



Morning Alert - Friday, March 9, 2018

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact [TokyoMATT@state.gov](mailto:TokyoMATT@state.gov).

## HEADLINES

### Morning news

Most broadcasters led with reports on the heavy rain in the Kanto region this morning. TBS led with the opposition bloc's strong reaction to Finance Ministry's submission to the Diet of copies of original documents on the controversial sale of state-owned property to Moritomo Gakuen.

Top stories in national dailies included reports on the scandal over documents related to Moritomo Gakuen (Asahi, Sankei); Cabinet Office survey results showing that none of the municipalities in areas that could be hit by a tsunami triggered by a Nankai Trough earthquake have applied to participate in a project to move to higher ground (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to manage land ownership data using the "My Number" identification system (Yomiuri); and a request from unions of major electronics makers to set an annual overtime limit of 720 hours (Nikkei).

Kyodo News reported that according to U.S. news sources, a senior U.S. official has said that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is extending an invitation to meet with President Trump.

## ECONOMY

### President Trump signs orders imposing new tariffs

NHK reported this morning that President Trump signed orders on Thursday imposing stiff new tariffs on imported steel and aluminum that will take effect in 15 days, adding that the President has agreed to exempt Canada and Mexico, with which the U.S. is renegotiating NAFTA, and held out the possibility of excluding other allies. The President was quoted as saying: "Strong steel and aluminum industries are vital to national security. Now we are finally taking action to correct this long overdue problem. Today, I'm defending America's national security by placing tariffs on foreign imports of steel and aluminum." An NHK reporter predicted that not only the Japanese steel industry but also

Japanese automakers that have plants in the U.S. will be affected by the tariffs due to the likely rise in manufacturing costs, expressing the view that the new tariff measures will probably develop into a trade war. The reporter noted that China is already preparing to take retaliatory measures by imposing steep tariffs mainly on American agricultural products and the EU has also announced that it will take retaliatory measures. Claiming that the President has directed his frustration over the loss of jobs in the U.S. toward free trade, the reporter projected that the tariffs will have immeasurable adverse effects on Japan and the global economy.

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **South Korean envoys to meet with President Trump, other senior U.S. officials**

Asahi wrote that it has learned from a source connected to U.S.-ROK relations that final arrangements are being made for a delegation led by Director Chung Eui-yong of South Korea's National Security Office, who met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Monday, to hold a meeting with President Trump in Washington on Friday. The paper wrote that according to the source, the delegation plans to hand a written message from the North Korean leader to the President. The envoys also plan to brief National Security Adviser McMaster and CIA Director Pompeo on their meeting with the DPRK leader. Sankei ran a similar front-page report, adding that a meeting with Vice President Pence might also be arranged.

### **Senior ROK official to visit Japan to brief officials on meeting with Kim Jong Un**

Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe disclosed at an Upper House Budget Committee session on Thursday that South Korea's National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon, who was one of the envoys who met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Monday, will visit Tokyo next week. The paper speculated that Suh will brief Foreign Minister Kono. Asahi wrote that Japan and South Korea are making arrangements for Suh to visit Tokyo on March 12-13, speculating that he will hold talks with National Security Council Secretariat Director Yachi and Director of Cabinet Intelligence Kitamura during his visit to Tokyo.

### **Foreign ministers of U.S., Japan, ROK may hold trilateral talks in Washington**

Mainichi wrote that it learned from a GOJ source on Thursday that arrangements are being made for Secretary of State Tillerson, Foreign Minister Kono, and South Korean Foreign Minister Kang to hold trilateral talks in Washington later this month. The paper conjectured that the officials will discuss coordination between the three nations ahead of a planned inter-Korean summit in late April.

### **China seeks early U.S.-DPRK talks**

All national dailies reported on a press briefing on Thursday by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during which he reportedly expressed support for the idea of holding an inter-Korean summit. According to the papers, Wang also urged the United States and North Korea to hold bilateral talks as soon as possible to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Regarding China's relations with Japan, Wang reportedly stated that Beijing welcomes Tokyo's recent positive policy toward China. He added that there will naturally be opportunities for the Chinese and Japanese leaders to make reciprocal visits to each other's nations if the appropriate conditions are established.

Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei added that the Chinese foreign minister also commented on the U.S. plan to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports by reportedly saying that a trade war is not the right solution and that China will definitely take the necessary steps.

### **Abe reaffirms continued pressure on DPRK**

All national dailies reported in their Thursday evening editions that in response to an agreement reached between North and South Korea to hold an inter-Korean summit in late April, Prime Minister Abe stated at an Upper House Budget Committee session on Thursday that even though North Korea has agreed to hold dialogue with South Korea, the sanctions on Pyongyang should not be eased and the DPRK should not be rewarded. The prime minister reportedly added that Japan will continue to step up the pressure to the maximum level through all means possible until Pyongyang abandons its nuclear and missile programs and that it is necessary for the Kim Jong Un regime to take concrete actions to denuclearize in order to hold meaningful dialogue.

### **Abe discusses North Korean sanctions with foreign minister of Laos**

Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe held talks with Foreign Minister Saleumxay of Laos at the Kantei on Thursday. The two reportedly agreed to steadily implement UNSC sanctions resolutions on North Korea. Nikkei also reported on the meeting, adding that in view of the fact that Laos has diplomatic relations with North Korea, Abe stated that it is necessary to increase the pressure on the DPRK to the greatest extent possible to urge Pyongyang to change its policy.

## **SECURITY**

### **Head of Air Force Space Command meets with CCS Suga**

Nikkei wrote that Gen. John Raymond, Commander, Air Force Space Command, held talks with Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga at the Kantei on Thursday. According to the paper, Ambassador Hagerty accompanied the general. Suga reportedly told a news conference afterward that they exchanged views on U.S.-Japan cooperation in space.

### **U.S. hospital ship to visit Tokyo**

Nikkei and Sankei wrote that Prime Minister Abe disclosed at an Upper House Budget Committee session on Thursday that the USNS Mercy is scheduled to call at Tokyo in June. This will be the U.S. Navy hospital ship's first visit to Tokyo. The premier reportedly expressed hope that the visit of the USNS Mercy will give Japan an opportunity to learn about medical response to disaster.

---



**JMI** JAPAN MEDIA  
HIGHLIGHTS