



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, April 13, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

Most TV networks led with the confrontation between the U.S. and Russia over Syria. They highlighted Secretary of State Tillerson's meetings in Moscow with his Russian counterpart Lavrov and President Putin, during which the two sides differed sharply over who ordered the use of chemical weapons, President Trump's press remarks saying U.S. relations with Russia are "at an all-time low," and Russia's veto of a U.S.-sponsored UN Security Council resolution condemning the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump expresses hope for more Chinese pressure on DPRK

NHK took up a press conference in Washington on Wednesday by President Trump, during which he voiced hope that China will step up the pressure on North Korea by enforcing UN sanctions vigorously so as to dissuade the defiant regime from pursuing nuclear and missile capabilities. While mentioning his recent summit in Florida last week and a separate telephone conference with Chinese President Xi a day before, the U.S. leader said: "I think he wants to help us with North Korea....I really think that China is going to try very hard, and has already started. A lot of the coal boats have already been turned back. The vast amount of coal that comes out of North Korea going to China, they've turned back the boats. That's a big step, and they have many other steps that I know about."

The network reported separately online on press remarks on Wednesday by an unnamed senior Trump administration official, who suggested that Washington will look into additional steps to press North Korea to stop its provocations. The official was quoted as saying: “As the President has stated repeatedly, we have no intention to predict what our response would be.... If North Korea continues its aggressive behavior that destabilizes the region, our national security team will respond appropriately.”

Abe evasive about U.S. intelligence on Syria attack

TBS and Fuji TV reported that during today’s Diet committee session, an opposition lawmaker took up the GOJ’s support for the recent U.S. attack on Syria, pressing Prime Minister Abe to explain what kind of evidence he obtained from President Trump concerning the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime. The premier did not offer a straight answer to the question and said instead: “During a recent teleconference with the President, I was given a briefing on the U.S. military strike on Syria. We’ve maintained close communications, but I cannot speak about the details.”

- **Japan disappointed with Security Council failure to agree on Syria** (Jiji)
- **U.S. calls for bilateral trade negotiations with Japan** (Asahi)
- **Agriculture to be targeted in Japan-U.S. economic dialogue** (Tokyo Shimbun)
- **Former Diet member Suzuki, Russian deputy FM discuss North Korea situation** (Yomiuri)
- **Editorial: China must take concrete actions to enhance pressure on North Korea** (The Japan News)
- **Editorial: Tokyo must aim for dialogue with Pyongyang, not military action** (The Asahi Shimbun)
- **Editorial: U.S. action on N. Korea a chance for Japan to leverage diplomatic solution** (The Mainichi)
- **Japan, U.S. need to maintain close partnership: ex-Japanese Ambassador to U.S.** (Yomiuri)
- **Japan ranked fourth in 2016 for development assistance spending: OECD** (The Japan Times)
- **Cartoon: Syria** (Asahi)

POLITICS

DP's Hosono to relinquish key post

Several papers reported online that Deputy President Hosono of the Democratic Party told the press this afternoon after meeting with Secretary General Noda that he offered to step down from his post. The 45-year-old lawmaker cited a “difference of views on constitutional reform” within the DP leadership as his reason for giving up the senior portfolio. Hosono was criticized by President Renho and others for publishing his own ideas on revising the Constitution in an influential monthly.

- [Prime minister's schedule on April 12](#) (Nikkei)
- [DP members at odds over Japan-India nuclear agreement](#) (Asahi)
- [More DP Tokyo chapter members planning to leave the party](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Aso supports Abe's running for third term as LDP president](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Editorial: DP lawmaker's exit shows conservative objections to cooperation with JCP](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan gov't approves Osaka's bid to host 2025 World Expo](#) (Kyodo News)

SECURITY

- [N. Korea may be able to attack with sarin-tipped missiles: Abe](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Okinawa seeks prefectural referendum on Henoko project](#) (Asahi)
- [Crimes by U.S. military personnel in Okinawa drop to lowest level ever in 2016](#) (Okinawa Times)
- [Gov't to increase “cyberdefense” exercises by 2.5-fold on the year in FY17](#) (Sankei)
- [Chinese snapping up Japanese land](#) (THEMIS)
- [Cartoon: Abe](#) (Akahata)

ECONOMY

- [Toshiba selects 4 overseas bidders as potential buyer of its chip unit](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Western Digital seeks exclusive rights to Toshiba Memory](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

SCIENCE

- [Gov't, industry, academia join forces to cultivate AI specialists](#) (Nikkei)
- [Police draft rules for driverless-car tests on public roads](#) (Kyodo News)

SOCIETY

Consumer debt surges due to “card loans”

NHK's "Close-up Gendai +" reported on "card loans" provided by banks, which are becoming increasingly popular due to their convenience. The program said the outstanding balance for all personal loans in Japan grew by 60% over the last five years to ¥5.4377 trillion. As a result, the number of people filing for bankruptcy is increasing. There is no limit to the amount a person can borrow through card loans because banks are not subject to lending law revisions designed to target consumer loan companies. The program found out, however, that consumer loan companies are actually working with banks to provide card loans, saying that banks have no choice but to rely on the profits from card loans due to the extremely low interest rate policy.

OPINION POLLS

- [Saitama Univ. develops index to track cabinet support rates from six news outlets' polls](#) (Mainichi)
- [Over 30% of persons with disabilities report discriminatory treatment, Tokyo Shimbun poll](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Less than half of universities approve of research screening frameworks, Mainichi poll](#) (Mainichi)

TRENDING@JAPAN

- [Talented women ditch corporate life for nonprofits](#) (Mainichi)
 - [Male nursery school teachers get a bad rap despite good intentions](#) (NHK)
 - [Popular celebrity inspires many by not letting cancer overshadow her life](#) (Yomiuri)
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