



Morning Alert - Monday, April 23, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave led with a report on the G7 foreign ministerial in Toronto, saying Foreign Minister Kono, following North Korea's announcement that it will stop conducting nuclear tests and ICBM launches, is expected to stress the need to closely monitor its steps toward denuclearization while continuing to apply maximum pressure. TBS led with a report on North Korea's announcement. NTV, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that Olympic gold medalist Yuzuru Hanyu held a victory parade in his hometown of Sendai on Sunday.

Major front-page items in national papers included the results of opinion polls showing the continued slide in the Abe administration's public approval ratings and a follow-up on North Korea's announcement on halting its nuclear development program.

## AMBASSADOR

### **Ambassador Hagerty underscores progress toward "mutually beneficial trade"**

Monday's Nikkei published on page four an op-ed written by Ambassador Hagerty on the recent meeting at Mar-a-Lago between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe, which he described as "one of the most consequential" summits ever held between the two nations. The Ambassador stressed that the two leaders took a "significant step forward" on bilateral trade in that they committed to enhancing bilateral discussions to reflect the priority they attach to "fair and reciprocal trade." Pointing out that the President clearly explained to the premier that he prefers a bilateral trade agreement, Ambassador Hagerty said: "It is now time to work together expeditiously on a trade relationship between our two countries that further enhances our partnership."

### **Ambassador Hagerty says biological, chemical weapons to be addressed in U.S.-**

## **DPRK summit**

Jiji's website published an article on an interview with Ambassador Hagerty, who projected that when meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un, President Trump will demand the early abolishment of its biological and chemical weapons as well as its nuclear arsenal. The Ambassador, commenting on the Florida summit between the President and Prime Minister Abe, reportedly said the two leaders held "in-depth discussions" on all types of weapons of mass destruction possessed by North Korea. Ambassador Hagerty reportedly said the President has made clear that he will only participate in a U.S.-DPRK summit as long as it is fruitful, and that any agreement will include verification protocols. As for President Trump's commitment to addressing the abduction issue in his sit-down with Kim Jong Un, the Ambassador disclosed that the President understands that this is a very serious issue for the families of the victims and the Japanese people. Speaking on the Kim regime's announcement on the suspension of nuclear development, the Ambassador said: "It evidences that the international community's maximum pressure campaign is bearing fruit. It is a very good thing for the North Korean people."

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **North Korea announces suspension of nuclear tests, ICBM launches**

All weekend papers gave extensive coverage to the announcement made by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un during a Workers' Party meeting on Friday that the regime will no longer conduct nuclear tests or ballistic missile launches and will close its nuclear test facility in the northern part of the country. He reportedly declared the completion of his policy of concurrently pursuing economic reform and nuclear development, saying that the time has come to concentrate on economic reconstruction. Kim reportedly promised that the DPRK will not use or transfer its nuclear weapons unless nuclear provocations are directed toward it. However, since he did not mention what he will do with the nation's existing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, the dailies stressed that this cannot be construed as a statement of denuclearization.

The papers speculated that Pyongyang may try to use its existing nuclear and missile programs as a tool to win concessions from the U.S. and others in denuclearization negotiations that may follow the planned U.S.-North Korea summit. Mainichi wrote that Pyongyang is stepping up its peace overtures ahead of its planned summits with South Korea and the United States in an effort to prompt the international community to ease the existing sanctions. Asahi expressed concern about trilateral coordination between Japan, the U.S., and South Korea possibly being disrupted in the face of North Korea's intensified diplomatic outreach. The papers also emphasized the importance of establishing rigorous mechanisms to verify Kim's commitment to freeze his nation's nuclear development.

With regard to North Korea's peace overtures, all papers reported over the weekend on a Wall Street Journal article claiming that North Korea gave CIA Director Pompeo assurances that the planned U.S.-DPRK summit could be linked to the release of the three Americans currently detained

there. Asahi separately reported that North Korea is ready to release them on the condition that President Trump visits Pyongyang for a summit with Kim, quoting a source connected to the regime as saying: “They could be freed anytime. They will be used as a political card for President Trump’s trip to North Korea.”

