



Afternoon Alert - Wednesday, May 16, 2018

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HEADLINES

Noon news

TBS and TV Asahi gave top play to reports that North Korea announced through its state media that it has cancelled the inter-Korean ministerial meeting slated for today. NHK and NTV led with updates on the arrest of a man on charges of murdering a 7-year-old girl in Niigata. Fuji TV reported on a bank robbery in Suginami, Tokyo, this morning

INTERNATIONAL

North Korea releases statement hinting at possible cancellation of U.S.-DPRK summit

NHK reported at noon that North Korea's state media, Korean Central News Agency, released a statement by First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Kye Gwan this morning hinting at the possibility of cancelling the U.S.-DPRK summit slated for June 12 in Singapore. Kim reportedly said in the statement: "If the U.S. is trying to drive us into a corner to force us to unilaterally give up nuclear weapons, then we are no longer interested in dialogue and cannot but reconsider our going ahead with the DPRK-U.S. summit."

The network also said that prior to the release of the statement, North Korea's Rodong Daily News carried this morning an article criticizing the "Max Thunder" joint military exercise between the U.S. forces and the South Korean military from May 11 to 25. The paper reportedly claimed that U.S. B-52 strategic bombers, which can carry nuclear weapons, are participating in the exercise and said: "It is a deliberate military provocation that runs counter to the trend toward improvement in the situation on the Korean Peninsula."

U.S. to continue to plan for U.S.-DPRK summit

All commercial networks reported at noon that although the inter-Korean ministerial summit was suddenly cancelled by North Korea this morning, a DOS spokesperson said the U.S. will continue to

plan for the U.S.-DPRK summit. DOS spokesperson Nauert was quoted as saying on Tuesday: "We have not heard anything from that government or the government of South Korea to indicate that we would not continue conducting these exercises or that we would not continue planning for our meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong Un next month...We will continue to go ahead and plan the meeting between President Trump and Kim Jong Un."

- [Editorial: Prevent issues in Middle East from worsening](#) (Sankei)
- [Editorial: U.S. is responsible for stability in Middle East](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)
- [Japan aims to lead Pacific Islands Summit to address N. Korean issues](#) (Jiji Press)
- [Japan, Samoa agree to cooperate toward Pacific islands summit](#) (Kyodo News)

ECONOMY

Japan's Q1 GDP shrinks for first time in 9 quarters

All networks reported that Japan's GDP shrank an annualized real 0.6% in the January-March quarter, saying that this is the first contraction in nine quarters. The network said private spending, which accounts for more than half of GDP, edged down from three months ago and housing investment and capital investment also dropped, putting a brake on Japan's economic recovery. Meanwhile, exports rose 0.6% due to robust auto exports to the U.S. and Asia. The network quoted Minister in Charge of Economic Revitalization Motegi as saying: "The results are after the economy grew for eight consecutive quarters. The real growth rate for fiscal year 2017 as a whole was 1.5%. The position that our economy is continuing to moderately grow remains unchanged."

- [LDP, Komeito, Ishin agree to jointly submit anti-gambling addiction bill to Diet](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Trade strategy impasse \(Part 1\): Jittery about a Japan-U.S. FTA](#) (Nikkei)
- [INSIGHTS into the WORLD / U.S.-China trade talks to sway world order](#) (The Japan News)
- [Infographic: Comparison of Japan and world energy mixes](#) (Tokyo Shimbun)

POLITICS

- [Prime minister's schedule on May 15, 2018](#) (Nikkei)
- [Outcome of Niigata gubernatorial race may affect LDP presidential election](#) (Yomiuri)
- [Editorial: Diet should promote constructive discussions, not just attack govt](#) (The Japan News)
- [Gov't tightens rules on "pre-designation" as special state secrets](#) (Asahi)

EDUCATION

- [U.S. college degrees lose mystique among Asian students](#) (Nikkei Asian Review)
- [Japanese firms in India come through with scholarships amid national shortage, high demand](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Gov't to promote major/minor system in engineering departments](#) (Yomiuri)

SOCIETY

Go Shohei Ohtani!

NHK's "Close-up Gendai+" reported on Shohei Ohtani of the Los Angeles Angels, who made his MLB debut 90 days ago. The program reported that he changed his batting form on the advice of a team batting coach and has hit five homers and is batting .340. As a pitcher, the program said Ohtani successfully mixes up his pitches and has an earned run average of 3.

SECURITY

- [Japan SDF's top uniformed officer Kawano to see term extended](#) (Kyodo News)
- [Defense minister mentions Akita and Yamaguchi as candidate sites for Aegis Ashore, naming specific prefectures for first time](#) (The Japan Times)
- [Editorial: China's buildup of aircraft carriers will only lead to heightened tension](#) (The Japan News)
- [Iwakuni: Local communities and the U.S. base – The SOFA Hurdle \(Part 2\)](#) (Chugoku Shimbun, Online)

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

- [Okinawa lawmakers seek compensation for family of base worker's murder victim](#) (Ryukyu Shimpo)

Local assembly members express mixed reactions to Onaga's possible bid for another term

Okinawa Times and Ryukyu Shimpo reported on remarks made to the press on Tuesday by Okinawa Governor Onaga, who was discharged from the hospital earlier in the day after undergoing surgery to remove a tumor in his pancreas on April 21. While disclosing that the tumor was malignant and that he will continue treatment to prevent metastatic recurrence, the governor expressed his willingness to return to work as soon as possible to fulfill his responsibilities. However, he did not clarify whether he would seek another term by running in the gubernatorial election in the fall. The papers wrote that several prefectural assembly members who support the governor expressed their readiness to back Onaga's possible quest for a second term, but his opponents said that the governor should concentrate on treatment.