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# JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Wednesday, March 14, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK, NTV, and TV Asahi led with reports on President Trump's dismissal of Secretary of State Tillerson on Tuesday, saying that CIA Director Pompeo has been tapped as his successor. TBS and Fuji TV led with updates on the Finance Ministry's falsification of documents on the sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen.

All national dailies gave prominent front-page coverage to Secretary Tillerson's upcoming departure and the Finance Ministry document falsification scandal.

## INTERNATIONAL

### President Trump dismisses Secretary Tillerson

All national dailies gave extensive coverage to President Trump's decision to dismiss Secretary of State Tillerson due to differences of opinion on key diplomatic issues including North Korea, saying that CIA Director Pompeo has been named his successor. The President was reported as saying on Twitter: "Mike Pompeo, Director of the CIA, will become our new Secretary of State. He will do a fantastic job!" All national dailies claimed that the U.S. leader and Secretary Tillerson have been at odds and the President was reportedly unhappy that the Secretary had advocated a conciliatory approach toward Tehran and Pyongyang. The President was quoted as telling the press on Tuesday: "We were not really thinking the same. Really, it was a different mindset, a different thinking." According to the papers, Director Pompeo appears to be very close to the President who appreciates his highly conservative credentials.

Yomiuri claimed that the President tapped Pompeo, who is reportedly known as a "hardliner" on security issues in preparation for the proposed summit with Kim Jong Un, speculating that the U.S.

leader chose to replace the “moderate” Tillerson ahead of the talks to remind Pyongyang that there will be no change in Washington’s resolve to seek denuclearization even if dialogue is resumed.

Contending that such so-called “globalists” as Tillerson, National Security Advisor McMaster, Defense Secretary Mattis, and National Economic Council Director Gary Cohn have tried to moderate administration policy on major diplomatic and trade issues, Asahi speculated that Director Pompeo will play a major role following the departure of Tillerson and Cohn. The paper projected that diplomacy “hard-liners” in the administration will gain momentum, expressing concern that it may move to seek a military solution to the DPRK standoff, abrogate the Iran nuclear agreement, and take a tough stance in trade talks with foreign partners.

The national Mainichi expressed concern that, after Tillerson’s departure, more globalists may choose to leave the administration, while the Nikkei voiced qualms that the replacement of the top U.S. diplomat right before a U.S.-DPRK summit may further weaken U.S. leadership in the international community.

Sankei conjectured that the President chose to tap someone whose thinking is close to his own as the next secretary of state to make his diplomatic and security team “dissent-free” prior to his summit with the North Korean leader. However, the conservative daily speculated that Tillerson’s departure is unlikely to create a diplomatic vacuum since Pompeo is well versed in foreign and security policies.

### **Japan surprised by Tillerson’s sudden departure**

All national dailies said the GOJ was surprised by the departure of Secretary Tillerson especially because arrangements had been made for Foreign Minister Kono to visit Washington later this week to discuss with him North Korea. Claiming that the State Department has lost influence under the Trump administration since the White House has taken the diplomatic initiative, Yomiuri quoted a GOJ source as saying: “Secretary Tillerson’s resignation will have little impact on U.S.-Japan relations and the response to North Korea. The U.S.-Japan alliance is ironclad since Prime Minister Abe and President Trump have established a strong relationship of trust.”

According to the national dailies, Kono still plans to travel to the U.S. and is hoping to hold talks with Defense Secretary Mattis and National Security Advisor McMaster so as to align the two nations’ approaches toward North Korea ahead of the upcoming inter-Korean and U.S.-DPRK summits. Asahi said Kono will probably also try to hold talks with Pompeo. Mainichi conjectured that the GOJ will be watching carefully for any change in the power dynamics within the Trump administration’s diplomatic and security teams. Sankei, the smallest of the national dailies, claimed that the Abe administration is perplexed by Tillerson’s dismissal and voiced concern that it may affect a proposed trilateral foreign ministerial meeting with South Korea in the U.S. capital this week.

### **Okinawa students to visit U.S. on GOJ sponsorship**

Mainichi took up Foreign Minister Kono's announcement on Tuesday that a total of 20 high school and college students from Okinawa will visit the U.S. at GOJ expense from March 14 through 21, quoting him as saying: "We are hoping that they will grow up to be adults who can think about Okinawa's future from a wider perspective."

## **SECURITY**

### **Court dismisses Okinawa's call for suspension of FRF project**

All national dailies reported that the Naha District Court on Tuesday rejected the Okinawa prefectural government's request for suspension of the ongoing reclamation work off Camp Schwab on the grounds that according to a previous Supreme Court ruling, the plaintiff's request does not constitute a legal dispute that should be settled in court. The local government had sought the suspension by arguing that the landfill operation is illegal since the central government has failed to obtain Governor Onaga's permission for destroying rock reefs. The governor reportedly voiced displeasure with the court decision in a released statement and is likely to file an appeal with a higher court.

Pointing out that this is the second court ruling against Onaga's legal bids to derail the FRF project, Asahi wrote that the governor finds himself in an increasingly difficult position. Mainichi said the court decision has dealt another heavy blow to Onaga after suffering political setbacks when candidates backed by him lost in recent mayoral elections, including anti-FRF mayor Inamine of Nago City. Noting that one of his key influential supporters from the local business community has decided to leave a civic group opposed to Futenma relocation, the paper projected that the governor's grip on power will weaken further. The daily wrote in a separate piece that the central government is set to steadily move forward with the construction plan with the goal of starting landfill operations as early as this summer. Nikkei said the Abe administration was buoyed by the court judgment, conjecturing that it will coordinate closely with the ruling LDP to block the Okinawa chief's reelection bid in the gubernatorial race in the autumn.

## **ECONOMY**

### **CPTPP legislation to be submitted to Diet**

Asahi reported that the GOJ has put together a set of bills for obtaining parliamentary endorsement of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and plans to submit the legislation to the Diet in late March with the goal of completing the domestic procedures by the end of June for the early effectuation of the free trade deal. The GOJ is reportedly hoping that Japan will be the first of the 11 TPP member states to finalize the domestic procedures for effectuation. Nikkei ran a similar story, noting that the ruling LDP on Tuesday approved the legislation for submission to the parliament.

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