



Morning Alert - Friday, January 20, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that the GOJ's Reemployment Surveillance Commission concluded that MEXT officials violated the National Public Service Law by pressuring Waseda University to hire a retired senior MEXT official. NTV led with the forecast for snow in Tokyo this afternoon. Other top news included Trump's inauguration on Friday.

Most national dailies gave top play to reports on MEXT officials' alleged involvement in about 30 revolving-door appointments. Nikkei led with the launch of the Trump administration on Friday, while Sankei gave top coverage to a plan by Tokyo Electric Power Company and Chubu Electric Power Company to consolidate their thermal power generation business.

INTERNATIONAL

Recalled Japanese ambassador to ROK to remain in Japan for time being

All papers wrote that Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Kishida confirmed on Thursday that the GOJ will not send Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Nagamine back to his post for the time being. The GOJ temporarily recalled Nagamine last week to protest the installation of a comfort woman statue in Busan. Yomiuri wrote that the return of the Japanese envoy will likely be delayed because the ROK government has taken no concrete steps to remove the statue.

ROK government opposes plan to install comfort woman statue on Takeshima

Most papers wrote that a spokesperson for South Korea's Foreign Ministry on Thursday expressed opposition to a plan by a group of local assembly members to install a comfort woman statue on

Takeshima (also known as the Liancourt Rocks or Dokdo). The spokesperson said that it is not appropriate to link the comfort women issue with the territorial dispute because they are totally different in nature.

ECONOMY

Japan to complete domestic procedures for TPP agreement today

Asahi wrote that Japan will complete its domestic procedures for the TPP agreement today after legislative procedures are approved at a cabinet meeting. Japan will then notify New Zealand, the secretariat for the TPP, of the completion of its procedures. Japan will be the first TPP member state to complete domestic procedures for the accord. Nikkei ran a similar report, adding that the move is intended to demonstrate Tokyo's position on the TPP ahead of the launch of the Trump administration on Friday.

SECURITY

U.S., ROK plan to deploy THAAD by July

Asahi wrote that it has learned from a source connected to U.S.-ROK relations that the governments of the U.S. and South Korea are making arrangements for completing the deployment of a THAAD missile system in the ROK by July. Although the two nations had originally planned to deploy the system in December, they decided to move up the schedule in view of the ROK presidential election scheduled for this spring and China's growing pressure on Seoul against the deployment.

Japan, UK to conclude ACSA next week

Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that the Japanese and British governments have agreed to sign an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA) next week or later in London. The agreement will enter into force after the Diet approves relevant legislation. The GOJ plans to submit the legislation to an ordinary Diet session to be convened today.

SCIENCE

Japan to participate in vaccine drive by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Thursday evening's Nikkei wrote that the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced at an annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Wednesday that it will form an "alliance of innovation" to step up measures against infectious diseases. The governments and pharmaceutical companies of Japan, Germany, and Norway will take part in the project, and the GOJ plans to provide \$125 million to the initiative in the next five years. Bill Gates told the paper that the international community is not prepared for pandemics and that it is necessary to create a system in which vaccines are provided expeditiously.

SOCIETY

Diet heads, party representatives discuss abdication legislation

All papers reported that the heads of both houses of the Diet and representatives of the ruling and opposition parties agreed on Thursday to compile the Diet's views on legislation on the Emperor's possible abdication by the end of March. Before compiling the Diet's views on the matter, the chamber heads will hear each party's opinions from mid-February. A government advisory panel on abdication is expected to finalize its recommendations on Jan. 23, and Prime Minister Abe will ask the Diet heads to begin hearings afterward.

