



Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, February 8, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Noon news

Most networks gave top play to reports that the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments from the Justice Department and the state of Washington, which challenged President Trump's order on immigration as illegal and unconstitutional, saying that the circuit court is expected to make a decision as early as this week. Fuji TV led with a report that the U.S.'s second largest trade deficit was with Japan in 2016.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Suga comments on U.S. trade deficit with Japan

Nikkei took up press remarks this morning by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who commented on USG data regarding the trade deficit that America logged with Japan last year. He said: "Japanese companies have invested heavily in the U.S. Foreign direct investment in the U.S. by Japanese firms amounted to over \$411 billion, and produced some 840,000 jobs. U.S.-Japan economic relations have matured.... We will make efforts to obtain the Trump administration's understanding" for Japan's contributions to the U.S. economy. As for the upcoming summit between Prime Minister Abe and President Trump, the government spokesman said: "It is extremely important for the two to hold constructive discussions on how they can cooperate on the economic front to build a 'win-win' relationship."

### White House spokesman comments on Abe's trip to Florida

NHK reported this morning on press remarks on Tuesday by White House Press Secretary Spicer, who disclosed that President Trump will invite Prime Minister Abe to his home in Florida after they

hold a summit in Washington on Feb. 10. The White House spokesman said: "This is a testament to the importance the United States places on the bilateral relationship and the strength of our alliance, and the deep economic ties between the United States and Japan." According to the network, the President is expected to host a dinner for the Japanese leader there.

### **To play or not to play golf, that is the question for Abe**

TV-Asahi's nightly "Hodo Station" news show took up Prime Minister Abe's upcoming trip to the U.S., highlighting press remarks on Monday by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who said it is still unclear whether the premier will play golf with President Trump in Florida even though the President himself has already referred to the plan in a radio interview. The program quoted a GOJ source as saying: "Although there are risks, playing golf will be necessary [for the prime minister] to get along" with the U.S. leader. However, the program explained that it would be bad publicity for the premier to be seen having a good time with the President amid the global uproar over the executive order on immigration. Former Kyodo News managing editor Goto warned Abe against going ahead with the idea because it would give the international community the impression that Tokyo is a "faithful follower" of Washington. The journalist suspected that because it was Abe who first suggested that they play golf sometime when they met in New York right after the election, the premier may not be able to decline the invitation.

- [Time's up for soft China policy](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Opposition parties criticize Japan-U.S. "golf diplomacy"](#) (Mainichi)
- [Interview with ex-USTR Kantor on Japan-U.S. trade friction](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- ["Seiron" column: Adopt a "Japan first" posture at the summit meeting](#) (Sankei)
- [Japan's plan to jointly market nuclear plants with U.S. seen as "unrealistic"](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Abe must carefully gauge position in relation to U.S. president](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Make economic cooperation between Japan, U.S. serve both nation's needs](#) (The Japan News)
- [Cartoon: PM Abe and President Trump](#) (Sankei)

## **ECONOMY**

**Government spokesman cautious about TPP without U.S. participation**

Nikkei reported online on press remarks this morning by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who voiced a cautious attitude toward the idea being pursued by New Zealand and other TPP member states of effectuating the regional free trade accord without the participation of the U.S. He said: “Japan is not considering it.... While we are aware that the idea is being explored, Japan would first like to engage in patient negotiations with the U.S.” However, the daily also quoted an unnamed senior GOJ official as saying that the GOJ should listen to what other TPP members say about the idea.

## **U.S. meat industry urges President Trump to start bilateral trade talks with Asian nations**

NHK reported that the National Pork Producers Association and the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association on Tuesday sent to the White House a joint letter asking the Trump administration to launch bilateral free trade talks with Japan and other countries in the Asia-Pacific now that the U.S. has withdrawn from the TPP. The two industry associations insisted on the importance of free trade by saying that some 9,000 jobs could have been created in the U.S. under the TPP thanks to an increase in exports as a result of agreed-upon cutbacks by Japan and other nations in their tariffs on American meat. The groups, which had called for the swift effectuation of the regional free trade initiative, sent the letter ahead of the U.S.-Japan summit on Friday. [Nikkei](#) ran a similar story.

