



Morning Alert - Thursday, May 18, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning News

NHK gave top play to a report that Wednesday's Dow Jones Industrial Average plunged by more than 370 points from Tuesday in response to a series of allegations regarding President Trump, including that the President asked former FBI Director Comey to end the bureau's investigation into ties between former National Security Advisor Flynn and Russia and that he gave classified information to Russia provided to the U.S. by Israel.

TBS and TV Asahi led with reports that documents believed to be drafted by MEXT refer to a request from the Cabinet Office for the ministry to approve Kake Educational Institution's request for permission to launch a veterinary school in a national strategic special zone in Imabari, Ehime. The Kantei has denied the allegation.

NTV and Fuji TV gave top play to reports on a press conference on Wednesday morning by Kei Komuro, with whom Princess Mako is expected to be engaged soon.

Top stories in national dailies included documents suggesting that Prime Minister Abe put pressure on the Education Ministry to approve the launch of a veterinary school by a friend of his (Asahi, Mainichi); a speech delivered by PACOM Commander Harris (Sankei); an LDP plan to finalize by the end of this year a bill to amend the Constitution (Yomiuri); and a plan by the Health Ministry to require major firms to disclose records of their workers' overtime hours (Nikkei).

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, ROK agree to cooperate on North Korea, but differ on comfort women

All papers reported on Foreign Minister Kishida's meeting on Wednesday with Moon Hee-sang, a special envoy of South Korean President Moon Jae-in, during which the two officials agreed that Tokyo and Seoul will cooperate closely against North Korea. The foreign minister reiterated Japan's position that the 2015 Japan-ROK agreement on comfort women should be implemented steadily, but Moon told Kishida that most South Korean people are emotionally unable to accept the agreement. However, Moon did not call for its renegotiation. The two officials also agreed on the need to arrange a summit meeting between Prime Minister Abe and President Moon at an early date.

Japan to send officials to Northern Territories to study joint economic activities

Asahi wrote that the GOJ is making final arrangements for sending a group of officials from the government and private sector to the Northern Territories from May 30 through June 4 to study how Japan and Russia should carry out joint economic activities on the islands in the future. The delegation, led by Special Advisor to the Prime Minister Eiichi Hasegawa, will include several dozen people from MOFA, the governments of Hokkaido and its municipalities, and the fisheries, medical, and tourist industries.

SECURITY

PACOM commander visits GSDF camp on Yonaguni

Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that PACOM Commander Harris visited the GSDF camp on Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni with SDF Chief of Staff Kawano. This was the first time for a PACOM commander to visit the camp, which was established in March 2016 to bolster Japan's defense of the Nansei Islands. The papers wrote that the visit by the PACOM commander was intended to keep China in check.

The papers also reported on a speech delivered by Admiral Harris in Tokyo earlier in the day, during which he stressed the need to apply further pressure on the DPRK.

ECONOMY

Leaders of Japan and New Zealand agree to cooperate in effectuating TPP agreement

Mainichi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that Prime Minister Abe and his New Zealand counterpart English agreed at their meeting at the Kantei on Wednesday that their nations will closely cooperate in effectuating the TPP agreement at an early date. Mainichi wrote that the two nations will aim to effectuate the accord without the participation of the U.S. Nikkei carried its one-on-one interview with Prime Minister English, during which he commented on the "TPP 11" by saying that New Zealand will not try to rework the accord agreed upon by the 12 member states, including tariff rates.

In a related story, Yomiuri wrote that although Japan hopes to take the lead and confirm unity in discussions at a ministerial meeting of the 11 TPP nations to be held in Vietnam on May 21, there are still differences between the member states over the TPP 11 idea.

Takahama nuclear reactor resumes operation

All papers reported on the restart on Wednesday of Reactor No. 4 at the Takahama Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture. Kansai Electric Power Co. plans to start commercial operation of the reactor in mid-June. The reactor was shut down in February 2016 due to a technical problem and had remained halted along with Reactor No. 3 following the Otsu District Court's ruling against their operation. However, the decision was repealed in March this year by the Osaka High Court, which determined that the necessary measures have been taken. A total of four reactors – two at Sendai nuclear power plant in Kagoshima, one at Ikata nuclear power plant in Ehime, and one at Takahama – are now in operation as a result.

POLITICS

MEXT documents mention Abe's "desire" to allow close friend to open veterinary school

All papers reported on documents believed to be drafted by the Education Ministry last September and October referring to a request from the Cabinet Office that the ministry approve the Kake Educational Institution's request for permission to launch a veterinary school in a national strategic special zone in Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture. The papers alleged that the Cabinet Office pressed the ministry to swiftly accommodate the request by saying that it was from "a top level official at the Kantei." The president of Kake Educational Institution is known to be a close friend of Prime Minister Abe. However, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a regular press briefing on Wednesday that the alleged documents failed to mention their authors' names or when they were drafted and that the prime minister had never issued such instructions. However, the opposition parties are set to grill Prime Minister Abe on the matter at Diet sessions this week.