



Morning Alert - Monday, May 21, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and Fuji TV led with reports that Japanese director Hirokazu Koreeda won the Palme D'Or at this year's Cannes International Film Festival for his film "Shoplifters." NTV and TBS led with reports that actress Yukiji Asaoka passed away at the age of 82 on April 27. TV Asahi gave top play to a report that the head coach of Nihon University's American football team announced that he will resign to take responsibility for a dangerous tackle by one of his players.

Top stories in national dailies included film director Koreeda's achievement at Cannes (Asahi, Mainichi), a GOJ plan to stop using era names in administrative systems (Yomiuri), a plan by the Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group to develop a rapid payment settlement system (Nikkei), and the possible future lineup of senior officials at the scandal-hit Finance Ministry (Sankei).

AMBASSADOR

Ambassador Hagerty works energetically to promote investment in the U.S.

NTV's news and entertainment program "news every" on Saturday carried a five-minute report on Ambassador Hagerty, saying that he is working energetically to draw investment to the U.S. The network first showed the Ambassador and his wife attending the annual Black Ship Festival in Shimoda earlier in the day, airing footage of him saying: "Right here in Shimoda, we have a powerful symbol of our enduring friendship." Noting that the Ambassador was in charge of human resources in President Trump's transition team and lived in Japan as a businessman, the network said the President places deep trust in him. The Ambassador was quoted as telling the network with regard to U.S.-Japan relations: "What I noticed is that our friendship is even stronger today than it was when I was here back in the late 1980s.... Those types of people-to-people bonds bring us closer

together, generation after generation.” The network said that even when attending events in local regions in Japan, the Ambassador always focuses on the theme of “investment in the U.S.”

The network said the Ambassador is currently working hard to increase Japanese business expansion in the U.S. and boost foreign direct investment there. The network showed the Ambassador meeting with Kentucky Governor Bevin at his residence in Tokyo, saying that the Ambassador has been inviting many American governors to Japan to directly promote their states to Japanese companies. The network said the Ambassador also meets with Japanese firms and local government officials to encourage them to invest in the U.S. The network showed footage of him saying: “The President has instructed me to work hard to convey a very important message to Japan, and that is ‘there is no better place in the world to invest than the United States.’”

The network then reported on a company in Funabashi, Chiba, that decided to invest in the U.S. last year. The network said the company is currently building in Kentucky its first U.S. factory, explaining that the company chose Kentucky through a system called “Select USA.” The CEO said: “One municipality said it would reduce the price of land by half. One candidate site was offered for free. All the local municipalities were actively trying to invite foreign investment.” The network said while Japanese FDI in the U.S. was about \$33.9 billion in 2016, it rose to \$45.4 billion in 2017 under the Trump administration. Kentucky Governor Bevin was quoted as saying: “I talked with the Ambassador about some broader issues related to trade, but they are all connected to business. He is a businessman. He understands the language of business.”

The network showed video of the Ambassador saying: “We need to have more connection between the governors and the municipal leaders, and the companies that are making critical infrastructure and critical capital investment decisions.... I tell the governors that Japan is a society that really values relationships.”

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump, President Moon discuss North Korea

All national dailies wrote on Monday that President Trump and South Korean President Moon spoke by phone for about 20 minutes on Sunday. The papers wrote that according to South Korea’s presidential office, the two leaders apparently agreed to work closely to ensure the success of the planned U.S.-DPRK summit on June 12. The Blue House said that the two leaders also exchanged views on North Korea’s recent moves.

Japan mulls sending senior MOFA officials to Singapore during U.S.-DPRK summit

Sunday’s Nikkei wrote that the GOJ is considering sending senior MOFA officials to Singapore when the United States and the DPRK hold a summit there on June 12. According to the paper, the

ministry is looking into sending Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director-General Kanasugi and other senior diplomats to collect information and possibly seek meetings with North Korean officials.

Admiral Harris nominated as ambassador to South Korea

Saturday evening's Asahi and Nikkei and Sunday's Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Sankei wrote that the White House announced on Friday that President Trump has nominated Admiral Harry Harris, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, as ambassador to South Korea. The White House hailed him as "a naval officer with extensive knowledge, leadership, and geopolitical expertise in the Indo-Pacific region." Asahi speculated that Adm. Harris's nomination is intended to demonstrate the Trump administration's tough stance of calling for North Korea's denuclearization ahead of the planned U.S.-DPRK summit on June 12.

Japan, Pacific island nations agree to cooperate for DPRK denuclearization

All national dailies reported on Sunday on the 8th Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting held in Iwaki, Fukushima, on Friday and Saturday. Japan and the 14 Pacific island nations adopted a joint leaders' declaration in which they pledged to cooperate against North Korea's nuclear and missile programs by fully implementing UN Security Council sanctions resolutions. They also plan to take measures to combat the DPRK's sanctions-evading tactics such as ship-to-ship transfers at sea by removing North Korean vessels from their shipping registers. Japan has hosted the regional summit with the Pacific island nations every three years since 1997. The papers said this was the first time for DPRK-related issues to be included in the declaration.

Prime Minister Abe said at a post-summit joint press conference that Japan will conduct human resource development and people-to-people exchanges involving more than 5,000 people over the next three years to support the island nations' efforts to enhance their maritime security capabilities. Nikkei speculated that Japan is trying to strengthen its ties with the Pacific island nations in view of China's increasing influence in the region, saying that Abe's idea of a "free and open Indo-Pacific" was included in the declaration for the purpose of keeping China in check.

