

VANTAGE POINT

DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH KOREA

Vol. 37 No. **5**
MAY 2014

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COVER PHOTO : Kim Jong-seong, the director of the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) development program at the Agency for Defense Development (ADD) under the Defense Ministry, explains the specifics of three North Korean UAVs retrieved in areas near the inter-Korean border in late March and early April during a briefing on an interim probe result at the ADD in Daejeon, 164km south of Seoul, on April 11. (Yonhap)

PYONGYANG'S PROVOCATIONS & ESCALATION OF TENSIONS

North Korea's March 31 live-fire drills came on the heels of its launches of rockets and ballistic missiles as well as the threat of another nuclear test.

■ By Lee Kwang-ho

In an ominous sign, what once seemed like a thaw in inter-Korean relations is rapidly turning into a confrontation due to North Korea's continued provocations. Breaking its promise to desist from mutual slander and provocations, North Korea has staged a series of missile launches and unleashed verbal attacks. The recalcitrant country has also recently been threatening a new type of nuclear test despite Seoul's efforts to create the environment for national reunification.

At this critical juncture, what is troubling is that the North's missiles launched in late March were ballistic missiles capable of hitting targets in Japan, parts of China and Russia, as well as South Korea. It was the first time that the North had test-fired these missiles, believed to be in the Rodong missile class, since 2009.

Series of Provocations

The North's missile launches were followed by a renewed threat of another nuclear weapons test. A North Korean diplomat in New York said recently his country was prepared to demonstrate its nuclear deterrent to counter the supposed nuclear threat from the United States. The North has also resumed verbal attacks against South Korean President Park Geun-hye, reversing its promise in February to refrain from slander. The authoritarian state's verbal attacks were resumed after Park proposed a plan for reunification in the eastern German city of Dresden on March 28.

Pyongyang's escalation of provocations appears to be a deliberate measure targeting the U.S. as well. The socialist country has long accused the U.S. of trying to invade North Korea, saying America is primarily

responsible for the division of the Korean Peninsula after the end of World War II.

Moreover, North Korea's deployment of unmanned aerial vehicles into South Korea poses a new type of threat to the security of the country. Notably, the drone incident has significantly damaged Seoul's trust-building process for the peninsula that is based on strong national security.

The rival Koreas had agreed in February to halt cross-border slander during their first high-level talks in seven years. Then came Pyongyang's renewed provocations. Following rocket and short-range missile launches considered to have been in protest of joint military exercises between Seoul and Washington, North Korea fired some 500 artillery shells near the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea on March 31, with about 100 of them falling south of the de facto inter-Korean sea border.

The South Korean military fired back about 300 shells and scrambled fighter jets. The North had begun its live-fire drills at around 12:15 p.m., some four hours after notifying the South through a fax message that it had zoned off seven areas just north of the NLL for the drills.

On March 26, Pyongyang fired two mid-range ballistic missiles capable of striking Japan. On March 27, the U.N. Security Council condemned the North's test-firing of mid-range ballistic missiles, a clear violation of a U.N. resolution that prohibits Pyongyang from nuclear weapon and missile tests.

In protest of the U.N. resolution, the North on March 30 said it will conduct a "new form of nuclear test" to bolster its nuclear deterrence, sharply stoking tensions on the Korean Peninsula. North



"North Korea would not rule out a new form of nuclear test for bolstering up its nuclear deterrence," a (North) Korean Central TV Broadcasting Station anchor says while reading a Foreign Ministry statement on March 30. (Yonhap)

Korea's warning indicates the possibility of a fourth underground nuclear test following tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013. The first two tests were confirmed by specialists as plutonium bombs. The type of device used in the February 2013 test has not been confirmed. Experts have speculated that the "new form" of test could mean a device made from uranium rather than plutonium.

Korean and U.S. Marines conducted their largest-ever landing operation in Pohang, North Gyeongsang Province, on April 30 as part of their joint drills. It is notable that the North turned its attention to the NLL in the West Sea in response to the drills. After the North accelerated efforts to nullify the NLL in 2009, it waged a sea battle against the South, followed by the sinking of the Cheonan warship and the bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010.

The South's Defense Ministry called the North's live-fire drills a "premeditated, deliberate" provocation. "The live-fire drills came on the heels of the North's launches of rockets and ballistic missiles, as well as the threat of another nuclear test," ministry

spokesperson Kim Min-seok told reporters. Some of North Korea's artillery shells landed up to 3.6 kilometers south of the NLL, but no shells fell on South Korean land.

The skirmish came after North Korea sent a rare fax message to the South Korean 2nd Navy Fleet Command at 8 a.m., notifying it of a plan to hold live-fire drills in seven areas near five front-line islands close to the NLL. It also warned against any boat movements in the areas.

The five South Korean islands included Yeonpyeong Island, which was shelled by North Korea in November 2010, killing four people. The residents of the islands were evacuated to temporary shelters upon the announcement. No casualties were reported. About 4,000 island residents later returned to their homes after the military lifted an evacuation order it issued hours earlier.

Flash Point

The maritime border is a flash point where the navies of the two sides fought bloody battles in 1999, 2002 and 2009. Pyongyang does not recognize the NLL, drawn unilaterally by the U.S.-led United Nations Command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, and demands that the line be drawn farther south.

Following the unprovoked North Korean attacks, South Korea has upgraded its defense capabilities along the western sea border, deploying an increased number of artillery batteries and precision-guided missiles on border islands.

North Korea has placed about 1,000 coastal artillery guns as well as multiple rocket launchers and anti-ship cruise missiles along

the southwestern shore. The communist state has also deployed about 70 hovercraft on its west coast and 60 amphibious vehicles in the east at its four hovercraft bases.

Most recently, Pyongyang has been building a new high-speed, wave-piercing craft called Very Slender Vessel (VSV), which Seoul officials believe is aimed at infiltrating the inter-Korean sea boundary to quickly occupy South Korean border islands in the event of a war.

The recent live-fire drills also came after the North threatened to avenge the alleged abuse of three North Korean fishermen who were captured by the South Korean Navy while crossing the western maritime border after engine failure. On March 27, South Korea's military seized the North Korean fishermen who had illegally crossed the NLL despite warning shots near Baengnyeong Island.

Just six hours after their arrest, the fishermen were all released and sent back to the North. On March 28, they appeared at a press conference broadcast by the North's Korean Central Television, claiming they were "assaulted with iron bats and pressured to defect to the South" by the South Korean Navy.

North Korea also condemned South Korean President Park's recent speech calling for denuclearization of the regime at the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague. In separate talks with President Park, Xi Jinping, the Chinese leader, clarified his firm opposition to the North's nuclear weapons program.

The impoverished country has called for sanctions on the regime to be eased. Sanctions include the so-called May 24 measures introduced in 2010, in which

Seoul froze all government-level aid to the regime, and the cancellation of tours to the Mount Kumgang resort.

The May 24 sanctions came in the aftermath of the sinking of the South Korean warship Cheonan in March 2010, which a group of international investigators concluded was torpedoed by Pyongyang. North Korea has denied the allegation. The Mount Kumgang resort on the North Korean east coast has been shut since the shooting death of a South Korean tourist there in July 2008.

Of note in the recent provocations is that some weapons had not been seen before, officials said, such as a missile transporter-erector-launcher (TEL), a mobile missile launcher. This is an indication the missiles were fired from a vehicle, rather than a missile base. On March 26, the North fired two medium-range missiles, assumed by South Korea to be Rodong missiles, from a launch site in the eastern coastal city of Wonsan.

U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on March 31 urged North Korea to discontinue its “dangerous” provocations, hours after receiving a briefing.

Hagel stressed the U.S. has been clear that North Korea should halt provocative acts. But he was noncommittal about whether the U.S. believes Pyongyang has entered a full-scale provocation cycle after months of a peace offensive.

Earlier in the day, the White House described North Korea’s act as “dangerous and provocative.” “We remain steadfast in our commitment to the defense of our allies and remain in close coordination with both the Republic of Korea (South

Korea) and Japan,” Jonathan Lalley, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said in a statement.

U.S. and China’s Reaction

The State Department characterized the North’s latest act as a “deliberate decision” to further escalate tensions on the peninsula. Marie Harf, the department’s deputy spokeswoman, said the communist nation should “desist from needlessly threatening regional peace and security.”

China expressed “concerns” on March 31 shortly after South and North Korea traded artillery shells, urging its two neighbors to exercise restraint. “Currently, there is rising tension on the Korean Peninsula, and we have concerns about this,” China’s foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei told reporters when asked about the exchange of fire. “We hope the relevant parties will exercise restraint, refrain from taking actions that may escalate tensions and make joint efforts to uphold peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.”

