



Morning Alert - Monday, April 9, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and NTV gave top play to a report that a powerful earthquake with a seismic intensity of 5 on the Japanese scale hit Shimane Prefecture at about 1:32 a.m. today, saying that the Japan Meteorological Agency issued a warning for strong aftershocks over the next week. Fuji TV and TV Asahi led with a report that Japanese national soccer team coach Vahid Halilhodzic is expected to be dismissed today. TBS aired the 2018 Masters Tournament.

No papers were published this morning due to a press holiday.

INTERNATIONAL

NHK says DPRK told U.S. that Kim Jong Un is ready to discuss denuclearization

NHK reported this morning on the finding that North Korea has told the U.S. that Kim Jong Un is ready to discuss the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The network said this was first reported by the Wall Street Journal on Sunday and the network has confirmed it with the White House. The network added, however, that it is not clear when and how the message was delivered. The network also reported on a CNN story saying that intelligence officials of the U.S. and North Korea have spoken several times to prepare for a summit between the two leaders and have even met in a third country. The network said although North Korea has been asking for the U.S.-DPRK summit to be held in Pyongyang, it remains to be seen whether the Trump administration will accept that request.

In meeting with Xi, Kim Jong Un said U.S. must guarantee regime before denuclearization

Sunday's Yomiuri gave front-page play to a report saying that a diplomatic source disclosed on Saturday that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told President Xi when they met on March 26 that he will only move toward denuclearization if the U.S. first guarantees that his regime will be preserved. The diplomatic source familiar with the China-DPRK summit last month quoted Kim as telling Xi: "If the United States definitely guarantees that our regime will be preserved and if we can receive the full compensation associated with the denuclearization, we will be able to completely relinquish our nuclear weapons." Kim also reportedly said he plans to normalize diplomatic relations with the U.S. and ask President Trump to open an embassy in Pyongyang.

President Trump, PM Abe planning their third "golf summit"

Sunday morning's Nikkei reported that several senior GOJ officials disclosed that Prime Minister Abe is making arrangements to play golf with President Trump when he visits the U.S. from April 17 to 20. The paper said playing golf with President Trump will give Abe an opportunity to demonstrate their close relationship in light of the North Korea issue. The daily said this will be the third time for the two leaders to hold a "golf summit" following their first one in Florida in February 2017 and their second one in Saitama in November. According to the senior GOJ officials, the U.S. side proposed the golf outing and the Japanese side reportedly decided that it would be best to have as many opportunities as possible for the two leaders to talk in private. The paper said the two leaders are expected to hold a summit at the Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida and play golf at one of the President's courses.

Japan, China to hold high-level economic dialogue

Nikkei reported on Sunday that the governments of Japan and China are planning to resume their high-level economic dialogue in mid-April after a hiatus of eight years. The paper said the dialogue will be held in conjunction with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang's visit to Japan on April 15 to 16, adding that the two sides are expected to discuss Japan's cooperation with China's "One Belt One Road" initiative as well as trade and investment issues. Noting that 2018 marks the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of the Japan-China Peace and Friendship Treaty, the daily said the two nations are hoping to build momentum for rapprochement ahead of the trilateral summit between Japan, China, and South Korea scheduled for May.

Chinese premier likely to visit Hokkaido after trilateral summit in May

Yomiuri reported on Sunday on the finding that Chinese Premier Li Keqiang is making arrangements to visit Hokkaido on May 10 and 11 after attending a trilateral summit with Japan and South Korea in Tokyo on May 9. The paper said the Chinese premier will attend a meeting between the heads of Chinese provinces and Japanese governors in Hokkaido. According to the paper, Li is also considering visiting Toyota Motor Hokkaido and a vegetable cultivation plant in the city of Tomakomai.

China to send art troupe to Pyongyang

Sunday's Nikkei reported that China is planning to send an art troupe to North Korea as early as the end of this month. The paper said that following the improvement of relations between China and North Korea at their recent summit, China is planning to play up the solidarity between the two nations through cultural exchange. A diplomatic source cited speculation that China will respond to North Korea's request for stronger regulation of North Korean defectors and relaxation of economic sanctions.

Leaders of Bhutan, Switzerland to visit Japan this month

Sunday's Yomiuri reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told reporters on Friday that Bhutanese Prime Minister Tobgay will visit Japan from April 10 to 13 and Swiss President Berset will visit Japan from April 12 to 15. The paper said the two leaders will meet separately with Prime Minister Abe while in Japan.

