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Afternoon Alert - Tuesday, March 20, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK and NTV gave top play to reports on an interpellation session held this morning at the Upper House Budget Committee over the Moritomo Gakuen scandal. TBS and Fuji TV led with reports that LDP members Akaike and Ikeda asked MEXT to inquire about the purpose and contents of a lecture given by former Vice Minister Maekawa at a middle school in Nagoya last month. TV Asahi gave top play to a report on the finding that although the Japan Pension Service outsourced data entry work to a private company in Tokyo, the company illegally contracted the work out to a Chinese firm. The network said the data included the personal information of about 5 million pension recipients in Japan.

INTERNATIONAL

Joint U.S.-ROK military drills to resume on April 1

All networks reported at noon that the South Korean Defense Ministry announced today that the joint military drills between the U.S. and South Korea, which had been suspended during the PyeongChang Olympics and Paralympics, will resume on April 1. Fuji TV reported that the "Foal Eagle" field exercise will be held for about four weeks, about one month shorter than normal, and the "Key Resolve" exercise will be held for two weeks. The network said that according to the South Korean media, neither a U.S. nuclear aircraft carrier nor B-1B bombers will participate, speculating that the two nations chose to avoid "irritating" North Korea which had been opposed to the participation of the flattop and bomber.

- [Japan-China-S. Korea summit eyed for early May](#) (Kyodo News)
- [G-20 finance chiefs voice concern over protectionism](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Putin's win raises Japan's hopes for progress on island row](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japan lauds Vladimir Putin's victory as isle row anchors Russo-Japanese diplomacy](#) (The Japan Times)

- [Caroline Kennedy sees Okinawa as key to security ties with Japan](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japanese foreign minister to visit Hong Kong in late March](#) (Kyodo News)

ECONOMY

U.S. to exclude from tariffs products difficult to procure domestically

NHK reported that the Department of Commerce has decided to exclude products that are difficult to procure in the U.S. from the recently announced tariffs on steel and aluminum product imports if requested to do so by American companies, speculating that there is now a possibility that Japanese products may be excluded from the tariffs set to go into effect on March 23. The network said while the aim is to prevent the tariffs from having a negative impact on domestic industry, Japanese steel and aluminum products may be excluded in response to requests from American firms.

- [Japan products likely exempted from stiff U.S. tariffs: minister](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan logs goods trade surplus of 3.4 bil. yen in Feb.](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Japan to fuel space startups with nearly \\$1bn funding pool](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [International commercial arbitration facility to be set up in Osaka](#) (Nikkei)
- [GE wins major contract for 49 wind turbines in Japan](#) (Nikkei)

POLITICS

Former tax agency chief Sagawa to be summoned to Diet on March 27

NHK reported this afternoon that the secretaries general of the LDP and Komeito have agreed to heed opposition parties' calls for summoning former National Tax Agency chief Sagawa to the Diet over the Finance Ministry's altering of documents on the sale of state-owned land to Moritomo Gakuen. The network said the Diet affairs chiefs of the LDP and the Democratic Party have agreed to summon Sagawa to the Budget Committee meeting on March 27. According to the network, the secretaries general also decided not to summon Prime Minister Abe's wife Akie or former National Tax Agency chief Sakota, who was the Financial Bureau chief at the time of the controversial land sale to Moritomo Gakuen, on the grounds that they were not involved in the doctoring of documents.

- [Ruling parties alarmed by plunge in cabinet support ratings](#) (Mainichi)
- [Hit by Moritomo scandal, cabinet support rate plummets across various media polls](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Latest polls show plunge in Abe cabinet's approval rating due to Moritomo scandal](#) (The Mainichi)
- [LDP removes "minimum strength" phrase from plan to amend Constitution](#) (Kyodo News)
- [LDP constitution headquarters postpones plenary meeting to March 22](#) (Asahi)
- [Japanese pension data inputs subcontracted to Chinese firm](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Cartoon: Moritomo scandal](#) (Akahata)
- [Prime minister's schedule on March 19, 2018](#) (Nikkei)

OPINION POLLS

- [Abe cabinet support rate plunges to 31% after files faked, Asahi poll](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Abe cabinet support rate plummets 12 points to 33% amid Moritomo scandal, Mainichi poll](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Opinion poll & results from Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Mainichi)

EDUCATION

- [The “going straight to Todai” academic path at a crossroad](#) (Nikkei, Online)

SECURITY

- [Column: Japan must redefine exclusive self-defense](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan sets sights on carrier-based fighter jets](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

Okinawa Marine admits to causing fatal DUI accident

Ryukyu Shimpo and Okinawa Times reported that local prosecutors on Monday sought a 6-year prison term for a U.S. Marine who while driving a military vehicle allegedly caused the death of an Okinawa resident in a traffic accident in Naha last November. The 22-year-old Marine stationed at Camp Kinser was allegedly intoxicated at the time of the accident. Pleading guilty to the charges of driving under the influence and negligent driving resulting in death, the service member offered an apology to the victim’s family during yesterday’s hearing at the Naha District Court. According to the defense counsel, the bereaved family has yet to receive compensation from either the USG or the GOJ given that no formal conclusion has been reached on whether or not the accident was work related. A verdict will be delivered on April 11.

- [Transient aircraft uses Navy ramp at Kadena](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
 - [Onaga expresses cautious stance on Futenma alternative plan](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
 - [Number of complaints about noise at Kadena hits record high](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
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