



Morning Alert - Tuesday, April 3, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on ceremonies welcoming new employees at major Japanese companies and government ministries on Monday. NTV, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi led with reports on a press conference held by singer Yuzo Kayama about the fire that broke out on his yacht. TBS led with a report on a performance by a South Korean art troupe in Pyongyang.

Front-page stories in the national dailies included the discovery of activity logs of GSDF logistical support operations in Iraq during the 2000s whose existence the Defense Ministry had denied, China's imposition of retaliatory tariffs on U.S. products, the ruling coalition's decision to allow casinos to be opened in up to three locations nationwide, and a GOJ announcement on convening the G20 summit in Osaka on June 28-29 in 2019.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S.-Japan summit to be held in Florida on April 17-18

All dailies reported that Prime Minister Abe will hold talks with President Trump at Mar-a-Lago in Florida on April 17-18. Sankei took up a statement released on Monday by White House Press Secretary Sanders, who noted that the President's "planned meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un" and "the international campaign to maintain maximum pressure" on the hermit state ahead of that meeting will be the top items on the agenda for the U.S.-Japan summit.

Yomiuri claimed that some Japanese officials are wary of a U.S. proposal for the two leaders to play golf at Mar-a-Lago given strong public criticism of the Abe administration over the document-tampering scandal involving the Finance Ministry. The daily said as Tokyo is reportedly alarmed by the rapid rapprochement between the U.S. and the DPRK and between North and South Korea, the

premier is likely to press President Trump not to readily ease the pressure on the Kim regime. Yomiuri also expressed concern that Abe's planned request for President Trump to exclude Japanese products from the steel tariffs may not be heeded, with some GOJ officials reportedly worrying that the President may propose a quid pro quo by linking the metal tariffs or other trade matters with the North Korea issue.

Mainichi wrote that although PM Abe has successfully capitalized on his strong relationship of trust with the President to reinforce the trans-Pacific alliance, this approach might not work this time, especially on the economic front since trade will be a major campaign issue in the November midterm elections.

Nikkei claimed that according to a source involved in bilateral relations, the U.S. has informally told the Japan that the President will exempt Japanese metals from the tariffs if the premier makes a direct request. However, the GOJ is reportedly cautious about the premier making such an appeal out of fear that the U.S. leader may call for the launch of bilateral FTA talks in return. Nikkei speculated that in order to downplay a potential schism on the bilateral trade front, Abe may choose to highlight coordination with the President on rectifying China's trade practices by proposing the filing of a joint suit in the WTO on Beijing's breach of intellectual property rights.

PM Abe comments on possibility of holding summit with Kim Jong Un

Asahi took up Prime Minister Abe's remarks yesterday about a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. According to the paper, Abe said there is no need for Japan to hasten to hold a summit with the DPRK leader. The premier, who was speaking to a senior LDP official, reportedly explained that pressure has been applied on Pyongyang to encourage it to come to the negotiating table and that this policy will not change.

Yomiuri claimed that PM Abe is anxious to arrange a summit with Kim Jong Un in an attempt to shore up his political base, which has been shaken by the Moritomo scandal. Asserting that the Kantei is spearheading efforts for a Japan-DPRK summit, the daily quoted a source involved in Japan-DPRK relations as saying: "There are senior GOJ officials who have been asked by the DPRK to visit Pyongyang to conduct coordination on a summit."

U.S. envoy calls for complete denuclearization

Mainichi spotlighted on a press conference by U.S. Embassy Seoul Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Marc Knapper on Monday, during which he commented on the proposed U.S.-DPRK summit by saying: "Complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization is necessary. The purpose of the summit is to convey that this principle is non-negotiable." As for DPRK leader Kim Jong Un's reported intent to take a "phased" approach in moving forward with denuclearization, the U.S. diplomat noted that although Washington would like to learn the details of this "phased and

synchronized” approach, the principle of complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization will be maintained.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit South Korea

Asahi claimed that coordination is underway between the GOJ and the ROK government for Foreign Minister Kono to visit Seoul next week for a bilateral foreign ministerial meeting. The top Japanese diplomat is hoping to convey Japan’s positions on the denuclearization and abduction issues ahead of the inter-Korean summit.

Government spokesman comments on exchange between Japanese, U.S. governors

Asahi highlighted press remarks by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who disclosed that Japan’s National Governors’ Association has been making arrangements with its U.S. counterpart to convene this summer their first bilateral meeting in almost 20 years. The government spokesman pledged the administration’s utmost support for deepening friendship at various levels.

G20 summit to be held in Osaka in 2019

All papers highlighted an official announcement by the GOJ on Monday that it will host the annual G20 summit in Osaka on June 28-29, 2019, and that eight ministerial meetings will be convened across Japan, including a foreign ministerial session in Aichi Prefecture and a financial ministerial meeting in Fukuoka.

Sino-Japanese economic dialogue to be resumed

Yomiuri wrote that final arrangements are being made between China and Japan to resume bilateral economic dialogue in Tokyo for the first time in seven years when Chinese Foreign Minister Wang visits Japan on April 15-16. In addition to Wang and Foreign Minister Kono, several economic ministers from both sides are expected to attend the meeting. Japan’s cooperation with China’s “Belt and Road” trade promotion initiative will be on the agenda.

POLITICS

GSDF activity logs on Iraq operations discovered

All papers reported extensively on the revelation by Defense Minister Onodera on Monday that daily activity logs of GSDF logistical operations in Iraq from 2004 through 2006 have been retrieved despite the ministry’s earlier explanation at the Diet that no such reports existed. An electronic copy of the 14,000-page document was reportedly found on a computer installed at a GSDF-affiliated facility in January. The minister offered an apology for providing false information at the parliament. Noting that this was the second incident in which the ministry discovered a document that it had previously claimed did not exist and that the Abe administration has recently been under fire over a document-tampering scandal involving the Finance Ministry, the dailies said serious doubts are being raised about the central government’s management of public records.

New legislation to allow up to three casinos in Japan

All dailies reported on an agreement reached between the ruling LDP and Komeito party on Monday regarding the outline of the proposed legislation on establishing “integrated resorts” featuring casinos. The two parties decided to allow gambling facilities to be opened in up to three locations across Japan initially and that this quantitative limit can be reviewed five years after the first casino is opened. They also agreed that Japanese nationals will be allowed to visit gambling facilities up to three times per week or ten times in 28 days. However, discussions between the two sides will continue over admission fees for Japanese visitors, as the junior ruling partner is strongly opposed to an LDP proposal to charge no more than 5,000 yen. If the bill clears the Diet during the present Diet session, the first casino could be opened in the early 2020s.

ECONOMY

Looming trade war between U.S., China

All national dailies focused on the Chinese government’s announcement yesterday that retaliatory tariffs of up to 25% were imposed on a total of 128 imported U.S. products on Monday, voicing deep apprehension about the escalating trade friction between the world’s two largest economies in view of Beijing’s apparent determination not to give in to U.S. pressure. The dailies conjectured that although the two sides appear to be initially taking a hard line toward each other, they may eventually be tempted to seek a middle ground to avoid a full-scale trade war.

