



Morning Alert - Tuesday, May 1, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

All networks gave top play to reports that an escaped inmate was caught in Hiroshima on Monday after being on the run for more than three weeks.

Top stories in national dailies included reports on China's growing influence over Cambodia (Asahi); foreign trainees working at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant (Mainichi); China's investment in neuroscience research (Yomiuri); and an agreement between Sprint and T-Mobile to merge by 2019 (Nikkei).

## INTERNATIONAL

### Secretary Pompeo, FM Kono discuss DPRK

All national dailies reported on Tuesday morning on talks held between Secretary of State Pompeo and Foreign Minister Kono in Amman on Monday, saying that the two officials affirmed close trilateral cooperation between the United States, Japan, and South Korea in dealing with North Korea. Yomiuri, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the Secretary and the foreign minister agreed to maintain maximum pressure on Pyongyang to urge it to take concrete actions to abolish its nuclear and missile programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. They also reportedly agreed to cooperate in resolving the abduction issue.

### Kim Jong Un expresses readiness to hold dialogue with Japan

All national dailies reported on Monday on an announcement made on Sunday by the South Korean Presidential Office that during the inter-Korean summit Kim expressed readiness to hold dialogue with Japan. According to the presidential office, Kim made the remarks in response to Moon's

statement that Prime Minister Abe is ready to talk with North Korea and hopes to normalize Japan's ties with the DPRK by resolving the issues of the past.

All of the papers wrote that Moon briefed Abe on his talks with Kim in a teleconference on Sunday that lasted about 40 minutes, telling him that he brought up the abduction issue during the summit. The prime minister met with South Korea's National Intelligence Service Director Suh Hoon at the Kantei following his teleconference with Moon. Abe reportedly told the press afterward that he will make maximum efforts to ensure that progress is made on the abduction issue at the U.S.-DPRK summit expected to take place by early June.

Asahi wrote that according to a North Korean source, the Kim regime has already begun looking into how to respond to Japan's request to resolve the abduction issue in the hope of receiving economic assistance from Tokyo. The paper speculated that Kim's reference to the possibility of a summit with Japan was aimed at achieving a major relaxation of sanctions and obtaining large-scale economic assistance. Nikkei quoted a GOJ source as saying that whether Japan holds a summit with the DPRK will depend on progress on the abduction front. The paper conjectured that Kim expressed his readiness to hold talks with Japan to create a positive international environment ahead of his summit with the United States.

### **North Korea ready to close nuclear test site in May**

All national dailies reported on Monday that the South Korean Presidential Office said on Sunday that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told South Korean President Moon during their summit on Friday that he is ready to close the Punggye-ri nuclear test site by the end of May and invite U.S. and South Korean experts and media outlets to observe the operations to shut down the facility. Kim reportedly said during the summit that he will not need nuclear weapons if his country can win reassurances of non-aggression and reach an agreement to formally end the Korean War. Asahi and Yomiuri speculated that North Korea's announcement was intended to demonstrate to the United States its "will and concrete actions" toward denuclearization.

### **Two Koreas confirm goal of "complete denuclearization"**

All national dailies on Saturday reported extensively on the inter-Korean summit held at Panmunjom on Friday, during which South Korean President Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed a joint "Panmunjom Declaration" that establishes a common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. The two leaders also agreed to strive to bring a formal end to the Korean War. All of the papers wrote that although Moon and Kim agreed on the common goal of pursuing "complete denuclearization," they failed to present specific measures or a timetable for achieving that goal. Yomiuri wrote that discussions on specifics, such as a deadline for denuclearization, procedures for inspections, and possible economic rewards, have been put off until the U.S.-DPRK summit in June. Mainichi wrote that attention will be focused on whether Washington and Pyongyang will conclude a detailed agreement on denuclearization at their planned summit.

Prime Minister Abe told reporters on Friday that he welcomes the outcome of the inter-Korean summit as a positive move toward the comprehensive resolution of various problems associated with North Korea. The premier reportedly added that he strongly hopes the DPRK will take concrete actions toward denuclearization and that Japan will keep a close eye on future developments. Sankei wrote that in response to a question from a reporter, Abe dismissed concern that Japan will be left behind amid Pyongyang's diplomatic overtures toward the United States, South Korea, China, and Russia.

