



Afternoon Alert - Thursday, April 20, 2017

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK gave top play to a report that White House spokesperson Spicer told reporters on Wednesday that the USS Carl Vinson is heading toward the Korean Peninsula. He was quoted as saying: "The President said the fleet is going toward the Peninsula and that's a fact." The network quoted a senior Pentagon official as saying that the Carl Vinson is expected to arrive in the Sea of Japan early next week and carry out activities in the vicinity of the Korean Peninsula. TBS led with a report that Russia is opposed to a draft press statement by the UNSC on North Korea since the phrase "through dialogue" was omitted. China reportedly accepted the draft statement. NTV, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that a fire broke out at an apartment in Saitama on Wednesday evening, killing a 4-year-old girl and injuring a 5-year-old boy and an 8-month-old baby.

INTERNATIONAL

Vice President Pence attends baseball clinic in Tokyo

TV Asahi reported early this morning that on Wednesday afternoon Vice President Pence attended a baseball clinic in Setagaya, Tokyo, where he interacted with Japanese middle and high school students. The event was held as part of an exchange program between Setagaya and the U.S. National Olympic Committee in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The network said the Vice President was greeted with enthusiastic applause from the students and received a baseball uniform with the number 48 printed on it to represent his position as the 48th Vice President of the United States. The network said that after the event the Vice President left Japan for Indonesia. NHK, TBS, Fuji TV, Asahi, Yomiuri, Sankei, and Hokkaido Shimbun carried similar reports on their websites. NHK quoted a 16-year-old girl whose softball was signed by the Vice President as saying: "He

wished me good luck in softball.... I will display the ball at my school so that it will inspire everyone to work hard."

- [**Analysis: Three U.S. approaches to North Korea emerge from Vice Pres. Pence's visit**](#) (Nikkei)
- [**TPP minus US to be discussed in May: Japan deputy PM Aso**](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [**U.S. considering relisting N. Korea as terror sponsor: Tillerson**](#) (Kyodo News)
- [**Pence Stresses U.S. Resolve to Defend Japan**](#) (Jiji Press)
- [**Pence calls N. Korea "most dangerous" threat, vows to defeat attack**](#) (Kyodo News)
- [**Editorial: U.S. puts on show of force in pursuit of peace**](#) (Sankei)
- [**"I want people to know the importance of art therapy," U.S. Second Lady Karen Pence**](#) (Mainichi)
- [**Editorial: Resolving North Korea needs dialogue — and pressure**](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [**Cartoon: FTA**](#) (Asahi)
- [**Russian company to launch ferry service to North Korea**](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [**South Korean municipal governor refuses to remove "comfort women" statue in Busan**](#) (Yomiuri)
- [**Survey of newspaper editorials on U.S.'s attack on Syria**](#) (Sankei)

ECONOMY

Aso says discussions on pursuing TPP without U.S. to begin next month

All networks reported that Finance Minister Aso delivered a speech at Columbia University in New York on Tuesday, during which he said that discussions by 11 nations on seeking the effectuation of the TPP without the U.S. will begin next month. Aso is currently visiting the U.S. to attend the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors' meeting. When asked about his first economic dialogue with Vice President Pence on Tuesday, Aso reportedly expressed hope that Japan and the U.S. will take the initiative in extending trade and investment rules in Asia. On the TPP, Aso reportedly said: "I don't know how it will take shape, but discussions by 11 nations to pursue the

accord without the U.S. will begin at a meeting to be held on the sidelines of the APEC in May." On a bilateral FTA between the U.S. and Japan, Aso kept the U.S. in check by saying that "it is clear that the benefits that Japan would gain from the U.S. in a bilateral agreement would not reach the level of the TPP."

- [Toyota sweetens investment pot in Pence's home state of Indiana](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Japan-U.S. bid eyed for Toshiba semiconductor unit sell-off](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Nuclear authority approves decommissioning plans for 5 aging reactors](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan's nuclear watchdog chief to step down after term ends in September](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Japan banks opening wallets for drug startups](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Growth in visitor numbers to Japan slows in March](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

SECURITY

[GOJ delays start of bank protection work at Henoko](#)

Okinawa Times wrote that the GOJ has postponed its plan to begin bank protection work for land reclamation at Henoko this Monday until next week due to high waves in the area. However, the paper speculated that the central government will not begin the work until after April 24 because it is concerned about a negative reaction from the Okinawan people ahead of the Uruma mayoral election on April 23.

[3,500 protesters gather in Tokyo to oppose Henoko plan](#)

Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo wrote that a rally protesting against the plan to construct the FRF at Henoko was held at Hibiya Park in Tokyo on Wednesday. The organizer announced that about 3,500 people participated in the demonstration and that it will organize another rally near the National Diet Building on June 10. Hiroji Yamashiro, the chairman of the Okinawa Peace Movement Center who was recently released after five months in police custody, called on the protesters to help stop the FRF construction at Henoko. Lawmakers from the Democratic Party, Japanese Communist Party, and other opposition parties participated in the rally.

- [LDP's Furuya does not intend to delete Facebook post claiming opposition candidate's tactics are "characteristic of Okinawa"](#) (Asahi)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on April 19](#) (Nikkei)
- [Public-private fund eyes bid for Toshiba memory ops](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Gist of interpellations at Lower House Committee on Judicial Affairs, April 19](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Panel issues lower house reform plan, set to defer election](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Former DP member Nagashima to set up nonpartisan study group on security](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Ruling coalition partner raps Abe administration over series of gaffes](#) (Kyodo News)
- [A study of the Cabinet Secretariat \(Part 1\): Concentration of power in the Kantei](#) (Nikkei)

SOCIETY

Interview with Ryuichi Sakamoto

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported on composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, who has just released his first solo album in eight years. It is also his first album since suffering from cancer. The program said the new album, titled "async," features field recordings from New York, Tokyo, and elsewhere along with piano and orchestral music and electronic sounds. During the interview, Sakamoto said he wanted to listen to the different sounds that exist in the world "equally."

- [Japan's 15-year-olds struggle with life satisfaction, OECD survey finds](#) (The Japan Times)