best in the world."

Vice President Pence invites father of deceased student to PyeongChang Olympics

Tuesday evening's Yomiuri wrote that an unnamed senior USG official reportedly told the press by phone on Monday that Vice President Pence has invited the father of Otto Warmbier, an American student who died following his release from North Korea in June 2017, to attend the opening ceremony for the PyeongChang Olympics. The paper quoted the official as reportedly saying that the Vice President will not allow North Korea to use the Olympics for propaganda purposes. The paper speculated that the United States is aiming to inform the international community of the inhumane actions of the DPRK.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japan affirm coordination on DPRK

Asahi took up a meeting held yesterday in Tokyo between MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi and visiting U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Yun, during which the two officials agreed to step up the pressure on North Korea to the maximum extent. Other national dailies ran similar stories.

Foreign Minister Kono "waffling" over Nuclear Posture Review

Asahi wrote that Foreign Minister Kono has apparently toned down his positive assessment of the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review, noting that while the top Japanese diplomat initially said he “appreciated it highly” in a released statement, he later expressed “regret” over the NPR’s negative description of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty in his personal blog and during a press conference. The daily speculated that the politician is torn between his personal commitment to nuclear disarmament and his role as the foreign minister of Japan, which has to rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella for national defense. Tokyo Shimbun published a similar story, saying that Kono’s contradictory statements reflect Japan’s dilemma.

Japanese, Russian diplomats exchange views on economic activities in disputed territories

Asahi, Mainichi, and Nikkei wrote that Deputy Foreign Minister Mori and his Russian counterpart Morgulov held a meeting in Tokyo on Tuesday to discuss “joint economic activities” in the Northern Territories. They reportedly exchanged views on joint activities for such concrete business initiatives as seafood farming and tourism promotion on the disputed islands. The two diplomats agreed to have their deputies finalize details for the implementation ahead of Prime Minister Abe’s planned trip to Russia in May.

SECURITY

Concern over planned deployment of GSDF Ospreys in Saga

Yomiuri reported on surging opposition among residents and some officials in Saga to the proposed deployment of GSDF Ospreys at Saga Airport following Monday’s fatal crash of a GSDF helicopter into a home in Kanzaki, quoting an unnamed senior Defense Ministry official as acknowledging that it has now become even more difficult to move forward with the plan. While emphasizing the importance of the deployment for the defense of remote islands in and around Okinawa, Defense Minister Onodera said the top priority for the time being will be to determine the cause of the accident.

Nago to receive hefty subsidies from Tokyo

Nikkei wrote that the GOJ is likely to increase its subsidies for the Nago municipal government in Okinawa by several billion yen in a bid to support newly-elected Mayor Toguchi, who defeated in Sunday’s mayoral race the anti-base incumbent Inamine, who will step down tomorrow. While serving as mayor for the past eight years, Inamine refused to accept central government subsidies for U.S. force realignment totaling some \$125 million on account of his rejection of the FRF initiative off Camp Schwab. The GOJ will probably make up for the lost amount by increasing the subsidies by several billion yen annually so that the new municipal chief can fulfill his campaign pledge to revitalize the local economy toward Tokyo’s ultimate goal of thwarting anti-FRF Okinawa Governor Onaga’s reelection bid in the autumn.

ECONOMY

Secretary Tillerson reportedly says U.S. has not rejected TPP

Tuesday evening's Nikkei ran a Kyodo story from Washington saying that Secretary of State Tillerson reportedly stated at a joint news conference with Peruvian Foreign Minister Aljovin on Monday that President Trump is looking at the TPP-11 with interest and has not completely rejected it. The Secretary was also quoted as adding that the United States has very strong trade agreements already in place with many countries in the Western hemisphere and should use them fully.

U.S. trade deficit with Japan nearly the same as previous year

Yomiuri wrote that according to Commerce Department data, the U.S. trade deficit with Japan in 2017 amounted to \$68.8 billion, almost the same level as a year before. Japan had the third largest trade surplus with the United States after China and Mexico. While noting that more than 70% of the U.S. trade deficit with Japan was related to auto trade, the daily projected that the Trump administration will likely press Japan to import more U.S. vehicles and agricultural products. Other dailies carried similar articles.

