



Morning Alert - Thursday, February 8, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All national papers gave prominent front-page play to Vice President Pence's meeting with Prime Minister Abe on late Wednesday afternoon.

Most networks gave top play to reports on the heavy snowfall in Fukui, saying that about 1,100 cars are still stranded on a national road. TV Asahi led with a report on its exclusive interview with sumo stable master Takanohana, who talked about grand champion Harumafuji's assault of a fellow sumo wrestler.

## VICE PRESIDENT PENCE

### U.S., Japan agree to keep applying pressure on DPRK

All national dailies reported extensively on yesterday's meeting between Prime Minister Abe and Vice President Pence at the Kantei, highlighting their consensus on stepping up the pressure on North Korea with the goal of realizing the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. They also agreed to ask South Korea to maintain a concerted line with Tokyo and Washington. In a post-conference press availability, the prime minister stressed that the international community "must not be charmed" by Pyongyang's recent peace overtures. The Vice President disclosed that the U.S. will soon unveil the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever. "We have brought unprecedented diplomatic and economic pressure to bear on North Korea through our maximum pressure campaign," the Vice President said.

Yomiuri, Mainichi, Asahi, and Nikkei said that Vice President Pence and PM Abe also reportedly exchanged views on the recent mishaps involving U.S. military aircraft in Okinawa and agreed to continue efforts to ensure flight safety. Yomiuri wrote that according to a Japanese briefing, they did not take up the issue of the comfort women. Nikkei speculated that although the GOJ was hopeful that they would address the issue, there may be a perception gap between the U.S. and Japan about the comfort women pact between Tokyo and Seoul that pronounced a “final and irreversible resolution” to the history dispute. The daily speculated that the consensus that the matter was resolved completely with the 2015 agreement is not necessarily shared throughout the Trump administration.

### **U.S., Japan alarmed that South Korea may be tempted to ease hard line toward DPRK**

All national dailies noted that in their meeting yesterday, Vice President and Prime Minister Abe reiterated the need to apply maximum pressure on North Korea out of deep concern about the growing mood in South Korea for reconciliation with North Korea. Asahi wrote that the Pence-Abe meeting was intended to keep South Korea’s moves to respond to North Korea’s peace overtures in check. Yomiuri said the Vice President used extremely strong language in criticizing Pyongyang. The U.S. official underscored that the DPRK regime, which he called “the most tyrannical and oppressive regime on the planet,” would not be allowed to “hijack” the upcoming Olympics. He said: “We will not allow North Korea to hide behind the Olympic banner the reality that they enslave their people and threaten the wider region.” The daily projected that when they hold talks with South Korean President Moon separately later this week in PyeongChang, Vice President Pence and PM Abe are set to urge him to reject Pyongyang’s “charm offensive.” Tokyo and Washington are reportedly determined to ratchet up the pressure on Pyongyang by cracking down on its attempts to evade UN economic sanctions.

### **Vice President Pence surveys missile defense platform in Tokyo**

All papers wrote that Vice President Pence visited the Defense Ministry on Wednesday morning and surveyed a PAC-3 interceptor deployed on the ministry premises, with Asahi claiming that the U.S. side had requested a tour of the Japanese anti-missile battery. Explaining that a visit to the ministry by a U.S. vice president is extremely unusual, Yomiuri asserted that Vice President Pence was hoping to showcase the strong U.S.-Japan alliance against the DPRK. The Vice President reportedly stressed later that the full range of American military capabilities is dedicated to the protection of Japan.

### **Vice President Pence, Aso exchange views on bilateral trade**

All national dailies except Sankei wrote that Vice President Pence met with Deputy Prime Minister Aso on Wednesday evening to discuss bilateral economic issues. Nikkei reported that Aso conveyed to the Vice President the importance of creating common trade rules in the Asia-Pacific region. According to Kyodo, a Japanese government source said Vice President Pence referred to the

possibility of the U.S. returning to the TPP if Washington can renegotiate it with better terms. Noting that yesterday's 20-minute session between Aso and the Vice President was not part of the bilateral economic dialogue, Yomiuri said they apparently did not hold in-depth talks. The paper added that the U.S. is growing increasingly frustrated that the economic dialogue has not picked up momentum.

Mainichi claimed that the Vice President expressed interest in a bilateral FTA and mentioned the Trump administration's possible return to the TPP on the condition that the terms would be more beneficial to the United States. By citing an unnamed GOJ source, Tokyo Shimbun also claimed that the Vice President referred to a possible U.S. return in response to Aso's inquiry about President Trump's remarks in Davos in January regarding the regional free trade pact. The two officials reportedly agreed to expedite the economic dialogue.

### **Second Lady Karen Pence visits Tokyo garden**

Sankei's website published a Kyodo report that Vice President Pence's wife Karen toured Hamarikyu Gardens in Tokyo on Wednesday afternoon. Together with Deputy Prime Minister Aso's wife Chikako and Ambassador Hagerty's wife Chrissy, Mrs. Pence strolled through the traditional Japanese garden for about an hour. Yomiuri filed a similar story online.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Kim Jong Un's sister to attend PyeongChang Olympics**

All papers reported from Seoul that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's younger sister Kim Yo Jong will visit South Korea as a member of the DPRK delegation for the PyeongChang Olympics. Keen attention is being paid to whether she and North Korea's second-highest-ranking official Kim Yong Nam will meet with ROK President Moon on the sidelines of the opening ceremony. The papers said by dispatching Kim Yo Jong, who is viewed as Jong Un's close confidant, the Kim regime is anxious to remind the South Korean people that Pyongyang is "dead serious" about improving its ties with the southern neighbor with the ultimate goal of prompting Seoul to relax sanctions.

### **U.S., ROK to hold joint exercises in mid-April**

Yomiuri wrote from Seoul that coordination is underway between the USG and the South Korean government to hold the annual Key Resolve and Foal Eagle joint exercises in mid-April. Mainichi reprinted a Jiji piece, quoting Mark Knapper, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in South Korea, as saying to the VOA that the joint exercises will be carried out in April.

