



Afternoon Alert - Monday, April 23, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

NHK, TBS, and TV Asahi led with reports on the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Toronto, saying that the ministers agreed to maintain maximum pressure on North Korea until it abandons its weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles. NTV and Fuji TV gave top play to reports that Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Angels got a hit on Sunday.

AMBASSADOR

- [William F. Hagerty, U.S. Ambassador to Japan: The Mar-a-Lago Summit: A Strong Alliance and Progress on Trade](#) (Nikkei)

Ambassador Hagerty says priority to be given to autos, farm sector in economic talks with Japan

Jiji's website carried a report on an interview with Ambassador Hagerty during which he predicted that American auto and farm exports to Japan will probably be high on the agenda of the new trade consultative pillar of the bilateral Economic Dialogue to be co-led by USTR Lighthizer and Economic Revitalization Minister Motegi. The Ambassador also said the issue of U.S. metal tariffs will be taken up. Asked whether discussions at the new mechanism will eventually lead to a bilateral free trade agreement, Ambassador Hagerty reportedly voiced optimism that the consultations will move toward the creation of a "win-win" relationship in bilateral trade. As for the possibility of the U.S.'s return to the TPP, the Ambassador said "it is not promising." He stated that Japan's purchase of American defense hardware will help strengthen the bilateral alliance.

- [Ambassador Hagerty on new Japan-U.S. trade talks, trade in farm products, autos](#) (Jiji)

- [Ambassador Hagerty on U.S.-DPRK summit, U.S.-Japan ties, abductions](#) (Jiji)

INTERNATIONAL

Suga welcomes DPRK's announcement on suspension of nuclear tests, ICBM launches

NHK reported at noon that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga welcomed the announcement by North Korea that it will stop conducting nuclear tests and ICBM launches. He was quoted as saying: "(Since the visit by South Korean special envoys to North Korea in March) North Korea has not announced publicly that it would stop conducting nuclear tests even though South Korea and China had talked about North Korea's nuclear and missile programs. Now North Korea has announced that it will suspend its nuclear tests and test launches of ICBMs and close a nuclear test site. Chairman Kim Jong Un even said, 'Let's actively contribute to creating a world without nuclear weapons.' This is a step forward and we welcome it as a positive move." Meanwhile, Suga was also quoted as saying: "Our policy to seek the abolishment of all of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner, which was confirmed at the U.S.-Japan summit, remains unchanged. Japan, the United States, and South Korea will continue to work closely and discuss policy ahead of the inter-Korean summit and the U.S.-DPRK summit."

Senior DOS official says DPRK must abolish its nuclear program before concessions are made

NHK reported at noon that a senior State Department official who is attending the G7 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Toronto told NHK and other media that the recent announcement by Kim Jong Un to suspend nuclear tests and ICBM launches is "good news" and is along the lines of North Korea's recent rhetoric. Meanwhile, the official also reportedly said: "We have said at the G7 that the mistakes of the past must never be repeated. We are hoping that North Korea will substantially relinquish its nuclear development program first. Our maximum pressure will continue until denuclearization is complete."

In addition, the network said the Wall Street Journal reported online on Sunday that several USG officials said President Trump does not plan to make any substantive concessions at the planned U.S.-DPRK summit, such as relaxing sanctions, unless North Korea substantially dismantles its nuclear development program. According to the report, Kim Jong Un proposed to CIA chief Pompeo when he secretly visited Pyongyang a plan for the two sides to make concessions over the next several years. The network said, however, that the Trump administration is skeptical of the plan and prefers the approach of moving toward with denuclearization at once.

Senior foreign ministry officials of Japan, ROK discuss North Korea

NHK reported at noon that MOFA Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau chief Kanasugi, who is currently visiting South Korea ahead of the inter-Korean summit on Friday, met with his South Korean counterpart Lee Do-hoon at the South Korean foreign ministry this morning. The network

quoted Kanasugi as telling Lee: "Things are moving very rapidly on the Korean Peninsula, and that is making our bilateral cooperation as well as trilateral cooperation with the United States all the more important." The network speculated that Kanasugi also called on South Korea to continue to apply maximum pressure on North Korea in order to make sure that denuclearization is achieved.

Experts discuss results of U.S.-Japan summit

On NHK's "Nichiyō Toron" Sunday debate show, six experts discussed the results of the summit held last week between President Trump and Prime Minister Abe. Concerning their discussion on dealing with North Korea, Keio University Professor Yasushi Watanabe speculated that the United States is unlikely to agree initially to any kind of concessions, including a possible reduction of its forces in South Korea, at its direct talks with the DPRK but will likely demand denuclearization by 2020. Ado Machida, a senior member of President Trump's transition team, stated that the upcoming U.S.-DPRK summit will be a historic event and that the President apparently listens to the views of the prime minister. Former Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka said that Abe should be commended for winning the President's commitment to raise the abduction issue at his planned talks with the DPRK leader.

As for U.S.-Japan trade, Mizuho Research Institute analyst Akihiko Yasui commented that it is good that the United States and Japan agreed to launch new consultations led by USTR Lighthizer and Economic Policy Minister Motegi to seek mutual benefits. Yasui and Watanabe stressed that the U.S.-Japan talks should respect the WTO and other international rules. Machida stated that it is natural for the United States to ultimately seek a free trade agreement with Japan and that the new consultations to seek free, fair, and reciprocal trade will be established as a subset within the framework of the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue in order to hold more in-depth discussions.

