



Morning Alert - Wednesday, April 19, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning News

NHK gave top play to a report on hot weather in the Kanto region and heavy snowfall in Hokkaido. Most commercial networks led with reports that a Japanese woman who was taken into custody in Thailand was arrested on Wednesday morning on a flight to Haneda Airport on charges of running a pyramid scheme.

Asahi gave top play to a report on the inaugural meeting of the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue, saying that the U.S. expressed its desire to hold FTA negotiations with Japan. Sankei led with a report on a meeting between Vice President Pence and Prime Minister Abe, during which the two leaders confirmed close cooperation against the DPRK. Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei gave top play to British Prime Minister May's announcement of a general election on June 8.

## VICE PRESIDENT PENCE IN JAPAN

### Vice President Pence, Prime Minister Abe agree to apply more pressure on North Korea

All papers ran front-page reports on a meeting between Vice President Pence and Prime Minister Abe at the Prime Minister's Official Residence on Tuesday. The papers wrote that the two leaders agreed on the need to apply further pressure on North Korea since its nuclear and missile development has entered a new phase. Nikkei wrote that the Vice President and the prime minister confirmed the U.S. policy of not excluding military options while seeking a peaceful solution. The paper also wrote that the two leaders agreed to urge China to play a greater role. Asahi wrote that the Vice President stressed that the U.S. plans to apply diplomatic and economic pressure on

Pyongyang together with China. The paper also wrote that the Vice President stated at a joint press conference with Deputy Prime Minister Aso that the era of strategic patience is over. Mainichi wrote that Vice President Pence expressed Washington's firm stance toward North Korea by saying that peace comes through strength. Yomiuri wrote that Abe welcomed the U.S.'s position to step up its pressure on the DPRK by displaying its military strength. The paper added that the Vice President thanked Prime Minister Abe for Japan's support for the recent U.S. attack on Syria.

### **Vice President Pence holds economic dialogue with Deputy Prime Minister Aso**

All papers front-paged the inaugural meeting of the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue that was co-chaired by Vice President Pence and Deputy Prime Minister Aso in Tokyo on Tuesday. The two nations agreed to pursue the dialogue by focusing on three things -- trade and investment strategy, cooperation in economic and structural policies, and sectoral cooperation. The U.S. and Japan also agreed that the dialogue should generate concrete results in the near term. The papers wrote that the Vice President stressed during a post-meeting joint press conference that the TPP is an idea of the past and that the U.S. will seek bilateral trade negotiations. However, Aso stated that it is important to establish trade rules for the Asia-Pacific region under the leadership of the U.S. and Japan.

Asahi wrote that the Vice President expressed the Trump administration's intention to seek bilateral negotiations on an FTA with Japan through the dialogue. The paper speculated that the U.S. may increase pressure on Japan to further open its farm and auto markets following Vice President Pence's clear statement as a key member of the Trump administration on Washington's desire to hold bilateral trade talks with Tokyo.

Mainichi also wrote that the Vice President expressed the Trump administration's strong desire to forge a bilateral trade agreement with Tokyo, quoting the Vice President as saying at the joint press conference that the U.S. will seek balanced bilateral trade relations with Japan and that it is necessary to remove trade barriers and allow U.S. exporters high-level access to Japanese markets. The paper wrote that the differences between the U.S. and Japan were made clear through the first round of economic dialogue. Washington plans to urge Japan to hold bilateral trade negotiations, while Tokyo gives priority to the establishment of a multilateral trade framework like the TPP.

Yomiuri wrote that although the first round of dialogue ended without creating a major stir because the U.S. was unable to prepare for it sufficiently due to a delay in filling key trade-related positions, Washington may place tough demands on Tokyo in the future after it finalizes the lineup of key trade officials.

Nikkei wrote that the U.S. and Japan failed to hold in-depth talks on infrastructure and energy development at the dialogue and that the issue of currency was not taken up. The paper wrote that attention will be focused on whether Japan will be able to conduct detailed discussions on economic

cooperation while deflecting the U.S. pressure on trade and currency. The paper wrote that the gap over trade negotiations may become a source of friction between Washington and Tokyo because Japan is considering a TPP agreement without the U.S.

