



Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, February 27, 2018

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 led with a report that Minister in charge of Okinawa and Northern Territories affairs Esaki, who was hospitalized last week for symptoms of a minor stroke, has decided to step down. NTV gave top play to a report on a fire that broke out at a house in Okayama this morning. TBS, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi led with reports on a disbandment ceremony held by the Japanese Olympic delegation today.

INTERNATIONAL

DOS announces resignation of special representative for North Korean policy

NHK reported on its website that State Department Spokesperson Nauert announced on Monday that Special Representative for North Korea Policy Joe Yun will step down, saying that attention will be focused on whether Yun's resignation will have an impact on the Trump administration amid North Korea's recent expression of readiness to talk with the U.S. The network said Ambassador Yun has been coordinating with Japan and South Korea since he assumed the post in 2016 under the Obama administration, adding that he has had several meetings with the North Korean mission to the UN in New York, and visited North Korea last June to call for the release of an American university student who had been detained in Pyongyang. According to the network, Nauert said that Yun was leaving for personal reasons and that Secretary Tillerson accepted his resignation with reluctance.

Suga rebuts ROK foreign minister's remarks over comfort women

NHK reported on its website that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told reporters today that the GOJ has lodged a protest in response to South Korean Foreign Minister Kang's speech before the UN Human Rights Council on Monday during which she expressed the view that the comfort women issue has not been resolved under the Japan-ROK agreement. "It is not acceptable to Japan and we filed a strong protest with the South Korean side immediately after her remarks. The Japan-ROK

agreement is a promise between two nations," Suga reportedly said. "It is an international and universal principal that agreements must be implemented even if there is a change of government. The Japanese government has been sincerely implementing all of the promises in the agreement. We will strongly call on the South Korean side to thoroughly implement the final and irreversible agreement."

- ["Comfort women" deal with Japan insufficient: S. Korean minister](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan protests S. Korea jab on "comfort women" deal at U.N. meeting](#) (Kyodo News)

North Korea's charm offensive

NHK's "Close-up Gendai +" reported on the growing conciliatory mood between North Korea and South Korea and the "smile diplomacy" of the North Korean leader's sister Kim Yo Jong. The program focused on the intense diplomatic moves made on the sidelines of the PyeongChang Olympics opening ceremony.

The program said the U.S. and Japan are alarmed by the recent conciliatory mood between the two Koreas, adding that while President Trump and Prime Minister Abe confirmed the need to increase pressure on the North during their phone conversation on Feb. 2, the two nations have also sought ways to convey their intentions to the North Korean leadership. According to the program, Vice President Pence told PM Abe when they met two days before the Olympics opening ceremony that the U.S. was planning to agree to hold talks with North Korea. The Japanese side was also planning to convey its position to the North Korean side if there was a chance to do so.

The program said while Vice President Pence only attended the reception before the opening ceremony for five minutes, PM Abe spoke briefly with Kim Yong Nam, President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea, during the reception. The program said the premier told Kim that all abductees should be returned home, and that North Korea must resolve the nuclear, missile, and abduction issues. Kim reportedly expressed interest in holding dialogue with Japan. The program said although there was no U.S.-DPRK meeting in PyeongChang, the North Korean side conveyed to ROK leader Moon that it is ready for talks with the U.S.

Nanzan University Professor Hiraiwa said North Korea's recent overtures are not necessarily the result of the intensified international sanctions, adding that the North is hoping as a nuclear power to hold talks with the U.S. to have the sanctions relaxed in order to develop its economy. An NHK reporter said that although the leaders of the U.S. and Japan believe that denuclearization should be a precondition for dialogue, ROK leader Moon thinks that dialogue should be a result, adding that the gap between South Korea and the U.S. and Japan remains wide. Hiraiwa also said the relationship between the U.S. and South Korea, including whether they will resume the joint military drills, holds the key to the future of the Korean Peninsula.

