



Morning Alert - Thursday, May 17, 2018

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK and most commercial broadcasters led with reports concerning a controversy arising over a Nihon University player's late tackle of a quarterback in a recent football game with Kwansai Gakuin University. TBS gave top play to North Korea's suggestion that it might call off its planned summit with the United States.

Top stories in national dailies included the enactment of a new law that urges political parties to address the low political representation of women in Japan (Asahi), plans to use iPS cells to treat serious heart diseases (Nikkei, Sankei), a possible agreement between Hitachi and the British government on a three trillion-yen nuclear plant project (Yomiuri), and allegations that a former Finance Ministry bureaucrat concealed records of land sale negotiations with Moritomo Gakuen (Mainichi).

## INTERNATIONAL

### North Korea says it may reconsider summit with U.S.

All national dailies reported on a statement released on Wednesday by North Korea's First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Kye Gwan via the state-run Korean Central News Agency in which he said: "If the United States unilaterally forces us to give up our nuclear programs, we cannot but reconsider the plan to hold a summit with the United States." Asahi interpreted the statement as an attempt by North Korea to gain an advantage ahead of its planned summit with the United States on June 12. Yomiuri conjectured that the statement shows that the Kim regime's intends to go into the summit with the status of a "nuclear power." Nikkei analyzed that the statement is part of Pyongyang's brinkmanship strategy of urging Washington to make concessions by escalating

tensions. The daily also speculated that the Kim regime's recent rapprochement with China is behind its hardline approach to its planned talks with the United States.

Wednesday evening's Asahi wrote that in response to North Korea's abrupt cancellation of its planned ministerial talks with South Korea earlier in the day, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nishimura told the press on Wednesday that U.S.-ROK joint military drills serve as an important deterrent for ensuing regional peace and security.

### **White House spokesperson reportedly says U.S. will maintain pressure on DPRK if summit is canceled**

Yomiuri, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that in response to North Korea's statement on Wednesday indicating that it might reconsider its planned summit with the United States on June 12, White House Press Secretary Sanders reportedly said during an interview with Fox News on Wednesday that President Trump is ready for the meeting if it takes place, and if it doesn't Washington will continue the maximum pressure campaign. Sanders reportedly told the White House press corps later that North Korea's threats to cancel the summit were "fully expected" and that the President is used to and ready for tough negotiations.

### **U.S. reportedly demanded that DPRK move nukes, ICBMs out of country within six months**

Asahi claimed in a Seoul-dated report that it has learned from multiple sources connected to North Korea that during preparatory talks for the planned summit on June 12, the United States demanded that Pyongyang move some of its nuclear warheads, nuclear material, and ICBMs out of the country within six months. The sources also said that Washington is considering removing the DPRK from its list of state sponsors of terrorism if Pyongyang accepts this demand. The paper speculated that the demand is one of the issues being discussed between Washington and Pyongyang in their preparatory talks on the procedures and schedule for denuclearization. However, the paper wrote that there are still major differences between the two nations because the United States is insisting on "complete, verifiable, and irreversible" denuclearization, while the DPRK is hoping for substantial rewards such as a regime guarantee and a peace treaty.

### **PM Abe holds teleconference with Indian counterpart**

Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that Prime Minister Abe and his Indian counterpart Modi spoke by phone on Wednesday and agreed to work together to realize a "free and open Indo-Pacific." The two leaders discussed the possibility of Modi's visiting Japan this year and the regional situation including North Korea.

### **PM Abe holds talks with Fijian leader**

Yomiuri and Sankei wrote that Prime Minister Abe held talks with visiting Fijian Prime Minister Bainimarama at the Kantei on Wednesday. The two leaders agreed on the need for countering North Korea's attempts to evade sanctions, including the ship-to-ship transfer of goods at sea. Abe

announced that Japan will offer 300 million yen in aid to Fiji to help strengthen its measures for maritime conservation and disaster risk reduction.

## SECURITY

### **Nago mayor meets with Keidanren chief to call for investment in city**

Nikkei wrote that Nago Mayor Toguchi held a meeting with Keidanren Chairman Sakakibara in Tokyo on Wednesday to call for investment in his municipality. The paper conjectured that the meeting was intended to create a positive environment for the FRF construction in the city by stimulating the local economy.

## POLITICS

### **Japan enacts law to promote women's participation in politics**

All national dailies reported on the enactment on Wednesday of a law to promote women's participation in politics by addressing the low political representation of women in Japan. The new law urges political parties to narrow the disparity in the numbers of male and female candidates running in national and local elections as much as possible by setting numerical targets for women candidates. This is the first law of its kind to be enacted in Japan.