



Morning Alert - Thursday, August 16, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to heavy rain in northeastern Japan, while all commercial networks led with reports that a two-year-old boy who had been missing in Yamaguchi for three days was found alive yesterday.

All national dailies except Nikkei gave top play to the Memorial Ceremony for the War Dead held in Tokyo yesterday to commemorate the 73rd anniversary of the end of WWII, underscoring that this was the last time for the Emperor to attend the event since he plans to abdicate next year.

SECURITY

GOJ reportedly postpones Henoko landfill work

Yomiuri claimed that on account of “foul weather,” the Abe administration has decided to postpone the landfill work for FRF construction off Camp Schwab slated to begin tomorrow, quoting Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga as telling the press yesterday that “no specific date has been set” for the operation. The daily speculated that the central government probably chose to postpone the work so as not to embolden the anti-base activists who are determined to step up their opposition to the Futenma relocation initiative following the recent passing of Governor Onaga. The paper speculated that in view of the postponement, the Okinawa prefectural government probably will not revoke the landfill permit anytime soon, quoting one of its senior officials as saying, “The permit will not be withdrawn this week.”

Asahi and Nikkei published similar stories, with the former saying Tokyo and Okinawa appear to be engaged in a war of nerves over the timing of the landfill operation and the rescindment of the landfill permit. The two sides are reportedly monitoring each other’s moves carefully with the Sept. 30

gubernatorial by-election in mind, since Futenma relocation could become a major campaign issue depending on what actions they take.

In a related story, Nikkei wrote that the ruling LDP plans to draw up measures to revitalize Okinawa's economy in order to support Ginowan Mayor Sakima's bid to win the gubernatorial race. Policy Research Council Chairman Kishida met with Secretary General Nikai and Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga separately yesterday to discuss possible measures in such areas as social security.

INTERNATIONAL

ROK leader calls for dialogue between U.S., DPRK

All papers reported from Seoul on a speech given yesterday by South Korean President Moon, who vowed to exercise diplomatic leadership to help promote dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea. Speaking on his planned trip to Pyongyang next month for a summit with Kim Jong Un, the ROK leader reportedly said he will take a "bold step" toward realizing the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, issuing a declaration ending the Korean War, and concluding a peace treaty. He stressed that there will be no full-fledged inter-Korean economic cooperation unless the Kim regime denuclearizes for permanent peace.

In a related development, Yomiuri highlighted a teleconference between Secretary of State Pompeo and South Korean Foreign Minister Kang that took place on Tuesday, during which they reportedly agreed to coordinate closely to ensure the "final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea." Meanwhile, Yomiuri and Sankei took up press remarks on the same day by DOS Spokesperson Nauert, who commented on the Kim regime's call for the release of a declaration ending the Korean War by saying: "We support a peace regime, a peace mechanism by which countries can move forward toward peace. But our main focus is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." The papers said that she thus indicated that such a declaration would be premature.

No criticism of Japan in South Korean president's speech on independence

All national papers except Nikkei reported on South Korean President Moon's speech on Wednesday marking the 73rd anniversary of the country's independence from Japan's colonial rule, highlighting his remarks expressing willingness to pursue a "future-oriented" relationship with Japan. The papers took note of the absence of rhetoric criticizing Japan, which has often been used in previous speeches on the same occasion. Noting that President Moon did not mention Seoul's bilateral history disputes with Tokyo, Sankei opined that it is very unusual for this level of consideration to be paid to Japan by a South Korean leader. According to the daily, the ROK leader described Prime Minister Abe as a "collaborator with whom we share the same views" and expressed eagerness to mediate dialogue between Japan and North Korea by saying that improved Japan-ROK ties would help normalize relations between Tokyo and Pyongyang.

No cabinet ministers pay homage at Yasukuni

Nikkei and Mainichi wrote that no cabinet ministers visited Yasukuni Shrine on Aug. 15 for the second consecutive year, conjecturing that Prime Minister Abe and the other ministers refrained from honoring the war dead enshrined there perhaps out of deference to China in view of Abe's desire to visit Beijing for a summit with President Xi in the fall.

