



Morning Alert - Friday, April 13, 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.

HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report that a man was taken to a police station for interrogation this morning in relation to the murder of a 17-year-old girl in Hiroshima 14 years ago. NTV and TBS led with a report that a document on Kake Gakuen entitled “matter concerning Prime Minister Abe” has also been discovered at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. TV Asahi led with a report on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal. Fuji TV reported on the arrest of a police officer on charges of fatally shooting his supervisor in Hikone, Shiga, on Wednesday.

Major front-page stories in national papers included reports on escalated tension in Syria over a possible military strike by the U.S. and Europe, a business tie-up between Volkswagen and Hino Motors, the Japan Coast Guard’s plan to increase personnel for conducting aerial patrols over the Senkaku Islands, and an informal decision by the Osaka Public Prosecutors’ Office not to press charges against the Finance Ministry’s former Financial Bureau Director General Sagawa and other officials for allegedly tampering with official documents on the sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen.

INTERNATIONAL

Secretary-Designate Pompeo outlines foreign policy agenda at Senate hearing

All national papers reported on the beginning of the Senate confirmation hearing for Secretary of State-Designate Pompeo on Thursday. Commenting on North Korea, Pompeo said: “I am not advocating for regime change.” In a written statement submitted to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Secretary-Designate commented on the planned summit between President Trump and Kim Jong Un by saying: “I’ve read the CIA histories of previous negotiations with the North Koreans and I am confident that we will not repeat the mistakes of the past.” Pompeo also reportedly

commented on the Iran nuclear accord and rising tension with Russia over Syria. The dailies also focused on his statement saying: “War is always the last resort. I would prefer achieving the President’s foreign policy goals with unrelenting diplomacy.”

While noting that the Secretary-Designate underscored the importance of finding a diplomatic solution to the DPRK nuclear standoff during Thursday’s hearing, Yomiuri opined in an analysis piece that the nominee focused on diplomacy to clear the confirmation hearing, which may become prolonged since he has consistently advocated taking a hard line against the Kim regime. The paper projected that his confirmation would increase pressure on Kim Jong Un ahead of the planned summit with President Trump.

National Security Advisor Bolton, Yachi confirm close cooperation over North Korea

NHK reported on its website this morning on the first meeting between visiting Secretary General of the National Security Secretariat Yachi and new National Security Advisor Bolton at the White House on Thursday, during which the two officials confirmed the importance of the bilateral alliance. The network said they also discussed North Korea in preparation for the U.S.-Japan summit next week and the first-ever U.S.-DPRK summit and agreed that the two nations will continue to work closely together and also with South Korea. The network speculated that Yachi asked the U.S. to urge North Korea to resolve the abduction issue. While noting that Director of the National Security Office of South Korea Chung also met with Bolton, the network said the three officials apparently did not hold a trilateral meeting.

PM Abe vows to bring up abduction issue in summit with U.S. leader

All papers took up remarks made to a group of parliamentarians on Thursday by Prime Minister Abe, who commented on the upcoming U.S.-Japan summit in Florida next week by saying: “I will urge President Trump to take up the abduction issue without fail when he meets with Kim Jong Un. Significant progress must be achieved on this front in the U.S.-DPRK summit.”

DPRK leader said he is ready to present roadmap for denuclearization

Tokyo Shimbun front-paged the disclosure by a source involved in China-DPRK relations that when holding talks with Chinese President Xi in Beijing in March, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said: “If the United States deals with us in good faith, we will be able to produce a roadmap toward denuclearization even before the U.S.-DPRK summit.” He reportedly went on to say: “We would give up our nuclear program if the United States offered a regime guarantee and full compensation.... We would have no need to possess nuclear weapons if the U.S. stopped being hostile toward us.”

Japan invites ROK leader to visit Tokyo

Asahi reported on the disclosure by several GOJ sources that when meeting with ROK President Moon at the Blue House on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Kono extended him on Prime Minister Abe’s behalf an invitation to visit Japan as early as May. Although the South Korean leader is

expected to travel to Tokyo on May 9 for a trilateral summit with China, he probably return the same day. The premier is reportedly hoping to hold extensive discussions with Moon on a separate occasion to improve bilateral relations with the goal of rebuilding his political foundation that has been undermined by various political scandals at home.

ECONOMY

President Trump ordered senior administration officials to look into rejoining TPP

NTV and Fuji TV reported this morning that President Trump instructed USTR Lighthizer and other senior administration officials to explore rejoining the TPP. NHK carried a similar story on its website, saying that multiple U.S. media outlets reported that President Trump ordered the USTR and National Economic Advisor Kudlow to look at rejoining the TPP on terms favorable to the U.S. during a meeting held on Thursday, according to several Republicans who attended the meeting. The network said attention will be focused on whether the President will raise the topic at the upcoming U.S.-Japan summit next week. The network added that some trade policy officials are speculating that the Trump administration thinks the TPP, which stipulates intellectual property protection and trade rules, would prove an effective measure against China as concerns are growing over a possible trade war between the two nations. Meanwhile, the network said White House Deputy Press Secretary Walters released a statement on Thursday saying that the President “has asked Ambassador Lighthizer and Director Kudlow to take another look at whether or not a better deal could be negotiated.”

U.S. pharmaceutical leader expresses concern about Japan’s moves to lower drug prices

Nikkei reported on a press conference held yesterday in Tokyo by Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America Chairman Robert Bradway, during which he voiced apprehension about the GOJ policy of regulating prices for new drugs by saying: “It will have a serious impact on Japan’s future.” The businessman stressed that highly innovative pharmaceuticals are not valued properly under the Japanese system. While noting that the association asked the USTR in February to put Japan on its priority watch list in connection with intellectual property protection, the daily claimed that Bradway hinted at reaching out to the Trump administration to further open up the Japanese drug market to U.S. products.

Japan to sign EPA with EU in July

Nikkei reported from Copenhagen that Prime Minister Abe is likely to travel to Brussels in July to sign an economic partnership agreement with the EU leaders, projecting that the two parties will both seek parliamentary approval by the end of this year for effectuation of the agreement ahead of the UK’s departure from the EU scheduled for March 2019.

SECURITY

Niigata leader positive about hosting Osprey drills

Mainichi reported that Niigata Governor Yoneyama expressed a positive attitude about his prefecture possibly allowing the Futenma-based MV-22 Ospreys to train there by saying: “Okinawa is not alone in enjoying the benefits of security. It is not right for us to enjoy the benefits without shouldering some of the cost. We all need to bear the risks.”

Coast Guard to increase personnel for aerial surveillance over Senkakus

Sankei wrote that the Japan Coast Guard has decided to significantly increase its personnel engaged in aerial surveillance operations in the vicinity of the Senkakus by capitalizing on the introduction of several new patrol aircraft beginning this fiscal year. Sixty additional pilots, radar technicians, mechanics, and engineers will probably be assigned to its airbase in Naha, which now hosts some 70 personnel. The personnel increase will greatly boost the JCG’s surveillance and patrol capabilities over the disputed outcrops.

