



Morning Alert - Thursday, April 26, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the intense interest in the inter-Korean summit slated for tomorrow. TV Asahi led with a report that LDP Diet Affairs chief Moriyama mentioned the possible dissolution of the Lower House, while Secretary General Nikai flatly denied the possibility. NTV, TBS, and TV Asahi led with reports that papers were filed with prosecutors against pop singer Tatsuya Yamaguchi for allegedly kissing a female high school student.

Main front-page items in national dailies included the planned inter-Korean summit on Friday, Takeda Pharma's buyout bid for Dublin-based Shire, the White House's dismissal of an online petition calling for giving the Sea of Japan a Korean name, and the prolonged boycott by the opposition bloc of parliamentary deliberations.

## INTERNATIONAL

### U.S., Japan affirm coordination ahead of inter-Korean summit

Sankei reported briefly on a meeting at MOFA yesterday between visiting Acting Secretary of State Thornton and Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Kanasugi, during which they confirmed enhancing coordination in the run-up to the planned inter-Korean and the U.S.-DPRK summits.

### Kono hoping to meet with Secretary of State-designate Pompeo next month

Sankei took up the disclosure by several GOJ sources that arrangements are underway for Foreign Minister Kono to visit Washington in early May for talks with Secretary of State-designate Pompeo.

## **President Trump to demand DPRK leader “get rid of” nuclear arsenal**

Yomiuri and Sankei reported on press remarks made on Tuesday by President Trump, who was asked by a journalist what he means by “complete denuclearization” on the Korean Peninsula. The President reportedly said: “It means North Korea gets rid of their nukes, very simple.... It would be very easy for me to make a simple deal and claim victory. I don’t want to do that. I want them to get rid of their nukes.” Yomiuri conjectured that the President perhaps made these remarks in response to the rising concern that when meeting with Kim Jong Un he may be tempted to cut a deal and agree to ease sanctions without obtaining assurances that the North Korean leader will surrender his nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

In a related story, Mainichi highlighted President Trump’s decision to nominate PACOM Commander Harris as the next U.S. ambassador to South Korea. Noting that the admiral, who had originally been tapped as U.S. envoy to Australia, has been closely involved in the U.S. military’s responses to DPRK nuclear and missile provocations, the article speculated that the last-minute change in portfolio signified Washington’s determination not to make concessions in demanding the denuclearization of North Korea.

## **China condones reentry of DPRK laborers**

Asahi claimed that more than 500 North Koreans have entered China as manual laborers following the historic summit between President Xi and DPRK leader Kim Jong Un in Beijing in late March, noting that although the Chinese government is on the surface maintaining a policy of complying with UN Security resolutions prohibiting UN member states from receiving new Korean laborers, local authorities appears to be relaxing border controls to allow the entry of workers from the neighboring country. While speculating that the Chinese may be effectively condoning the reentry of DPRK laborers in exchange for Kim’s aggressive diplomatic outreach, the daily wrote that this may constitute a loophole in the international community’s sanctions against the defiant regime. According to the daily, Chinese companies near the border with North Korea have been suffering acute labor shortages following the adoption of the UN resolution in question last September.

## **U.S. dismisses petition calling for Korean name for Sea of Japan**

Sankei gave top play to the Trump administration’s rejection of an online petition signed by more than 100,000 people asking it to use “East Sea” along with “Sea of Japan” when referring to the body of water between Japan and the Korean Peninsula. According to the daily, the White House explained that the U.S. government uses the names of geographic locations determined by the United States Board on Geographic Names and that the board’s conventional name for the body of water in question is “Sea of Japan.” The board reportedly uses only one official name for each sea or ocean as a matter of policy and practice.

## **Japan pledges \$14 million in aid for Syrian refugees**

All papers wrote that during the UN-EU conference on the future of Syria that began on Wednesday, Foreign Minister Kono announced that Japan will offer an additional \$14 million in humanitarian aid for Syrian refugees.

## SECURITY

### **U.S. expected to redouble efforts to export weapons abroad**

Asahi carried a prominent inside-page story on the Trump administration's policy of promoting defense hardware exports, in which was noted the official launch on Tuesday of a Defense and Aerospace Export Council by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The article contended the President's export drive is linked to his desire to reduce the U.S. trade deficit, increase jobs at home, and keep in check China, which has aggressively marketed defense equipment abroad in the past decade. Noting that Japan is one of the biggest potential customers of American weapons systems, the paper speculated that Japan's procurement of U.S. defense hardware may be high on the agenda of the upcoming bilateral consultations for a "free, fair, and reciprocal trade deal." Asahi added its analysis that Washington is also keen to export more weapons to foreign partners in the expectation that their use of U.S. defense equipment will help reduce U.S. costs for stationing troops overseas.

### **Ospreys make "emergency landings" on Amami Island**

All national papers except Sankei wrote that two Futenma-based Ospreys made emergency landings at Amami Airport in Kagoshima on late Wednesday afternoon following the blinking of a warning light in the cockpit of one of the aircraft, which were heading to MCAS Iwakuni at the time. The tilt-rotor planes reportedly took off an hour later for Futenma since on-the-spot inspections detected no malfunctions. No injuries or disruption to airport operations were reported. According to Asahi, Defense Minister Onodera commented on the latest mishap involving Futenma-based Ospreys by saying: "It is important to ensure flight safety. When meeting with Secretary of Defense Mattis a week ago, I asked him to take measures to ensure the safety of aircraft operations."

### **Onaga says landfill permit to be recalled "without fail"**

Yomiuri reported that Okinawa Governor Onaga released a statement yesterday concerning the one-year anniversary of the start of bank construction for the Futenma replacement facility. The statement said in part: "I will recall the landfill permit without fail" if the environmental degradation reaches a level that cannot be overlooked. He stressed that his resolve not to allow the construction of a new base in Henoko will "not be shaken one iota."

## ECONOMY

### **Motegi to visit Thailand in a bid to expand CPTPP**

Nikkei wrote that Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi will visit Bangkok during the Golden Week holidays in early May to brief local officials on the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership, noting that the Japanese official is eager to recruit more new members for the regional

free trade framework in a bid to forestall the Trump administration's renewed push for sealing a bilateral FTA. Noting that the Thai government is also being pressed by Washington to enter bilateral FTA talks, the paper projected that if Bangkok elects to join the CPTPP, Indonesia, the Philippines, and other Asian nations may follow suit. The GOJ is reportedly hoping that the possible addition of new Asian members would prompt the U.S. business community to ask the Trump administration to return to the regional trade arrangement.

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