



Morning Alert - Wednesday, May 9, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports on an incident in which a 7-year-old girl was hit by a train in Niigata on Monday, saying that she was apparently strangled to death before being abandoned on the railway.

Main front-page stories in national papers included the summit held between DPRK leader Kim Jong Un and Chinese President Xi in Dalian on Tuesday, President Trump's decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal, and Takeda Pharmaceutical's successful buyout of Irish drug maker Shire.

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary Pompeo heading to North Korea

Nikkei reported online on President Trump's announcement on Tuesday that Secretary of State Pompeo has departed for North Korea in preparation for his planned summit with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un. According to the article, the Secretary told the press on his flight to Yokota AB for refueling that he would meet DPRK officials to pin down key details for the summit, including the precise location, timing, and agenda. As for the rumored release of three American detainees, the Secretary reportedly stated that he had received no commitment for their release. But he said if they are freed, it would be a "great gesture." The Secretary added that he is not certain whether he will be able to hold talks with Kim Jong Un on this trip.

DPRK leader visits China again

All papers reported extensively on the second summit in about 40 days between DPRK leader Kim Jong Un and Chinese President Xi in Dalian on Tuesday, focusing on Kim's remarks that the United States should take "phased and synchronous measures" corresponding to the steps to be taken by

his regime toward denuclearization. With this statement, the North Korean strongman was apparently indicating that his country will only move ahead with denuclearization in exchange for a regime guarantee and relaxation of sanctions by the Trump administration. In response to Kim's statement reiterating his commitment to denuclearization, the Chinese president praised his decision to stop testing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles and pledged Beijing's full support in achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula through U.S.-DPRK dialogue. The papers said the fact that Kim used an aircraft to visit the Chinese port city indicates that he may be able to travel some distance for his summit with President Trump.

Kim eager to obtain China's backing prior to summit with President Trump

All dailies published reports looking into the motives behind Kim Jong Un's decision to stage another diplomatic surprise, noting that by visiting China again only weeks after his first historic trip to Beijing in late March, Kim appeared keen to obtain Beijing's backing ahead of his meeting with the U.S. leader that is expected to take place in a few weeks. They speculated that the apparently hastily arranged summit with the Chinese along with the lack of an announcement from the USG on the date and location of the Trump-Kim summit suggest that arrangements for the historic sit-down may have hit a snag, perhaps due to the U.S.'s insistence on maintaining the maximum pressure campaign. According to the papers, Kim might have been desperate to enlist China's support in the face of the Trump administration's hard line. Nikkei and Sankei wrote that senior U.S. officials have recently used the phrase "permanent, verifiable, and irreversible" denuclearization instead of "complete," speculating that the new language may mean that the Trump administration is taking an even tougher approach toward North Korea.

The papers conjectured that President Xi probably agreed to meet with the North Korean leader again in a bid to demonstrate to the international community that Beijing holds the key to achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula. The dailies claimed that by displaying "cordial and friendly" ties with Pyongyang, Beijing may have also been trying to keep Washington in check, as friction has intensified between the two superpowers over Taiwan and bilateral trade.

Meanwhile, Nikkei, Asahi, and Yomiuri reported that President Xi phoned President Trump last night to provide a briefing on his latest summit with Kim Jong Un. The Chinese leader reportedly expressed hope that "by taking phased actions and taking into account the reasonable security concerns of North Korea," the planned U.S.-DPRK summit will yield progress toward a political settlement on the Korean Peninsula issue. President Trump reportedly said in reply that he has high regard for the Chinese position on the Korean Peninsula issue.

ROK envoy urges Japan to launch dialogue with DPRK swiftly

Asahi ran an interview with South Korean Ambassador to Japan Lee Su-hoon, who advised the Abe administration to start dialogue with North Korea quickly if Japan wishes to remain a viable player in achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula. The academic-turned diplomat, who has offered

diplomatic counsel to President Moon, reportedly said: “The most effective way to head off “Japan passing” is to undertake dialogue [with North Korea] as soon as possible.” The envoy went on to say: “The chances are very high that if Prime Minister Abe elects to commence dialogue, such communication will be successful.”

Chinese premier arrives in Japan

All papers reported that Chinese Premier Li arrived in Tokyo last night for a trilateral summit today with Prime Minister Abe and South Korean President Moon. This is the first formal visit to Japan by the Chinese premier in eight years. The papers projected that the three leaders will hold intense discussions on North Korea, adding that trilateral economic cooperation, including a three-way free trade agreement, will also be high on the agenda. PM Abe reportedly stated at the Diet on Tuesday: “I would like to hold in-depth discussions on North Korea.” President Moon is reportedly scheduled to arrive in Japan this morning.

Nikkei asserted that the idea of reducing U.S. troops in South Korea will loom over today’s trilateral meeting since the issue of the U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula is closely linked to North Korea’s denuclearization and converting the Korean War armistice to a peace treaty. The paper speculated that a drawdown of U.S. forces could encourage China to play a more active role in realizing North Korea’s denuclearization. Sankei projected that the three leaders are likely to highlight mutual “coordination” on North Korea and other pending issues, noting that this will mark a sharp contrast to the “confrontation” and “friction” that have often been present among the three partners previously.

President Trump announces U.S. will withdraw from Iran nuclear deal

NHK reported this morning that President Trump announced on Tuesday that the U.S. will pull out of the Iran nuclear deal known as JCPOA and reinstate its economic sanctions against the nation. The network said the U.S. withdrawal could lead to the collapse of the nuclear deal framework and send shockwaves through the international community, including European nations, which has been hoping to maintain the nuclear deal. According to the USG, foreign financial institutions that have dealings with the Iranian central bank and companies involved in the trade of Iranian oil and resources will be subject to sanctions. The network said the President pointed out that there are flaws in the current nuclear deal, and that the U.S. will withdraw from it if they are not amended by May 12.

An NHK reporter said the President had North Korea in mind when announcing the planned U.S. withdrawal, quoting a senior USG official as saying that the announcement sends a “signal that the U.S. will not conclude an inadequate agreement with North Korea” ahead of the summit.

ECONOMY

ROK to decide on whether or not to join CPTPP by yearend

Asahi and Nikkei reported on a meeting held yesterday in Tokyo between Trade minister Seko and his ROK counterpart Paik Ungyu, during which the South Korean official indicated that the Moon administration will decide by December whether or not to join the CPTPP. Paik reportedly asked for Japan's cooperation for the early conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) trade initiative.

In a related development, Nikkei and Mainichi reported that parliamentary deliberations began on Tuesday on legislation that will enable the effectuation of the CPTPP, quoting Prime Minister Abe as saying in a plenary session of the Lower House that early effectuation would help the United States understand that its return would bring benefits to its economy and employment. Nikkei wrote that the Abe administration is anxious to obtain parliamentary endorsement of the CPTPP bills during the ongoing Diet session in order to send a message to Washington that Tokyo will not make concessions beyond the scope of the CPTPP in the planned "fair, free, and reciprocal" trade talks. Tokyo is also reportedly hoping that swift effectuation of the regional free trade scheme will prompt the U.S. business sector to urge the Trump administration to return to it.