### **President Trump, PM Abe speak by phone to discuss response to DPRK**

All national dailies wrote on Sunday that Prime Minister Abe spoke by phone with President Trump on Saturday for about 30 minutes following the President's teleconference with South Korean President Moon, during which the ROK leader is believed to have briefed the President on his talks with Kim Jong Un on Friday. Abe told reporters after his conversation with President Trump that they welcomed the inter-Korean talks as a historic first step toward bringing peace and stability to Northeast Asia and agreed to keep a close eye on North Korea's moves ahead of the planned U.S.-DPRK summit. Asahi wrote that according to a Japanese briefing, the two leaders agreed to work together to make progress on the abduction issue. Sankei added that President Trump and PM Abe agreed to maintain maximum pressure on Pyongyang until it takes concrete actions toward denuclearization.

### **Families of Japanese abductees meet with senior DOS official**

NHK reported this morning that family members of Japanese abductees who are currently visiting Washington ahead of the U.S.-DPRK summit met with a senior DOS official on Monday. According to the network, Takuya Yokota, the brother of abductee Megumi Yokota, met with Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Japan Chung at the State Department and said 40 years have passed since his sister was abducted and there is not much time left to resolve the issue. In response, Acting DAS Chung reportedly said: "We also understand the abduction issue. We will cooperate to bring all of the abductees home." Yokota told reporters after the meeting: "We will convey the voices of the families to many government officials ahead of the U.S.-DPRK summit and ask for their support." The network said the family members are expected to stay in the U.S. until May 5 and meet with other senior USG officials and attend a UN symposium.

### **Australia, Canada to help monitor DPRK's illegal ship-to-ship transfers**

Sunday's Asahi wrote that the Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs announced on Saturday that Australia and Canada will participate in multilateral efforts to monitor North Korea's illegal ship-to-ship transfers of goods at sea by deploying patrol planes to the U.S. military's Kadena Air Base. The paper wrote that the United States, Japan, Australia, and Canada will enhance the ongoing surveillance activities in the East China Sea and the Sea of Japan through information sharing. Sankei and Mainichi ran similar stories, with Mainichi adding that a British Royal Navy ship that has been dispatched to waters near Japan for joint drills is already participating in the surveillance

mission. In a related development, Monday's Yomiuri and Asahi wrote that the MSDF announced on Sunday that a destroyer, replenishment vessel, reconnaissance plane, and submarine will participate in a joint exercise with a Royal Navy frigate in waters off the Kanto region on April 27-28.

### **Japan, UAE agree on cooperation in energy, other sectors**

All national dailies reported on Tuesday on talks held between Prime Minister Abe and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Monday in Abu Dhabi. After the meeting the prime minister and the crown prince released a joint statement on strengthened bilateral cooperation between Tokyo and Abu Dhabi in 12 sectors, including energy development, education, agriculture, and space development, and signed an investment agreement. Abe expressed gratitude for the UAE's decision in March to extend by 40 years an offshore oil field contract held by a Japanese energy developer. Yomiuri and Nikkei wrote that Japan and the UAE plan to sign a memorandum on defense cooperation in the near future and that Tokyo is hoping to discuss having the UAE acquire Japan-made defense equipment, including the C-2 transport aircraft used by the ASDF.

### **LDP Secretary General Nikai meets with Russian prime minister**

All national dailies on Saturday wrote that LDP Secretary General Nikai and Russian Prime Minister Medvedev held talks on Friday in Moscow and confirmed that Japan and Russia will strengthen their economic and other cooperation. The two officials also agreed to promote exchanges between the LDP and the United Russia party. Nikai reportedly told Medvedev that North Korea's abduction of Japanese nationals is one of the most important issues for the Abe administration. Nikkei wrote that the two officials did not discuss the Northern Territories or a peace treaty between Japan and Russia.

### **Japan, Israel to launch new working-level consultations on cybersecurity**

Sunday's Nikkei wrote that the governments of Japan and Israel have agreed on a plan to set up a new framework for working-level consultations involving defense and foreign affairs officials to deepen their security cooperation and cybersecurity coordination. According to the paper, Prime Minister Abe plans to conclude an official agreement on the plan during his scheduled meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu on May 2.

