


JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Friday, February 16, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports on the PyeongChang Olympics, focusing on Japanese figure skater Yuzuru Hanyu who will perform in the men's short program today.

Top stories in national dailies included the fact that none of the seven major nuclear power plant operators has selected a disposal site for waste from decommissioning (Asahi); moves among lawmakers to provide redress for women with disabilities who were forcibly sterilized (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to announce the next era name as early as the end of 2018 (Yomiuri); the fact that nearly two-thirds of Japanese bank loans carry rates below 1% (Nikkei); and a GOJ plan to establish with Vietnam, the Philippines, and Indonesia a system to monitor radio jamming by China and North Korea (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

Vice President Pence comments on DPRK

Yomiuri wrote that during his speech in Washington on Wednesday, Vice President Pence reportedly stressed that there will be no change in the United States' policy of continuing the maximum pressure campaign against North Korea until it gives up its nuclear and missile programs.

New Japanese envoy to the U.S. comments on bilateral coordination, comfort women

All national dailies reported on the group interview Japan's new ambassador to the United States Shinsuke Sugiyama gave on Thursday. Asahi and Mainichi quoted Sugiyama as saying that maintaining close coordination with the United States in dealing with North Korea is a pressing task for him and that Japan and the United States are in complete agreement that they should not hold

dialogue with Pyongyang for the sake of dialogue. Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Nikkei quoted Sugiyama as expressing his readiness to visit major U.S. cities to seek understanding of the Japanese government's position on the comfort women issue, saying that it is necessary for Japan to send a stronger message on the issue.

Japanese, Russian foreign ministers to meet in Tokyo next month

Asahi wrote that it has learned from several GOJ sources that the Japanese and Russian governments are making final arrangements for Foreign Minister Kono and his Russian counterpart Lavrov to hold talks in Tokyo in late March. The paper wrote that during the planned meeting Japan is hoping to discuss arrangements for future talks between Prime Minister Abe and President Putin and the details of joint Russo-Japanese economic activities in the Northern Territories.

SECURITY

U.S., Japan to hold tabletop exercise on missile defense

Nikkei wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on Thursday that the Japan Self-Defense Forces will hold tabletop exercises for ballistic missile defense with the United States February 16-23. Although the two nations had conducted similar exercises involving the U.S. Navy and the Maritime Self-Defense Force until last year, they will expand their scope this year by including the U.S. Air Force, the Marines, and the Air Self-Defense Force. The paper speculated that the expanded exercises are intended to display a firm stance toward North Korea.

PACOM commander comments on NEO for possible Korea contingency, China

Asahi wrote that PACOM Commander Harris reportedly told a House Armed Services Committee hearing on Wednesday that PACOM is making efforts to draw up plans for noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO) for American citizens living in South Korea in preparation for a possible contingency on the Korean Peninsula. The paper wrote that the admiral, pointing out that there are more than 200,000 American civilians, 60,000 Japanese, and 1 million Chinese living in South Korea, reportedly stated that it would be useful for Japan and China to develop NEO plans. Yomiuri also reported on Adm. Harris's remarks, quoting him as reportedly saying that China could soon militarily challenge the U.S. in almost every domain.

Komeito sets up working group on SOFA

Mainichi and Sankei wrote that on Thursday the Komeito party set up a new working group to study the implementation of the U.S.-Japan Status of Forces Agreement with incidents involving the U.S. military in Okinawa in mind. Mainichi conjectured that the move is intended to demonstrate the party's consideration for the people of Okinawa.

U.S. revises accident rate for Osprey

Asahi, Nikkei, and Tokyo Shimbun wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on Thursday that the accident rate for the U.S. Marines' MV-22 Osprey as of September 2017 was 3.24 per 100,000

flight hours. Although the Marines announced in November 2017 that the aircraft's accident rate was 3.27, it was lowered due to a correction of flight hours.