### **U.S. cautiously positive, Japan skeptical about DPRK’s plan to freeze nuclear tests**

All papers reported on Sunday that the USG reacted positively to Kim Jong Un’s decision to freeze his nation’s nuclear development, with President Trump saying in a tweet that it is “very good news.” Asahi wrote the U.S. leader appeared to be pleased with the development, conjecturing that he seeks to cut a nuclear deal with Kim at their planned summit in order to play up his diplomatic leadership ahead of the midterm elections. Today’s dailies took up the President’s separate tweet posted on Sunday, in which he wrote: “We haven’t given up anything & they have agreed to denuclearization (so great for World), site closure, & no more testing!”

As for Japan’s reaction to the announcement, Prime Minister Abe reportedly told the press: “This is a positive development.... We would like to watch carefully to see if this move will lead to the complete, verifiable, and irreversible abandonment of nuclear arsenals, weapons of mass destruction, and missiles.” However, he underscored that the existing policy of applying strong pressure on North Korea will continue in coordination with the U.S. and South Korea. Defense Minister Onodera said: “As Kim Jong Un did not mention the removal of medium- and short-range ballistic missiles, this is not enough. The pressure must not be eased right now.” The dailies said the GOJ is suspicious of Kim’s motives, suspecting that he is trying to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Japan. Asahi opined that despite the fact that President Trump and PM Abe confirmed enhanced mutual cooperation against North Korea at their summit in Mar-a-Lago, the GOJ may still be concerned that the U.S. leader could seek a deal with Kim Jong Un that fails to address Japan’s concern about short- and medium-range missiles.

### **DPRK conveyed to U.S. readiness for “complete denuclearization”**

Saturday morning’s Asahi front-paged the revelation by a DPRK source that when meeting with Secretary of State-Designate Pompeo in Pyongyang over Easter weekend, DPRK leader Kim Jong Un conveyed his regime’s readiness for “complete denuclearization.” Although Kim did not reportedly specify how fast and to what extent he will proceed with the denuclearization, the daily cited a different source saying that Pyongyang is considering terminating its ICBM program ahead of the U.S. midterm elections and phasing out other nuclear programs in about six years before a potential second term for President Trump would expire. The daily said this envisaged timeframe is not consistent with the reported U.S. desire to complete the denuclearization by the end of 2020. According to the sources, the North Korean leader asked Pompeo if the planned summit with the President could be held in Pyongyang and said that if it were to take place there, he ‘would not let the President down.’”

Today's Asahi ran a Seoul-dated report claiming that North Korea rolled out the red carpet for Pompeo, who reportedly met with Kim three or four times in Pyongyang. The DPRK leader was reportedly very pleased to discover that they had excellent chemistry. The report added that a senior USG official, believed to be from the CIA, is currently in Pyongyang to make arrangements for the planned summit.

### **Foreign Minister Kono says DPRK must complete denuclearization by 2020**

Saturday morning's Nikkei front-paged an interview with Foreign Minister Kono, who said that North Korea should terminate all of its nuclear programs by the 2020 U.S. presidential election at the latest. He said he would like to see North Korea's complete denuclearization while the current leaders of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea are still in office. He stressed that no "rewards" will be given to Pyongyang unless it takes "clear and irreversible" denuclearization measures. On the abduction issue, the minister noted that it must be resolved ultimately through Japan-DPRK normalization talks.

Nikkei speculated in a separate article that Japan's goal of denuclearization by 2020 may have been set with President Trump's potential bid for reelection in mind, claiming that Japan considers his presence to be imperative in resolving the nuclear standoff on account of his willingness to resort to military means if necessary. The daily opined that Japan is afraid that unless denuclearization is completed during President Trump's first term, North Korea's nuclear weapons will become fully operational and this will pose a grave threat to national security.

### **Prime Minister Abe meets with abductees' families**

All national dailies wrote today that Prime Minister Abe met yesterday with the family members of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea to brief them on his latest summit with President Trump. The premier reportedly disclosed that the U.S. leader told him that he will do as much as possible to bring the Japanese abductees home. Abe also stated to the families: "We have no intent to ease sanctions [on North Korea] at this stage.... It is necessary to watch carefully to see whether North Korea will move toward getting rid of its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles."

In a related story, Asahi said abductee family members Takuya Yokota and Koichiro Izuka will visit Washington later this month with the goal of asking President Trump via USG officials to address the fate of their loved ones during his planned summit with Kim Jong Un. Yokota reportedly stated that he was "very encouraged" by the U.S. leader's pledge to do his best to bring the Japanese abductees home.

