



Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, March 29, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Noon news

TV Asahi gave top play to a report that the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University said on its 38 North website that satellite imagery of North Korea's nuclear test site from Saturday suggests that North Korea is preparing to conduct another nuclear test. The network said the imagery shows three or four vehicles near the entrance of the nuclear test site, communication cables laid on the ground, and water being pumped from the portal, adding that the institute reckons that preparations for another nuclear test are in the final stages.

NHK led with a report on the apparent murder of a nine-year-old girl in Chiba, while most commercial networks carried updates on the fatal accident in which a group of high school students were hit by an avalanche in Tochigi Prefecture.

## ECONOMY

### Government spokesman comments on Westinghouse bankruptcy filing

Nikkei reported online on press remarks on Wednesday morning by Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga, who commented on Westinghouse's plan to file for Chapter 11 by saying: "We would like to see constructive discussions among stakeholders, including Westinghouse, Toshiba, and U.S. utilities." Regarding the "national security concerns" reportedly expressed by an unnamed senior USG official about the U.S. nuclear plant manufacturer's filing for bankruptcy protection, the top government spokesman said: "The GOJ and the USG are coordinating closely in dealing with the matter.... We would like to continue to communicate closely with the USG."

Nikkei wrote in a separate piece that Toshiba approved its U.S. subsidiary's policy of filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy at a board meeting earlier today, projecting that the filing will probably be postponed from Tuesday to Wednesday (U.S. time) due to a delay in internal deliberations among Westinghouse board members.

According to NHK's website, the Energy Department commented on the fate of Westinghouse by saying: "The U.S. government is paying close attention while holding communications with concerned parties to obtain the latest information. We are hoping that all parties can reach an accord that protects taxpayers, promotes economic growth, and enhances energy and national security."

- [Labor costs during fourth quarter of 2016 mark highest level in five years at 44.4 trillion](#) (Nikkei)
- [Toshiba board greenlights Westinghouse bankruptcy plan](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Possible Westinghouse bankruptcy a potential security concern, US official says](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Toshiba memory spinoff raises tech security fears](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [JA Zen-Noh to Expand Direct Sales of Farm Products](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Rakuten to start brokerage platform for trading CO2 emission reductions, conserved electricity](#) (Nikkei Evening edition)
- [Gist of Work Style Reform Action Plan](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Management and labor organization leaders weigh in on Work Style Reform Action Plan](#) (Mainichi)
- [Gov't announces new guidelines to expand sake exports](#) (Nikkei)
- [After key deal, Tepco, Chubu Electric struggle with next step](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

## SECURITY

### [Okinawa leader orders suspension of sea-based construction work off Henoko](#)

Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo ran front-page reports saying that Governor Onaga instructed the Okinawa Defense Bureau on Tuesday to halt the ongoing installation of concrete blocks on the ocean floor off Camp Schwab on the grounds that the bureau "has failed to provide sufficient explanations" on the status of the operation. Since the bureau is set to proceed with the operation

because such administrative instructions are not legally binding, the dailies projected that the Okinawa leader will consider taking additional steps, including filing a new lawsuit and revoking the landfill permit.

According to NHK, Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga underscored that the Abe administration does not plan to comply with the governor's instructions by telling the press this morning: "No procedural mistakes have been made in undertaking the operation.... We will move ahead with it based on the relevant laws and statutes while giving maximum consideration to the natural environment and living conditions of the local residents."

In a related story, Okinawa Times wrote that some senior ruling coalition officials are responding cautiously to Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga's suggestion on Monday that the central government might seek damages from the governor to be paid out of his personal funds if he continues to sabotage the FRF construction. LDP Secretary General Nikai and Komeito Chief Representative Yamaguchi on Tuesday voiced skepticism about the feasibility of the idea on account of its negative implications.

- **Cabinet adopts decision that U.S. military is complying with aircraft noise abatement measures** (Ryukyu Shimpo)

## **INTERNATIONAL**

### **U.S. pressured Japan not to take part in Nuclear Weapons Convention talks**

Most nightly TV news programs took up the GOJ's decision not to take part in the UN conference on the framing of the Nuclear Weapons Convention, claiming that Japan had no choice but to boycott the talks in the face of strong U.S. pressure. On TV-Asahi's "Hodo Station," Kyodo News senior writer Ota insisted that because the Abe administration was very grateful that President Trump renewed Washington's pledge to maintain the nuclear umbrella when Prime Minister Abe met with him in February, it gave in to the "strong displeasure" voiced by the Trump administration over Japan's possible participation. TBS "News 23" anchor Hoshi explained that although Foreign Minister Kishida initially insisted on Japan's participation, he eventually subscribed to his deputies' narrative that Japan's participation would damage ties with the Trump administration. As a "face-saving" measure, the GOJ chose to have its representative participate in the opening session only. Former Kyodo News Managing Editor Goto expressed profound regret at Kishida's turnaround, saying that despite the fact that the politician represents Hiroshima, he failed to fulfill his "obligation" to explain to the world Japan's commitment to seeking nuclear disarmament.

### **Japan, Mongolia confirm cooperation toward resolving North Korea issue**

NHK reported on its website that Foreign Minister Kishida met with his Mongolian counterpart Munkh-Orgil at MOFA today. The two ministers reportedly shared the view that the

threat of North Korea's nuclear and missile development programs has reached a new level and agreed that the two nations will cooperate toward resolving the issue, including urging North Korea to completely abandon its nuclear and missile programs and abide by the UNSC resolutions. In addition, Kishida reportedly asked for Mongolia's cooperation in resolving the issue of the abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea, and the Mongolian foreign minister expressed his support for Japan's position on the matter. The two ministers reportedly signed a five-year action plan and agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in various sectors.

- [Editorial: Why won't Japan speak out as an A-bombed country?](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Record high number of foreigners pass Japanese nursing exam](#) (Mainichi)

## **POLITICS**

- [Prime minister's schedule on March 28](#) (Nikkei)
- [Gist of interpellations at Upper House Audit Committee, March 28](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Diet session highlights fragileness of dominant Abe gov't](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Editorial: Moritomo Gakuen issue should not dominate Diet discussions](#) (The Japan News)
- [Rift emerges between Kantei and Imperial Household Agency over Emperor's abdication](#) (Sankei)

## **SCIENCE**

- [Trump inks order to roll back Obama's anti-emissions steps](#) (Kyodo News)
- [MHLW to promote genomic medicine by designating hospitals to concentrate resources](#) (Mainichi)
- [Japan turns to AI, drones in war on smuggling](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Hitachi develops AI technology to identify specific individuals](#) (Mainichi)

## **SOCIETY**

- [366,000 elderly waiting to enter nursing homes, down 30% from 2013](#) (Kyodo News)
  - [Tokyo temple offers graves for same-sex couples](#) (The Japan Times)
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