



Afternoon Alert - Monday, February 27, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

Most networks continued to report on the murder of Kim Jong Nam, with NHK saying that the Malaysian health ministry is trying to identify the body as soon as possible in order to put pressure on North Korea in response to its claims that the man who was murdered was not Kim.

NHK also reported that Prime Minister Abe was grilled by an opposition party member at the Diet this morning over school operator Moritomo Gakuen's purchase of state-owned land in Toyonaka, Osaka, at only 14% of its appraised value last June, saying that the premier denied his or his wife's involvement in the land sale. The prime minister also reportedly said his wife did not receive any compensation for being an honorary principal of Moritomo Gakuen. Abe reportedly acknowledged that it was "inappropriate" that preschoolers of a kindergarten operated by Moritomo Gakuen were made to shout "Go Prime Minister Abe!" during a sports event.

INTERNATIONAL

Yachi to visit U.S. for talks with top White House security official

Nikkei reported online on the disclosure by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga this morning that Secretary General Yachi of the National Security Secretariat will visit Washington starting today for talks with National Security Adviser McMaster, quoting the government spokesman as saying: "Yachi will discuss regional issues and exchange views to follow through with the results of the U.S.-Japan summit."

Defense pundits discuss North Korea

Five diplomatic and national security specialists exchanged views on North Korea, including its recent missile test and the murder of Kim Jong Nam, which is suspected to be the work of the DPRK government led by his half-brother Kim Jong Un. While agreeing that the assassination was ordered by the DPRK strongman to “neutralize” a potential rival, the panelists were divided over whether the political foundation of his dynasty has been reinforced as a result. Keio University Assistant Professor Jinbo projected that the Trump administration will not hold a dialogue with Pyongyang since it has become clear that the reclusive regime carried out “chemical terrorism” abroad. The experts agreed on the importance of enhancing policy coordination by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea so as to deter Pyongyang from pursuing nuclear and missile development. They also called for greater cooperation between the U.S. and China to ratchet up the pressure on the DPRK.

- [Cartoon: The Trump wall](#) (Asahi)
- [Japan has Northern Territories deal ready for Russia](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [“Inside story” of Abe-Trump summit meeting](#) (Sankei)
- [State Department holds no news conferences for over a month](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Prolonged absence of ambassadors under Trump administration](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Editorial: N. Korea’s evasion of responsibility in Kim Jong Nam murder deplorable](#) (The Japan News)
- [U.S.’s hard line on Russia may affect Japan’s strategy](#) (Mainichi)
- [Interview with former Defense Minister Onodera](#) (Mainichi)

SECURITY

[Kishida avoids mentioning Henoko plan in meeting with Okinawa leader](#)

Monday’s Okinawa Times reported on Foreign Minister Kishida’s talks with Okinawa Governor Onaga on Sunday, highlighting that the GOJ official did not mention that the “Henoko relocation plan is the only solution.” Pointing out that Kishida used the phrase in his earlier meeting with the “pro-GOJ” leaders of nine local municipalities the same day and that in his session with Onaga he instead underscored the GOJ’s efforts to reduce the security burden on Okinawa, the daily speculated that Kishida chose not to discuss the Henoko plan with the Okinawa chief in the belief that the Kantei and the Defense Ministry rather than MOFA should take the lead in dealing with base issues in the island prefecture. According to the paper, the foreign minister told the press afterward that he did not mention the Henoko option simply because he did “not have enough time.”

Okinawa's new Washington office director formally appointed

Saturday morning's Okinawa Times reported on the Okinawa prefectural government's announcement on Friday that Osamu Unten, an expert on U.S. base issues, was formally appointed as the new director of its Washington office to replace the incumbent Hideo Henzan in April. Unten, who has been heavily involved in base issues for years as the director of the local government's military affairs division, said to the daily: "I would like to convey to the U.S. accurate information on Okinawa by capitalizing on the connections that Mr. Henzan has built in Washington and the administrative expertise on base issues that I have acquired."

- [**U.S. Sailor Nabbed in Okinawa for DUI**](#) (Jiji Press)
- [**Tokyo firm found to have overcharged SDF for equipment by 9 mil. yen**](#) (Kyodo News)
- [**'White hat' hackers see rising demand for protection in corporate Japan**](#) (The Japan Times)
- [**Japan to renew cybersecurity strategy ahead of 2020 Tokyo Olympics**](#) (Kyodo News)

POLITICS

- [**Prime minister's schedule on Feb. 26**](#) (Nikkei)
- [**Prime minister's schedule on Feb. 25**](#) (Nikkei)
- [**Prime minister's schedule on Feb. 24**](#) (Nikkei)
- [**Gist of interpellations at Lower House Budget Committee intensive session, Feb. 24**](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [**LDP members recovered one million**](#) (Nikkei)
- [**Japan Opposition SDP to Relocate HQ to Save Costs**](#) (Jiji Press)
- [**Targets of "Conspiracy law"**](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [**Abe denies ties with school in controversial land deal**](#) (Kyodo News)
- [**Lawmaker group to investigate academia's involvement in military research**](#) (Mainichi)

OPINION POLLS

Public approval for Abe hovers around 54.5%

TV Asahi reported on the results of its opinion poll carried out over the weekend, which showed that 83% of respondents want the issue of Moritomo Gakuen to be pursued at the Diet, while 7% did not. Regarding Akie Abe's previous role as honorary principal of the school, 70% said it was not appropriate, while 9% felt otherwise. Concerning Prime Minister Abe's close relationship with President Trump, 47% said it will bring disadvantages to Japan in terms of the economy and security, while 28% said it will not. Approval for the Abe cabinet was 54.5%, down 0.8 points from last month, and nonsupport was 27.9%, up 0.4 points.

- [60% approve of Japan-U.S. summit meeting, cabinet support drops 6 points to 60%, Nikkei poll](#) (Nikkei)
- [Concerns about Japan-U.S. relations alleviated, Nikkei poll](#) (Nikkei)

ECONOMY

- [Tokyo to suffer 20 billion yen tax revenue loss from Furusato Nozei](#) (Nikkei)
- [Japanese automakers' attention focused on NAFTA renegotiation](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Some cast doubt on new JICA department for infrastructure export](#) (Ekonomisuto)
- [Japanese carmakers giving US dealers bigger incentives](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [43% of companies say they don't have enough full-time employees, Teikoku Databank poll](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [MUFG to create 10 billion yen fund for life science ventures](#) (Nikkei)
- [Toshiba's U.S. unit Westinghouse to explore Chapter 11 bankruptcy](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Tepco to ban foreign trainees from engaging in cleanup efforts](#) (Mainichi)

EDUCATION

- [Ambitious curriculum guidelines](#) (The Japan Times)

SOCIETY

Matayoshi works on his second novel

Sunday's "NHK Special" reported on Naoki Matayoshi, a popular comedian who received the prestigious Akutagawa Prize in 2015 for his first novel, "Hibana," which became a bestseller. The program followed Matayoshi for about six months during which he was working on his second novel, titled "Gekijo." Matayoshi struggled to write something that is easy to understand but still a work of literature.

- [60% of Fukushima evacuees have experienced, witnessed, or heard of bullying, Asahi Shimbun-Fukushima University poll](#) (Asahi)
 - [Junior high students show mixed results in English-language push](#) (The Japan Times)
 - [Visitors to Hiroshima Peace Museum Hit Annual Record](#) (Jiji Press)
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