



Morning Alert - Friday, June 29, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

All networks and all national dailies except Nikkei led with reports saying that although the Japanese national soccer team lost to Poland at the FIFA World Cup on Thursday, it has advanced to the final round of the competition. **Nikkei** led with a report on the results of its survey of Japanese business executives in which two-thirds of the respondents cited protectionism as a risk to the global economy.

INTERNATIONAL

Defense Secretary Mattis reportedly says U.S. to maintain current troop levels in ROK

All national dailies reported on Secretary of Defense Mattis's visit on Thursday to Seoul where he held talks with his ROK counterpart Song. The papers wrote that the Secretary reportedly told the South Korean defense chief that the United States is firmly committed to the defense of South Korea including maintaining the current scale and levels of U.S. forces in the nation. Asahi interpreted this remark as a dismissal of the idea of reducing the U.S. forces in South Korea. Nikkei asserted that the Secretary reaffirmed the United States' commitment to the Korean Peninsula and tried to dispel Japanese and South Korean concerns that the suspension of joint U.S.-ROK military exercises will result in a drawdown in U.S. forces in South Korea. Sankei speculated that the Secretary made this remark out of consideration for South Korea, which is concerned that the suspension of joint exercises could weaken deterrence against North Korea.

The papers also wrote that the Secretary reportedly stated that the United States will make efforts to achieve the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea.

Secretary Pompeo may visit North Korea next week

Asahi, Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Nikkei wrote that the Financial Times reported on Thursday that according to unnamed USG sources, Secretary of State Pompeo may visit North Korea next week for talks with DPRK officials on denuclearization. According to the Financial Times, the Secretary canceled a meeting with his Indian counterpart slated for July 6 in Washington. The paper wrote that if the visit is realized, it will be the first high-level meeting between the United States and the DPRK following the summit between the two nations earlier this month in Singapore.

FM Kono discusses North Korea with Australian counterpart

Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that Foreign Minister Kono spoke by phone with his Australian counterpart Bishop on Thursday. The papers wrote that the two officials reconfirmed the policy of urging North Korea to abolish all of its weapons of mass destruction and all types of ballistic missiles in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. Kono reportedly asked for Australia's cooperation in resolving the abduction issue.

Abe congratulates Erdogan on his reelection as president

Yomiuri and Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe spoke by phone with Turkish President Erdogan on Thursday and congratulated him on his reelection. Nikkei and Sankei added that the two leaders agreed on a wide range of bilateral cooperation including on the political and economic fronts.

Japan to increase involvement in Arctic region

Asahi wrote that the GOJ has begun to develop its policy toward the Arctic amid the escalating tug-of-war between Russia and China in the region. Noting that the GOJ stated for the first time in its basic ocean policy approved at a cabinet meeting in May that the Arctic is a key issue for Japan's ocean policy, the paper speculated that Tokyo is planning to participate more proactively in international discussions on rulemaking in the region concerning natural resources development and the use of sea routes connecting Europe and Asia.

The paper added that in view of the absence of a legal framework for the peaceful use of the Arctic, Japan incorporated in its basic ocean policy the goals of securing national interests through multilateral dialogue and of ensuring freedom of navigation in the Arctic in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

SECURITY

Japan may relax vigilance against DPRK missile launches

Nikkei wrote that the GOJ will consider lowering its level of vigilance against ballistic missile launches by the DPRK by lifting its order to destroy missiles, which has been in place since 2016, and removing some of the PAC-3 units deployed in several locations nationwide. The paper quoted Chief of Staff Kawano of the SDF Joint Staff as telling the press on Thursday that it appears unlikely

that North Korea will launch missiles at this juncture and that the GOJ will take appropriate steps while observing future developments.