- [U.S. Coast Guard cutters to help fight smuggling by North Korea](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Japan softens stance on prospect of “chat” with N. Korea: sources](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan mulls additional sanctions on N. Korea](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan, U.S. take both hard and soft approaches toward N. Korea](#) (Mainichi)
- [Editorial: Behavior of host nation called into question at Pyeongchang Olympics](#) (The Japan News)

ECONOMY

- [TPP can't be redone to please U.S., Chilean president says](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Gov't mull regulating cryptocurrency capital raising](#) (Sankei)
- [Next year shapes up to be the dawn of 5G](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan's Inpex renews contract in Abu Dhabi oilfield with smaller stake](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan drugmakers struggle to effectively invest in R&D](#) (Nikkei)
- [JA Zen-Noh sets up wagyu beef processing firm in U.S.](#) (Nikkei, Evening edition)
- [Removal of spent fuel from Fugen reactor site pushed back 9 years](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Trailblazing Nagoya restaurant that accepts XEM cryptocurrency moves to Tokyo](#) (The Japan Times)

POLITICS

Okinawa Minister Esaki to step down

All networks reported at noon that Minister in charge of Okinawa and Northern Territories affairs Esaki, who was hospitalized last week after a minor stroke, has decided to step down. NHK said that Prime Minister Abe has decided to tap the LDP's Teru Fukui, former State Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, to replace him. Fukui, 64, has been elected to the Lower House seven times from the Shikoku block.

- [Prime minister's schedule on Feb. 26, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Ruling parties give up on passing FY18 budget on Feb. 27](#) (Yomiuri)
- [233 more data flaws fuel controversy over work style reform](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Okinawa minister Esaki to step down after stroke: sources](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Minister for Okinawa hospitalized again due to minor stroke](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Ishiba willing to accept LDP constitutional revision proposal on Article 9](#) (Nikkei)
- [CDPJ focusing on local elections to consolidate support base](#) (Yomiuri)

OPINION POLLS

- [57% opposed to expansion of scope of discretionary work scheme, Mainichi poll](#) (Mainichi)
- [Opinion poll & results from Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cabinet support rate holds steady at 56%, Nikkei poll](#) (Nikkei)
- [75% say reinvestigation is needed to resolve discretionary labor data issue, Nikkei poll](#) (Nikkei)
- [44% approve of reappointment of BOJ Governor Kuroda, Nikkei poll](#) (Nikkei)

SCIENCE

Japan successfully launches reconnaissance satellite

NHK reported this afternoon that an H2A rocket carrying a new Japanese information-collection satellite was successfully launched from the Tanegashima Space Center in Kagoshima at 1:34 p.m. today. The network said that this will be Japan's seventh reconnaissance satellite. Noting that the GOJ uses the satellites to monitor developments at North Korea's missile sites and disaster-hit regions, the network said the GOJ is planning to increase the number to 10.

EDUCATION

- [Students prepare for the ninth annual Japan Times Bee, the nation's only Scripps-endorsed contest](#) (The Japan Times)

SOCIETY

- [Japan clamps down on apparent job seekers applying for refugee status](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Gov't eyes making permanent residency easier for "Cool Japan" talent](#) (Kyodo News)

SECURITY

- [Japan mulls deploying antiship missile unit to Okinawa's main island](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Onodera: Security laws, long-range missiles needed for Japan's defense-only posture](#) (Chuokoron)
- [Japan successfully launches rocket carrying reconnaissance satellite](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Editorial: Japan's lack of thorough debate on defense spending a cause for concern](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Gov't to build new SDF hospital in Saitama Pref.](#) (The Japan News)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

FAA issues NOTAM on flights over Futenma school

Okinawa Times wrote that the Federal Aviation Administration issued on Monday a Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) calling for aircraft to avoid flying over Futenma Daiini Elementary School adjacent to MCAS Futenma. The paper wrote that this is the first time for such a notice to be issued since the incident last December in which a window fell from a Futenma-based CH-53E helicopter on the playground of the school. Noting that a U.S. military helicopter that is not based at the Futenma Air Station flew over the school on Feb. 23, the paper speculated that the NOTAM was intended to inform pilots of U.S. military aircraft that are not based at Futenma.

In a related story, Ryukyu Shimpo reported on a meeting held between Defense Minister Onodera and visiting Assistant Secretary of Defense Schriver in Tokyo on Monday. The paper wrote that with the presence of Deputy USFJ Commander Chiarotti at the meeting, Onodera, in response to a U.S.

military helicopter's flight over Futenma Daiini Elementary School on Feb. 23, asked the U.S. side not to allow U.S. military helicopters that are not based at Futenma to fly over the school.

- [Ginowan assembly adopts resolution calling for suspension of Futenma operations](#) (Okinawa Times, Ryukyu Shimpo)
-