But North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has vowed to “crush” what he called the hostile policy of the United States toward the North, Pyongyang’s state news agency reported on April 2. Kim made the comments on April 1 in a speech to officers at Mount Paektu, a symbolically significant venue known to represent the Kim bloodline in the socialist country.

North Korea has not indicated any willingness to give up its nuclear program despite the international community’s continuing pressure. North Korea experts say Pyongyang must understand that pursuing

nuclear weapons and economic development together cannot succeed as its nuclear ambitions only invite further isolation and sanctions.

They also said South Korea needs to take the lead in resolving the nuclear conundrum, saying that, without progress in denuclearization, President Park's efforts to promote reunification will not go anywhere.

Nevertheless, the analysts said the Seoul government should seek a path to denuclearization, starting with the freezing of the North's nuclear activities and missile launches.

Some watchers raise fears that North Korea could test-fire intercontinental ballistic missiles mounted with nuclear warheads. Such a test, if conducted, would cause far greater ramifications than those in 2006, 2009 and last year, given that it would indicate that the North has made progress in developing technology needed to miniaturize nuclear devices.

Seoul's Dilemma

As the isolated North sticks to its provocations, hard-liners raise the need for the United States and other Western countries to slap broad-based economic sanctions on the communist country. Still, analysts said North Korea's intentional escalation of tensions is also seen as a move to enhance its position ahead of the possible resumption of the six-way denuclearization talks. The multilateral talks have been dormant since late 2008.

But Seoul's efforts to ease tension on the Korean Peninsula face hurdles. President Park unveiled a package of proposals to North Korea, which she hopes will help

improve relations and boost her drive to achieve unification of the two Koreas. The proposals, which Park outlined in a speech in Dresden, Germany, were highlighted by three themes -- the resolution of humanitarian issues, assisting infrastructure development in the North and restoring integration of the two Koreas.

They included regular reunions of separated families, cooperation in the fields of agro-fisheries and forestry, expansion of people-to-people exchanges and establishment of an office for promoting exchanges and cooperation. Some critics rapped Park's Dresden initiative as being insufficient, saying that the package lacks substantial measures to change inter-Korean relations and that most of the proposals have already been put forward.

There were few groundbreaking proposals and some, such as those for an international peace park and the linking of the railways of the two Koreas with Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway, were merely the repetition of past suggestions.

The North's powerful National Defense Commission dismissed Park's declaration as "irrelevant and nonsensical." The commission also claimed Park's policy on unification with North Korea was designed to hurt the ideology and socialist system of the North. The communist country has long suspected that Seoul could be plotting to absorb Pyongyang.

South Korea recently warned the North against using vulgar language toward President Park. The North has called the female president an "eccentric old spinster" over her comments on North Korea's economic difficulties and its homeless children.

The North's committee on South Korean affairs also called Park a kingpin of slander for her recent comments critical of the North.

To make matters worse, South Korea has said that three small unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) discovered near the tensely-guarded border were built and sent by North Korea for spying purposes, though a smoking gun has yet to be found. The military has retrieved the drones from separate areas near the inter-Korean border since late March, prompting serious concerns about holes in South Korea's air defense as one of them had taken photos of Seoul's presidential compound and important military installations.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

While the three sky blue drones built with rudimentary UAV technology had been widely believed to have been sent from the communist state, Seoul's defense ministry officially announced an interim investigation result pointing to Pyongyang 18 days after the first one was discovered.

On April 14, North Korea said it had nothing do with three small unmanned aerial vehicles found in South Korea. South Korea "fabricated the incident of the unmanned aerial vehicles in its frantic move to slander the North," said the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea.

In response, Seoul reiterated that there is enough circumstantial evidence to prove the North's involvement in the drone incursion, and urged the North to stop slandering the South. Defense ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in a briefing, "It is



The U.S. 7th Fleet's nuclear submarine USS Columbus enters the South Korean Navy's operational command base in Busan, 453 km southeast of Seoul, on April 3 to join the Foal Eagle, an annual Korea-U.S. joint exercise to deter North Korean provocations. (Yonhap)

North Korea that threatens peace by continuously threatening to conduct nuclear tests and missile launches."

The North has since claimed South Korea has slandered the North's leadership and its social system with the communist country citing, among other things, anti-Pyongyang leaflets. For years, North Korean defectors in the South and conservative activists have flown the leaflets to the North via balloons to encourage North Koreans to eventually rise up against the Pyongyang regime.

On April 14, Pyongyang said the North's military and people will force South Korea to "pay a dear price for insulting our dignity and system." But the North's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea did not elaborate on what it meant by a dear price. The North has made several military threats against the South over the leaflets in recent years. (Yonhap)

PRESIDENT PARK'S DRESDEN DECLARATION

Seoul will push ahead with the unification initiative of President Park Geun-hye despite North Korea's clear rejection of Park's proposal.

■ By Kim Tae-shik

In the first official response to the unification initiative by South Korean President Park Geun-hye in late March, North Korea squarely rejected Park's so-called Dresden Declaration, in which the South Korean leader suggested proposals calling for bolstering exchanges with North Korea as first steps toward building trust between the two sides to lay the groundwork for unification. Park also urged the North to give up its nuclear program during a speech at the Dresden University of Technology in the former East German city of the same name on March 28.

"The Dresden Declaration is a nonsensical statement made by an anti-reunification element who deceived the public with hypocrisy and deception as she offered no solution, ignorant of the present state of the North-South relations," the North's powerful National Defense Commission (NDC) said on April 12.

It was the first time that an authoritative North Korean agency officially rejected Park's proposals although Pyongyang had poured a heavy barrage of verbal attacks on Park's proposals through its state news organizations.

The North's commission also claimed Park's policy on unification with North Korea was designed to hurt the ideology and socialist system of the North.

South Korea, however, pledged it will push ahead with Park's unification initiative despite the North's rejection.

"We will demonstrate our sincerity of the Dresden Declaration through our actions," unification ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do told reporters on April 14.

He also said South Korea will make internal preparations to carry out the declaration, though he did not elaborate.

The Koreans have been divided for six decades following the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in a cease-fire, not a peace treaty.

South Korea said unification would provide the Korean people with a springboard to prosperity by combining South Korea's capital and technology with North Korea's rich natural resources. Still, the communist country has long suspected that Seoul could be plotting to absorb Pyongyang.



South Korean President Park Geun-hye unveils the so-called Dresden Declaration for the unification of the two Koreas during her honorary doctorate awarding ceremony at the Dresden University of Technology in Dresden, Germany, on March 28. (Yonhap)

Three-point Proposal

In a keynote speech titled “An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula. Dresden - beyond division, toward integration,” Park presented her three-point proposal for unification -- the settlement of humanitarian problems of the South and North Korean people; building of infrastructure for co-prosperity of both Koreas; and integration between the people of South and North Korea.

“For a start,” she said, “we must help ease the agony of separated families. It makes little sense to talk about solidarity as one nation, when members of the same family are refused their god-given right to live together.”

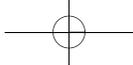
Park also called for regularizing the reunions of families separated since the Korean War in the address that was watched closely and televised live amid expectations that she would unveil a new vision for unification of the two Koreas.

“It is about time South and North Korea allow family reunions to take place regularly so we could ease their anguish and build trust in doing so.”

Other humanitarian projects include a program to provide health care support for expectant mothers and infants in the North during their first 1,000 days. Park said South Korea will work with the United Nations in the health care project.

“Furthermore, we will provide assistance for North Korean children so they could grow up to become healthy partners in our journey toward a unified future,” she added.

Park stressed that the two Koreas must jointly pursue an agenda for co-prosperity through the building of infrastructure that supports the livelihood of people.



An example of larger economic cooperation would be the South building infrastructure in the North in exchange for underground resources in the North, Park said. She also said the South will actively pursue joint economic projects that would involve not only the two Koreas but also China.

The package of proposals laid out a road map for how the two Koreas should work toward unification. It calls for the South to first increase humanitarian aid projects for the impoverished North before expanding economic cooperation to bigger projects as trust builds between the sides.

“Now more than ever, South and North Korea must broaden their exchange and cooperation,” Park said. “What we need is not one-off or promotional events, but the kind of interaction and cooperation that enable ordinary South Koreans and North Koreans to recover a sense of common identity as they help each other out.”

Park said she believes Germany overcame the after-shock of unification fairly quickly and achieved the level of integration of today because of the sustained people-to-people interaction that took place prior to unification.

Park also called for bolstering non-political exchanges between the two sides and offered to help train North Koreans in finance, taxation and other economic areas. She proposed that the two Koreas set up an office for exchanges and cooperation in their capitals to handle a variety of cooperation projects.

