



Morning Alert - Wednesday, June 6, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that Subaru Corp. announced on Tuesday that it found new cases of the fabrication of its vehicles' mileage data. NTV led with updates on the suspicious death of a real estate mogul in Wakayama. TV Asahi gave top play to a report that Finance Minister Aso once again said he will not step down despite mounting calls for resignation from the opposition parties. TBS continued to report on the scandal involving Nihon University's football team. Fuji TV led with a report on the arrest of a 31-year-old woman in Shiga for abandoning the body of her mother.

Major front-page items in national papers included Subaru's acknowledgement of additional fabrication of product data, updates on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal, and a GOJ policy to accept more foreign workers, including "manual laborers," in such sectors as agriculture, tourism, construction, shipbuilding, and elderly care.

INTERNATIONAL

Abe to depart for Washington today for bilateral summit

All dailies wrote that Prime Minister Abe is expected to leave for the U.S. capital today for a meeting with President Trump, projecting that the Japanese leader plans to ask the President again to bring up the abduction issue when he holds talks with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore next week. Asahi speculated that the premier is likely to urge the President to convey to Kim that Tokyo would not be able to hold talks with Pyongyang in the absence of an assurance from North Korean that at least some of the 12 "certified" Japanese abductees will be allowed to go home. According to the daily, an unnamed Abe administration official predicted that the upcoming U.S.-Japan summit will probably be a "simple" one in which the premier will ask the President to address the abductions without fail when he meets with Kim Jong Un since it is by far the most important issue for Japan.

In a related story, Nikkei and Mainichi reported on the disclosure by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga yesterday that GOJ officials will be dispatched to Singapore to collect information on the U.S.-North Korea summit. MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi will reportedly be arriving there early next week.

Plans underway for trilateral foreign ministerial in Seoul after U.S.-DPRK summit

All papers claimed that arrangements are being made between the U.S., Japan, and the ROK to convene a meeting between their foreign ministers in Seoul on June 13 or 14 just after the Singapore summit between President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Foreign Minister Kono is hoping to obtain information direct from Secretary of State Pompeo on what is discussed in the historic sit-down between the President and his DPRK counterpart, including what kind of commitment Kim makes on denuclearization and whether he makes any remarks on the abduction issue. Asahi noted that the USG is unlikely to accept Prime Minister Abe's proposal for President Trump to visit Tokyo on his way home to brief Abe on the summit with Kim due to his tight schedule. The paper added that the exact timing of the trilateral session among the top diplomats is still fluid since nationwide local elections will be held in South Korea on June 13.

According to Mainichi and Sankei, Kono is separately planning to visit Washington from today through Saturday for talks with Secretary of Pompeo tomorrow. Kono will sit in on the summit between PM Abe and President Trump.

Senior MOFA official suspended over sexual harassment

All papers reported on a MOFA announcement yesterday that the director of the Russia desk of its European Affairs Bureau was relieved of his post and suspended for nine months on Monday due to "behavior that undermines confidence in public servants." Although the ministry reportedly refused to disclose the details of his problematic behavior by citing "the privacy of those involved," the dailies claimed that the diplomat, a well-known Russia expert, had been sexually harassing a female ministry official for months.

SECURITY

Futenma commander dismissed

Yomiuri highlighted a USMC announcement on Tuesday that the commanding officer of MCAS Futenma has been relieved of duty "due to a loss of trust and confidence in his ability to lead his command," adding that the Marines provided no further information on why Col. Coppess was dismissed. He assumed the command a year ago.

Temporary deployment of F-22s at Kadena begins

Nikkei wrote that according to Defense Minister Onodera, a total of 14 USAF F22s will be deployed at Kadena AB for about a month, saying that ten of them arrived there on May 30. The minister

commented on the Raptors' deployment by saying: "It will be conducive to the security of the Indo-Pacific region. It is an extremely important mission for the U.S.-Japan alliance."

ECONOMY

Japan, EU to sign EPA on July 11

Yomiuri front-paged an informal GOJ decision to seal an economic partnership agreement with the EU on July 11 when Prime Minister Abe visits Brussels for a summit with EU leaders. The GOJ is reportedly looking to submit relevant legislation to the Diet in the autumn to effectuate the trade liberalization pact early next year. The Abe administration is reportedly hoping that coupled with the CPTPP, which is expected take effect as early as this year, an EPA with Europe would prompt the Trump administration to consider returning to the TPP because the U.S. would be put in a disadvantageous position compared with the members of the two massive free trade deals in trade with Japan, especially in the agricultural sector. By creating a free trade zone with European countries, Tokyo is reportedly aiming to counter America's protectionist approach when bilateral talks begin in July or later on a "free, fair, and reciprocal" trade deal.

