



Morning Alert - Tuesday, March 14, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK, TBS, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports on the arrival of King Salman of Saudi Arabia to Japan and his meeting with Prime Minister Abe on Monday.

Major front-page stories in national papers included an emerging Diet consensus on passing special measures legislation during the current session to allow Emperor Akihito to abdicate, an agreement reached between Keidanren and Rengo to limit overtime work to less than 100 hours per month, and Toshiba's plan to postpone an announcement scheduled for today on its business performance last year.

INTERNATIONAL

Tillerson to seek China's cooperation in deterring DPRK provocations

Asahi reported on Secretary of State Tillerson's trip to Northeast Asia starting tomorrow, projecting that his foremost task will be to elicit greater cooperation from China to prevent North Korea from continuing to pursue missile and nuclear development. The daily quoted an unnamed senior DOS official as saying on Saturday that "all options are on the table" and that the USG is looking into "more effective measures" to apply pressure on North Korea. As the Trump administration is currently conducting a review of its strategy toward Pyongyang, the Secretary is expected to brief Japan and South Korea on the status of the review. The paper added that China will be Secretary Tillerson's top priority for the tour, noting that he is hoping to hold talks with President Xi in order to

enlist his support for putting more pressure on the DPRK. The Secretary is also expected to ask the Chinese leader to visit the U.S. in early April for a summit with President Trump.

Sankei also filed a report on Tillerson's visit to Japan, noting that senior MOFA officials visited Washington last week to make final arrangements. Given that their U.S. counterparts did not clearly indicate when the USG will complete its ongoing review of North Korea policy, the Japanese diplomats reportedly believe that Tokyo will still be able to offer its input so that the new U.S. strategy can reflect Japan's views. The daily said some Japanese officials are insisting that the Trump administration consider a "preemptive strike" by the U.S. military as a possible option in the belief that North Korea will not come to the negotiating table unless stronger pressure is applied. They claim that the DPRK agreed to launch the Six-Party Talks in the early 2000s since the Bush administration took a hard line by calling North Korea a member of the "axis of evil."

Japan to support Saudi's efforts to reduce reliance on oil production

All papers reported on yesterday's summit between Prime Minister Abe and visiting Saudi King Salman, at which the premier agreed to assist Riyadh in reducing its heavy reliance on petroleum exports for economic growth. The two leaders signed a joint document entitled "Japan-Saudi Vision 2030" that calls for Japan's support for nine sectors in Saudi Arabia, such as social infrastructure and the entertainment industry. They also agreed on greater mutual cooperation for ensuring regional stability in the Middle East as "strategic partners."

Japanese Communist Party leader to visit U.S.

Nikkei reported that Japanese Communist Party Chairman Shii plans to visit the U.S. from March 22 through April 1 to lobby for the conclusion of the Nuclear Weapons Convention, as the UN is expected to hold talks on the proposed international treaty around that time. Speculating that by visiting the U.S., Shii may be anxious to play up his party's "realistic line" on the diplomatic front with possible greater election collaboration with the Democratic Party in mind, the daily claimed that he is hoping to hold meetings with U.S. members of Congress, including Senator Bernie Sanders.

SECURITY

USFJ manual mentions possibility of serious Osprey accident

Tokyo Shimbun front-paged remarks by a Japanese Communist Party lawmaker at the Diet committee session yesterday, in which he referred to an alleged USFJ checklist for Osprey crewmembers stationed at MCAS Futenma. According to the politician, the U.S. military manual mentions the possibility of a serious accident caused by problems during aerial refueling operations. The manual also says that because a propeller striking the refueling hose in midair could cause "catastrophic damage," the hose should be "guillotined" in the event of a refueling accident. In response to the opposition lawmaker's claim that the shallow water landing made by an Osprey in

Okinawa last December was a result of the situation described in this alleged U.S. military document, Defense Minister Inada simply stated: “The ministry is not aware of the existence of the checklist.”

Abe says security situation not the reason for ending SDF operations in South Sudan

Several papers highlighted remarks made at the parliament on Monday by Prime Minister Abe, who underscored that he decided to end GSDF peacekeeping operations in South Sudan in May or later based on the judgment that their primary mission of facilitating road and infrastructure improvement has been largely accomplished. He stressed that the deteriorating security situation is not the reason for discontinuing the operation.

ECONOMY

TPP conference to be held in Chile

Most papers reported that the TPP member states plan to hold a ministerial meeting in Chile on Wednesday, saying that the Chilean government invited China and South Korea to join the meeting for a possible expansion of the group. Asahi said Chile and Peru are anxious to court the two Asian powers in view of the U.S.’s withdrawal, quoting a senior Chilean diplomat as saying: “When exploring economic integration, it is only natural to hold negotiations with China and South Korea.”

Yomiuri said although Australia and other members are looking to effectuate the TPP without U.S. participation, Japan is still hoping to persuade the Trump administration to rejoin the accord since Tokyo views the regional free trade deal as a tool for containing China in coordination with Washington. Mainichi wrote that some LDP officials are now insisting on effectuating the TPP without U.S. membership so as to prevent the Trump administration from demanding market opening in bilateral economic talks. The paper added that the focus of the Chile meeting will be on whether to hold accelerated discussions on effectuating the trade liberalization accord without the U.S.’s participation.

POLITICS

Tokyo chapter of Komeito to cooperate with new party led by Governor Koike

All papers reported that the new regional party headed by Tokyo Governor Koike, “Citizens-First Assembly,” announced yesterday that it has forged an accord with the Tokyo chapter of the Komeito party on cooperation in the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly election in July. The papers explained that since Komeito has chosen to distance itself from the LDP in Tokyo, ruling party officials are afraid that the popular governor may try to field candidates of her own to challenge the LDP in the next general election depending on the outcome of the upcoming Tokyo race. The largest opposition Democratic Party will also be put in a difficult position, since some of its metropolitan assembly

members have announced plans to leave the party to join Koike's group out of frustration with the DP's dwindling popularity among voters.

SOCIETY

Japanese youths found to be passive, less ambitious

Several papers took up the results of a survey of high school students taken in Japan, the U.S., China, and South Korea, noting that Japanese youths were found to be more passive about learning and less ambitious about their future than their foreign counterparts. As many Japanese students tend to doze off and not express opinions during class, the pollster, National Institute for Youth Education, speculated that Japanese youths may be bored with their schools' educational programs.