Park renewed her proposal to establish an international peace park in the Demilitarized Zone, a four-kilometer-wide buffer zone separating the two Koreas, to help reduce cross-border tensions. Linking the railways of the two Koreas to Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway would be a great project for all sides involved, she added.

Should North Korea give up its nuclear program, Park said that the South will work aggressively to help North Korea win international development funds for economic development. Seoul is also willing to establish a Northeast Asia Development Bank with neighboring nations to help with development there, she said.

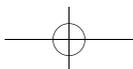
Vision for Unification

The “Dresden speech” was interpreted as the culmination of Park's vision for unification and viewed as a kind of “unification doctrine.”

She has made strong pitches for unification in recent months, saying it would be an economic “bonanza” for the two Koreas as well as a blessing for neighboring countries because it will touch off massive investments in North Korea, mainly infrastructure projects.

Earlier she had announced a plan to set up a unification preparation committee to establish unification policies and push ahead with the preparatory work as a control tower. The committee to be chaired by Park herself is to be launched during April.

“A reunited Germany took its place at the heart of Europe,” Park said in the address. “I believe that the Republic of Korea will similarly reach ever greater heights after unification.”



South Korean President Park Geun-hye (L) and German Chancellor Angela Merkel look at each other after holding a joint news conference on their talks in Berlin on March 26. Park was on a three-day state visit. (Yonhap)



The Republic of Korea is the official title of South Korea.

After unification, Park said, the northern half of the Korean Peninsula will “experience rapid development” and a unified Korea will contribute to dealing with a wide range of global issues like international peace-keeping, nuclear non-proliferation, environment and energy and development.

“Just as the German people secured freedom, prosperity and peace by tearing down the Berlin Wall, we too must tear down barriers in our march toward a new future on the Korean Peninsula,” Park said. “We must build a ‘new kind of Korean Peninsula,’ a peninsula free of nuclear weapons, free from the fear of war, and free to enjoy life, peace and prosperity.”

Park’s trip to Dresden made her the first South Korean president to visit a former East German city. Dresden is also symbolic in German unification as it is where former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl made a landmark pro-unification speech in 1989.

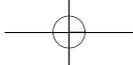
South Korean leaders have sometimes used trips to Germany to announce new proposals or policies on North Korea. In 2000, former President Kim Dae-jung issued the “Berlin Declaration” calling for the end of Cold War on the Korean Peninsula and lasting peace between the two sides.

Three months after the declaration, Kim held the South’s first-ever summit with North Korea.

Unification has been the main theme in Park’s state visit to Germany that earlier took her to Berlin. On March 26, Park held talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and agreed to work closely together to share the lessons of German unification to help South Korea chart a course for its own unification with the North.

Merkel said she believes it is Germany’s obligation to help realize Korean unification.

In Seoul, government officials said they expect North Korea to positively respond to Park’s overture.



North Korea, however, gave an initial response by throwing a heavy barrage of verbal attacks on Park's proposal through its state media, making North Korea experts here to speculate that it would be hard to expect a positive response from North Korea in the near future.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) blasted Park's proposal dismissing it a "vulgar diplomacy of the South Korean ruler."

In an analysis the KCNA said on April 1, "During her recent trip to Germany, she viciously maligned the DPRK (North Korea) ... Shunning the rapidly changing reality of the DPRK, Park talked jargon on the basis of a scenario worked out by the National Intelligence Service with the defectors' vituperations that the DPRK suffers economic difficulty and food shortage.

"As far as her plan is concerned, it is little different from 'proposal for unification' and 'confidence-building process' much touted by her in South Korea, which have been criticized as 'unilateral plan' and 'policy toward the north without core issues,'" the KCNA said.

The North's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper also criticized Park's comments "are an unpardonable insult" to the North.

South Korea denounced the North for repeatedly displaying senseless behavior toward Park.

"North Korea should be careful in its words and action after deliberation, and we will monitor them," unification ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do said.

Kim said the North used vulgar language toward Park as it called on South Korea to stop slander against its leader Kim Jong-un.

NDC Statement

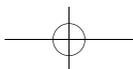
NDC, the North's top governing body, blasted President Park's reunification initiative as a "psychopath's daydream" in the April 12 statement.

"The proposal is irrelevant and indifferent to the improvement and development of the inter-Korean relations," a spokesman of the NDC said in the statement carried out by the KCNA.

Denouncing Park's remark that "Germany's unity is for us an example and model for a peaceful reunification," the NDC spokesman asserted that German reunification came about with the West absorbing the East. He accused Park of begging foreign countries to help bring about a reunification in which South Korea would absorb the North.

"This is merely a daydream of a psychopath," he said, denouncing Park's proposal as "nonsense" full of "hypocrisy and deception."

The North Korean spokesman urged Seoul to abide by earlier agreements including a landmark agreement signed in 2000, stressing that all these previous accords gave priority to addressing the issue of easing military confrontation over the settlement of humanitarian problems.



The North-South relations showed signs of thawing, as Pyongyang made a series of peace offensives to the South since the turn of this year. However, tensions remain high on the Korean Peninsula as the North made verbal war threats against the South and the United States since the South launched annual military exercises with the U.S. in February.

In an apparent move to protest the joint exercises, which Pyongyang described as a rehearsal for an invasion while Seoul and Washington say are defensive in nature, Pyongyang carried out a series of rocket and missile launches, capped by its first midrange missile test since 2009 on March 26.

On March 31, North Korea fired around 100 shells across the maritime border in the West Sea, and South Korea returned barrage of shells.

The fire exchange followed a North Korean warning that it might carry out a “new” form of nuclear test -- a possible reference to a uranium-based device or a miniaturized warhead small enough to fit on a ballistic missile.

The North also criticized Park’s remark in the Dresden speech that the South would help funnel international funding for the North’s economic development should Pyongyang give up its nuclear weapons program.

On the prospects of the Dresden Declaration, North Korea watchers showed mixed predictions.

As the North expressed virtual rejection of the proposal in the NDC statement, it would be difficult to expect the inter-Korean relations to move ahead for the time being, some experts said.

Prof. Kim Yong-hyun of Dongguk University in Seoul said North Korea does not appear to have a positive attitude toward improving inter-Korean relations when the rival Koreas are far apart on the issue of North Korea’s nuclear programs.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said that Pyongyang was likely to ease up and return to dialogue in late April as the South and the United States were concluding their military exercises.

Meanwhile, South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won asked the international community on April 10 to extend support for the reunification of the two Koreas, stressing that a unified Korea will be a new global growth engine.

He made the remarks during his keynote speech at the Boao Forum of Asia held in China’s tropical island of Hainan.

“Our peaceful reunification will set out a novel blueprint for the future for not only the Korean Peninsula but all of Asia,” Chung said.

Explaining the Dresden Declaration, Chung called for the international community’s active cooperation and support for Seoul’s efforts for unification.

“The unified Korea based upon free democracy and market economy will be a new growth engine for Asia and beyond by providing each country of the world with a new destination for investment,” he said. (Yonhap)

N. KOREA'S PSYCHOLOGICAL TACTIC ON DRONES

“North Korea’s offer to launch a joint investigation into the drone incident is a mean psychological tactic to divide S. Korea and therefore is unworthy of consideration.”

■ By Kim Tae-shik

South Korea on April 15 rejected North Korea’s offer for a joint investigation by the two Koreas into the suspected North Korean drones that were found crashed in South Korea in recent weeks, saying that it is the North’s psychological tactic to evade its responsibility.

The South Korean government said on April 11 that it believes North Korea was the origin of the three unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that crashed near the heavily guarded border area in the South and were found between March 24 and April 6, though conclusive evidence has yet to be found.

“In no case would a suspect be allowed to investigate evidence of his own crime,” a presidential official told reporters on April 15. He asked not to be identified, citing policy.

He also said South Korea will continue its investigations into the drones in a scientific manner to confirm that the drones came from North Korea.

His comment came hours after the North’s National Defense Commission

accused South Korea of fabricating the latest case to shift the responsibility for the acute inter-Korean relations to the North.

North Korea “remains unchanged in its stand to jointly investigate all cases, including the Cheonan case, as (South Korea) claims the North was involved in them,” the commission said, referring to the South Korean warship that sank near their western sea border, killing 46 South Korean sailors.

A South Korean-led international investigation found that North Korea torpedoed the warship on March 26, 2010, though Pyongyang has denied its role in the accident. Denying the investigation results, the North offered to send its team of investigators to the South for a joint probe into the sinking of the warship, a demand rejected by Seoul.

Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said in a briefing on April 15 that North Korea distorted basic facts about the drones to cover up its provocations.