### **USG report cites widespread sexual harassment in Japan**

Sunday's Asahi reported on the 2017 Human Rights Report released on Friday by the State Department, which mentions widespread sexual harassment in workplaces in Japan and concerns voiced by female workers about unfair treatment, such as lower wages compared with their male colleagues. In a section on corruption and lack of transparency in government, the DOS document

also addresses the Moritomo and Kake Gakuen scandals involving Prime Minister Abe by saying: “While the media reported allegations that Prime Minister Abe might have attempted to influence government decisions in favor of two educational institutions, the prime minister categorically denied involvement in the government’s decisions.” Yomiuri also took up the USG report, highlighting its description of serious human rights violations by North Korea and China.

## **ECONOMY**

### **“Tough negotiator” to face off with “trade hardliner” in new economic talks**

Saturday’s Sankei carried a prominent inside-page article on the agreed-upon launch of a new venue for consultations between the U.S. and Japan for a “free, fair, and reciprocal trade deal,” focusing on the two chairs – USTR Lighthizer and Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi. While noting that Motegi is known among the members of the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) as a “tough negotiator,” the daily called Lighthizer a “trade hardliner,” who successfully forced Japan as deputy USTR to agree on “voluntary restrictions” of auto exports to the U.S. market in the 1980s. The article said Motegi will be tasked with fending off strong pressure from the U.S. official, who is reportedly anxious to start FTA talks with Japan, and persuading the Trump administration to return to the TPP.

Saturday’s Asahi claimed that the Trump administration is determined to press the GOJ to increase market access for U.S. beef and autos, saying that the U.S. is deeply concerned that its market share for beef in Japan will be undercut by Australian, Canadian, and other foreign products. As for the auto sector, the daily asserted that President Trump is extremely unhappy about the lopsided state of auto trade between the two nations.

### **Japan conveys concern about protectionism to U.S.**

All papers reported over the weekend that Finance Minister Aso met with Treasury Secretary Mnuchin in Washington on Friday on the margins of the G20 ministerial meeting and conveyed concern about the “protectionist” approach being taken by the Trump administration. The Japanese official reportedly said: “It is not desirable that an inward-looking trend is developing in the United States.” He also urged his U.S. counterpart to exempt Japanese products from the new metal tariffs. Sankei projected that the Trump administration will use the steel tariff as a bargaining tool to push Japan to make concessions on other trade areas, such as beef and autos.

In a related development, Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei reported today on press remarks on Saturday by Treasury Secretary Mnuchin, who emphasized that the Trump administration intends to pursue an FTA with Japan. The Treasury chief reportedly disclosed that during his meeting with Finance Minister Aso a day earlier, he said: “We would like to begin bilateral talks to make U.S.-Japan trade free, fair, and reciprocal.”

### **G20 affirms commitment to free trade, but U.S. insists on “America First”**

All Saturday evening papers reported on the conclusion of the G20 finance ministerial meeting in Washington on Friday, noting that the participants confirmed the importance of pursuing free trade to ensure global economic growth. However, the papers also highlighted a deep rift between the U.S. and other member states over the Trump administration's trade policy. Nikkei said the U.S. appeared to be indifferent to the chorus in favor of free trade by other members. Yomiuri wrote that in response to concerns raised by other participants, Treasury Secretary Mnuchin insisted that U.S. trade policy is intended to rectify the unfair practices of other economies when trading with the U.S. Mainichi and Asahi said the G20's unity has reached its limit.

## SECURITY

### **U.S., Japan agree to press DPRK to abolish all ballistic missiles**

All weekend papers reported from Washington on a meeting at the Pentagon on Friday between Secretary Mattis and Defense Minister Onodera, during which they agreed that North Korea should get rid of all of its ballistic missile programs, including short- and medium range missiles, as well as weapons of mass destruction. The two defense chiefs agreed to continue applying pressure on North Korea. Onodera also held talks with National Security Advisor Bolton, during which they discussed China's maritime advancement in the South and East China Seas.

### **New Japanese fighters to be equipped with radar drones**

Saturday morning's Yomiuri led with a finding that the Defense Ministry is looking into equipping the successor model to the aging ASDF F-2 fighter jets with radar drones for detecting enemy aircraft, noting that the new model will have stealth capabilities that are superior to those of the state-of-the-art F-35As that the ASDF has just started introducing. The ministry is also reportedly hoping to equip the new model, which will probably be produced jointly with the U.S., with twice as many air-to-air missiles as the F-35A with the goal of countering the rapid modernization of the PLA Air Force.

