



Morning Alert - Thursday, April 19, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a live report on the joint press conference by President Trump and Prime Minister Abe. All commercial networks led with reports that Vice Finance Minister Fukuda announced on Wednesday his intention to resign, but denied a tabloid report that he sexually harassed female journalists.

Top stories in national dailies included the summit between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe (Yomiuri); the vice finance minister's announcement of his intent to resign over sexual harassment allegations (Asahi, Mainichi, Sankei); and rising premiums for nursing-care insurance in 80% of municipalities in Japan (Nikkei).

## U.S.-JAPAN SUMMIT

### U.S., Japan agree to start consultations between Lighthizer and Motegi for fair trade

NHK reported that President Trump and Prime Minister Abe concluded their second day of talks on Wednesday, with USTR Lighthizer, Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi, and other officials in attendance. The network speculated that PM Abe explained to the President that Japanese companies are making major investments in the U.S., and proposed establishing a new framework for discussing trade and investment in order to seek an approach acceptable to both sides. NHK later reported online that President Trump and Prime Minister Abe agreed to commence consultations between USTR Lighthizer and Minister Motegi to realize free and fair trade deals.

## **President Trump tells Prime Minister Abe he will raise abduction in summit with DPRK**

All national dailies reported extensively in their Wednesday evening and Thursday morning editions on the first day of the two-day summit between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe at Mar-a-Lago on Tuesday. The two leaders held talks for the first 55 minutes only with their interpreters present and held an expanded meeting for an hour and ten minutes afterward with a small number of senior government officials from both sides in attendance. All of the papers wrote that Prime Minister Abe asked President Trump to raise the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea at his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and the President accepted Abe's request by reportedly saying that he will do his best for Japan. The papers also wrote that the two leaders agreed to maintain maximum pressure on Pyongyang to seek the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea.

Mainichi wrote that although the two leaders apparently held in-depth discussions on their policy coordination toward the DPRK, neither Japan nor the United States have disclosed the details of the bilateral talks. The paper added, however, that according to a GOJ source, the President called on the prime minister to correct the trade imbalance between the two nations. Yomiuri and Mainichi wrote that according to a Japanese source accompanying the prime minister, President Trump expressed his intent to call on North Korea to relinquish its short- and mid-range missiles that pose a threat to Japan. Nikkei speculated that Prime Minister Abe attaches importance to cooperation with President Trump out of concern that Japan could be left out amid the rapidly changing international situation surrounding the DPRK, including the planned inter-Korean and U.S.-DPRK summits. Sankei wrote that the President's statement to the prime minister that he will raise the abduction issue at his planned talks with Kim Jong Un is a major achievement for Abe. Nikkei wrote that although Abe is hoping to resolve the abduction issue in order to regain public support ahead of the LDP presidential election in September, he is running out of time.

Mainichi wrote that the President reportedly stated in public remarks at the outset of his meeting with Abe that Japan is buying a tremendous amount of military equipment from the United States and the United States is buying a lot of cars and other products from Japan, but the two nations still have to talk further about trade and Prime Minister Abe understands that. The paper wrote that according to a Japanese briefing, the two leaders discussed economic issues at their talks.

Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that the two leaders also discussed Syria and that the premier told the President that Japan supports the resolve of the United States, Britain, and France not to accept the proliferation and use of chemical weapons.

## **U.S., Japan aim to set 2020 as deadline for denuclearization**

Yomiuri wrote that it has learned from multiple GOJ sources that the governments of the United States and Japan are discussing the idea of demanding North Korea eliminate all of its nuclear

programs by 2020 before President Trump's first term ends in January 2021. The paper speculated that the idea is aimed at urging Pyongyang to abolish its nuclear programs without fail by setting a deadline. Nikkei ran a similar story.

### **Secretary of State-Designate Pompeo met with Kim Jong Un**

All national dailies reported on a tweet by President Trump in which he said Secretary of State-designate Pompeo recently met with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Asahi speculated that the visit by Pompeo demonstrates the President's seriousness about meeting with the DPRK leader. Yomiuri conjectured that the President dispatched the Secretary-designate to hold direct talks with Kim Jong Un to lay the groundwork for his "deal" with the DPRK leader.

### **President Trump, Prime Minister Abe play golf in Florida**

Asahi, Mainichi, and Nikkei wrote that President Trump and Prime Minister Abe played golf together in Palm Beach, Florida, on Tuesday. This was the third time for the two leaders to play golf together. Asahi speculated that the golf outing was intended to demonstrate their close personal relationship.

### **Families of Japanese abductees pin hopes on U.S.-DPRK summit**

All national dailies ran reports in their Wednesday evening and Thursday morning editions on the reactions of the families of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea to President Trump's statement to Prime Minister Abe on Tuesday at Mar-a-Lago that he will raise the abductions at his planned summit with Kim Jong Un. Sakie Yokota, the mother of Megumi Yokota, expressed her gratitude for the remarks by the President and said that she believes that their wishes to bring their loved ones home were conveyed to the President.

Shigeo Iizuka, the head of a group representing abductees' families whose sister Yaeko Taguchi is believed to have been abducted by North Korea in 1978 at 22, said: "President Trump understands the abduction issue. I believe that he is determined to resolve the issue. I hope the President will make use of this opportunity. I hope he will obtain a firm commitment from North Korea that it will return the victims to Japan." Yomiuri wrote that Iizuka also said that Ambassador Hagerty told the families on April 10 that the President feels that something must be done about the abduction issue.

Kenichi Ichikawa, the brother of an abductee, said: "I've been suffering for the past 40 years. This is the chance of a lifetime. I'm hoping that progress will be made at the upcoming U.S.-DPRK summit."

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **Finance Minister Aso to visit Washington for G20 meeting without Diet approval**

Yomiuri wrote that Finance Minister Aso plans to visit the United States from April 19-22 as planned to attend a G20 meeting of finance ministers and central governors that will be held on April 20 in Washington. On Wednesday the Lower House Committee on Rules and Administration rejected

Aso's plan to travel to the United States because it did not win approval from a majority of the opposition parties, but the committee decision is nonbinding.

## SECURITY

### **U.S. military helicopters make precautionary landings at Kumamoto airport**

Asahi wrote that two U.S. military helicopters made precautionary landings at Kumamoto airport at around 1:17 p.m. on Wednesday. The landings caused no injuries and did not disrupt the airport's operations. According to the Defense Ministry, the aircraft that landed were an UH-1 multipurpose helicopter and an AH-1 attack helicopter, both of which belong to MCAS Futenma. The U.S. Marines told the paper that the two aircraft were heading together from Fukuoka to the MSDF Kanoya base in Kagoshima and landed when a warning light came on in the UH-1 helicopter. According to the Defense Ministry's Kyushu bureau, an oil cooling system malfunction was detected in the UH-1 helicopter. The paper wrote that in response to multiple incidents involving Futenma-based U.S. military aircraft that have occurred in Okinawa since last October, the Okinawa Prefectural government has been calling on the U.S. military to suspend flights of all U.S. military aircraft in the prefecture to conduct emergency inspections. Yomiuri, Mainichi, Sankei ran similar reports.

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