### **Comfort women memorial taken down in Manila**

Sunday's Sankei wrote that a statue symbolizing Filipino comfort women that was installed in Manila by a Chinese-Filipino citizens' group last December was removed on Friday. Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Noda expressed Japan's displeasure over the memorial during her meeting with Philippine President Duterte in Manila in January and his administration later told the GOJ that it would remove the statue by the end of April.

## **ECONOMY**

### **USTR questions "fairness" of Japan's drug pricing system**

Saturday's Sankei wrote from Washington that the USTR released on Friday its annual report on intellectual property rights that identifies trading partners that do not adequately or effectively protect and enforce intellectual property rights. The report took up the "transparency and fairness" of Japan's pharmaceutical pricing and said the USTR intends to address the issue in the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue. Sunday's Mainichi ran a similar Kyodo story.

### **Foreign firms express strong interest in casinos in Japan**

Saturday morning's Nikkei wrote that the GOJ approved at a cabinet meeting on Friday a bill on the operation of integrated resorts featuring casinos in Japan. The paper wrote that MGM Resorts International and other major casino operators are paying close attention to Japan's moves to legalize casinos. But the GOJ has imposed restrictions, such as only allowing casinos to be built in three locations, leading the paper to speculate that the competition for "a slice of a small pie" will escalate.

## **SECURITY**

### **U.S., Japan to conduct joint drills involving F-35s**

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that the Ministry of Defense announced on Friday that Japan will conduct at the ASDF Misawa Air Base joint drills with the United States involving F-35s from May 9 through 24. Eight F-35Bs from MCAS Iwakuni and ten ASDF aircraft including an F-35A are expected to participate in the drills.

### **Remodeled Izumo-class destroyers could carry F-35Bs**

All national dailies on Saturday wrote that the Ministry of Defense released on Friday a report concluding that if the Maritime Self-Defense Force's Izumo-class destroyers are remodeled, they would be able to handle takeoffs and landings by fighter jets. The report positively evaluated the Izumo-class destroyers for their "high potential to improve aircraft operational capabilities." The Izumo and Kaga destroyers, both currently in service, are under consideration to be remodeled into aircraft carriers. The report, which was submitted on March 22, was based on an investigation conducted by Japan Marine United Corp., the company that manufactured the Izumo-class vessels. The company examined whether the most advanced stealth F-35B fighter jet, which is capable of making short take-offs and vertical landings, can be operated from the Izumo-class vessels.

### **U.S. military admits that Misawa-based U.S. jet flew at low altitude**

Sunday's Nikkei wrote that the 35th Fighter Wing at Misawa said on Saturday that it has confirmed that a video posted on YouTube that is believed to have been taken from a Misawa-based F-16 fighter jet flying at a very low altitude was taken from one of its fighter jets during training and that the plane flew below 150 meters – the lowest altitude allowed in Japan. The fighter wing also said that it will make sure that all of its pilots adhere to the flight rules in Japan. Mainichi ran a similar report.

## POLITICS

### **PM Abe discusses U.S.-Japan relations in interview with Sankei**

Sunday's Sankei led with a report on an exclusive interview with Prime Minister Abe during which he stated that the strong alliance between the United States and Japan helped produce progress in dealing with North Korea. The premier said it is significant that President Trump expressed in a televised joint press conference with Abe his intention to make efforts to bring the Japanese abductees home. The premier added that the United States and Japan agreed to establish consultations for a free, fair, and reciprocal trade deal based on the common understanding that the two nations will increase their trade and investment.

### **No major change in cabinet support at 43%: Nikkei poll**

Monday's Nikkei reported on the results of its joint public opinion poll with TV Tokyo that was conducted on April 27-29. The approval rating for the Abe cabinet stood at 43%, essentially unchanged from 42% in the previous survey in March. The disapproval rating was 51%, up 2 points from last month. Some 72% said Prime Minister Abe bears responsibility for the Moritomo, Kake, and other scandals. However, 64% said that they think the opposition parties' boycotting of Diet deliberations to seek the resignation of Finance Minister Aso over his management of the ministry is "inappropriate." Some 75% said that Abe should hold a summit with Kim Jong Un, while 19% said a summit is unnecessary. Some 46% welcomed the outcome of the summit between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe on April 17-18, while 39% did not.

