



Morning Alert - Wednesday, May 30, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that an inmate confessed yesterday to the murder of a 9-year-old girl in Okayama 14 years ago. All commercial networks led with reports on the scandal involving Nihon University's football team.

Major front-page items in national papers included follow-ups on the scandal involving Nihon University's football team, a DPRK official's planned trip to New York for a meeting with Secretary of State Pompeo, and a GOJ proposal to accept foreign "manual laborers."

INTERNATIONAL

Abe to visit U.S. for talks with President Trump

All papers reported on a White House announcement on Tuesday that Prime Minister Abe is expected to visit Washington on June 7 for a summit meeting with President Trump at the White House, explaining that during their teleconference on Monday, the two leaders agreed to meet ahead of the purported U.S.-DPRK summit in Singapore on June 12. Sankei focused on a White House readout on the call that said in part: "The President and PM Abe affirmed the shared imperative of achieving the complete and permanent dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons and ballistic missile programs."

Top DPRK official to visit New York

All dailies took up the disclosure by White House Press Secretary Sanders on Tuesday that Kim Yong Chol, the vice chairman of North Korea's ruling party, will visit New York for talks with Secretary of State Pompeo later this week, noting that since the DPRK official is believed to be Kim

Jong Un's top lieutenant, he and the Secretary are likely to discuss the details of the expected summit in Singapore between President Trump and the DPRK leader.

Yomiuri noted that a U.S. delegation reportedly headed by Ambassador to the Philippines Sung Kim has been holding talks with DPRK officials at the DMZ and that a North Korean official who has been referred to as Kim Jong Un's "butler" is currently visiting Singapore perhaps for the purpose of making concrete arrangements with a White House delegation led by Deputy Chief of Staff Hagin for the two leaders' purported summit. The paper opined that the negotiations in three separate locations illustrate that both the Trump administration and the Kim regime are extremely anxious to convene the historic meeting as scheduled. Asahi speculated that the proposed meeting between Secretary Pompeo and Kim Jong Un's right-hand man is perhaps intended to achieve a breakthrough on the scope and pace of denuclearization over which lower-ranking officials have probably been having difficulty reconciling differences. Sankei wrote that the fact that President Trump tapped Sung Kim, the top DPRK negotiator under the Obama administration, evidences President Trump's strong commitment to realizing the summit with Kim Jong Un and ensuring its success.

Japan considering foreign ministerial meeting with DPRK in August

Mainichi front-paged a speculative piece claiming that the GOJ is exploring the possibility of convening a foreign ministerial meeting with North Korea on the sidelines of the annual ASEAN Regional Forum conference to be held in Singapore from August 1 through 4.

MSDF detects ship-to-ship transfer involving DPRK vessel

All papers reported on a GOJ announcement on Tuesday that an MSDF patrol plane spotted a DPRK tanker engaging in an apparent transfer of unspecified items with a Chinese-flagged vessel in the East China Sea on May 19. Since the North Korean ship in question is subject to UN sanctions, the GOJ has reportedly notified the Security Council of the apparent breach of relevant sanctions resolutions. This is reportedly the fifth time for a suspicious ship-to-ship transfer of goods involving North Korea to be detected by the Japanese government.

SECURITY

U.S., Japan to hold defense ministerial meeting in Hawaii

All papers wrote that Defense Minister Onodera departed for Hawaii yesterday for a meeting with Secretary of Defense Mattis today, speculating that the two ministers are likely to agree on maintaining the maximum pressure campaign against North Korea ahead of the planned Singapore summit between the U.S. and North Korea in mid-June. The Japanese official reportedly told the press on Tuesday that he and Secretary Mattis will demonstrate firm coordination so as to prompt North Korea to change its policy. Onodera also disclosed that a trilateral defense ministerial meeting with the U.S. and South Korea will probably be convened in Singapore on the margins of the annual

Shangri-La Dialogue early next month. According to Asahi, while in Hawaii the Japanese minister is expected to attend a change of command ceremony for the new PACOM commander.

USS Ronald Reagan leaves Yokosuka for training in Western Pacific

Yomiuri wrote that the USS Ronald Reagan departed Yokosuka Naval Station yesterday for the Western Pacific for training and patrol operations, quoting Rear Adm. Marc Dalton, commander, Task Force 70, as telling the press on Monday that the operations will bring peace and prosperity to the Asia Pacific region.

Defense Ministry to brief local government on new missile defense platforms

All national papers reported on the disclosure by Defense Minister Onodera yesterday that senior ministry officials plan to visit Akita and Yamagata Prefectures on June 1 to brief local officials on the planned deployment of Aegis Ashore batteries at two GSDF camps there.

ECONOMY

Japanese firms keen to import American LNG

Mainichi published a prominent inside-page article on growing moves among Japanese companies to import liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the United States, noting that a tanker carrying some 70,000 tons of LNG produced in Maryland arrived in Yokohama on May 21. According to the article, the shipment in question was the first delivery of LNG from the U.S. to be made based on a long-term contract. Noting that American LNG prices are relatively stable compared with LNG produced in the Middle East and that American LNG can be sold to third parties without restrictions, the paper wrote that Japanese trading firms, utilities, and gas companies have been investing heavily in shale gas-related LNG development projects in America following the Fukushima nuclear accident in 2011. The paper added that GOJ officials are hopeful that increased LNG imports from the U.S. will compel the Trump administration to ease its pressure on Japan to rectify the bilateral trade imbalance.

Japan to convey to U.S. concern about proposed auto tariff

Mainichi projected that during a planned trilateral trade ministerial meeting between Japan, the U.S., and the EU to be held in Paris tomorrow, Trade Minister Seko is likely to convey to USTR Lighthizer Tokyo's apprehension about the proposed 25% punitive tariff on imported cars. The daily said Seko is set to join hands with his EU counterpart in countering the Trump administration's hard line on the trade front.

Japan to open doors to foreign manual laborers

Nikkei gave top play to a GOJ plan to accept foreigners as "manual laborers," explaining that by around 2025, as many as 500,000 foreigners may be allowed to work in Japan in five sectors, including construction, agriculture, tourism, and elderly care even if their Japanese language skills are deemed inadequate. Noting that the GOJ is apparently set to ease the present strict regulations

on foreign manual labor in the face of Japan's serious and chronic labor shortage, the daily speculated that the envisaged plan may mark a major shift in the nation's immigration policy.

