



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, March 2, 2017

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.

HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports Prime Minister Abe was grilled at the Diet again over the possible involvement of an LDP member in the sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen at an overly discounted price. Fuji TV and TV Asahi led with reports that a JR Tokaido line train collided with a vehicle this morning, killing the driver.

INTERNATIONAL

New U.S.-Japan economic dialogue to be held in mid-April

NHK reported this afternoon that Finance Minister Aso said during a meeting of the Upper House Budget Committee today that Japan is making arrangements with the U.S. side to hold the first meeting of the new U.S.-Japan economic dialogue in mid-April when Vice President Pence visits Japan at the invitation of a private group. The network said while the U.S. and Japan are expected to discuss economic cooperation, U.S.-Japan trade, and investment rule-making at the new economic dialogue, it is uncertain how much the two sides will be able to discuss since major high-ranking officials of the Trump administration have yet to be confirmed by Congress.

Melania Trump sends thank you letter to Japan for cherry trees

NHK reported at noon that First Lady Melania Trump sent a letter to Japan expressing her appreciation for the cherry trees Japan sent to the U.S. in 1912, ahead of the annual cherry blossom festival to be held in Washington this month. The network said that Mrs. Trump wrote that the cherry blossoms remind her of the "enduring friendship" between the peoples of the U.S. and Japan.

Japan, India to hold 2+2 vice-ministerial talks

Jiji reported that it learned from a source on Wednesday that Japan and India will hold a 2+2 meeting of foreign and defense vice ministers in Tokyo on Mar. 8. The two nations plan to discuss such issues as the international situation after the launch of the Trump administration and seek to strengthen their bilateral cooperation. Japan and India, which regard each other as a special strategic global partner, have been rapidly deepening their cooperation both on the economic and security fronts in recent years. According to the source, the two nations will discuss regional issues, including China's maritime advancement, in addition to their bilateral security cooperation. Deputy Foreign Minister Takeo Akiba and Vice Defense Minister Ro Manabe will participate in the meeting from the Japanese side, and Foreign Secretary Jaishankar at the Ministry of External Affairs and Defense Secretary Kumar at the Ministry of Defense will lead the Indian delegation. Foreign Affairs officials and defense officials from the two nations also plan to hold separate meetings on Mar. 7. Japan and India held their first 2+2 vice-ministerial meeting in 2010 and held the third round of the talks in New Delhi in 2015.

- [Japan dreams of windfall from US infrastructure investment](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Gov't: "no surprises" in Trump's speech to Congress](#) (Nikkei)
- [Commentary: Trump address shows limits to his vision of 'greatness'](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Editorial: Promote international stability by rebuilding the U.S. military](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: President Trump's speech lacked policy specifics](#) (Nikkei)
- [LDP Nikai shares thoughts on how to deal with Trump administration](#) (Gekkan Nippon)

SECURITY

DOS, DOD differed on reducing U.S. military presence in Okinawa in 1995

Okinawa Times wrote that it learned recently that Winston Lord, the assistant secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs under the Clinton administration, disclosed in a State Department record that there were differences between the State and Defense Departments over how to reduce the base-hosting burden on Okinawa in response to the rape incident involving U.S. service members in 1995. The paper wrote that although the State Department began to review the U.S. military presence in Okinawa based on the question of whether it was necessary to maintain all the existing bases and facilities in the prefecture, the Defense Department did not respond positively and moved forward with establishing the Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) with the

purpose of maintaining the U.S. military presence in Okinawa. Lord reportedly said the 1995 rape could affect the overall presence of the U.S. military in Okinawa if the United States failed to seriously address the issue of consolidating the U.S. military bases. Lord added that it was difficult for the State Department to persuade the Defense Department because the Defense Department lacked a sense of crisis.

U.S. serviceman helps save life of Okinawa woman injured in traffic accident

Okinawa Times reported online that on March 1 the family of a woman in Kadena who was seriously injured in a traffic accident on Feb. 3 thanked Col. John Cotton, the commander of the 18th Aerospace Medicine Squadron, for helping save her life. The woman has recovered and is now undergoing rehabilitation. The daughter of the woman tearfully told Col. Cotton and another person who helped the woman at a local fire station that although her mother could have died due to loss of blood, she survived thanks to their first-aid treatment. Col. Cotton was quoted as telling the family that he did what he had to and he is thankful that she survived.

POLITICS

Akie Abe being tested as “liberal” First Lady over connection with ultraconservative school operator

Tokyo Shimbun ran an extensive report claiming that Akie Abe, the wife of Prime Minister Abe, is facing a predicament over her connection with Moritomo Gakuen, an Osaka-based school operator that provides a nationalistic education. Although Mrs. Abe has resigned as honorary principal of the school, the paper wondered to what extent she knew about the school’s ultraconservative educational policy. The paper also wondered whether Mrs. Abe’s popularity as a “liberal” First Lady who sometimes objects to the policies of her husband will decline on account of the recent scandal.

- [Prime minister’s schedule on March 1](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gist of interpellations at Upper House Budget Committee, March 1](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Abe irked by questions on his wife’s connection with Moritomo Gakuen](#) (Mainichi)
- [Editorial: Renho’s attempt at ‘zero nuclear power plants by 2030’ unreasonable](#) (The Japan News)
- [LDP mulls adding word “terrorism” in anti-terrorism bill](#) (Asahi)
- [Cartoon: Renho](#) (Asahi)
- [Editorial: Moritomo Gakuen’s lessons fly in the face of education law](#) (The Mainichi)

ECONOMY

- [Yamato's famed customer-centric approach under strain](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Stretched thin, Yamato Transport to cut overtime 10%](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan's Oct.-Dec. business investment up 3.8% on year](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Job-hunting begins for '18 graduates](#) (The Japan News)
- [Editorial: Does trade minister office lockup show he regards reporters as foes?](#) (The Japan News)
- [U.S. production of Japanese cars record high for 5th straight year](#) (Mainichi)
- [Revision to law will allow foreigners to do farm work in special zones](#) (Asahi)
- [METI wrests Kasumigaksei crown from MOF, supplying bureaucrats for positions close to Abe](#) (Asahi Online)

SOCIETY

Entertainers' trouble with agents

NHK's "Close-up Gendai Plus" reported on issues related to entertainers leaving their agents, saying that views on how entertainers should work are changing. The program looked at the case of actress Fumika Shimizu. Although she requested to terminate her contract, her agent would not agree to its termination. The program also reported on the question of whether or not entertainers are "employees." While one legal expert has pointed out that they are employees since many of them receive de facto salaries and cannot choose the work they do, people in show business say it is not a simple employer/employee relationship as talent agents foster and produce entertainers and even manage their copyrights.

OPINION POLLS

- [Highlights of the February 2017 Jiji Press Public Opinion Poll](#) (Jiji Press Public Opinion Poll Bulletin)

TRENDING@JAPAN

- ["Joshi-ryoku" isn't the same as "girl power"](#) (Asahi)
- [Small dots equal big steps toward an inclusive society](#) (NHK)

- [Investment in knowledge yields the best benefits](#) (Mainichi)
-