- [\*\*Analysis: Trump lashes out at Toyota even as local production hits record high\*\*](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [\*\*Sharp reveals massive U.S. investment plan prior to Abe-Trump summit\*\*](#) (Kyodo News)
- [\*\*Ride-hailing businesses face bumpy road in Japan\*\*](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [\*\*Analysis: Japan prioritizes taxi industry, trailing other countries in ride-sharing services\*\*](#) (Nikkei)
- [\*\*Honda bets on tie-up to catch up in e-vehicle race\*\*](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [\*\*Trainee program, small firms drive rise in Japan’s foreign worker numbers\*\*](#) (The Japan Times)
- [\*\*Total agricultural and fisheries product exports reach record high\*\*](#) (Nikkei)
- [\*\*New diagnostic drug to make radiation therapy more effective\*\*](#) (Nikkei)
- [\*\*Toyobo developed highly accurate diagnostic drug for genetic abnormalities\*\*](#) (Nikkei)

## **POLITICS**

- [Prime minister's schedule on February 7](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gist of interpellations at Lower House Budget Committee, Feb. 7](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Justice minister retracts statement seen to suppress Diet discussion](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Panel wants government do more to prevent bullying of kids relocated from Tohoku disaster zone](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Nikai recommends sending Japanese ambassador back to South Korea as soon as possible](#) (Sankei)
- [METI minister Seko hopes LDP Nikai and his son will self-destruct](#) (THEMIS)
- [Reporters' roundtable discussion on Diet interpellations at budget committee thus far](#) (Nikkei)
- [Cartoon: "Amakudari"](#) (Asahi)

## SECURITY

### **Japanese science community rocked by research funding offered by Defense Ministry**

TBS's "News 23" reported that Japanese university scholars, especially physicists, chemists, and engineers, are sharply divided over the Defense Ministry's generous R&D funding program for defense technology. This fiscal year's budget for the program was 11 billion yen, or about \$100 million, as opposed to only \$5.6 million in FY2016. According to the report, opponents of the program insist that scientists must not accept MOD money aimed at developing next-generation defense equipment, arguing that the postwar academic code of not conducting research connected to national security must be honored so as to remind foreign scholars that Japanese scientists are committed to preserving Japan's identity as a peace-oriented country. On the other hand, some university scholars are in desperate need of funding given that annual research funding for three out of five Japanese scholars is below 500,000 yen, or about \$4,500. They also believe that it is becoming increasingly difficult and meaningless to separate civilian technology from military expertise. Although the proponents point out that the results of their research financed by the Defense Ministry will be published so as to prove that their studies were not influenced by the ministry, the opponents argue that the ministry apparently reserves the right to obtain from the recipients prior consent for making the research results public. TBS found fault with the central government for reducing research funds through the Education Ministry substantially for many years so as to prompt "cash strapped" scientists to look to the Defense Ministry for financing.

## **Okinawa furious over sea-based construction in Henoko**

This morning's Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo gave extensive coverage to yesterday's operation by the Okinawa Defense Bureau to place large concrete blocks in waters near Camp Schwab, focusing on the rage expressed by Okinawa Governor Onaga, local residents, and base opponents. According to the articles, four blocks were laid on the sea bottom on Monday, and 224 additional blocks will be placed through early April in preparation for the installation of four massive underwater fences to prevent the spread of dirt. The bureau also resumed preliminary drilling operations in the construction area yesterday for the first time in almost a year. The dailies emphasized that the governor and base opponents pledged to redouble their efforts to derail what they call the "destruction of the precious marine environment" by the central government.

- [\*\*Kishida to visit Okinawa from Feb. 25, may hold talks with governor\*\*](#) (Kyodo News)
- [\*\*Editorial: Avoid delay in returning site of Futenma Air Station to Japan\*\*](#) (The Japan News)
- [\*\*Editorial: Base relocation without local support destabilizes Japan-U.S. alliance\*\*](#) (The Mainichi)
- [\*\*Editorial: Abe putting U.S. before Okinawa in starting base work off Henoko\*\*](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [\*\*Hitachi chairman to become president of industrial cybersecurity center\*\*](#) (Nikkei)

## **SCIENCE**

- [\*\*Humans vs. space debris\*\*](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

## **SOCIETY**

- [\*\*Prejudice against LGBT individuals to be classified as sexual harassment\*\*](#) (Mainichi)

## **TV PROGRAMS**

### **"Fake news" – Are you a victim or an offender?**

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" reported on the "fake news" spreading around the world via the Internet, saying that there are ways to make money by circulating scandalous but groundless news stories and that many people share such articles on social media without really thinking. The

program also reported on efforts by Facebook and other social media platforms in the U.S. to detect fake news.

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