



Morning Alert - Wednesday, March 1, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report that the Malaysian authorities will indict two female suspects on murder charges today in relation to the death of Kim Jong Nam on Feb. 13. TBS and TV Asahi gave top play to reports on the education policy of Moritomo Gakuen. Fuji TV aired video Akie Abe's speech at an event hosted by Moritomo Gakuen in 2015, during which she praised the school's education policy. NTV led with a report that actress Maki Horikita has announced that she has retired from show business.

Top stories in national dailies included the decision by the ruling LDP and Komeito Party to approve a government-sponsored bill to penalize conspiracy to commit crimes such as terrorism (Asahi); the situation in Fukushima six years after the nuclear accident in 2011 (Mainichi); the indictment of the de facto head of Samsung Group on bribery charges (Yomiuri); a plan by the National Federation of Agricultural Cooperative Associations (Zen-Noh) to invest up to 4 billion yen in Sushiro Global Holdings, Japan's largest operator of conveyor belt sushi restaurants, in an effort to increase direct sales of rice to retailers and eateries (Nikkei); and alleged leaking of bidding information about construction projects of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japan, ROK confirm cooperation against North Korea

Tuesday evening's Yomiuri wrote that the representatives for the Six-Party Talks from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea discussed North Korea at their trilateral talks held at the State Department on Monday. The meeting was the first of its kind since the start of the Trump administration. The

three nations released a joint statement saying that they will apply pressure on the DPRK through all possible measures, including means to further restrict revenue sources for North Korea's weapons program. The three nations also agreed to urge China to completely implement the UNSC's sanctions resolutions against Pyongyang. U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joseph Yun reiterated the United States' commitment to providing extended deterrence to Japan and the ROK. MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi told reporters after the meeting that the U.S. appears to have a harsher view on North Korea than before.

Tuesday evening's Nikkei wrote that according to South Korean media reports, the United States told Japan and South Korea during the trilateral talks on Monday that it has begun to study whether to put North Korea back on its list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Abe to visit Russia in April

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that the governments of Japan and Russia are making final arrangements for Prime Minister Abe to visit Russia for talks with President Putin in late April. The GOJ is also making arrangements for former residents of the Northern Territories to fly to the islands around April 22 ahead of Abe's visit to Russia. The former residents have mainly visited the islands under the visa-free program by ship up until now, but the GOJ is hoping to make arrangements to send them by chartered plane with the aim of reducing the burden on the aging residents and increasing such visits.

ECONOMY

New commerce secretary may take hardline approach to Japan

All papers reported on the Senate's confirmation on Monday of Wilbur Ross as secretary of commerce. Mainichi wrote that the new commerce secretary may take a hardline approach to Japan in discussions at the U.S.-Japan economic dialogue to be launched in April or later in view of America's large trade deficit with the nation. Speculating that Secretary Ross will play a key role in the economic dialogue with Japan, the paper wrote that although he has made no specific comments on the possibility of a U.S.-Japan FTA, he will probably seek to begin discussions on the matter at an early date. Yomiuri wrote that Secretary Ross will probably take the lead in the United States' trade negotiations, a role that was traditionally played by the USTR. The paper quoted METI Minister Seko as stating at a regular news conference on Tuesday that he would like to hold bilateral talks with Secretary Ross in the near future.

60% of Osaka citizens oppose hosting integrated resort

Asahi wrote that in its recent poll of citizens of Osaka Prefecture, 60% of respondents expressed opposition to the idea of Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City hosting an integrated resort that includes casinos, while 31% supported it. Some 62% of the opponents expressed concern over the possible deterioration of public safety, while 51% of the proponents expressed expectations for economic

benefits. The poll was jointly conducted with the Osaka-based Asahi Broadcasting Corporation on Feb. 25-26.

SCIENCE

Japan to tighten control over domestic ivory trade

Tuesday evening's Nikkei wrote that the cabinet approved on Tuesday a bill strengthening government control over domestic ivory trade by requiring domestic dealers to register with the government. The bill to amend the existing law on conservation of endangered species will be submitted to the current Diet session. Under the amended law, ivory dealers will be inspected every five years and their registration will be rescinded if they engage in illegal transactions. Those engaging in ivory trade without registration will face harsh penalties. The maximum fine for individuals will be raised to 5 million yen from the current 500,000 yen, and corporations will be fined up to 100 million yen.

