



Morning Alert - Wednesday, April 18, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi gave top play to the first day of the U.S.-Japan summit that ended at about 6 a.m. Japan time, highlighting that President Trump told Abe that he will raise the abduction issue when he meets with the North Korean leader. NTV and TBS led with updates on Vice Finance Minister Fukuda's alleged sexual harassment of female journalists.

Major front-page stories in national papers included the Chinese government's announcement yesterday on eliminating all regulations on foreign capital investment in local automakers by 2022, the start of the U.S.-Japan summit at Mar-a-Lago, massive corporate tax evasion involving SoftBank Group Corp., and mounting calls both within the ruling and the opposition blocs for Vice Finance Minister Fukuda to step down over his alleged sexual harassment of female journalists.

## INTERNATIONAL

### President Trump tells PM Abe he will raise abduction issue at U.S.-DPRK summit

All networks reported this morning on the first day of the U.S.-Japan summit at Mar-a-Lago. NHK said Prime Minister Abe asked the President to raise the issue of the Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea when he meets with Kim Jong Un. The President was quoted as telling Abe: "We will bring up the abductees, we will bring up many different things. I know it's time for talk, it's time for solving problems. I know that's been a very big factor for you." The network also said the President disclosed that he is considering five possible venues for the U.S.-DPRK summit, adding, however, that he also expressed caution by saying that the summit may not go well or may not even be held. The network said the two leaders first held talks with only their interpreters present and then had discussions with other officials in attendance until around 6 a.m. Japan time. The network added that PM Abe stressed at the summit the need to continue to apply maximum pressure on North Korea

until it takes concrete actions so that it will denuclearize and relinquish its ballistic missiles in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. The network speculated that the two leaders discussed fundamental bilateral policies ahead of the inter-Korean and U.S.-DPRK summits.

All national papers carried scene-setting reports, projecting that North Korea and trade will be high on the agenda at the Mar-a-Lago summit and that the U.S. leader will probably put strong pressure on the prime minister to open up Japanese markets further by possibly calling for the launch of bilateral FTA talks.

As for North Korea, Mainichi claimed that the two leaders are likely to agree that when meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un by early June, President Trump will demand that Pyongyang eliminate all of its nuclear programs by 2020. The daily quoted an unnamed senior GOJ official as saying that the U.S., Japan, and South Korea have been discussing the timetable for denuclearization. The official reportedly said that denuclearization will be difficult to achieve unless a deadline is set before President Trump's first term ends in January 2021. A different GOJ source reportedly claimed that since Kim Jong Un is apparently hoping to visit Japan for the Tokyo Olympics, 2020 could be set as a goal for denuclearization. The three nations are reportedly in firm agreement on rejecting Kim's idea of proceeding with denuclearization in a "phased, synchronized" manner.

### **Former senior DOS official comments on North Korea**

Sankei front-paged an interview with former Assistant Secretary of State Russel, who said that President Trump regards Prime Minister Abe as an "adviser" on DPRK issues and that his counsel will help the President "to avoid falling into the many traps" set by North Korea in the planned Trump-Kim summit, which he described as a "gambit." Russel reportedly asserted that "the most realistic and best scenario" for the U.S.-DPRK summit is for the two leaders to reach agreement on the launch of negotiations for denuclearization.

### **Chinese foreign minister holds talks with top LDP official**

Asahi reported that visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang met with LDP Secretary General Nikai yesterday and asked for Japanese support for President Xi's "One Belt, One Road" trade promotion initiative. Speaking on bilateral ties, the Chinese official said: "Sino-Japanese relations have finally begun picking up momentum. Efforts must be made to prevent any backsliding."

The daily wrote that in contrast to the hard line Wang had taken toward Japan until recently, Wang conducted "soft diplomacy" this time. Asserting that the veteran diplomat who has extensive knowledge on Japanese affairs had been very critical of Japan since his assumption of his post five years ago, the daily said the charm offensive he launched during his latest Japan trip signifies improvement in relations between East Asia's two major powers.

### **ROK government takes issue with plan to build monument near Japanese mission**

Asahi reported on a letter issued by the South Korean Foreign Ministry concerning a local civic group's idea of installing in front of the Japanese Consulate General in Busan a statue of Korean victims of forced labor during Japan's colonial rule. In the document addressed to the organizer, the ministry said that erecting the monument at the proposed site might cause a diplomatic controversy and recommended a different location, such as a history museum in the same city.

## SECURITY

### **Students near Futenma evacuated from playground more than 200 times in 40 days**

Mainichi published a prominent inside-page story on data compiled by the Okinawa Defense Bureau showing that pupils at Futenma Daini Elementary School adjacent to MCAS Futenma, where a window fell onto the playground from a Marine helicopter last December, left the playground and took shelter inside school buildings 216 times from Feb. 13 through March 23 as a precautionary measure. The paper wrote that a team of seven people was monitoring the sky over the school for aircraft operations at the Marine installation during school hours and the children were reportedly instructed to evacuate whenever U.S. aircraft were spotted potentially flying over the school premises. While noting that the pupils took refugees 23 times on April 6 alone, the daily wrote that the December mishap is still having adverse effects on the children's activities at school. The paper quoted a 3rd MEF spokesperson as saying: "As all pilots are aware of their aircraft's location, they are able to avoid flying over the school after takeoff by visually confirming the school."

Mainichi separately gave prominent inside-page play to the results of a fact-finding mission conducted in February by the Okinawa prefectural government on the SOFAs in Germany and Italy, saying that the U.S. military is generally subject to local laws in Europe and that this marks a sharp contrast to Japan's SOFA. The daily wrote that Japan's SOFA appears to be different from those in Europe, quoting a journalist familiar with defense issues as saying: "The survey found that the U.S. military infringes on Japan's sovereignty. The Japanese government should seek a revision of the SOFA before pursuing constitutional amendment."

## ECONOMY

### **Diet begins deliberating CPTPP legislation**

Asahi and Nikkei reported that Diet deliberations started on Tuesday on government-sponsored legislation to accede to the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), with Asahi highlighting Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Motegi's remarks dismissing the possibility of renegotiating the regional free trade pact among the 11 member states. In response to a question from an opposition legislator, the cabinet minister said: "It would be extremely difficult to address and renegotiate only certain parts of it. We have absolutely no intention to strike with any country a deal that runs counter to our national interests." The Abe administration is reportedly hoping to obtain parliamentary approval during the current Diet session, which ends in early June.

Nikkei explained that the Abe administration is seeking the early effectuation of the CPTPP based on the assessment that the multilateral trade liberalization accord would enable Japan to “forestall” President Trump’s potential demand for a bilateral FTA by arguing that it cannot make concessions beyond the scope of the CPTPP. The daily added that although the ratification bill itself will probably be enacted by June, the passage of other related legislation may not be so easy due to the tight schedule of the Cabinet Committee where a number of other important bills, such as one on gambling addiction, are awaiting deliberation.

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