“North Korea’s offer to launch a joint investigation into the drone incident is a mean psychological tactic to divide South

Korea, which is unworthy of consideration,” Kim said, adding that the ministry plans to announce the final results of the joint investigation by South Korean and U.S. investigators at an early date.

On April 14, a team of American experts in drones and software technology arrived in Seoul to help South Korean investigators analyze the global positioning system data of the crashed drones, which officials say could provide a smoking gun to their origin.

S. Korea-U.S. Investigation

The joint team plans to work on the analysis of the memory chips in the central processing units (CPUs) of the drones to find out the mission of the drones and recover the coordinates indicating locations to which the drones were to return.

“Investigators found several pieces of circumstantial evidence that strongly show the small UAVs were sent by North Korea,” Kim said in another briefing on April 11, mentioning its design, operating system and photos contained in the cameras installed in the devices.

Earlier on April 8, a senior military official said military investigators concluded that the three drones were sent from a North Korean region located 15 km to 20 km north of the military demarcation line taking into account their engines, fuel storage and weights.

A team of military officials and experts has disassembled the three suspected North Korean drones, which were painted sky blue, to get a rare glimpse of the small aircraft built with crude UAV technology.



The photo, provided by South Korea's Defense Ministry, shows the third North Korean drone found on a remote mountain in Samcheok, Gangwon Province, on April 6. (Yonhap)

The first discovery of the drone was made on March 24 in Paju, just south of the demilitarized zone separating the two Koreas. The second one was retrieved from the front-line island of Baengnyeong during the North's live-fire drills near the western maritime border on March 31.

On April 6, the military found a third drone similar to the other two drones, on a mountain on South Korea's east coast, in

the latest finding of a series of border incursions by North Korea's unmanned spy aircraft, raising fresh concerns over the military's shabby air defense network.

South Korean soldiers found the crashed drone on a mountain in Samcheok, 290 kilometers east of Seoul, after three local residents informed the military on April 3 that they had seen the unmanned aircraft on Oct. 4 last year.

One of the residents, identified by his family name Lee, told the military he found a Canon camera near the crash site on Oct. 4 and later discarded it after using the memory chip that he claims contained photos of a beach near the mountain.

The drone's appearance is almost identical to the one found in Paju, a city near the heavily fortified inter-Korean border, on March 24, according to the Defense Ministry.

The drone was 1.22 meters long and 1.93 meters wide compared with 1.43 meters long and 1.92 meters wide for the one found in Paju. The weight of the two drones were identical at 15 kilograms, according to the ministry.

A military source said the drone was believed to have been crashed in Samcheok due to fuel shortage while returning to the North after a reconnaissance flight. The cause of crash of the drone found in Paju was said to be engine failure, while the exhausted fuel was listed as the probable cause of the drone's crash on Baengnyeong Island.

The drone discovered in Paju contained 193 photos, including those of military installations and particularly the residential quarters of Seoul's presidential compound,

while the drone crashed on Baengnyeong Island had unidentified number of photos of nearby Socheong and Daecheong islands.

The three drones had apparently flown over South Korea undetected for months, sparking new security concerns over North Korea's spy capabilities.

Possible Threats

Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin said on April 4 that Pyongyang could develop more advanced unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for attack purposes, though the small aircraft discovered so far were rudimentary spy drones equipped with small cameras.

The South Korean military said it is considering purchasing advanced low-altitude surveillance radar and anti-aircraft guns to better guard against drone infiltrations.

The military is also pushing to supplement its existing surveillance equipment, such as the Thermal Observation Device (TOD) and multipurpose telescopes deployed near the border.

Also on April 6, a South Korean government official said attack drones operated by the North are believed to be capable of striking all targets in South Korea.

North Korea has deployed attack drones it unveiled last March during military drills.

The range of the drones is estimated at up to 800 kilometers, sufficient to strike major South Korean and U.S. military targets in South Korea, the official said.

About 28,500 U.S. troops are stationed in South Korea, a legacy of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in a cease-fire,

not a peace treaty.

In March last year, North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un lauded the accuracy of its attack drones.

While the small UAVs are considered as rudimentary spy drones that fly according to prearranged coordinates using the GPS system, the official said the investigation team has nearly completed decoding the GPS data, which would confirm whether the North was behind the drone incursions.

Seoul's defense ministry earlier said that the communist state has developed the spy drones to enhance its relatively weak reconnaissance capability, as it lacks advanced surveillance assets such as military satellites and advanced early warning aircraft.

The ministry estimated that the North has about 300 spy drones, less than 10 attack UAVs and about 10 Russian-made Shmel UAVs, while currently developing a multipurpose UAV.

While the drones equipped with low-tech cameras are considered as crude, South Korean Defense Minister Kim said they could potentially pose new security threats if they are modified to conduct attack missions.

As the Samcheok drone was discovered 130 km south of the military demarcation line, it is believed to be capable of flying a round trip covering a distance of over 260 km. If confirmed, it would be able to conduct espionage or attack missions on major South Korean military target and installations in the central region. The headquarters of three military branches are located near Daejeon, about 160 km south of Seoul.

After President Park Geun-hye voiced concerns over potential threat posed by North Korean drones and ordered the military to come up with countermeasures, the South Korean military vowed to maintain high vigilance against them and acquire advanced low-altitude surveillance radars and anti-aircraft guns.

Measures to Check UAVs

South Korea currently monitors North Korea with military satellites, early warning aircraft and ground radars, as well as high-altitude UAVs. Seoul is also set to finalize a contract to buy four high-altitude, long-endurance Global Hawk spy drones for deployment in 2018.

At a meeting of top military commanders on April 7, Defense Minister Kim ordered tighter vigilance against new threats of small unmanned aerial vehicles as a recent discovery of suspected North Korean drones has sparked concern over the nation's air defense system.

"If (North Korea) developed the small unmanned aerial aircraft for reconnaissance purposes to enhance its relatively weak surveillance capability, it is expected to develop drones for secret infiltration and terrorism purposes in the future," Kim said.

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Choi Yun-hee, talked through the video conference system with the commander of U.S. Forces Korea, Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, the same day to discuss ways to cooperate in dealing with North Korean drones. (Yonhap)

DIPLOMATIC MOVES FOR RESUMPTION OF SIX-PARTY TALKS

N. Korea has expressed its willingness to reopen the six-party talks, but Seoul and Washington have demanded Pyongyang demonstrate its sincerity first.

■ Lee Kwang-ho

Amid prolonged tension on the Korean Peninsula, a flurry of diplomatic moves have been under way to resume the six-party talks to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Specifically, Seoul, Washington and Beijing are intensifying diplomatic efforts as they wrestle to rein in North Korea's nuclear threats and find middle ground in reopening the long-stalled six-nation forum.

The six-party talks involving the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia have been dormant since late 2008, with Pyongyang recently threatening a "new form" of nuclear test.

South Korea's newly appointed nuclear envoy has been engaged in busy shuttle diplomacy with related countries over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons dismantlement. Hwang Joon-kook, Seoul's new special representative for Korean peninsular peace and security affairs and top envoy to the six-party talks, recently made separate trips to Beijing and Washington.

In Beijing on April 11, Hwang and Wu Dawei, China's top nuclear envoy and special representative for Korean affairs, dis-

cussed ways to resume "meaningful dialogue" while boosting consultations to deter Pyongyang from an additional underground explosion. The meeting came on the heels of three-way talks with the United States and Japan in Washington earlier in April.

The Beijing talks also came as South Korean officials voiced "flexibility" in its preconditions for North Korea before resumption of the talks could take place, indicating that they could lower the bar for North Korea to sit down at the negotiating table.

Conditions for Talks

Diplomatic sources said South Korea, the U.S. and Japan have agreed to lower the bar on conditions for resuming the nuclear talks with North Korea. The top nuclear envoys listed several conditions, which were originally set by the U.S. and North Korea in February 2012, as steps the North should take before the resumption of the six-way talks, the sources said.

In the Washington meeting, however, Hwang and his U.S. and Japanese counter-

Hwang Joon-kook (R), South Korea's chief negotiator for the six-party talks on ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program, poses with his American counterpart Glyn Davies (C) and Japanese counterpart Junichi Ihara before holding trilateral talks in Washington on April 7. (Yonhap)



parts sent a strong warning to Pyongyang against a fourth nuclear test and vowed to step up cooperation to preclude any further provocations.

But controversy is brewing after a ranking Seoul official displayed willingness to apply “flexibility” toward the preconditions for what would be the first gathering in more than five years.

His remarks imply a softened stance for South Korea and the U.S. compared with their previous demand for preemptive, stronger commitments from the North than those enshrined in the now-defunct Feb. 29, 2012, agreement.