### **Vice President Pence visits Sensoji**

Yomiuri reported online that Vice President Pence visited Sensoji Temple in Tokyo on Tuesday afternoon. The daily said the Vice President's motorcade arrived at the temple just before 6 p.m., after which the Vice President and his family entered the main hall of the temple, where they admired the main statue. The paper said the Vice President and Mrs. Pence left the temple about 20 minutes later, smiling and waving to tourists before getting in their car.

### **Mrs. Pence stresses importance of art therapy**

Mainichi ran an interview with Karen Pence, the wife of Vice President Pence, during which she stressed the importance of art therapy. Mrs. Pence, who has been engaged in educational activities involving art therapy for more than ten years, discussed the situation of art therapy in Japan during a meeting with medical and other professionals in Tokyo on Tuesday.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Commerce Secretary Ross, Trade Minister Seko discuss trade, economic cooperation**

All Tuesday evening papers ran reports on a meeting between Secretary of Commerce Ross and Economy and Trade Minister Seko that was held earlier in the day in Tokyo. Seko told reporters after the meeting that he held candid discussions with the secretary and that in addition to trade in Asia, the two officials discussed such issues as cybersecurity and infrastructure development as areas for bilateral cooperation. Mainichi wrote that concerning the possibility of a bilateral FTA with Japan, the secretary stated that it is too early to discuss the issue and that Washington is hoping to strengthen its trade relations with Tokyo. However, Asahi and Nikkei wrote that the secretary expressed Washington's desire to seek a bilateral trade agreement with Tokyo. Yomiuri wrote that the U.S. and Japan plan to move forward with discussions on specific issues at talks between the Commerce Department and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Nikkei wrote that Japan tried to keep the talks between Secretary Ross and Minister Seko separate from the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue in order to prevent the dialogue from focusing on trade issues.

### **Japan, Australia discuss idea of TPP without U.S.**

Yomiuri wrote that TPP Minister Ishihara and Australian Trade Minister Ciobo held talks in Tokyo on Tuesday. The two ministers discussed the idea of a TPP agreement without U.S. participation and the need for the 11 TPP member states to seek the establishment of a high-level free trade framework in the Asia-Pacific region ahead of a TPP ministerial meeting to be held in Vietnam in May.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **White House press secretary says Trump not planning to draw “red line” for North Korea**

Several papers wrote that White House Press Secretary Spicer stated at a press briefing on Monday that President Trump has no plans to draw a “red line” for North Korea. However, citing a U.S. airstrike on Syria earlier this month, Spicer said the President will take decisive action when appropriate.

### **North Korea prepared to respond to preemptive strikes by U.S.**

Tuesday evening’s Mainichi ran a Kyodo report saying that North Korea’s Deputy Ambassador to the United Nations Kim In Ryong told the press at the UN headquarters in New York on Monday that Pyongyang is prepared to respond to any military action initiated by the United States. Kim was quoted as saying that if the U.S. opts to take military action and makes a preemptive strike, the DPRK is ready to react to any type of war desired by the Americans. The envoy criticized the deployment of the USS Carl Vinson to waters near the Korean Peninsula as a reckless strategy for an invasion of North Korea. He also criticized a UNSC meeting on North Korea that will be hosted by the U.S. on April 28 by saying that Pyongyang firmly rejects it because the meeting will infringe on the sovereignty of the DPRK.

### **Japan, Australia to hold 2+2 meeting**

Tuesday evening’s Nikkei reported on a GOJ announcement that Japan and Australia are making arrangements to hold a 2+2 meeting of their foreign and defense ministers in Tokyo on April 20. The paper wrote that the two nations plan to confirm their trilateral cooperation with the U.S. in response to China’s maritime advancement in the South China Sea and North Korea’s nuclear and missile development.

### **Philippine president to visit Japan in June**

Tuesday evening’s Nikkei wrote that Philippine President Duterte will visit Japan in early June to hold talks with Prime Minister Abe. The Japanese and Philippine leaders are expected to discuss regional security, including territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

## **SECURITY**

### **Japan to allow female SDF personnel to take on combat roles**

Asahi wrote that Defense Minister Inada told the press on Tuesday that the SDF will allow its female personnel to serve in the GSDF’s infantry units and other roles, enabling them to apply for virtually all occupational fields in the SDF. Under the Abe administration’s initiative to encourage women to play more active roles, the SDF will seek to double the percentage of female personnel from the current 6%. Inada stated that the ministry will make efforts to make the Self-Defense Forces an

appealing organization to work for. As of the end of December 2016, the number of female SDF personnel stood at 13,989.

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