



Morning Alert - Thursday, May 10, 2018

The following information reflects the reporting of the cited news media and does not reflect the opinions of the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo. Japan Media Highlights is intended for USG use only and should not be forwarded. Visit the website [here](#). For more information, contact [TokyoMATT@state.gov](mailto:TokyoMATT@state.gov).

## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK, TBS, and TV Asahi led with reports that three American detainees were released from North Korea on Wednesday. NTV and Fuji TV led with updates on the murder of a 7-year-old girl in Niigata.

Asahi and Sankei gave top play to reports on North Korea's release of three American detainees. Yomiuri led with a joint declaration issued by the Japanese, Chinese, and South Korean leaders, while Mainichi gave top coverage to Prime Minister Abe's bilateral talks with Chinese Premier Li. Nikkei gave top play to President Trump's announcement of his decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal.

## INTERNATIONAL

### North Korea frees three detained U.S. citizens

All national dailies reported extensively on President Trump's tweet on Wednesday disclosing that North Korea has freed three American detainees. Asahi and Yomiuri wrote that although this development constitutes progress toward realizing a U.S.-DPRK summit, differences still exist between the United States and the DPRK over the procedure for denuclearization. Yomiuri speculated that the Kim regime released the detainees in an attempt to build a relationship of trust with the Trump administration. Sankei conjectured that Pyongyang was trying to demonstrate a conciliatory stance toward Washington by releasing the U.S. citizens ahead of the planned summit with President Trump. Nikkei asserted that major progress has been made toward realizing a U.S.-DPRK summit through the release of the detainees.

All the papers, as well as NHK, reported that the President said on Wednesday that the date and location of his planned summit with Kim Jong Un will be announced within three days and that it will not take place in Panmunjom. According to Asahi, Secretary of State Pompeo, who visited North Korea on Wednesday and is now on his way back to Washington with the three released Americans, told reporters at Yokota Air Base on Wednesday evening that his visit to Pyongyang was very productive.

### **Leaders of Japan, China, ROK agree to seek complete denuclearization of Korean Peninsula**

All national dailies reported on the trilateral summit held between Prime Minister Abe, Chinese Premier Li, and South Korean President Moon in Tokyo on Wednesday. The three leaders released a joint declaration stating that they are committed to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Asahi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that the three leaders failed to present a clear path toward denuclearization because differences remained between Tokyo, which attaches importance to pressure on Pyongyang, and Beijing and Seoul, which place importance on dialogue. All the papers wrote that the declaration was not released until late in the evening because it took time for the three nations to agree on the language of the document, which in the end did not refer to “complete, verifiable, and irreversible” denuclearization.

The declaration also says the Chinese and South Korean leaders hope that the abduction issue can be resolved through dialogue at an early date. Prime Minister Abe said at a post-summit joint press conference that he had obtained understanding from Li and Moon for his request for cooperation in resolving the issue of Japanese nationals abducted by North Korea.

The three leaders also agreed to promote cooperation on the economic front, including through infrastructure development in East Asia, and to accelerate talks on a trilateral free trade agreement and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Abe, Li, and Moon also agreed to expand people-to-people exchanges through cultural, sports, and other events, as Japan is scheduled to host the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games and China the 2022 Beijing Winter Games following South Korea’s hosting of the PyeongChang Winter Games in February.

Yomiuri wrote that the first trilateral summit between the leaders of Japan, China, and South Korea in two and a half years demonstrated improvement in Tokyo’s ties with Beijing and Seoul.

### **Japanese, Chinese leaders agree to improve bilateral ties**

All national dailies reported on bilateral talks held between Prime Minister Abe and Chinese Premier Li in Tokyo on Wednesday, during which the two leaders reached agreement in areas ranging from security to the entertainment business. With this year marking the 40th anniversary of the signing of

a friendship treaty between Japan and China, Abe and Li promised to accelerate the improvement of their bilateral ties. The two leaders agreed on the implementation of the “Maritime and Aerial Communication Mechanism” and to work toward a visit to China by Abe by end of this year and a visit to Japan by Chinese President Xi in the future. However, Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Nikkei pointed out that the agreement did not clearly state whether the Senkaku Islands fall within the scope of the mechanism.

### **Japanese, South Korean leaders agree to seek forward-looking relationship**

All national dailies reported on bilateral talks held between Prime Minister Abe and South Korean President Moon in Tokyo on Wednesday, during which they agreed that the two nations will build their relationship in a forward-looking manner. Asahi wrote that the two leaders, in view of the North Korea issue, attached importance to cooperation rather than took up history issues between their nations. According to Nikkei, Abe and Moon agreed to promote reciprocal visits to each other’s country.

### **CCS Suga comments on U.S. decision to withdraw from Iran nuclear deal**

Yomiuri wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga commented on President Trump’s announcement of his decision to withdraw from the Iran nuclear deal at a news conference on Wednesday by saying that it will be very regrettable if the decision has a major impact on maintaining the agreement.