In the so-called “leap day deal,” Pyongyang agreed to put a moratorium on its nuclear program, cease atomic and missile tests and let in international inspectors in return for 240,000 tons of food aid from Washington. The deal fell apart when North Korea launched a long-range rocket two months later and conducted its third nuclear test a year later.

At her recent three-way summit with the leaders of the U.S. and Japan, South

Korean President Park Geun-hye also indicated movement in her position, saying the allies can “explore various ways to resume dialogue if there is a guarantee that we can make substantive progress on the denuclearization front and block North Korea from beefing up its nuclear capabilities.”

But other Seoul and Washington officials cautioned against overinterpreting the “flexibility” remarks, saying no concrete ideas were being floated for the restart of the talks and tension remains high on the peninsula on the back of Pyongyang’s threats of a nuclear test and military drills on both sides of the border.

Since its third nuclear test in February last year, North Korea has repeatedly expressed its willingness to reopen the six-party talks “without preconditions,” but Seoul and Washington have demanded Pyongyang demonstrate its sincerity first by taking steps toward denuclearization.

Subsequently, South Korea, the U.S. and Japan had called on the North to take steps beyond what it agreed to in the leap day deal before resumption of the talks.

The move to relax the conditions for talks comes amid threats by North Korea to carry out a “new form” of nuclear test ahead of visits by U.S. President Barack Obama to South Korea and Japan in late April.

“Two principles have been set before resumption of the six-party talks can take place. The first is to make practical progress in denuclearizing North Korea and the second is to prevent the North from sophisticating its nuclear capability,” a diplomatic source said.

After the trilateral talks in Washington, South Korea’s chief nuclear envoy, Hwang Joon-kook, visited Beijing, during which he discussed the issue with his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei.

China’s Role

In Beijing, the top nuclear envoys of South Korea and China discussed North Korea’s recent nuclear threat and agreed to bolster “strategic cooperation” to prevent Pyongyang from carrying out its fourth nuclear test, a Seoul diplomat said.

During the April 11 meeting, Hwang and Wu reaffirmed a “clear commitment to oppose any North Korean provocations, particularly an additional nuclear test, and agreed to deepen bilateral strategic communication and cooperation to curb such provocations,” the diplomat said on the condition of anonymity.

“The two sides also agreed that the current situation on the Korean Peninsula is grave and worrisome following North Korea’s threat of a nuclear test,” the diplomat said. Hwang and Wu also discussed

“ways to resume meaningful dialogue to make progress in denuclearizing North Korea and prevent it from sophisticating its nuclear technology,” according to the diplomat.

Meanwhile, China asked South Korea to refrain from holding large-scale military drills with the U.S. on the Korean Peninsula during the talks, according to other diplomatic source. In response, South Korea insisted that the annual drills with the U.S. are defensive in nature.

Following the Beijing meeting, China’s top nuclear envoy Wu flew to America for talks with U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Glyn Davies from April 14 through April 17 in New York and Washington. Wu traveled to Pyongyang in March, while Choi Son-hui, director general of the North Korean Foreign Ministry, was in Beijing the following week.

In New York, the top U.S. and Chinese nuclear envoys had “productive” discussions on North Korea. “The United States and China agree on the fundamental importance of a denuclearized North Korea,” the State Department’s spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in a readout about a meeting between Glyn Davies and Wu Dawei a day earlier.

Psaki described the Davies-Wu talks as part of “a series of high-level, in-depth U.S.-China discussions on how to achieve our shared goal of a denuclearized North Korea in a peaceful manner.”

Davies and Wu met for three hours at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. on April 14. They gave no comments to media after the session.

At this juncture, China warned North

Korea against another nuclear detonation. In a rare public warning to its unruly ally, China on April 15 urged the North not to carry out a nuclear test, saying it does not support Pyongyang's "threat of a nuclear test."

The public warning by China's Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Hua Chunying came as tensions on the Korean Peninsula spiked again, with the North continuing to threaten additional missile launches and a "new form" of nuclear test.

"We do not support the joint military drills (between South Korea and the U.S.) and do not support the threat of a nuclear test (by North Korea)," Hua told reporters during a regular press briefing, when asked about the current tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

While China has long voiced opposition to annual military drills between South Korea and the U.S., it is rare for Beijing to issue a pointed warning to North Korea over possible provocations.

Describing the situation on the peninsula as "quite fragile," Hua said, "We oppose any actions that may escalate tensions." "China continues to play a positive role in making the Korean Peninsula have a soft landing," Hua said. "Meanwhile, we hope relevant parties bear in mind the big picture and do things that are conducive to building mutual trust and easing tensions."

Recently North Korea has conducted a series of artillery and ballistic missile launches, widely seen as acts of protest against joint South Korea-U.S. military drills that ended on April 18. The U.N. Security Council condemned in March the North's tests of two midrange ballistic missiles, but

stopped short of imposing new sanctions.

China has been more accommodating toward North Korea, urging South Korea and the U.S. to lower their bar for talks. Beijing resents Washington for the continuous pressure to do more to persuade North Korea. "You are giving us a mission impossible," Chinese Ambassador Cui Tiankai told a conference at the U.S. Institute of Peace.

Meanwhile, South Korea's Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se on April 10 warned North Korea of "unimaginable consequences" amid threats of a fresh nuclear test, calling on its leadership to choose between coexistence or isolation.

"North Korea has recently spoken of unimaginable next steps and a new type of nuclear test. It will be North Korea that faces unimaginable consequences if it undertakes an additional nuclear test," the top diplomat told a conference hosted by a think tank affiliated with the ruling Saenuri Party in Seoul.

In the event of a fourth atomic blast, Pyongyang's relations with the international community will take on a "completely different aspect," he warned. "North Korea will have to make a serious judgment about what the nuclear test would mean to its regime at a time when the international community including China is tightly united against North Korean nuclear weapons," Yun added.

"The North Korean leadership must bear in mind that its parallel pursuit of nuclear and economic development will never succeed and must make the right strategic choice between coexistence and isolation." (Yonhap)

N. KOREA'S POWER SHIFT THROUGH PARLIAMENT

Contrary to advance speculation for sweeping reshuffle, North Korea apparently opted for stability by making no dramatic changes in a Cabinet shakeup.

After its election a month before, North Korea's newly formed parliament was called into its first session on April 9 to rubber-stamp a reshuffle of high-ranking officials. Although the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) revealed a glimpse into the shift of power structure under the leadership of Kim Jong-un, there was not any sweeping shakeup in the regime's power hierarchy.

As widely expected, the SPA session re-elected the young leader as the first chairman of the country's most powerful body, the National Defense Commission (NDC). The chairman of the commission is the late ruler Kim Jong-il, the father of Kim Jong-un and called "the eternal chairman" of the body. The North's single-chamber legislature meets once or twice a year to approve government budgets and review important state policies, as well as major personnel reshuffle.

Contrary to advance speculation by government officials and analysts in Seoul, most high-ranking military and party officials were re-elected to their previous posts. A widespread shake-up was predict-

ed in the wake of the execution of Kim Jong-un's powerful uncle Jang Song-thaek last December. Analysts explain the North apparently opted for stability by making no dramatic changes in a Cabinet shakeup.

Choe Ryong-hae as No. 2 Man

Choe Ryong-hae, a top military official who is a rising star under the new leader's rule, was appointed as one of three vice chairmen on the National Defense Commission, a post that had been vacant following the bloody purge of Jang on treason charges. Choe, the director of the North Korean army's General Political Bureau, vowed to track down and kill those who do not follow Kim's leadership during a massive rally held just days after Jang's execution.

With his NDC appointment, Choe has grabbed all of the No. 2 positions of the North's three core power bodies, the Political Bureau of the Workers' Party's Central Committee and the party's Central Military Commission. Choe served as the special envoy for Kim Jong-un and met

Kim Yong-nam (L), president of the Presidium of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), and Choe Ryong-hae (R), the director of the General Political Bureau of the North Korean People's Army, applaud North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (C) as he was re-elected the first chairman of the National Defense Commission during the 13th SPA's first session in Pyongyang on April 9. This is a screen capture from the (North) Korean Central TV Broadcasting Station. (Yonhap)



with Chinese President Xi Jinping in May 2013. The North's state media called Choe's name first before the other two vice chairmen were announced, apparently in recognition of his position as the second-most powerful figure in the regime.

The SPA also reshuffled some of the cabinet members. Foreign Minister Pak Ui-chun was replaced by Ri Su-yong, former ambassador to Switzerland. Ri reportedly took care of Kim and his sister Kim Yo-jong when they were at a boarding school in Switzerland, and although he was close to Jang, he apparently survived due to this relationship with the young leader.