SECURITY

Cabinet Office poll shows 30% think Japan's defense situation is getting worse

Saturday's Asahi and Sankei reported on the results of the opinion poll released by the Cabinet Office on Friday, which found that those who said Japan's defense situation is getting worse rose for the fourth consecutive year to 30.3%. Sankei said this is probably due to the North Korean situation and China's military buildup. The poll, which was conducted from January 25 to February 11, asked respondents to choose multiple areas where they think Japan's situation is getting worse. According to Asahi, 35.5% of respondents chose "national finances," followed by "defense" at 30.3%. As for areas that are improving, 31.5% reportedly chose "medical welfare" and 20.5% cited "science and technology."

GOJ to launch first survey of privately owned land on remote islands

Sunday's Yomiuri gave top play to a report that the GOJ will conduct its first survey of privately owned land on the remote islands that form the border of Japanese territorial waters and EEZ. The paper said the GOJ is planning to establish a system to designate "land whose protection is crucial" and take steps for its protection. The daily said the move is aimed at strengthening the monitoring of land deals that could pose security threats, protecting Japan's territorial waters, and ensuring maritime interests.

Defense Minister Onodera denies doctoring of documents on U.S.-Japan defense cooperation

Sankei reported on Saturday that Defense Minister Onodera disclosed at a press conference on Friday that an investigation has found that there was no doctoring of the MOD's internal documents on defense cooperation between the U.S. and Japan that were updated after the ministry received a request for information disclosure. The documents were disclosed last May. Japanese Communist Party Diet Affairs chief Kokuta reportedly pointed out that some parts of the documents were deleted, claiming that this constitutes doctoring.

Okinawa Governor Onaga discharged from hospital after tests

Sankei reported on Sunday that the Okinawa Prefectural Government announced on Saturday that Governor Onaga was discharged from the hospital on Saturday evening. Onaga was admitted to the hospital on April 5 for tests. The daily said Onaga's health condition has not been disclosed.

ECONOMY

U.S. media says Trump administration mulling tougher restrictions on imported cars

All national dailies reported on Saturday evening or Sunday morning on a Wall Street Journal story on Friday saying that the Trump administration is considering subjecting only imported cars to stricter environmental rules, according to USG officials. The papers asserted that if the restrictions are introduced, they will deal a heavy blow to Japanese automakers. Asahi claimed that following the measures to impose steep tariffs on steel imports and Chinese products, the move demonstrates that the Trump administration is becoming increasingly protectionist. The paper said President Trump has ordered the EPA and the Department of Commerce to draw up a plan to impose stringent emissions standards only on imported cars. The daily pointed out that the U.S. has been asking Japan to abolish "non-tariff barriers" erected on the grounds of safety and environmental regulations, adding that there are voices within the U.S. government calling for careful consideration of the idea and that it is still at the stage of the examination of its feasibility from a legal standpoint.

Rakuten to become fourth wireless carrier

All Saturday morning papers reported that the Radio Regulatory Council of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications decided on Friday to allocate 4G bandwidth to Rakuten, allowing the company to launch cellular services in October 2019 as the fourth major wireless carrier in Japan. The decision is expected to be formally endorsed by Minister of Internal Affairs Noda on Monday. But Nikkei noted that the panel conditioned its approval on Rakuten building its own network and securing funds for capital investment due to concerns over the viability of Rakuten's plan, which aims to offer prices 30% lower than the three existing carriers – Docomo, KDDI, and Softbank. The papers said Rakuten's debut as a wireless carrier will intensify price competition among the carriers.

Japan intends to join U.S.'s WTO complaint against China

Saturday morning's Sankei carried a Kyodo story saying that it was learned on Friday that Japan has notified the WTO of its intention to join as a third party the U.S.'s complaint against China's alleged theft of intellectual property. According to the report, if China and the U.S. approve Japan's participation, Japan will be able to express its views in the WTO consultations.

SCIENCE

OECD calls Japan's efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions "insufficient"

Asahi reported on Sunday that the OECD has drafted a report saying that Japan's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 are "insufficient" and calling on Japan to strengthen its

measures. The paper said the OECD report urges Japan to accelerate its efforts to promote not only solar power but also wind power and geothermal power. The paper said OECD Secretary General Gurría is expected to refer to the report when making policy recommendations to Japan when he visits in the near future.

POLITICS

Democratic Party to merge with Party of Hope to form new party

Sunday's Sankei reported that the Democratic Party (DP) decided on Saturday to enter discussions with the Party of Hope about forming a new party using the "merger and acquisition" method that was employed when the now-defunct Democratic Party of Japan was founded in 1998. According to the daily, the DP will be maintained and the Party of Hope will be disbanded. The members of the Party of Hope will join the DP to create a new party. The paper said the parties are hoping to form a new party in early May.



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