



Morning Alert - Monday, March 12, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports that the Ministry of Finance plans to report to the Diet today that it has confirmed that several documents on the controversial sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen were altered.

Top stories in national dailies included reports on the seventh anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11 (Asahi, Mainichi); a plan by the Finance Ministry to present to the Diet today the results of its investigation into documents related to Moritomo Gakuen (Yomiuri); and an increase in consumer spending through online shopping (Nikkei).

## INTERNATIONAL

### President Trump says Japan is “very happy” about his plan to meet with DPRK

All national dailies wrote on Monday that President Trump commented on his planned meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un by saying at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania on Sunday that Japan, over which North Korean missiles have flown, is “very happy” with what he is doing. The papers wrote that the President reportedly added that he believes that North Korea wants to make peace and that his talks with the DPRK leader could result in “the greatest deal for the world.”

### South Korean envoy to brief Abe on meetings with President Trump, Kim Jong Un

All national dailies wrote on Monday that South Korea’s National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon will visit Tokyo today to brief Prime Minister Abe on his meetings with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and President Trump last week.

### Japan concerned about being left out in dealing with North Korea

Saturday's Yomiuri wrote that Prime Minister Abe plans to visit the United States in early April to hold talks with President Trump to discuss the details of his proposed meeting with Kim Jong Un and confirm Japan's unity with the United States in dealing with the DPRK. The paper speculated that the GOJ is hoping to be able to coordinate closely with the United States out of concern that Japan could be left out of direct talks between Washington and Pyongyang if progress is made on intercontinental ballistic missiles but not on the short- and mid-range missiles that are capable of reaching Japan or on the abduction issue.

Saturday's Asahi and Mainichi ran similar analytical stories claiming that Japan was shocked by the Trump administration's decision to hold a summit meeting with Kim Jong Un. Asahi conjectured that the Abe administration's security policy, including the planned Aegis Ashore deployment that is primarily aimed at responding to the military threat posed by North Korea, could be called into question. Nikkei speculated that PM Abe will call for President Trump's cooperation in resolving the abduction issue during their planned meeting in early April. Sankei conjectured that the strong bonds between the President Trump and PM Abe will be tested over their coordination in response to the DPRK.

### **President Trump comments on possible meeting with Kim Jong Un**

Sunday's Mainichi wrote that President Trump reportedly commented on his envisaged talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un by posting a message on Twitter saying: "The deal with North Korea is very much in the making and will be, if completed, a very good one for the World. Time and place to be determined." The paper also wrote that White House Press Secretary Sanders reportedly said on Friday that the United States will not hold a meeting with Kim until North Korea takes concrete actions that match its words and rhetoric. The paper speculated that the Trump administration will call on the Kim regime to take concrete steps to demonstrate its readiness to denuclearize and freeze its nuclear and missile programs in future preparatory talks for the summit meeting. Sunday's Asahi, Nikkei, and Sankei ran similar stories.

### **Kim Jong Un sends "special message" to President Trump**

Sunday's Nikkei and Saturday evening's Asahi wrote from Seoul that South Korea's Yonhap News Agency reported that a senior ROK government source told the South Korean media on Saturday that a South Korean envoy conveyed a "special message" from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to President Trump in Washington on Friday apart from his invitation to hold a meeting. While describing the message as "very comprehensive," the official reportedly declined to disclose the content of the message.

### **U.S. could cancel or delay summit with DPRK**

Sunday's Asahi claimed that it learned from an unnamed USG source that the Trump administration reportedly confirmed at an NSC preparatory meeting on North Korea on Friday that President Trump's envisaged talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un would be cancelled or delayed if the

DPRK failed to work toward denuclearization, freeze its nuclear and missile tests, and show understanding for U.S. military drills with South Korea. The paper quoted the source as reportedly saying that the Kim regime's failure to uphold these three conditions would have an impact on the envisaged U.S.-DPRK talks.

### **Onodera reiterates need for maximum pressure on DPRK**

Sunday's Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that Defense Minister Onodera reiterated the need to apply maximum pressure on North Korea in a speech he gave in Tokyo on Saturday by reportedly saying that the DPRK has not stopped its nuclear and missile development and that it is necessary to increase the pressure to the maximum level through all possible means.