Abe to visit Russia for talks with Putin

Saturday morning's Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga announced on Friday that Prime Minister Abe will visit Russia on May 24-27 to attend an international economic forum in St. Petersburg on May 25 and hold talks with President Putin in Moscow on May 26. Mainichi speculated that Abe will discuss with the Russian leader specific plans for joint economic activities in the Northern Territories and how to deal with North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, quoting Suga as saying that the premier will talk about North Korea and make maximum efforts to resolve the issue of the Northern Territories and conclude a peace treaty with Russia based on a forward-looking perspective. Monday's Nikkei conjectured that Abe and Putin will agree to hold a 2+2 meeting of Japanese and Russian foreign and defense ministers by the end of this year.

Japan extends SDF deployment to UN mission headquarters in South Sudan

Saturday's Mainichi and Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ decided at a cabinet meeting on Friday to extend the current deployment of four SDF members to the headquarters of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) for another year through May 31, 2019. The move was made following a decision by UNMISS to extend its operations until March 15, 2019. Japan ended its five-year deployment of GSDF civil engineering units to South Sudan in May 2017, but it has kept the four SDF members at the mission headquarters. Defense Minister Onodera told the press on Friday that Japan will continue to participate in the mission based on its policy of actively taking part in international peacekeeping.

Abductees' families tell supporters about their meetings with USG officials

Saturday's Sankei wrote that Takuya Yokota, the brother of abductee Megumi Yokota, and Koichiro Iizuka, the son of abductee Yaeko Taguchi, visited the United States from April 30 through May 5 to seek U.S. help in resolving the issue of the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea. Yokota reportedly said at a meeting of supporters of the abductees' families that was held in Tokyo on Friday that he felt as though USG officials' understanding of the seriousness of the issue is deepening and that the officials gave him the impression that they will cooperate in resolving the issue.

ECONOMY

Lower House approves bill to ratify TPP-11

All national dailies wrote in their Saturday morning editions that the Lower House on Friday passed a bill to ratify the 11-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, paving the way for its enactment before the current Diet session ends in June. Asahi speculated that the GOJ is hurrying to complete the domestic procedures to approve the trade agreement ahead of its "free, fair, and reciprocal" (FFR) trade talks with the United States that are expected to start in mid-June. The paper wrote that although Japan plans to urge the United States to return to the TPP by explaining that Japan's tariffs on U.S. beef imports will drop to 9% from the current 38.5% if the United States joins the free trade agreement, there is no guarantee that this strategy will work with President Trump because he stated at his joint press conference with Prime Minister Abe in April that he does not intend to return to the TPP. Mainichi conjectured that Japan is rushing to enact the bill to fend off calls from the U.S. to hold bilateral trade negotiations and that Washington and Tokyo will likely engage in intensive negotiations in the FFR talks. Nikkei analyzed that Japan is hoping to use the TPP-11 as a "bulwark" to deflect U.S. pressure to hold bilateral talks.

Japan notifies WTO of intention to take countermeasures against U.S. metal tariffs

All national dailies wrote in their Saturday morning editions that the GOJ on Friday notified the WTO of its intention to consider taking countermeasures against U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. Asahi speculated that Tokyo is hoping to use the notification as a negotiating tool in future

trade talks with Washington. Yomiuri wrote that the GOJ will carefully study whether or not to actually take countermeasures in the future, speculating that the notification was intended to strengthen Tokyo's position in future talks with Washington by demonstrating that it might take countermeasures.

SECURITY

CCS Suga visits Okinawa

Sunday's Mainichi wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga held a meeting with the leaders of 12 municipalities in northern Okinawa, including Nago Mayor Toguchi, in Nago on Saturday. The local leaders asked for the central government's support for their infrastructure development and promotion of tourism. The paper speculated that Suga's trip was intended to prepare for the Okinawa gubernatorial election in the fall that is expected have a major impact on the ongoing FRF construction in Henoko. Yomiuri ran a similar report, quoting Suga as telling the local leaders that Prime Minister Abe will do everything possible to promote the local economy and reduce the base-hosting burden on Okinawa. Suga reportedly added: "There are many U.S. military facilities in northern Okinawa. We will work closely with the U.S. military to minimize their impact on the local community."

Nikkei claimed that the USG, which is apparently becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the 20-year impasse over Futenma relocation, is hoping that Prime Minister Abe and Suga will exercise leadership in resolving the issue. The daily noted that since the BOJ analyzed that the Okinawa economy has expanded for the past 56 months, it appears that the Abenomics economic stimulus policy is helping to boost the Okinawa economy. Sankei added that Mayor Nakama of the town of Kin expressed agreement with the plan to relocate warehouses and maintenance facilities from the Makiminato Service Area in Urasoe to Camp Hansen in Kin during his meeting with Suga.

Monday's Yomiuri, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that Suga said at a ceremony for the return of a portion of the Makiminato Service Area (Camp Kinser) in Urasoe that was held in Naha on Sunday that the return is a major step toward reducing the base-hosting burden on Okinawa and the central government will do everything it can to reduce the burden further, realize the total return of the Makiminato Service Area and the Futenma base, and boost the local economy.

POLITICS

Cabinet support edges up to 42%

Yomiuri reported on the results of its nationwide opinion poll conducted on May 18-20, which showed that support for the Abe cabinet increased by 3 points to 42% from a month ago. Nonsupport was 47%, down 6 points. When asked whether they expect the planned U.S.-DPRK summit on June 12 to help resolve the issue of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, 66% of the respondents said yes, while 29% said no. Some 60% expected the planned summit to help

resolve the abduction issue, while 37% did not. Some 41% said that Japan should hold a summit with the DPRK as early as possible, while 55% remained cautious about the idea.

