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Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, October 17, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK led with a report on the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue, saying that Vice President Pence expressed strong interest in a bilateral FTA. Other top news included reports on the detection for the first time of two neutron stars merging in a cataclysmic crash.

INTERNATIONAL

Vice foreign ministers of U.S., Japan confirm close cooperation over North Korea

NHK reported online on a vice foreign ministerial meeting held today in Tokyo by Vice Foreign Minister Sugiyama and visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Sullivan. The network said the two officials confirmed close bilateral cooperation ahead of President Trump's visit to Japan next month and agreed to make efforts to urge North Korea to abandon its nuclear and missile development programs. According to the network, the two officials confirmed that the threat posed by North Korea has increased, and that the two nations will take the lead in urging other nations, including China and Russia, to completely implement the UNSC resolutions.

The network said Deputy Secretary Sullivan told reporters after the meeting that the U.S. is focused on resolving the issue diplomatically, and stressed that the U.S. will continue to increase pressure on the North together with such allies as Japan and South Korea. The deputy secretary also reportedly said that the U.S. will not rule out military options by saying: "As Secretary Tillerson said, we need to be prepared for the worst-case scenario of our diplomatic efforts failing."

GOJ announces President Trump's Japan tour

Asahi reported online on the disclosure by Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nogami this morning that

President Trump will visit Japan on Nov. 5 through 7. The government spokesman said: "At a time when the regional security situation is becoming even more tense due to North Korea, President Trump's trip to Japan presents a great opportunity to discuss issues facing the international community and display the strong bonds of the U.S.-Japan alliance."

President Trump to meet with abductees' families in Japan

NHK reported at noon that Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nogami told reporters today that President Trump will visit Japan from Nov. 5 to 7, saying that in addition to a bilateral summit, the President will meet with the families of the Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea together with Prime Minister Abe. Nogami was quoted as saying: "President Trump's visit to Japan will present a perfect opportunity for the leaders to discuss the issues faced by the international community amid the increasingly tough security situation in the region, including North Korea, and to once again demonstrate to the world the strong ties of the U.S.-Japan alliance. The government of Japan wholeheartedly welcomes the President's visit to Japan." On his meeting with the families of the abductees, Nogami reportedly said: "The abduction issue is one of the most important issues for the Japanese government. It is extremely significant that the issue will be discussed at the Japan-U.S. summit."

DOS spokesperson comments on abductions of Japanese citizens

Nikkei's Tuesday evening edition reported on its one-on-one interview with DOS spokesperson Heather Nauert, during which she commented on President Trump's plan to meet with the families of the Japanese abductees when he visits Japan by saying: "The President is attaching importance to human rights and he cares deeply about the lives of children and innocent people in particular." While referring to Deputy Secretary Sullivan's ongoing East Asian tour, the DOS official noted that the main item on the agenda for talks with his Japanese and ROK counterparts is how to apply "peaceful pressure" on the DPRK. She underscored that the purpose of such pressure is to prevent the inflow of money that the Kim regime has been using for nuclear and missile development rather than for its people. Speaking on the trade aspects of U.S.-Japan relations, the spokeswoman said: "We wish to create jobs and promote economic growth for the American people."

North Korea rejects direct talks with South Korea

TBS reported at noon that Russian Federal Council Chairwoman Matviyenko separately met with representatives of North Korea and South Korea on Monday on the sidelines of an international forum held in Saint Petersburg, adding that although the Russian side proposed holding direct talks between North Korea and South Korea, the North Korean side rejected the proposal. Matviyenko reportedly told reporters after the meetings that the North Korean side "is not prepared to hold talks" and disclosed that the reclusive state rejected the Russian proposal. North Korea reportedly expressed opposition to the joint military drills between the U.S. and South Korea.

North Korea not planning to negotiate with U.S. until it completes ICBM

TBS reported at noon that according to a CNN report, a North Korean official has said that the DPRK has no intention to hold talks with the Trump administration until it completes its development of an ICBM that can reach the East Coast of the United States. According to the network, the North Korean official said: "Before we can engage in diplomacy with the Trump administration, we want to send a clear message that the DPRK has a reliable defensive and offensive capability to counter any aggression from the United States." The official also reportedly pointed out that North Korea needs to conduct a "nuclear test on land" and a "test launch of an ICBM that can reach Guam or beyond" in order to develop a reliable ICBM. The network added that the official also said North Korea could conduct either of these tests during the joint U.S.-ROK military drill that began on Oct. 16 or President Trump's visit to Asia early next month.