### **U.S. to relax regulations in order to export more drones**

All Friday evening papers reported on the Trump administration's plan to ease existing rules regarding exports of armed drones and conventional weapons with the goal of exporting them more actively to Japan and other allies. The article said the planned deregulation is in line with President Trump's "America First" policy, saying that it is intended to shore up the U.S. defense industry and counter China, Russia, and Israel, whose presence is growing in the international arms market. Under the revised policy, U.S. defense contractors will reportedly be able to hold negotiations with foreign governments directly without USG involvement when marketing military drones overseas.

### **Japan-China military hotline to be put in place next month**

Asahi reported on Saturday on the disclosure by several sources involved in Sino-Japanese relations that Japan and China are likely to seal a formal accord on the launch of a communication mechanism between the PLA and the SDF designed to head off inadvertent confrontations in and above the East China Sea when Prime Minister Abe holds talks with Chinese Premier Li, who is

expected to visit Tokyo for a trilateral summit with South Korea scheduled for May 9. The two nations' military authorities will reportedly sign the official document immediately after the summit for implementation without delay.

### **Chinese navy steps up aircraft carrier operations**

All Saturday papers reported on an announcement made by the Defense Ministry on Friday that several PLA fighter jets apparently took off from China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, in waters some 350 km south of Japan's westernmost island of Yonaguni earlier in the day. This was reportedly the first time that airplanes were detected taking off from the Liaoning in the Pacific. In follow-up reports, all Sunday papers said the Chinese carrier transited the strait between the main island of Okinawa and Miyako Island from the Pacific into the East China Sea on Saturday.

Sunday's Yomiuri separately took up an announcement by China's maritime authorities regarding a complete ban on maritime operations in the northern part of the Yellow Sea, speculating that the nine-day ban that began on Saturday was a step taken in advance of sea trials for China's new indigenous aircraft carrier now undergoing preparations in Dalian for its commissioning.

### **Japan, Canada sign ACSA**

All Monday papers reported from Toronto that Foreign Minister Kono and his Canadian counterpart held talks on Saturday and signed a bilateral acquisition and cross-servicing agreement (ACSA), saying that this is the fourth such accord that Tokyo has concluded.

## **POLITICS**

### **Abe's popularity continues to slide**

Monday's Yomiuri and Mainichi front-paged the results of their latest public opinion surveys apparently pointing to the public's discontent with the Abe administration's handling of the Moritomo and Kake Gakuen scandals and allegations of sexual harassment by the vice finance minister. Yomiuri put support for the premier at 39%, down three points from a month ago, and nonsupport at 53%, up three points, a record high. According to Mainichi, approval stood at 30%, down three points, while disapproval was 49%, up two points. About half of the respondents in both polls said Finance Minister Aso should step down to take responsibility for his top deputy's alleged misconduct.

Yomiuri wrote that the prolonged political scandals at home apparently dashed the prime minister's hopes to play up his accomplishments in the Mar-a-Lago summit with President Trump, explaining that the domestic media coverage of the diplomatic event was overshadowed by the harassment scandal involving the top Finance Ministry bureaucrat. As the public was divided over the results of the summit — 45% were positive and 42% were negative — the daily asserted that the U.S.-Japan summit apparently failed to boost the beleaguered premier's standing. The paper added, however, that the opposition camp has apparently failed to capitalize on Abe's relatively poor performance, as public support for the CDPJ, the Party of Hope, and the DP remained low.

### **Incumbent prevails in Okinawa City mayoral race**

All Monday papers wrote that incumbent Mayor Kuwae, who was supported by the Abe administration, defeated a candidate backed by Okinawa Governor Onaga in Sunday's mayoral election in **Okinawa City**, saying that this was the third consecutive setback for the governor in mayoral elections in the island prefecture this year. As its candidate scored a resounding victory in the latest "proxy war" with Onaga, the GOJ is reportedly increasingly confident that it will be able to unseat him in the gubernatorial election in the fall.

In a related development, most Monday papers reported that Governor Onaga underwent surgery on Saturday to remove a tumor in his pancreas, adding that the prefectural government will make an announcement on his health condition and gubernatorial duties today.

