
 **JAPAN MEDIA
HIGHLIGHTS**

Morning Alert - Wednesday, August 1, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with an analysis of the mudslides triggered by heavy rainfall in Hiroshima last month. All commercial TV networks gave top play to the Japan Boxing Federation's acknowledgement of its misuse of subsidies.

All national dailies gave top play to reports on the Bank of Japan announcement that it will maintain its credit easing but modify its monetary easing policy by, in effect, allowing long-term interest rates to rise.

ECONOMY

U.S., Japan to launch new trade talks on Aug. 9

All national dailies wrote that Economy Revitalization Minister Motegi announced on Tuesday that the U.S. and Japan will hold the first session of their new trade talks in Washington on Aug. 9. Asahi speculated that the U.S. team to be led by USTR Lighthizer will probably call on Japan to launch negotiations on a bilateral FTA. Nikkei conjectured that Japan, which is concerned about the impact on domestic agriculture, will be put on the defensive in the upcoming talks because the United States is set to urge Tokyo to negotiate an FTA. Mainichi conjectured that in view of the United States' dissatisfaction with its trade deficit with Japan, auto trade and the opening of Japan's agriculture market will be taken up in the talks, adding that while Washington may urge Tokyo to hold bilateral trade

negotiations, Japan plans to stress the importance of multilateral discussions for upholding the free trade system.

Japan, EU, Canada, Mexico, ROK confirm cooperation against possible U.S. auto tariffs

Mainichi ran a Kyodo report saying that senior officials from Japan, the EU, Canada, Mexico, and South Korea held a meeting in Geneva on Tuesday to discuss how to respond to the Trump administration's alleged plan to impose high tariffs on auto imports. The report said that the participants agreed to cooperate by taking concerted actions on auto trade in the event that the proposed tariffs are imposed.

UK expresses interest in joining TPP

Asahi, Mainichi, Nikkei, and Sankei wrote that British International Trade Secretary Fox expressed his nation's interest in joining the TPP-11 during a meeting with Economy Revitalization Minister Motegi in Tokyo on Tuesday. Motegi reportedly told the British official that Japan would support the UK's joining the accord.

Japan to reduce plutonium stockpile

All national dailies reported on a decision made on Tuesday by the Japan Atomic Energy Commission to revise Japan's basic policy on plutonium use for the first time in 15 years to reduce its plutonium stockpile. The commission decided that reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel should be limited to the amount required as fuel for the country's nuclear reactors. As of the end of fiscal 2017, Japan held a total of 47.3 tons of plutonium, enough to produce about 6,000 nuclear warheads. About 10.5 tons of the plutonium is kept in Japan and 36.7 tons is stored in the UK and France for reprocessing. Asahi wrote that Japan was urged by the United States to present specific plans for reducing the stockpile before their bilateral nuclear agreement was extended in July beyond the initial 30-year period.

Fire ants found in cargo arriving at Narita from Texas

Sankei wrote that the Environment Ministry announced on Tuesday that about 160 fire ants, which have a toxic sting and are native to South America, were detected in cargo that arrived at Narita Airport from Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. According to the ministry and the Chiba Prefectural Government, this is the first time for fire ants to be found in the prefecture and the sixth time for them to be found in Japan this year. According the prefectural government, about 10 ants were found on a wooden board of a shipping container at Narita on July 29 and another 170 ants were detected on the following day. The ministry confirmed on Tuesday that about 160 of them were fire ants.

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, Russia hold 2+2 meeting in Moscow

All national dailies reported on a Japan-Russia 2+2 meeting of foreign and defense ministers that was held in Moscow on Tuesday, saying they discussed bilateral security issues and North Korea. Yomiuri wrote that Foreign Minister Kono reportedly said at the outset of the meeting that it is extremely important for Japan and Russia to increase mutual understanding on the security front by promoting communication between the two nations. Ahead of the 2+2 meeting, the foreign ministers and defense ministers met separately to discuss such issues as cooperation in dealing with the DPRK and joint economic activities in the Northern Territories.

American former JET participants raise funds for flood victims in Japan

Sankei ran a column from Washington saying that the United States Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme Alumni Association (USJETAA) launched on its website on July 12 a campaign to raise funds for those affected by the recent flooding in western Japan. They have surpassed their goal of \$5,000 and raised more than \$6,000. The column said the JET program is the greatest achievement of Japan's soft power, quoting one of the alumni as saying, "Japan has given me a lot in my life. It's my turn to help Japan."