### **GOJ survey shows over 85% feel Japan could be involved in war**

Sunday's Asahi, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei reported on the results of a recent GOJ survey on Japan's defense and the Self-Defense Forces, in which 85.5% of the respondents said that they think Japan could be involved in a war. This was 10 points higher than in the previous poll taken in 2015. The papers wrote that the Ministry of Defense attributes the increase to escalating tensions over North Korea.

## **ECONOMY**

### **President Trump urges Japan to correct trade imbalance**

All national dailies reported on Monday that President Trump commented on trade with Japan by posting a message on Twitter on Sunday saying: "Spoke to Prime Minister Abe of Japan, who is very enthusiastic about talks with North Korea. Also discussing opening up Japan to much better trade with the U.S. Currently have a massive \$100 billion Trade Deficit. Not fair or sustainable. It will all work out!" Asahi speculated that Japan has been calling on the United States to exempt it from the planned tariffs on steel and aluminum imports and Washington may ask Tokyo to make some sort of concession because the United States is targeting trade partners with which it has deficits even if they are allies.

### **Japan asks to be exempted from U.S. steel tariffs**

All national dailies reported on Sunday that during a meeting with U.S. Trade Representative Lighthizer in Brussels on Saturday, Economy, Trade, and Industry Minister Seko asked the United States to exempt Japan from its tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, but reportedly did not receive a response to the request. According to the papers, Seko told reporters after the meeting that although USTR Lighthizer explained to him the timeline and procedures for the new tariffs, the U.S. official provided no further explanation. Seko reportedly added that Japan will continue to make vigorous efforts to be exempted from the tariffs.

In a related development, Asahi, Mainichi, and Nikkei wrote that President Trump reportedly expressed his intention to exempt Australia from the tariffs by stating on Twitter: "Spoke to PM

@TurnbullMalcolm of Australia. He is committed to having a very fair and reciprocal military and trade relationship. Working very quickly on a security agreement so we don't have to impose steel or aluminum tariffs on our ally, the great nation of Australia!"

### **USG official comments on signing of TPP 11 agreement**

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that concerning the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement by the 11 member states, Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Ted McKinney told reporters in Japan on Thursday that the United States hopes that its products will receive the same benefits as those of other nations. The paper speculated that attention will be focused on what moves the United States will make in the future concerning the TPP.

### **AMBASSADOR**

### **Ambassador Hagerty releases video message on seventh anniversary of 3/11 disaster**

Sunday's Sankei wrote that Ambassador Hagerty released a video message on the seventh anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake on March 11. The paper wrote that the Ambassador speaks in the video about his admiration for the resilience of the Japanese people and underscores the United States' commitment to moving forward together with Japan as "Tomodachi" (friends).

### **SECURITY**

### **Ishigaki mayor in favor of GSDF deployment wins third term**

Monday's Asahi, Yomiuri, and Sankei wrote that Yoshitaka Nakayama, the current mayor of Ishigaki, Okinawa Prefecture, who supports the Abe administration's plan to deploy Ground Self-Defense Force personnel on the island, won a third term in the election on Sunday. He defeated two other candidates, one of whom was backed by Okinawa Governor Onaga. Asahi speculated that the defeat of another candidate backed by Onaga following the one who lost the Nago election in February will deal a blow to the governor's bid to seek reelection in the gubernatorial election this fall.

### **Japan to submit bid for Thai radar system contract**

Sunday's Nikkei front-paged a report saying that the GOJ is preparing to submit a bid to supply Thailand with an air defense radar system being used by the Air Self-Defense Force by approving the plan at an NSC ministerial meeting held earlier this month. Mitsubishi Electric, the manufacturer of the system, will participate in the bidding to be held by the Royal Thai Air Force as early as the end of March. The paper wrote that companies from the United States and Europe are also expected to submit bids.

### **Okinawa governor travels to U.S.**

Monday's Mainichi wrote that Okinawa Governor Onaga left for Washington on Sunday, speculating that he is planning to reiterate his opposition to the FRF construction at Henoko in planned meetings with U.S. government officials and lawmakers in Washington.

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