



Morning Alert - Tuesday, April 24, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

Most networks led with reports that the Duchess of Cambridge gave birth to her third child on Monday, a son who is fifth in line to the British throne. TBS gave top play to a report on the sexual harassment allegation against former Vice Finance Minister Fukuda.

Top stories in national dailies included a U.S. plan to maintain pressure on North Korea until it abandons its nuclear programs (Asahi); a Tokyo-based security firm's overcharge of 700 million yen for maritime security services for the Futenma Replacement Facility construction at Henoko (Mainichi); a GOJ plan to create a database for the medical records of 50 million patients (Yomiuri); plans by Resona Group banks to recommend their defined contribution pension fund customers shift their investments from fixed deposits to investment trust funds (Nikkei); and a plan by a Health Ministry taskforce to produce a report on government plans to store and distribute antidotes against possible chemical terrorism targeting the Tokyo Olympics (Sankei).

INTERNATIONAL

U.S. plans to maintain maximum pressure on DPRK until it denuclearizes

Asahi wrote that at the G7 foreign ministers' meeting held in Toronto on April 22-23 the Trump administration expressed its intention not to relax sanctions or give other rewards to the DPRK just for pledging to suspend its nuclear and missile tests. The paper wrote that an unnamed senior USG official, who was part of the American delegation to the meeting, reportedly said that the past approach of giving rewards in stages only for the freezing of nuclear development was a mistake and that the United States will continue to apply maximum pressure on the DPRK until it

substantially relinquishes its nuclear program. The paper wrote that GOJ welcomes the Trump administration policy and that Foreign Minister Kono and Acting Secretary of State Sullivan confirmed their nations' unity in dealing with North Korea in their talks in Toronto on Monday, during which they confirmed maintaining maximum pressure on the DPRK until it relinquishes all types of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. Yomiuri also reported on the meeting between Kono and Sullivan, adding that they confirmed cooperation in resolving the abduction issue and discussed the new economic consultations on trade.

President Trump, PM Abe agree to demand DPRK eliminate biological, chemical weapons

Yomiuri wrote that Prime Minister Abe disclosed at a fundraising event held for an LDP lawmaker in Tokyo on Monday that he agreed with President Trump at their summit at Mar-a-Lago last week to demand that North Korea eliminate its biological and chemical weapons in addition to its nuclear and missile programs. The paper conjectured that the President will convey this demand directly to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in their planned talks to be held by early June.

GOJ concerned that Pyongyang may be trying to drive a wedge between U.S., Japan

Mainichi wrote that the GOJ is carefully analyzing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's announcement last week of suspending its mid- and long-range missile tests. The paper wrote that there is a view within the GOJ that Pyongyang may be trying to drive a wedge between Washington and Tokyo by only bringing up its missiles capable of reaching the United States and not addressing those that can target Japan in its talks with the United States.

Prime Minister Abe eyes visiting France in July

Monday evening's Asahi wrote that Foreign Minister Kono told his French counterpart Le Drian in Toronto on Sunday that Prime Minister Abe would like to visit France to attend the opening ceremony of "Japonismes 2018," a series of Japanese cultural events starting in July in Paris. Kono also extended an invitation to French President Macron to visit Japan at an early date.

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishimura comments on U.S.-Japan summit

Sankei wrote that Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishimura, who accompanied Prime Minister Abe to Mar-a-Lago last week, said on a BS-Fuji TV program on Monday that the summit gave him the impression that the President is apparently trying to address North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and the abductions swiftly instead of taking several years.

ECONOMY

Thailand to join TPP

Yomiuri front-paged a report saying that Thailand is making arrangements to join the new TPP accord agreed upon by 11 nations, including Japan and Australia, after it goes into effect by the end

of this year or later. Noting that Thailand will be the first nation to participate in the new TPP agreement other than the original 11 members, the paper speculated that this may give momentum to the expansion of the group's membership. Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi, who is in charge of the TPP, plans to visit Thailand to discuss the matter during the Golden Week holidays starting at the end of this month.

SECURITY

Governor Onaga undergoes surgery to remove pancreatic tumor

Monday evening's Asahi, Yomiuri, and Nikkei wrote that the Okinawa Prefectural Government announced on Monday that Governor Onaga underwent surgery to remove a tumor in his pancreas on Saturday to determine whether the tumor is benign or malignant. The papers said it will take about two weeks for the results of the cystoscopy to become available. According to Deputy Governor Tomikawa, who made the announcement, Onaga is expected to remain hospitalized for four to five weeks. The governor issued a statement saying: "I will focus on rehabilitation so I can return to my official duties as soon as possible." Yomiuri wrote that Onaga's health condition may affect the next gubernatorial election scheduled for this fall.

POLITICS

Sankei-FNN poll: Cabinet support drops to 38%

Sankei front-paged the results of its joint opinion survey with the Fuji News Network that was conducted on April 21-22. Support for the Abe cabinet dropped to 38.3%, down 6.7 points from the previous poll conducted on March 10-11, while nonsupport increased to 54.1%, up 10.3 points. Concerning the recent U.S.-Japan summit at which the two leaders discussed North Korea and bilateral trade, 42.2% welcomed the results of the meeting while 49.6% did not. 81.9% welcomed the agreement between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe to continue to put maximum pressure on the DPRK until it completely abolishes its nuclear and missile programs. 56.7% said they expect that progress will be made on the abduction issue at the planned U.S.-DPRK summit, while 40.1% said they don't.

No cabinet ministers visited Yasukuni during its spring festival

Nikkei wrote that no members of the Abe cabinet visited Yasukuni Shrine for its spring festival on April 21-23 this year. The paper speculated that they gave consideration to the possible negative impact that a visit to the shrine could have on the planned trilateral summit with China and South Korea in May and cooperation with these two nations in dealing with North Korea.



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