



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, March 23, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

All broadcasters gave prominent top play to sworn Diet testimony provided this morning at the Upper House by President Kagoike of scandal-hit Moritomo Gakuen, who insisted that he received a donation of 1 million yen from Prime Minister Abe via his wife Akie for the launch of an elementary school.

POLITICS

Scandal-hit school operator gives controversial testimony on premier and other politicians

All networks reported extensively on the sworn statements made today at the parliament by Moritomo Gakuen President Kagoike, during which he revealed that Prime Minister Abe's wife gave him a donation of 1 million yen in September 2015 on behalf of the premier for the launch of an elementary school. According to Kagoike, Mrs. Abe personally handed him the donation when she took a tour of his kindergarten. Kagoike also claimed that his wife and Mrs. Abe had been corresponding with each other online until recently, adding that the First Lady asked Mrs. Kagoike in several messages not to disclose her earlier communications with the Kagoikes.

In responding to lawmakers' questions about the substantial discount that the school operator received when purchasing state-owned land for opening an elementary school, Kagoike said he was surprised by the scope of the discount offered by the central government. He acknowledged that there was "political involvement," although he did not specify what he meant by that. Kagoike later mentioned the names of three Diet members from Osaka, including two LDP parliamentarians,

whom he approached in the hope that they would use their political influence to help him obtain the prefectural government's permission for opening the school.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga dismissed Kagoike's remarks on the alleged donation by Abe by reiterating that neither the prime minister nor his wife gave any donations to the school operator.

- [Prime minister's schedule on March 21-22](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Inconsistent gov't explanations on 'anti-conspiracy' bill stand out](#) (The Mainichi)

SECURITY

[**Pentagon says DPRK missile that failed to launch was not an ICBM**](#)

NHK reported this morning on press remarks on Wednesday by DOD spokesman Davis, who commented on North Korea's recent failed missile launch by saying: "We are still analyzing the type of missile, but it did not appear to be an ICBM. It was a shorter range missile." He went on to say: "A catastrophic explosion occurred within seconds after the missile was fired. The launch was a major failure." The network also took up a speech in Washington by U.S. Strategic Command Deputy Commander Richard, who expressed concern about Pyongyang's relentless efforts to improve its missile capabilities by saying: "Every time we had a failure, we learned from it and eventually got to the point where we are today. I think the same thing will happen with North Korea." The vice admiral underscored the need for the U.S. military to prepare for the growing missile threat posed by North Korea.

[**Former top army official condemns data concealment by MOD officials**](#)

NHK "New Watch 9" reported on the concealment by the Defense Ministry of activity logs kept last summer by a GSDF engineering battalion deployed for UN peacekeeping operations in South Sudan. The program noted that although the GSDF drafted a press release on the discovery of the activity logs that had supposedly been destroyed, the document was never issued based on the judgment by some senior MOD officials that it would contradict the previous narrative. Former GSDF Chief of Staff Tomizawa commented on the scandal by saying that the activity logs need to be safeguarded for future scrutiny by the Diet. The retired general also said: "Information disclosure is extremely important. The biggest problem is that the SDF and the Defense Ministry may have lost public trust. The raison d'être of the SDF will be undermined if the public views it as a group of liars."

- [Lower House committee approves ACSAs with U.S., U.K., Australia](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Young scientists must consider responsibility in defense research](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)

INTERNATIONAL

Abe condemns terrorist attack in London

Asahi reported online on press remarks made this morning by Prime Minister Abe, in which he commented on the fatal terrorist incident in London by saying: “We can never accept terrorism. Japan stands with British Prime Minister May and the British people at this difficult time for them.... Prime Minister May has issued a message expressing her resolve to fight against terrorism. Japan will strongly support her and fight terrorism in coordination with the UK and the international community.”

Japan still undecided on whether to join negotiations on Nuclear Weapons Convention

NHK reported online on remarks made to the press on Wednesday by Japanese Ambassador to the UN Bessho, who commented on the planned start of negotiations on the framing of the Nuclear Weapons Convention at the UN headquarters next week. The Japanese diplomat said: “While Japan has expressed opposition to the commencement of the negotiations, we are still considering whether or not to take part in them.” The network added that Japan’s role in pursuing nuclear disarmament will be called into question in the negotiations on a treaty aimed at prohibiting nuclear weapons at a time when the Trump administration plans to strengthen U.S. nuclear capabilities.

- [Gist of Japan-Italy summit talks](#) (Yomiuri Evening edition)
- [Japan’s ODA White Paper pledges increased support to anti-terrorism efforts](#) (Sankei)
- [Japan to invite Pope Francis to visit](#) (Nikkei)

ECONOMY

Government spokesman comments on Toshiba’s plan to sell semiconductor unit

Nikkei’s website took up press remarks this morning by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who commented on a media report about the GOJ’s alleged opposition to Toshiba’s possible sale of its flash memory business to a Chinese or Taiwanese company. The top government spokesman said: “The unit is highly competitive internationally and is quite important from the standpoint of maintaining jobs. From the viewpoint of information security, its importance will increase further.... Toshiba should take these perspectives into account when making a decision. The government will be paying close attention.”

- [Powered robosuits empower aging farmers](#) (Nikkei)
- [Bank of Japan wary of Trump administration](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan posts largest trade surplus in 7 years in February](#) (Kyodo News)
- [MOF to appoint Keidanren’s Sakakibara as chairman of Fiscal System Council](#) (Nikkei)
- [TEPCO to delay seeking end to state control by 2 years to FY 2019](#) (The Mainichi)
- [The big money is on BOJ chief being reappointed](#) (Nikkei)

SOCIETY

- [Chiba Muslims join neighborhood patrols to promote safety, counter prejudice](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Study support programs for children from poor families raise children's self-esteem, NPO poll](#) (Mainichi)
- [Transgender students may be accepted at women's universities](#) (Asahi)
- [Elderly abuse cases by professional care workers highest to date: survey](#) (The Mainichi)

OPINION POLLS

- [Cabinet support rate high despite claim that Abe donated money to Moritomo Gakuen](#) (Sankei)
 - [Infographic: Support rate for Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike, Sankei-FNN poll](#) (Sankei)
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