

Dear subscribers: The Japan Media Highlights website is currently offline. We are trying to fix the problem and will let you know when it is fixed again. Thank you for your patience!

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that a Tokyo-based manufacturer of seismic dampers to protect structures from earthquakes sold products for which inspection data had been fabricated. NTV, TBS, and TV Asahi led with updates on the arrest of 12 people in connection with a bogus land sale in which homebuilder Sekisui House suffered a loss of about 5.5 billion yen. Fuji TV gave top play to a report that a male Keio University student was arrested on suspicion of sexually assaulting a female student in September.

Top stories in national dailies included a court hearing for three former TEPCO executives over the Fukushima nuclear accident (Asahi, Mainichi), data fabrication by a Japanese manufacturer of seismic dampers (Yomiuri, Sankei), and a rise in the number of Chinese startups (Nikkei).

ECONOMY

Trade talks between U.S., Japan likely to begin as early as next January

NHK reported online this morning that USTR Lighthizer notified the U.S. Congress on Tuesday of his intention to begin talks on a new trade agreement with Japan. The network said that since U.S. law requires that Congress be notified 90 days before the start of new negotiations, it is now expected that the talks will officially begin as early as next January. According to the network, the USTR told Congress, "The trade deficit with Japan was \$68.9 billion last year. Our goal is to address tariff and nontariff barriers and achieve fairer and more balanced trade." The USTR reportedly released a statement saying: "Under the leadership of President Trump, we will continue to expand trade and investment through trade agreement talks with Japan and other nations."

Japan to support U.S. exports of shale gas to Asia

Nikkei wrote that the GOJ will support Japanese companies' exports of liquefied natural gas produced in the United States to other parts of Asia. Under the current rules, vessels carrying American LNG only qualify for subsidies such as discounted trade insurance if they stop at ports in Japan before heading to third countries. However, Tokyo plans to remove this requirement as early as this year because it costs businesses time and money. The GOJ also plans to extend financial support for projects by Japanese companies to build LNG terminals in other Asian countries. The paper speculated that the move is intended to help expand Japan's exports of energy infrastructure, such as generators and LNG terminals, while supporting shale gas exports by the United States.

INTERNATIONAL

DPRK criticizes U.S. policy of maintaining sanctions

Asahi wrote from Seoul that North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) published a commentary on Tuesday criticizing the United States' policy of maintaining sanctions on North Korea until it takes concrete steps to denuclearize. The paper speculated that the commentary was intended to apply pressure on Washington and gain the upper hand in working-level denuclearization talks.

In a related development, Nikkei wrote from Seoul that it has learned from a source connected to U.S.-DPRK talks that Chairman Kim asked Secretary of States Pompeo during their talks in Pyongyang on Oct. 7 to lift sanctions on the DPRK. The paper projected that Pyongyang will probably continue to call for sanctions to be lifted in its working-level talks with Washington.

U.S. military tightens base access for South Koreans in Japan

Nikkei wrote from Seoul that the Stars and Stripes reported on Monday that the U.S. military has ordered extra scrutiny for South Koreans who want to visit friends or attend events on American bases in Japan. U.S. Forces Japan recently added the longtime American ally to a list of nations whose citizens must undergo additional screening before they can be escorted onto installations. Nikkei wrote that there is speculation in South Korea that the move may reflect the United States' concern over South Korea's reconciliatory approach toward the DPRK.

GOJ gives up on having President Moon visit Japan this year

Mainichi claimed that the GOJ has given up on the idea of having South Korean President Moon travel to Tokyo by the end of this year and has decided to arrange for him to visit next year instead. The paper speculated that the GOJ came to the conclusion based on the assessment that President Moon is busy making arrangements for DPRK leader Kim Jong Un to visit South Korea and that Japan-ROK relations have become strained recently over the implementation of the 2015 comfort women agreement and the MSDF's rising sun flag.

In a related development, Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that Defense Minister Iwaya told a regular news conference on Tuesday that he will raise the issue of the MSDF flag at his planned bilateral talks with South Korean Defense Minister Jeong Kyeong-doo slated for Oct. 20 in Singapore.

Abe to invite Indian leader to his vacation home

Nikkei wrote that Prime Minister Abe is planning to invite Indian Prime Minister Modi to his vacation home in Yamanashi Prefecture when Modi visits Japan on Oct. 28-29. The paper wrote that this is probably the first time for Abe to host a foreign leader in his private country home, speculating that the invitation is intended to demonstrate Abe's close personal relationship with Modi.

SECURITY

GOJ to take steps to counter Okinawa government's revocation of landfill permit

Asahi front-paged a report saying that the GOJ notified the Okinawa Prefectural Government on Tuesday that it will soon begin legal procedures to counter the prefectural government's revocation in August of its landfill permit for FRF construction at Henoko by requesting Land, Infrastructure, Transport, and Tourism Minister Ishii, who oversees land reclamation, to issue a stay of execution of the revocation. The paper wrote that the central government had put off launching the countermeasure until now to prevent it from having an adverse impact on the gubernatorial election in Okinawa on Sept. 30. The paper speculated that the people of Okinawa, who expressed opposition to the Henoko project by electing Governor Tamaki, will likely react strongly to Tokyo's moves to overturn the decision by the Okinawa government.

All other national dailies ran similar front- or inside-page reports, with Mainichi adding that Defense Minister Iwaya told a regular news conference on Tuesday that the Okinawa Defense Bureau is closely examining the validity of the retraction in preparation for legal proceedings.

In a related development, Mainichi and Sankei wrote that Governor Tamaki reiterated his opposition to the FRF construction at Henoko in his first policy speech delivered before the prefectural assembly on Tuesday.

U.S., Japan to conduct missile interception test

Sankei front-paged a report saying that the governments of the United States and Japan are planning to conduct a SM-3 Block IIA missile test launch in Hawaii next week or later. The paper wrote that although the GOJ plans to deploy the SM-3 Block IIA by fiscal 2021 to prepare for the possibility of North Korea firing ballistic missiles, the last two tests of the missile in June 2017 and January 2018 failed. The paper wrote that the U.S. side and the Ministry of Defense have said that there is no problem with the missile's performance. However, the paper speculated that if the upcoming test is unsuccessful, it may affect Japan's plan to procure the missile.

