
 **JAPAN MEDIA
HIGHLIGHTS**

Afternoon Alert - Friday, March 23, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK, NTV, and TBS led with reports that President Trump signed an executive order imposing hefty tariffs on Chinese imports. The networks also reported on the new tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, saying that Japan is also subject to the tariff measures that will go into effect at around 1 p.m. Japan time. The networks said China has already announced a plan to impose retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports worth 310 billion yen. Fuji TV reported that the Nikkei Stock Average temporarily fell by more than 800 points this morning due to fears of a possible trade war between the U.S. and China following President Trump's announcement of the new tariff measures. TV Asahi led with updates on the Moritomo Gakuen scandal.

INTERNATIONAL

U.S., Japan, ROK defense officials confirm maximized pressure on North Korea

NHK reported on its website that defense officials of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea released a joint statement on Thursday after concluding a two-day meeting on North Korea at the Pentagon. According to the network, the officials welcomed the planned summit meetings between North Korea and South Korea and North Korea and the United States and stressed the need for the DPRK to take concrete actions toward denuclearization. The network said the officials also agreed to continue to hold anti-ballistic missile drills and to continue to endeavor to prevent illegal ship-to-ship transfers in order to maximize pressure on the North. The network quoted Defense Minister Onodera as telling reporters this morning: "It is important that the three nations continue to work closely and maximize pressure on North Korea using every possible means and push North Korea to change its policy."

Japan anticipates no negative impact from McMaster's departure

NHK reported online on President Trump's announcement of his intention to replace National Security Adviser McMaster with former Ambassador to the UN Bolton. The network said that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga told a news conference this morning that although he does not comment on personnel matters of foreign governments, he does not think there will be any particular negative impact because the GOJ has been closely exchanging views with the United States government both between Prime Minister Abe and President Trump and at the working level.

Foreign Minister Kono told reporters that he was "a bit surprised" that McMaster is leaving because he met with him in Washington just last week. Kono added that although he has never met John Bolton, the incoming national security adviser, he would like to have an opportunity to hold talks with him as soon as possible. Kono also said that there probably won't be any change in U.S. policy on North Korea because there appears to be complete agreement on DPRK policy within the U.S. government.

Defense Minister Onodera also told the press that he does not anticipate any negative impact because Japan has been closely exchanging views with the U.S. government at various levels.

Asahi filed a similar story online, quoting an unnamed senior MOFA official as saying that it will be easy for Tokyo to work with Washington in stepping up the pressure on the DPRK because Bolton is well-versed in North Korean issues.

- [Japan says McMaster's resignation will not impact N. Korea response](#) (Kyodo News)

Nikkei column on the impact of recent administration departures on bilateral relations

Nikkei's website published a column by a reporter on the departure of several key Trump administration officials, including Secretary of State Tillerson and National Security Adviser McMaster, claiming that even though GOJ officials have underscored that these developments will not have an adverse impact on bilateral relations due to the close relationship between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe, bilateral relations may eventually weaken in the absence of viable communication channels between lower-level officials. Foreign Minister Kono expressed surprise at McMaster's resignation, especially because he met with the senior White House official only about ten days ago. The writer speculated that the purpose of Kono's visit was to meet with as many high-ranking USG officials with direct access to President Trump as possible in order to ask them to convey to the President Japan's desire to maintain the maximum pressure campaign and address the abduction issue when he meets with DPRK leader Kim Jong Un. The columnist projected that since it may take some time for Kono and other GOJ officials to establish a rapport with the incoming secretary of state and national security adviser, the planned trip to the U.S. by Prime Minister Abe for a summit with President Trump in mid-April will become even more important.

ECONOMY

Seko calls new tariff measures “extremely regrettable”

All networks reported on President Trump's executive orders imposing steep tariffs on Chinese imports as well as on steel and aluminum imports, focusing on the fact that Japan was not excluded from the new tariff measures on steel and aluminum imports. NHK quoted President Trump as saying: "I will talk to Prime Minister Abe of Japan and others - great guy, friend of mine - and there will be a little smile on their face. And the smile is, 'I can't believe we've been able to take advantage of the United States for so long.' So those days are over." NHK quoted Minister for Economy, Trade, and Industry Seko as telling reporters this morning: "The measures targeting Japan are extremely regrettable.... We will continue to persistently ask the United States to exempt Japan from the measures." Fuji TV said Seko also expressed the view that since there is no replacement for many of the Japanese steel products used in the U.S., they could be excluded from the tariffs in the future.

- [Japan to continue pursuing exemption from U.S. steel, aluminum tariffs](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Economic revitalization minister keen to expand TPP membership](#) (Sankei)
- [Gov't to obligate casino operators to report 1 mil. yen chip exchange](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Komeito favors ¥8,000 admission fee for casinos to match Singapore](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Japan eyes steps to avert medical issues with foreign tourists](#) (Kyodo News)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on March 22, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [LDP to pursue Abe-proposed amendment of pacifist Constitution](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Full text of LDP's rough draft of revised Constitution's Article 9](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Govt concerned over behavior of PM's wife](#) (The Japan News)
- [CDPJ leads opposition parties in dealing with Diet affairs](#) (Mainichi)
- [Editorial: LDP debate on Article 9 ignores priorities for nation's politics](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Cartoon: Unlucky day for LDP convention](#) (Mainichi)
- [Cartoon: Abe forages for edible wild plants](#) (Sankei)

SOCIETY

- [Coincheck hackers thought to have laundered all stolen NEM coins](#) (Kyodo News)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

- [Soft seabed found at Henoko site; design changes requiring governor's approval may be necessary](#) (Okinawa Times)
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