



Morning Alert - Friday, April 27, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK and most commercial broadcasters led with scene-setting reports on today's inter-Korean summit to be held at the Freedom House on the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone. The networks said the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the development of inter-Korean relations will be high on agenda for the landmark meeting between the two leaders.

Asahi, Mainichi, and Yomiuri gave top play to reports on a Sendai High Court ruling that the deaths of 23 elementary school pupils in the tsunami following the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake could have been prevented if the governments of Ishinomaki and Miyagi Prefecture had updated their contingency plans. Sankei led with a report on today's inter-Korean summit, while Nikkei gave top coverage to an EU plan to step up regulations on IT giants including Google and Facebook.

INTERNATIONAL

Senate confirms Pompeo as secretary of state

NHK, Fuji TV, and NTV reported that the Senate confirmed CIA Director Pompeo as secretary of state on Thursday. The networks quoted President Trump as saying in a released statement: "Having a patriot of Mike's immense talent, energy, and intellect leading the Department of State will be an incredible asset for our country at this critical time in history." The networks said the new secretary is expected to play a leading role in the run-up to the planned U.S.-DPRK summit. They aired photos released by the White House of a meeting between CIA Director Pompeo and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that reportedly took place in Pyongyang over Easter weekend.

Acting Assistant Secretary Thornton comments on North Korea

All national dailies reported on a press roundtable held by Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Susan Thornton at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo on Thursday. Asahi quoted the acting assistant secretary as commenting on the inter-Korean summit to be held today by saying President Trump supports the idea of ending the state of war on the Korean Peninsula. The paper interpreted this remark as an expression of hope for a path toward a lasting peace. The paper also quoted Thornton as saying that in the past North Korea continued to develop nuclear weapons while holding negotiations and that the mistakes of the past should not be repeated in dealing with Pyongyang. According to the paper, she also stressed that it is necessary for the North to take serious steps to denuclearize and that the sanctions will be maintained until the right path to that end has been laid out. Mainichi wrote that she reportedly said the President supports a permanent solution to end the Korean War and that the inter-Korean summit will be a good opportunity to make progress.

Yomiuri quoted the acting assistant secretary as saying that although North Korea has made positive remarks on denuclearization, it is difficult to take them at face value because there is a history of years of negotiations with Pyongyang. Nikkei wrote that Thornton expressed the view that it is necessary to set a deadline for North Korea to denuclearize, quoting her as saying that the same mistakes should not be repeated. Sankei quoted Thornton as saying that the inter-Korean summit will be the first venue to test the sincerity of the DPRK.

PM Abe says President Trump agreed to seek DPRK's abolishment of short-and mid-range missiles

Thursday evening's Mainichi wrote that Prime Minister Abe stated at a Lower House Budget Committee session on Thursday that he and President Trump agreed at their summit last week to seek North Korea's abolishment of short- and mid-range missiles capable of reaching Japan. Abe said he stressed to the President that there are hundreds of thousands of Americans living in South Korea and Japan and that it is important to abolish short- and mid-range missiles to ensure their safety.

Foreign Minister Kono to visit South Korea, U.S.

Asahi, Yomiuri, and Sankei wrote that according to a GOJ source, Foreign Minister Kono is making arrangements to visit Washington on May 3-6 for talks with Secretary of State Pompeo. Ahead of the trip Kono plans to visit South Korea on May 2-3.

Senior USG official stresses need for permanent abolition of North Korea's nuclear programs

Thursday evening's Asahi wrote that Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Ford told the press in Geneva on Wednesday that North Korea must relinquish its nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. The paper speculated that this

remark was aimed at dispelling concern that the United States may make concessions to Pyongyang in its talks with the DPRK. Ford was in Geneva to participate in the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

PACOM Commander Harris, PM Abe discuss U.S.-Japan alliance, DPRK

All national dailies wrote that Prime Minister Abe held talks with Admiral Harry Harris, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, at the Kantei on Thursday. All of the papers wrote that the two officials agreed that the United States and Japan will maintain maximum pressure on North Korea to seek its denuclearization in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner and will strengthen their alliance and work together to realize a “free and open Indo-Pacific.” Asahi wrote that the prime minister expressed gratitude for the admiral’s contributions to enhancing the U.S.-Japan alliance. The paper also wrote that the PACOM commander reportedly said it is important to continue to put pressure on the DPRK with the cooperation of not only South Korea but also other allies and friends.

PM Abe to accompany Chinese Premier Li Keqiang on visit to Hokkaido

Yomiuri wrote that Prime Minister Abe is making arrangements to accompany Chinese Premier Li Keqiang when he visits Hokkaido on May 10-11 as part of his trip to Japan on May 8-11 for a trilateral summit with South Korea to be held in Tokyo. Li plans to attend a meeting of Japanese and Chinese governors that will be held in Sapporo on May 11. The paper speculated that Abe’s hospitality toward Li is intended to demonstrate improved relations between Tokyo and Beijing.

PM Abe to visit Middle East during Golden Week holidays

Thursday evening’s Nikkei and Friday morning’s Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Sankei wrote that Prime Minister Abe told a Lower House Budget Committee session on Thursday that he is planning to visit the UAE, Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Autonomous Areas during the Golden Week holidays in late April and early May. Abe stated that he would like to strengthen Japan’s relations with these nations not only in the energy sector but also in a range of areas including economy, security, and cutting-edge technology. This will be his first visit to the region in three years. Mainichi wrote that although the premier had originally planned to go to Iran, he decided to skip Tehran out of consideration for the United States.

Foreign Minister Kono holds talks with Iranian counterpart

Thursday evening’s Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kono held talks with his Iranian counterpart Zarif in Brussels on Wednesday. The paper wrote that the two officials agreed that it is important for the United States to uphold the nuclear agreement with Iran. Kono reportedly expressed Japan’s readiness to provide Tehran with the necessary technical assistance for implementing the accord.

LDP Secretary General Nikai visits Russia

Mainichi and Nikkei reported on LDP Secretary General Nikai’s visit to Russia starting on Thursday. Nikai plans to deliver a speech at a private-sector forum on Japan-Russia relations in Moscow on Friday and hold talks with Prime Minister Medvedev, who leads the ruling party, United Russia.

Pointing out that the 200-person retinue includes many people from business circles and local governments, Nikkei speculated that the delegation aims to promote economic cooperation and party exchanges.

POLITICS

PM Abe denies possibility of Lower House dissolution

Thursday evening's Yomiuri and Mainichi and Friday morning's Asahi wrote that at a Lower House Budget Committee session on Thursday, Prime Minister Abe flatly denied the possibility of dissolving the House of Representatives for a snap general election, saying: "I am not thinking of that at all. I can clearly say that. What I need to do now is to fulfill my campaign pledges."