The 79-year-old is also believed to have managed slush funds of former leader Kim Jong-il through an alias, Ri Chol, in Switzerland. He served as a diplomat for more than 20 years in Switzerland and the Netherlands and his appointment as foreign minister has prompted experts to speculate that North Korea may seek to strengthen ties with European countries.

Ri's appointment also came as a surprise to the outside world because a Japanese

newspaper reported from Beijing in December that he was executed as he was an associate of Jang Song-thaek. The appointment, however, is unlikely to lead to any dramatic changes in the North's foreign policy toward the U.S. or its nuclear programs.

Meanwhile, the octogenarian ceremonial head of state, Kim Yong-nam, kept his job at the head of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, and Premier Pak Pong-ju also retained his position. That suggests Kim Jong-un is trying to maintain stability amid tensions with Seoul and Washington.

It was initially anticipated that two high-profile officials would be dismissed at the latest parliamentary meeting as the 86-year-old Kim Yong-nam has served the post for decades and Pak Pong-ju was rumored to have been purged over his few contributions to the moribund economy.

Kim Jong-un's powerful aunt, Kim Kyong-hui, was not elected to any important position in the SPA, according to the list of Assembly members revealed by the

North's Korean Central News Agency. Since the death of her husband, Jang, she has been rumored to have stepped down from political life in North Korea.

South Korea has speculated that she may not have been elected to the parliament, though among those elected include an individual named Kim Kyong-hui. South Korea has cautioned that Kim Kyong-hui mentioned in the ballot may be a different person with the same name as the leader's aunt.

Fate of Kim Jong-un's Aunt

The North's state media has not reported further on Kim Kyong-hui or the party's light industry department headed by her. In reality, her name was not called during the April 9 parliamentary session, indicating that she has apparently stepped down from the North's power hierarchy due to her bad health. Kim's failure to show up at the parliamentary session could mean her "retirement from politics," said Cheong Seong-chang, a senior research fellow at the Sejong Institute, a private security think tank near Seoul.

Another notable figure is cabinet vice premier Kang Sok-ju, who has long been a veteran diplomat and longtime confidant to late leader Kim Jong-il on foreign affairs and the North's nuclear negotiations. He was removed from the cabinet post, but later he was confirmed to have become a secretary of the Workers' Party Central Committee.

One newly elected official to watch is Jo Chun-ryong, who had not been a prominent figure before. The new face joined

North Korea's powerful NDC and appears to have replaced Paek Se-bong, the ousted chief of the Second Economic Commission in charge of the munitions industry, according to a government official in Seoul. The official said chances are that he "has been involved in rocket and missile affairs, and the authorities seek not to reveal his identity for security reasons."

Ri Yong-mu and O Kuk-ryol, two other vice chairmen of the National Defense Commission, retained their posts, but former armed forces minister Kim Yong-chun was not included in the list of re-elected officials. Confidants of former leader Kim Jong-il like former army chief Kim Kyok-sik, who supervised the sinking of South Korea's navy corvette Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in 2010, Ju Kyu-chang, who took care of military supplies, and Paek Se-bong, who managed economic matters, were not re-elected.

But People's Armed Forces Minister Jang Jong-nam, Pak To-chun, who oversees nuclear arms development, Minister for State Security Kim Won-hong, and Choe pu-il, minister of people's security, are newly elected members.

The parliamentary meeting came a month after Kim was elected to the new legislature in uncontested nationwide elections along with 686 deputies.

Most of those who were considered close to Jang were elected to the legislature in the parliamentary election in March, an indication that Kim is confident enough not to worry about any backlash from the execution of his uncle.

The election is widely seen as a formality in a country where Kim exerts absolute

power he inherited upon the death of his father and long-time leader, Kim Jong-il, in 2011. "North Korea appears to pursue continuity in policies while seeking stability in personnel appointments," said Chang Yong-seok, a North Korea expert at Seoul National University. He said there is little possibility that the North will bring about any big policy shift.

Continuity and Stability

The outcome of North Korea's latest parliamentary meeting indicates that the communist country has chosen stability over change to minimize the fallout from Jang's execution, Seoul's unification ministry said. Analysts also said the North's regime reshuffle indicates that Pyongyang is seeking for internal stability amid tensions with South Korea and the United States. "There were no big changes in the leadership nominations during the SPA session, and new policy directions were not announced," said an official from the Ministry of Unification, which handles inter-Korean affairs.

Before the meeting, ministry officials expected a major shift in the North's leadership, given that the SPA session marks the first since 31-year-old Kim took the helm of the country in 2012.

"With its power structure now being set after the execution, Pyongyang is expected to concentrate on projects to consolidate Kim Jong-un's sole control," according to the ministry official. The North was also forecast to put more focus on improving its relations with the international community such as seeking ways to resume the six-

party talks, the ministry official said.

Although Pyongyang has not announced details of the state budget during the latest SPA meeting, the assemblymen must have discussed the state budget, which was predetermined by the ruling Workers' Party. According to Seoul's estimates, North Korea's 2014 budget is estimated to be about US\$7.1 billion, a 4.3 percent increase from \$6.76 billion last year. The defense budget accounts for \$1.07 billion, or 15.9 percent of the total in 2013. Last year, Pyongyang spent 45.2 percent of its budget on boosting the economy and 38.8 percent on developing culture.

It has been known that the organization and guidance department of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party has emerged as a key power elite group supporting leader Kim Jong-un following Jang's execution. "The organization guidance department's status has been strengthened since the dismantlement of the party's administrative department, which was headed by Jang, following his execution," a source on North Korea said.

On April 8, a day before the first session of the 13th SPA, the North held a meeting of the party's Politburo and discussed the issue of reinforcing the organization for increasing the leadership role and function of the Party. North Korea experts speculate that the meeting discussed ways to dismantle the party's administrative department and have its functions be absorbed by the organization guidance department, a sign that the North is desperately strengthening the monolithic leadership of Kim Jong-un through the party. (Yonhap)

LONG-OVERDUE LOANS TO NORTH KOREA

North Korea is required to pay back a total of US\$961.53 million by 2037, including principal and interest on food loans and assistance of raw materials.

North Korea's long-overdue loans extended by South Korea's past governments have become a thorny issue for the incumbent government as the impoverished country does not show any signs of repaying its huge debts amid its lackluster economy and rising tensions over Pyongyang's live-fire artillery drills and its threat of another nuclear test.

From 1999 to 2007, South Korea extended loans worth about US\$2 billion to the impoverished country -- US\$804 million in direct loans and US\$1.15 billion in indirect loans via an international body, according to official statistics.

During the governments of former Presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, South Korea provided food loans worth US\$724 million to North Korea and extended loans worth US\$80 million to assist the North's light industry in 2007. In addition, Seoul offered US\$1.15 billion to finance the North's light water nuclear reactor project via the now-defunct Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in 1999.

South Korea's state-run Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) sent a message to its North Korean counterpart on April 1 to inform the North of its debt obligations. The Eximbank handles the execution of the Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund on behalf of the government.

The move came a day after North Korea failed to pay back US\$7 million by the deadline for the third installment payment of principal and interest on US\$724 of food loans.

It marked the third time that North Korea has missed the deadline.

South Korea provided the North with a total of 2.4 million tons of rice and 200,000 tons of corn worth US\$724 million on six occasions between 2000 and 2007, during which the two liberal South Korean presidents sought reconciliation with North Korea. The loans were repayable over 20 years after a 10-year grace period with an interest of 1 percent per annum.

The North failed to repay US\$11.61 million in principal and interest to South Korea for the first and second installments of food loans in 2012 and 2013. The

South Korea has sent messages to North Korea on eight separate occasions to repay its debt, but the North has kept silent on Seoul's repeated demands.

amount of North Korea's overdue food loans, including principal and interest, now totals US\$18.61 million.

In May last year Seoul called on North Korea to repay US\$5.83 million in loans provided in the form of food since 2000 for the fifth time. The North missed the June 7, 2012 deadline to repay South Korea the debt in the first installment of the \$724 million food loan.

Eximbank sent a message on May 24, 2013, to Pyongyang's Foreign Trade Bank, calling for the repayment.

The South Korean bank also sent another message the same day, notifying the North of its forthcoming June 7 deadline to repay the second installment of US\$5.78 million. The North again failed to make the second installment payment.

Separately, North Korea has also failed to pay back US\$8.6 million in what should have been the first repayment of the principal and interest on assistance worth US\$80 million.

In 2007, South Korea provided the North with US\$80 million worth of raw materials to help produce clothing, footwear and soap.

North Korea paid back \$2.4 million, or 3 percent, of the principal in kind in zinc in 2008. The remaining principal amounting to \$77.6 million was to be repaid in installments in 10 years after a five-year grace period with an interest of 1 percent per annum.

