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Afternoon Alert - Monday, April 9, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK and Fuji TV led with reports that the Finance Ministry's Finance Bureau chief Ota offered an apology at the Diet this morning after admitting that a Finance Bureau official had asked Moritomo Gakuen to give a false explanation giving the impression that removing waste from the construction site was extremely costly. The school operator reportedly refused to give the false explanation. NTV and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that Shohei Ohtani of the LA Angels won his second game as a pitcher on Sunday, striking out 12 batters. TBS led with a report that Japanese national soccer team coach Vahid Halilhodzic will be dismissed and his replacement will be announced this afternoon.

INTERNATIONAL

- [Abe to ask Trump to raise abduction issue with Kim](#) (Kyodo News)
- [CCS Suga takes cautious stance on resumption of Six-Party Talks](#) (Asahi)
- [N. Korea told Japan that abduction issue had been resolved](#) (Kyodo News)
- (Kyodo News)
- [Japan ready to support Laos economic growth, Kono says](#) (Kyodo News)
- [ROK names former chair of comfort women issue task force as consul general in Osaka](#) (Nikkei)

ECONOMY

Experts discuss Japanese economy, U.S.-China trade dispute

On NHK's "Nichiyo Toron" Sunday debate show, six experts talked about the Bank of Japan's "bold" monetary easing policy with a 2% inflation target implemented by Governor Kuroda over the past five years. Chairman Emeritus of Japan Research Institute Susumu Takahashi and Daiwa Institute of Research Chief Economist Mitsumaru Kumagai welcomed the BOJ policy, saying it has produced

results by improving business earnings and employment. While acknowledging the results of the policy, including the rise in stock prices and the yen's depreciation, Chief Economist for BNP Paribas in Tokyo Ryutaro Kono said the monetary policy is not sufficient to boost the economy. Meanwhile, Hosei University Professor Kazuo Mizuno said he disagrees with the BOJ policy, and freelance economist Megumi Ushikubo insisted that the "trickle-down effect" has yet to materialize.

All of the participants expressed concern that the ongoing trade dispute between Washington and Beijing may have a significant impact on the Japanese economy, pushing down Japan's GDP by more than 1%. Kono and Takahashi emphasized that it is necessary for Japan to stress the importance of free trade to the international community.

- [Tokyo willing to host TPP negotiators' meeting in June or July](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Virtual currency industry changing, major firms from other sectors stake their claims](#) (The Japan News)
- [Japan may enjoy longest recovery buoyed by wage increase, but concern looming over external demand](#) (Nikkei)
- [Editorial: Curbing overtime remains central issue of work-style reform](#) (The Mainichi)
- [Editorial: Legalization of casino operations causes hard-to-remove side effects](#) (The Japan News)
- [Toshiba parts with Westinghouse stake with a chance for capital boost](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on April 6, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on April 7, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Abe's party rocks bureaucracy with ministry reshuffle proposal](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Ministry admits to urging false explanation over dubious land deal](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Passage of work-style reform bills in current Diet session hangs in the balance](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Opposition to step up offensive on gov't document management](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Cartoon: SDF logs](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Opinion poll analysis \(Part 3\): Disparity between men's and women's cabinet support rates signals sudden change in overall backing is on horizon](#) (Nikkei)

OPINION POLLS

Poll: Nonsupport for Abe cabinet exceeds support

TBS reported at noon on the results of its opinion poll conducted over the weekend, which showed that public support for the Abe cabinet plunged to 40%, down 9.3 points from last month, while nonsupport rose 9.5 points to 58.4%. The network said this is the first time in six months for disapproval to exceed approval. The network added that the approval rating of 40% is the second lowest since the second Abe administration was launched.

When asked whether civilian control is being maintained in relation to concealment of the GSDF's daily activity logs in Iraq, only 9% said yes, while 78% said no. When asked who is most responsible for the issue, 39% said senior SDF officials; 31%, Prime Minister Abe; 17%, former Defense Minister Inada; and 2%, Defense Minister Onodera. On the Moritomo Gakuen scandal, 82% of respondents said they are not satisfied with the explanation given at the Diet by former Tax Agency chief Sagawa. On the upcoming LDP presidential election in the autumn, 34% of respondents said former Regional Revitalization Minister Ishiba is most suitable as the next LDP president, followed by Abe at 23%. Meanwhile, support for the LDP was 31.7%, up 1.4 points, followed by the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan at 8.8%, down 2.6 points, and the Komeito Party at 3.1%, down 0.7 points.

- [30% say Japan's "defense situation is heading in negative direction," Cabinet Office survey](#) (Sankei)

SCIENCE

- ["The Great Journey" – Part 1: How humans were born](#) (NHK)

EDUCATION

- [Japan high school English proficiency falls short of gov't targets](#) (Kyodo News)

SOCIETY

About 30,000 young Japanese "disappear" every year

Saturday's "NHK Special" reported that out of the approximately 80,000 people who go missing every year in Japan, 40% of them are in their teens or twenties. According to the National Police Agency, 33,156 people in their teens or twenties went missing in 2016. While about 70% of them are located within a week, 22% of them remain missing for months. The program said many young people, especially girls, run away from home and stay with people they meet on social media. The program said they usually use multiple social media accounts, which makes them difficult to locate. When they post a message saying they need a place to stay, they receive responses within seconds. The program said many of them stay with strangers, and some of them are sexually assaulted or even killed. The program also reported on an NPO group that is helping such girls through social media.

- [Vietnamese trainee in Japan sent back after asking for paid leave](#) (Kyodo News)

SECURITY

- [Defense Ministry denies alteration of documents on Japan-U.S. defense cooperation](#) (Mainichi)
- [Gov't eyes July to begin land fill for U.S. base transfer in Okinawa](#) (Kyodo News)
- [India to participate in Japan's coast guard officers' training program](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)
- [Japan launches 2nd defense satellite](#) (Kyodo News)

- [Editorial: Repeated log cover-ups expose GSDF's inward-looking nature](#) (The Mainichi)
- [New challenges to introducing Aegis Ashore](#) (Kanagawa Shimbun)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

School buildings at Henoko exceed height limit for FRF airspace

Okinawa Times gave top play to a report claiming that buildings at the National Institute of Technology, Okinawa College, which is located in Henoko, exceed in height the limit set for the airspace around the Futenma Replacement Facility. The paper wrote that according to the standards set by the Department of Defense, the height limit to ensure safety in airspace around Henoko is set at about 55 meters above sea level. However, most of the school buildings, which are situated in a hilly area, stand higher than 55 meters above sea level. According to the school, the Defense Ministry's Okinawa Bureau has given no explanation about the matter. The bureau reportedly told the paper that although it has been coordinating with the U.S. side and other relevant parties on various issues, it will refrain from commenting on specific issues. The paper also said that the public affairs section of the Marines in Okinawa reportedly told it that they are coordinating closely with the Japanese government on all issues.

- [Interview with Niigata governor on sharing Okinawa's base-hosting burden](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)
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