Kim Jong Un's ambition – Part 2: Office 39

Saturday's "NHK Special" aired the second part of a series on how Kim Jong Un is able to maintain his regime and nuclear and missile development program despite the international community's stepping up its economic sanctions against the country. The program focused on how the Kim regime earns foreign currency, saying that a secret agency within the Workers' Party of Korea called Office 39 holds the key. The network interviewed five people who are either former Office 39 officials or involved in the office's operations, saying that it earns or obtains about 30 to 60 billion yen in foreign currency annually, both through legal and illegal means. The money obtained is used freely at the discretion of the North Korean leader to consolidate his power base, such as to purchase extravagant gifts for senior party officials and bureaucrats who pledge loyalty to the regime. One of the former officials said that the office will do anything to evade the economic sanctions on the North, including hacking the networks of financial institutions, in order to earn money for the North Korean leader.

Kim Jong Un's ambition – Part 3: Real intention behind nuclear and missile

programs

Sunday's "NHK Special" aired the third part of a series on how Kim Jong Un is able to maintain his regime and nuclear and missile development programs despite the international community's stepping up its economic sanctions against the country. The third part focused on Kim's recent interest in dialogue and intent to denuclearize. The program reported that North Korea has probably recruited former engineers from Ukrainian aerospace manufacturer Yuzhmash to develop nuclear missiles. The program also said North Korea is apparently conducting cyber attacks to obtain classified information for its nuclear development program, saying that it has been confirmed that the hackers who recently stole classified information from a nuclear power plant in South Korea were North Koreans. The program said that Bureau 121, North Korea's secret cyberwarfare agency, now has as many as 6,000 members.

Former North Korean diplomat Thae Yong-ho said in an interview that Kim Jong Un's scenario is to suspend nuclear and missile tests before the U.S.-DPRK summit, but put off abolishing its nuclear weapons until sanctions have been lifted, diplomatic relations with the U.S. have been normalized, and the USFK have withdrawn from South Korea. He said North Korea eventually aims to be recognized as a nuclear power. The program also said a former IAEA inspector suspects that North Korea is operating a nuclear reactor to produce plutonium. Another expert analyzed that North Korea is expanding a nuclear test site by building underground tunnels, claiming that North Korea is planning to continue to develop nuclear weapons. Former Defense Secretary Perry said it has become impossible to verify whether North Korea will completely abandon its nuclear weapons, given that it is unknown how many nuclear weapons North Korea already possesses. The former defense secretary also stressed the importance of maintaining dialogue with North Korea.

- [Top Japan diplomat sets 2020 goal for North Korea denuclearization](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Editorial: North Korean move stops short of declaring abolition of N-weapons](#) (The Japan News)
- [Editorial: Aim of N. Korean talks must be the complete end of arms programs](#) (The Asahi Shimbun)
- [Editorial: Japan, U.S. must iron out differences for mutually beneficial trade relations](#) (The Japan News)
- [Editorial: Steady collaboration between Japan, US needed in approach to N. Korea](#) (The Mainichi)
- ["Seiron" column: Japan should demonstrate its capability for denuclearization](#) (Sankei)
- [G-7 focuses on N. Korea ahead of U.S.-N. Korea summit](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Officers of association of abduction victims' families to visit U.S. in late April](#) (Asahi)
- [Abe sends ritual offering to war-linked Yasukuni Shrine](#) (Kyodo News)
- [ROK lawmakers call off plan to land on disputed Takeshima this month](#) (Nikkei)

ECONOMY

- [Gist of G20 finance ministers' meeting, Aso-Mnuchin talks](#) (Mainichi)
- [Aso voices concern over U.S. protectionist policies to Mnuchin](#) (Kyodo News)
- [U.S. keeps metal tariff exemption as bargaining chip; Japan opts for orthodox negotiations](#) (Sankei)
- [Long-stalled LNG plant revived as Asia ditches coal: Companies from China, South Korea and Japan have stakes in Canada project](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)

SECURITY

- [Govt wants F-2 successor jet to carry radar-boosting drones / List of specs drafted with strong China in mind](#) (The Japan News)
- [Security issues worry Osaka residents ahead of 2019 G-20 summit](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Facial recognition system to screen departing foreign visitors](#) (The Japan News)
- [False terrorist attack alert issued in central Tokyo](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Tokyo police panel recommends computerizing crime prevention by tapping AI, big data](#) (The Japan Times)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on April 19-20, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on April 21, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Prime minister's schedule on April 22, 2018](#) (Nikkei)

OPINION POLLS

Public support for Abe cabinet drops to 29%

TV Asahi reported at noon on the results of its opinion survey conducted over the weekend, which found that public approval for the Abe cabinet dropped 3.6 points from last month to 29%, the lowest approval rate since the launch of the second Abe cabinet in 2012. When asked how long Prime Minister Abe should remain at the helm of government, 38% said until the LDP presidential election in September and 23% said he should resign now. With regard to Finance Minister Aso, 51% said he should step down to take responsibility for the document tampering concerning Moritomo Gakuen and the resignation of Vice Finance Minister Fukuda.

- [Cabinet support rate falls further to 39%, nonsupport reaches new high of 53%, Yomiuri poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [45% approve of Japan-U.S. summit outcomes, while 42% do not, Yomiuri poll](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Opinion poll & results from Yomiuri Shimbun](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Support for Abe administration slides further to 30%, Mainichi survey](#) (Mainichi)
- [Opinion poll & results from Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Mainichi)

SOCIETY

- [In annual rights report, U.S. expresses concern about sexual harassment in Japan](#) (The Japan Times)
 - [March in Tokyo calls for end to sex crimes against young women](#) (Kyodo News)
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