A government official said North Korea can repay the loans with mining rights if it

is difficult to pay in kind as North Korea had agreed to repay the loans with mineral resources and mining rights.

"North Korea should faithfully abide by what it previously agreed to with the South," Kim Eui-do, a Unification Ministry spokesman, said, calling for the repayment of food loans.

The government said it will continuously urge North Korea to repay the loans. Once the North responds to the call for repayment, the government can negotiate the methods of repaying the overdue loans with the North, an official said.

South Korea says the North is required to pay back a total of US\$961.53 million by 2037, including principal and interest on food loans and assistance of raw materials, excluding the loans for the KEDO project.

The prospects that the North will repay the loans are said to not be bright, and the political circle in Seoul says the issue should be settled during the current government of President Park Geun-hye.

Chung Woo-taik, a member of the Supreme Council of the ruling Saenuri Party, said in a party gathering, "How to resolve the North Korean loan issue is the task of the Park government." It will become a much more complex problem if the government postpones the settlement without showing its firm determination on the issue and making strong demands to the North while regarding it as a blunder of the past governments, he said. (Yonhap)

U.N.'S TASKS TO BETTER N. KOREA'S HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS

North Korean human rights issues need a comprehensive approach as they embody very complex characteristics.

■ By Lee Keum-soon. *senior research fellow at Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul*

Interest in North Korea's human rights conditions, which surfaced at the United Nations Sub-commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, garnered the attention of the U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC). It eventually led to the adoption of the U.N. Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights in North Korea at the UNHRC and the U.N. General Assembly.

A Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) was appointed in 2004, and the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in DPRK (COI) was established in 2013. DPRK is the official name of North Korea.

This was the outcome of concerted efforts by international human rights organizations, which argued that "systematic, widespread and gross" human rights violations occurring in North Korea are crimes against humanity. The issue of North Korea's human rights could be dealt with at a U.N. level due to the fact that the communist country had presented itself as a "dangerous entity" to the international community through acts such as conducting nuclear tests and launching missiles.

In the midst of such circumstances, the execution of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's uncle, Jang Song-thaek, in December served as a reminder of the inhumanity of the oppressive regime.

After settling its year-long work of public hearings and investigations, the COI presented its final report to the UNHRC in March 2014. The request of the COI to access information held by the North Korean authorities was rejected. Also, unlike other cases, the COI was not able

Robert King, the special U.S. envoy on North Korean human rights, answers reporters' questions after meeting with senior South Korean officials on human rights issues in North Korea at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul on April 7. (Yonhap)



to contact victims of human rights violations and organizations in North Korea, facing limitations in its activities.

Despite the level of expertise held by the commission and its secretariat, as demonstrated in other human rights-related cases, it appears that they faced serious difficulties in examining the North's particular structure of human rights violations and specific cases.

Based on my experience of participating in drafting the White Paper on Human Rights in North Korea for Korea Institute for National Unification since 1996, collecting data for the purpose of holding persecutors accountable is not an easy task. This is due to the victims' lack of information on their persecutors.

COI's Final Report

In addition, only a small number of the victims, including Shin Dong-hyuk, have given testimonies on political prison camps in North Korea. Despite a one-year time limitation, the COI not only organized

existing discussions in a systematic manner but also made suggestions on policy that consider diverse aspects.

However, most noteworthy is that the COI concluded that human rights violations in North Korea are "crimes against humanity" as they are systematically conducted for the political purpose of maintaining the regime centered on public security agencies such as the State Security Department.

In this regard, the COI and the UNHRC have advised the international community to enforce sanctions upon those who are accountable for crimes against humanity and refer the North Korean authorities to the International Criminal Court through the UNSC.

The COI expressed special concerns on the punishment faced by defectors after their forced repatriation from China, and officially requested China to submit data on cases where it did not return defectors in accordance with humanitarian principles.

It is very significant that the COI request-

ed the Chinese government to ask concrete questions on cases of abduction of North Korean defectors by North Korean operatives, and provide the number of North Korean citizens according to their status, documented and undocumented, in China.

Based on the reports from the COI and the Human Rights Resolution on North Korea from the UNHRC, the UNSC will discuss the submission of the international criminal justice mechanism and effective scope of targeted sanctions on North Korea. Although Chinese opposition may make it difficult for the UNSC to deal with the submission, it is significant in that it has led to the request that the issue of North Korean human rights be addressed as a “crime” under international law.

The Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) supports the work of the Special Rapporteur on human rights in North Korea, collects data on human rights violations in the North, and is reviewing the establishment of a “field-based structure” to address the issue. It is reported that the OHCHR has discussed with relevant countries where to establish such an office. It is strongly suggested that the location of the office be decided in consultation with North Korean defectors, who are the main sources of information on human rights violations in North Korea.

Tasks Ahead

The Park Geun-hye government has set the resolution of inter-Korean humanitarian issues, including North Korea’s human rights, as a key administrative task. This is due to the importance of solving North

Korea’s human rights issues in order to enter an era of unification where all the inhabitants of the Korean Peninsula are happy.

The international community will intensify its human rights advocacy as a follow-up to the COI on human rights in the North. After the main opposition party’s clear expression of its stance on the North Korean human rights issue earlier this year, discussions on enacting the North Korean Human Rights Act have taken hold.

However, it seems the gap between approaches based on civil and political rights and approaches that focus on humanitarian aid, based on economic, social and cultural rights, is still significant. If the North Korean Human Rights Act is established through an agreement between ruling and opposition parties, it would be possible to express to the North Korean authorities that human rights should be respected under all circumstances.

As was indicated by the COI’s recommendations, various efforts to improve human rights should be accompanied by attempts to hold the perpetrators accountable. Thus, it is necessary for civil society and the Seoul government to take further steps to publicize the seriousness of the human rights violations and lead the way in making practical improvements that consider the conditions in North Korea and its social changes.

To this end, it is necessary to systemize investigations on North Korean human rights violations by interviewing all defectors entering South Korea. For this purpose, not only concrete information on human rights violations but data on North

Korean defectors' knowledge of their own rights should be systematically collected. Based on such information, measures should be devised to formulate a consciousness of human rights among North Korean residents.

However, it would not be appropriate to indiscriminately and assertively disseminate outside information to North Korea. This is because those who are given access to outside information may face grave danger. Under such circumstances, one should be mindful of making sure that aims other than the promotion of human rights are not given priority.

Careful Approaches

Practical ways to promote human rights will have to be implemented with consideration given to the indivisibility and interdependency of human rights. The fact that the North Korean authorities prioritize the survival of the regime is widely known in the international community. At present, it seems the rights to move and trade freely are what is most needed by North Korean citizens. It is believed that many North Korean people genuinely anticipate an environment in which one can "receive compensation fit for one's labor" rather than rely on the distribution system.

In practice, the existing central distribution system, free medical care and free education have collapsed, while individual economic capability has become the major factor which determines the accessibility of food, health and education. As the difficulties of minorities without little economic capacity have been aggravated with the

diffusion of markets, humanitarian assistance by the international community should be continued, accompanied by efforts to demand accountability from the North Korean authorities.

While the structured "sung-bun (class system)" is a problem, it is necessary to highlight the issue of polarization aggravated by marketization from a human rights perspective. Also, one should note that a culture and customs of discrimination toward women in North Korea are a serious problem.

Inter-Korean humanitarian agenda emerging from the division of the Korean Peninsula such as separated families are also urgent tasks. To this end, it is necessary for the two Koreas to resume talks. North Korean human rights issues need a comprehensive approach as they embody very complex characteristics. From this perspective, cooperation between civil organizations and relevant countries should be intensified to implement various recommendations by the COI.

While relevant parties may prioritize particular agenda reflecting their interests, it is important to respect various efforts made to improve North Korea's human rights. It is important to operate systematic maternal and child health programs given that infant and maternal mortality rates are still serious. Finally, every state and civil organization that promotes cooperative projects and exchanges with North Korea should strengthen its efforts to integrate their human rights concerns into their programs with North Korea. (Yonhap)

NORTH KOREA'S ALL-FEMALE MORANBONG BAND

“Moranbong Band’s resumption of activity is to show that the North Korean society has regained normalcy in the aftermath of Jang Song-thaek’s purge.”

The Moranbong Band, the first all-female music group in North Korea, has recently been making sensations in the reclusive country, touring major cities and counties following months of hiatus.

The band, organized by the North’s top leader Kim Jong-un about two years ago, had disappeared from North Korea’s state media until mid-March after it last performed jointly with the State Meritorious Chorus in October last year on the occasion of the 68th anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers’ Party of Korea (WPK).

