



Morning Alert - Friday, April 6, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports that prominent animator Isao Takahata died at the age of 82 on Thursday. Fuji TV and TV Asahi led with reports that two Tokyo Metropolitan Television Broadcasting Corporation employees were arrested on Thursday on suspicion of helping renowned commentator Susumu Nishibe commit suicide in January. TBS aired the 2018 Masters Tournament.

Main front-page items in national papers included updates on the GSDF's failure to inform the defense minister of its discovery of daily activity logs of GSDF logistical support operations in Iraq.

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump, PM Abe making arrangements to play golf in Florida

NTV reported this morning that Prime Minister Abe is making final arrangements to play golf with President Trump when he visits the U.S. from April 17. The network said the President strongly requested the golf outing, quoting a Kantei official as saying: "There are many opinions about it, but it is significant that the two leaders will be able to talk in private."

DPRK leader voiced readiness to return to Six-Party Talks

Nikkei front-paged the disclosure by several sources involved in Sino-DPRK relations that when meeting with Chinese President Xi in Beijing in late March, Kim Jong Un said he was ready to return to the Six-Party Talks. Noting that China has been a primary proponent of the multilateral nuclear talks, the daily speculated that the North Korean leader was perhaps trying to get Beijing on his side to head off a possible U.S. military strike in the event that the planned talks between him and President Trump falter, based on the assessment that Washington will not be able to take military action as long as the Six-Party Talks are underway. Pointing out that the Chinese are poised to

seize the initiative in expediting the international community's dialogue with the Kim regime, the paper said the GOJ is cautious about the idea of resuming the Six-Party Talks and Prime Minister Abe is reportedly planning to ask President Trump to maintain the maximum pressure campaign at their summit in Florida later this month.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit South Korea next week

Thursday evening's Asahi wrote that arrangements are underway for Foreign Minister Kono to visit Seoul on April 10-11 for talks with Foreign Minister Kang, projecting that Kono will ask that the abduction issue be addressed during the inter-Korean summit scheduled for April 27. The top Japanese diplomat is also reportedly hoping to meet with President Moon.

Japan promises continued support for Iraq reconstruction

All papers reported on a meeting held yesterday in Tokyo between Prime Minister Abe and Iraqi PM Abadi, during which the Japanese leader explained the GOJ's intention to continue to support the reconstruction of the war-torn nation in the Middle East. Abe reportedly told the press afterward that Tokyo will continue to proactively support Iraq reconstruction in order to maintain stability there. Ahead of the summit, the two governments reportedly co-sponsored an international conference on Iraq reconstruction, at which the participants agreed to improve law and order there by establishing a system to eliminate weapons held by civilians through enhanced vocational training and job creation.

SECURITY

USAF Ospreys arrive at Yokota

All national dailies except Nikkei highlighted the arrival of five CV-22 Ospreys at Yokota AB on Thursday, with Yomiuri speculating that the earlier-than-scheduled deployment is perhaps intended to apply stronger military pressure on North Korea ahead of the planned U.S.-DPRK summit. While quoting a USFJ press release as saying that the aircraft will "bring unparalleled special operations capabilities to the region," the daily said additional CV-22s may be deployed at MCAS Iwakuni.

Some local officials and residents around Yokota base are reportedly concerned about the Osprey's safety on account of accidents involving Futenma-based Ospreys in the past few years. Pointing out that the MV-22's "Class-A" mishap rate is higher than the average accident rate for USMC aircraft, Yomiuri said the basic structure of the CV-22 is the same as the MV-22. The daily also claimed that in operating the CV-22s at Yokota, the U.S. military has promised that it will avoid flying them over densely populated areas as much as possible, as it did when deploying the MV-22s at MCAS Futenma.

Meanwhile, Tokyo Shimbun wrote that the GOJ withheld information on the Ospreys' arrival for 18 days until April 3 even though it was told by the U.S. military on March 16 that the five tilt-rotor planes would arrive in Japan in early April. During a Diet committee session on Thursday, Foreign Minister Kono reportedly disclosed this, adding that the Japanese announcement on the arrival was

made on April 3 because the U.S. military had requested Japan not make the plan public until coordination had been completed. Anti-base activists reportedly reacted strongly to what they called the Japanese government's "concealment" of military information.

Inside the USS Carl Vinson

NTV aired a five-minute report early this morning on the nuclear carrier USS Carl Vinson, which is operating about 400 km southeast of Kadena AB in Okinawa. The network said the Carl Vinson was deployed to waters near the Korean Peninsula multiple times last year and is now operating in the Western Pacific. The network showed video of fighters performing touch-and-go landings and introduced the daily lives of the ship's 5,000 crew members, airing footage of the post office, shops, dental clinic, gym, and dining hall. The network also reported on the joint drill with the JDS Ise. The network added that while maintaining pressure on North Korea by conducting joint drills with Japan, the Carl Vinson will not participate in joint U.S.-ROK military drills this year because the U.S. wants to monitor the outcome of the U.S.-DPRK dialogue.

ECONOMY

China files WTO suit against U.S. metal tariffs

Nikkei reported that the Chinese government on Thursday filed a suit with the WTO against the Trump administration's imposition of hefty tariffs on Chinese and other foreign steel and aluminum imports, conjecturing that China is anxious to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Europe and Japan by playing up its willingness to comply with WTO rules. The daily said Beijing is wary of the possibility of Japan and the EU taking a concerted approach with the U.S. on the issue of protection of intellectual property in China. Other papers also took up China's decision to take the case to the WTO.

Meanwhile, Asahi, Yomiuri, and Sankei highlighted press remarks made on Wednesday by a number of high-ranking USG officials, including White House Press Secretary Sanders, Commerce Secretary Ross, and National Economic Council Director Kudlow regarding the escalated trade friction between the U.S. and China. The dailies said these officials struck a rather conciliatory tone, apparently expressing hope that the trade dispute between the world's two largest economies will be resolved through dialogue. Sanders told the White House press corps that "it will be a couple months before tariffs on either side would go into effect and be implemented, and we're hopeful that China will do the right thing." Secretary Ross said: "It wouldn't be surprising at all if the net outcome of all this is some sort of a negotiation." Kudlow reportedly pointed out in a TV interview that "nothing concrete has actually happened" in terms of tariffs on Chinese products.

CPTPP meeting to be held as early as June

Nikkei took up press remarks on Thursday by Minister for Fiscal and Economic Policy Motegi, who disclosed that the chief negotiators of the 11 members of the Comprehensive and Progressive

Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will assemble as early as June to discuss a mechanism for admitting new members.



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