- [Aso, Pence apart over FTA, Japan to ease rules on U.S. auto imports](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan, U.S. vow to solve N. Korea crisis through diplomatic means](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Abductees' families welcome President Trump's plan to meet with them](#) (Yomiuri)
- [S. Korea shows concern over Abe's ritual offering to Yasukuni Shrine](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Column: Factors behind Japan, Russia differences on North Korea policy](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan's security calls for wide-ranging discussion of "four nuke principles"](#) (Chuokoron)
- [Gov't sees no need to enhance controls on hate speech](#) (Mainichi)

POLITICS

PM Abe sends ritual tree offering to Yasukuni Shrine

All networks reported at noon that Prime Minister Abe sent a "masakaki" tree offering under the name of the prime minister to Yasukuni Shrine at the start of its four-day annual festival today. NHK said Abe is likely to refrain from visiting the shrine as he is planning to visit Akita and Yamagata to make stump speeches for candidates running for the general election. The networks said Upper House President Date, Health Minister Kato, and Vice Education Minister Mizuochi also sent ritual offerings to the shrine. NHK quoted Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nogami as saying at a press conference today: "I've heard through media reports that the prime minister made the masakaki offering, but it was a private action and I have nothing to say on behalf of the government. The prime minister will make an appropriate decision on whether or not to visit Yasukuni Shrine."

- [Prime minister's schedule on Oct. 16, 2017](#) (Nikkei)

- [Opposition forces calling for attracting veterinary medicine school in Ehime constituency](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Let permanent foreign residents participate in local elections: Komeito chief Yamaguchi](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Statistics show linkage between cabinet support ratings, number of seats won in LH elections](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

OPINION POLLS

- [61% say they will “definitely vote” in LH election or “have already voted in pre-election-day voting,” NHK public opinion poll](#) (NHK Online)
- [Cabinet and political party support rates, NHK public opinion poll](#) (NHK Online)
- [Party of Hope and CDPJ neck and neck, cabinet support rate drops to 42.5%, Sankei-FNN poll](#) (Sankei)
- [LDP may be defeated in all single-seat constituencies in Okinawa, Sankei-FNN poll](#) (Sankei)
- [Opinion poll & results from Sankei Shimbun](#) (Sankei)
- [Opinion poll & results for Yomiuri Shimbun’s survey on views on newspapers and the media](#) (Yomiuri)

ECONOMY

Global shift to electric vehicles

NHK's "Close-up Gendai +" on Monday reported on the global shift to electric vehicles, which is being referred to as a once-in-a-century revolution. The program said the shift is rapidly advancing not only in European nations such as Norway, the UK, France, and Germany, but also in China. The Chinese government is reportedly hoping to shift to electric vehicles to combat global warming and also because it wants to become the world's top producer of electric cars. The program said Japan is lagging behind in this trend and Japanese auto parts makers are growingly alarmed.

- [Japanese suppliers bet on India’s bullet train project](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan’s Kansai Electric to shut down 2 major nuclear reactors](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Kobe Steel plants faked quality data for decades](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

SOCIETY

- [Rare case of father lodging criminal charges against ex-wife's attorney over custody case](#) (Sankei)
- [Man arrested for employing under-age girl in "JK" dating service](#) (Kyodo News)

SECURITY

- [Okinawa assembly protests crash-landing of U.S. military helicopter](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Hear the pleas of Okinawans ahead of Lower House election](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Half of Japanese banks targeted in cyberattacks: BOJ survey](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

CH-53s to be grounded until probe into mishap ends

Tuesday morning's Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo both front-paged remarks made by a senior U.S. military official in Okinawa to a local politician on Monday that the Futenma-based CH-53 helicopters will remain grounded until an investigative report concerning the recent accident is ready to be released. USMC Okinawa Assistant Chief of Staff Darin Clarke was quoted as saying to Uruma Mayor Shimabukuro: "The [CH-53] training will not be resumed until the investigative findings can be published." The official said the results cannot be released right now because U.S. military experts are still investigating the accident. Col. Clarke separately told Ginowan Mayor Sakima that the suspension will continue until the aircraft's safety is confirmed. Okinawa Times added that the U.S. military continued to refuse to allow local government and police officials to access the cordoned off area on Monday.

Meanwhile, Ryukyu Shimpo claimed that Marine officials are likely to visit the Okinawa prefectural government office next week to provide a briefing on the helicopter accident. The paper said in a separate piece that even if U.S. military officials visit the government office next week as expected, more than 10 days will have elapsed since the mishap occurred last Thursday. The article insisted that the U.S. military has been "insincere" in dealing with the latest incident involving Futenma-based aircraft, explaining that the U.S. military appears to be reluctant to visit the prefectural government office to offer apologies when incidents involving military personnel and equipment are directly connected to military operations.

In a related development, both dailies took up the unanimous adoption by the Okinawa prefectural assembly yesterday of a motion calling for the U.S. military to discontinue the use of the six helipads in the Northern Training Area and suspend military flights over privately owned property throughout Okinawa.

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