



Morning Alert - Tuesday, May 22, 2018

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact TokyoMATT@state.gov.

HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that Ehime Prefecture submitted to the Diet new documents on Kake Gakuen mentioning that the director of the school operator met with PM Abe to discuss the establishment of a new veterinary school. TBS, NTV, and Fuji TV led with reports on a press conference held by the father of the Kwansei Gakuin quarterback who was injured when tackled long after he had thrown a pass.

Yomiuri and Nikkei gave top play to reports on GOJ estimates that Japan's social security costs will likely rise 60% to 190 trillion yen by fiscal 2040, while Asahi and Mainichi led with reports on new documents submitted to the Upper House by the Ehime Prefectural government that indicate Prime Minister Abe's may possibly have known earlier of Kake Gakuen's interest in launching a veterinary school. Sankei led with a report on its finding of the Japan Coast Guard's moves to step up monitoring of North Korean vessels' illegal fishing in Japan's exclusive economic zone in the Sea of Japan.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe plans to call for DPRK's complete denuclearization in talks with President Trump

Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe notified a GOJ and ruling party meeting on Monday of his plan to hold bilateral talks with President Trump on the margins of the G7 summit to be held in Canada on June 8-9. The paper speculated that Abe is planning to reiterate his request to the President to urge North Korea to denuclearize in a "complete, verifiable, and irreversible" manner and resolve the issue of the abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korea.

Japan steps up international cooperation in monitoring ship-to-ship transfers involving DPRK

Nikkei wrote that the GOJ is strengthening its cooperation with other nations in monitoring ship-to-ship transfers of oil and other goods at sea involving North Korea. The paper wrote that Australia, Canada, and the UK joined in late April the operations led by the United States and Japan to monitor smuggling attempts by North Korea. The paper also wrote that Japan plans to call for international cooperation in implementing UN sanctions resolutions on the DPRK.

In a related report, Nikkei wrote that Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Sonoura told a MOFA-sponsored international seminar held in Tokyo on Monday that Japan will play a leading role in realizing a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” The seminar was held with the participation of maritime security officials from nations including the United States, the UK, and China.

North Korea rejects South Korean journalists’ coverage of nuclear site dismantlement

All national dailies wrote that South Korea’s Unification Ministry said on Monday that North Korea rejected for the second time a list of ROK journalists hoping to cover the planned dismantlement of the Punggye-ri nuclear site on May 23-25. North Korea announced that it will invite journalists from the United States, the UK, China, South Korea, and Russia to cover a ceremony marking the dismantlement, but it refused to accept a list of journalists from South Korea on May 18. Asahi wrote that although the intention behind the rejection is unknown, Pyongyang may be trying to create a stir ahead of planned talks on May 22 between President Trump and President Moon.

ECONOMY

U.S.-produced LNG arrives in Japan

Asahi wrote that a vessel carrying about 70,000 tons of shale-gas-derived LNG produced in Maryland arrived at a facility operated by Tokyo Gas in Yokohama on Monday. Japanese firms including Tokyo Gas and Kansai Electric Power Company (KEPCO) are participating in the shale gas production in Maryland, and this is the first shipment to Japan of American LNG produced with the participation of Japanese companies. Tokyo Gas plans to purchase 1.4 million tons of the gas annually and KEPCO plans to buy 800,000 tons through a subsidiary of Sumitomo Corp. The paper wrote that prices of American shale gas have been stable despite rising crude oil prices because shale gas prices are decided on the basis of supply and demand in the United States.

Nikkei and Sankei ran similar reports, pointing out that the shipment is based on a long-term contract of 20 years. Nikkei said that American LNG provides an advantage to buyers because it comes with no destination clause. The paper quoted a USG source as saying on May 16 that U.S.-produced LNG has many merits and that the United States is hoping to supply it to many countries.

OPINION

POLLS

Sankei poll on SDF in Constitution, expectations for U.S-DPRK summit

Sankei reported on the results of its opinion poll jointly conducted with the Fuji News Network on May 19-20. Some 25.8% said that the presence of the SDF is “unconstitutional” under the current Constitution while 57% said it is “constitutional.” Some 60.6% agreed with Prime Minister Abe’s proposal to enshrine the existence of the SDF in the Constitution.

Some 64.6% said they expect that the planned U.S.-DPRK summit will achieve progress in resolving the abductions of Japanese nationals by North Korea. Some 59.9% also said they expect that progress will be made in the summit in resolving North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. Some 81.5% said that the GOJ should maintain its sanctions on North Korea until the abduction issue is resolved. The same poll showed that support for the Abe cabinet edged up by 1.5 points to 39.8% from a month ago, while nonsupport dropped by 5.6 points to 48.5%.

SECURITY

Osprey crash off Australia caused by air turbulence

NHK reported this morning that according to an investigative report it obtained from the U.S. military after requesting the disclosure of information, the fatal crash of a Futenma-based MV-22 Osprey in waters off Australia last August was caused by air turbulence. The network said the Osprey, which was carrying 26 service members to the USS Green Bay, suddenly lost lift and crashed into the sea after one of its propellers struck the deck of the ship. The network said the report concluded that the loss of lift was due to air turbulence resulting from the downwash caused by the rotor blades.

The network showed footage of Former ASDF Lt. Gen. Nagaiwa saying: “We need to reexamine and analyze in detail whether [the U.S. military] was fully aware of or trained its personnel in the Osprey’s flight performance and features.” The network added that although the U.S. military stressed that it has already revised parts of the operation manual and ensured the safety of the aircraft, Nagaiwa pointed out that Japan needs to learn lessons from the accident since the SDF is planning to introduce Ospreys from this fiscal year and operate them on transport and escort ships.