According to North Korea’s official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the band made a splendid comeback on March 23 by performing at the April 25 House of Culture in Pyongyang before an audience jam-packed in the 5,000-seat hall.

“The performers represented with cheerful music the immortal feats supreme leader Kim Jong-un has achieved by powerfully demonstrating the dignity of the great Paektusan nation and the spirit of achieving prosperity,” the KCNA said. “The performance pervaded with hymns in the great era of Kim Jong-un reached its climax when the band presented female quartet ‘We Cannot Live without You’ and female chorus ‘We Know Nobody but You.’”

The group’s performance in Pyongyang continued for 10 days until April 1. It was a rare case for the band to present massive performances to ordinary citizens for 10 days.

Explosive Popularity

On April 1, the KCNA said tens of thousands of people, including schoolchildren and foreigners, have watched 10 performances given since its start on March 23.

“For 10 days of performances the band raised an unprecedented sensation in the capital city,” it said and added that the performances evoked a lively response among audience.

“After enjoying the band’s performance, the audience described it as a ‘performance which kicked off ideological offensive,’ ‘songs making audience refreshed,’ ‘unique perfor-



The North Korean girl group Moranbong Band performs at the April 25 House of Culture in Pyongyang on April 1. (KCNA-Yonhap)

mance bringing party policies home to people' and 'performance which demonstrated the might and characteristics of our music,'" the English-language report of the KCNA said.

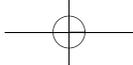
North Korean media such as Rodong Sinmun and the KCNA said the popularity of the Moranbong Band is "explosive." People form a long queue at ticket offices from early hours of the day to buy tickets and shouts for "encore" were heard continuously in every performance, they said.

A North Korean defector in Seoul said North Korean people used to engage in fierce competition to get tickets when new bands like Pochonbo Electronic Ensemble and Wangjaesan Light Music Band held performances before. The competition to buy tickets for Moranbong Band's performance may be much fiercer than previous ones, he said.

He attributed the high popularity of Moranbong Band to the members' superior singing and playing skills, bold costumes and a wide variety of repertoires that include western popular songs.

On March 22, Kim Jong-un watched the band's performance with his wife Ri Sol-ju, sister Kim Yo-jong and core officials of the military and the party, including Choe Ryong-hae, the military's top political officer. North Korean media said Kim also enjoyed the band's performance on March 17.

The group was organized in early 2012 by Kim Jong-un and made its debut in July 2012. Now it is an icon of "Kim Jong-un Era" performing various styles of pop, rock and fusion in



addition to propaganda music clad in sensuous short skirts.

When the group was launched the KCNA reported that Kim Jong-un organized the Moranbong Band “as required by the new century, prompted by a grandiose plan to bring about a dramatic turn in the field of literature and arts this year in which a new century of Juche (self-reliance) Korea begins.”

The band, the KCNA said, just several months old “raised its curtain for its significant demonstration performance proclaiming its birth before the world.”

The repertoire of the performance included colorful numbers such as light music “Arirang,” female vocal quintet “Let’s Learn,” light music “Yeppuni,” light music and song “Victors,” female trio “Silk Weaving Girl of Yongbyeon,” string quartet “We Can’t Live without His Care,” foreign light music “Chardash,” “Victory” and “Song of Gypsy,” female sextet “Fluttering Red Flag” and light music and song “Suite of World Fable Songs.”

The July 7, 2012 audience was composed of Choe Ryong-hae, Jang Song-thaek, the once-powerful uncle of Kim Jong-un who was executed in December 2013 for treason charges, WPK secretary Kim Ki-nam and other top military and WPK officials, creators, artists, writers and journalists of literary and art, media and art educational institutions, according to the KCNA.

Also, the band has performed songs such as “Let’s Study” and “Our Dear Leader,” an instrumental version of Frank Sinatra’s “My Way,” and the theme song from Rocky.

The exact reason of the sudden disappearance of Moranbong Band has not been confirmed, but North Korea watchers say it may be related to the purge of Jang Song-thaek and execution of some female entertainers in the summer of 2013.

In August last year South Korean newspapers reported that key members of the Moranbong Band were made to watch the execution by a firing squad of Hyon Song-wol, head of the Moranbong Band, and members of the Unhasu Orchestra and Wangjaesan Light Music Band, on orders of Kim Jong-un. The victims were reportedly involved in producing and distributing pornographic videos.

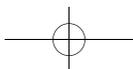
Earlier Japan’s Asahi Shimbun newspaper reported that some members of the North’s Unhasu Orchestra and an art troupe were executed for making pornography.

Propaganda Function

The surprising execution of Jang and purge of his confidantes, which began in November 2013, may also have something with the hiatus of Moranbong Band considering that Jang had wielded considerable influence in North Korea’s entertainment and artistic world.

Jang, the political mentor of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and No. 2 man in the North, was executed on Dec. 12 on charges of attempting to overthrow the Kim regime, corruption and other misdeeds. Jang was also accused of selling the North’s coal to “a foreign country (referring to China)” at excessively cheap prices.

The execution marked the biggest political upheaval in North Korea since Kim took



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and his wife Ri Sol-ju enjoy a performance by the North Korean girl group Moranbong Band at the April 25 House of Culture in Pyongyang on March 22. (KCNA-Yonhap)



power in late 2011.

North Korea watchers say the re-emergence of Moranbong Band is designed to strengthen the “monolithic leadership” of Kim Jong-un and induce the people’s loyalty to the leader by using the band, which enjoys hottest popularity among North Korean people.

They pointed out that the contents of the band’s performance were composed of songs to praise Kim and vow loyalty to the young leader.

The KCNA said in a report on April 6 of the band’s performance in Taehongdan County, Ryanggang Province, that “the audience hardened their pledge to unite in a single mind around the Marshal (Kim Jong-un) and reap a rich harvest on the Paektusamcholli Plain in the spirit of Taehongdan.”

“Female solo and chorus ‘Warm Feelings’ and ‘We Think of the Marshal Day and Night,’ female duo and chorus ‘Our Marshal’ and female quartet ‘We Cannot Live without You’ heightened the atmosphere of the performance as they reflected the loyalty of the people in the area of Mount Paektu to Marshal Kim Jong-un, who devotes himself to translating into reality the desire of President Kim Il-sung and leader Kim Jong-il on this land,” the report read.

“Moranbong Band has emerged as a representative band of the Kim Jong-un era, The band’s resumption of activity is to show to North Korean people and to the outside world that the North Korean society has regained normalcy in the aftermath of Jang Song-thaek’s purge,” Jeon Young-sun, a professor at Seoul’s Konkuk University, said. (Yonhap)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRANS-KOREAN, EURASIAN RAILWAY PROJECTS AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

I. Introduction

Home to approximately 71 percent of the global population, Eurasia is the largest single continent, spanning 12 different time zones from its easternmost point to the westernmost tip, as described by President Park Geun-hye on Oct. 18, 2013 when she proposed a “Eurasian Initiative” in a Eurasian conference in Seoul. The proposal calls for turning Eurasia into “a single united continent, a continent of creativity and a continent of peace.”

“Getting past the disconnect and isolation as well as tension and conflict, we need to build a new Eurasia where all of us can carry out peaceful exchanges and achieve prosperity through mutual understanding and door-opening efforts,” says the proposal. One of the key projects aimed at attaining this ambition is to build the Silk Road Express, which will run from Busan in South Korea all the way to Europe via North Korea, Russia, China and Central Asia, by connecting the northeastern part of Eurasia with railways and roads to establish a multi-purpose logistics network, which would eventually be extended to Europe, it stressed, adding: “The construction of transnational transport infrastructure is making it possible to save shipping costs and efficiently utilize energy, mineral resources and agricultural produce. If trade barriers were gradually dismantled and regional economic integration were accelerated by turning Eurasia into a free trade zone, it would be possible for the Eurasian continent to emerge as a massive single market just like

By Na Hee-seung,
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National Consultant*

the European Union.” While mentioning a trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula, which has been pushed forward by the Seoul government, the bid for a Eurasia Initiative also said: Seoul will also “execute the trust-building process as a means to promote cooperation in the Russian Far East and in China’s three northeastern provinces as well as trilateral cooperation encompassing the South and North (referring to the two Koreas) and third parties like China and Russia.”

During their summit last November, Seoul and Moscow signed a memorandum of understanding for the participation in the Rajin-Khasan railway project and port redevelopment project in Rajin by a South Korean consortium of the state-run rail operator KORAIL, steelmaker POSCO and Hyundai Merchant Marine. In early February this year, an 18-man mission of the consortium has visited the North Korean port city of Rajin for a field survey. Earlier in June last year, RZD Trading House, which acts as the official representative of Russian Railways (RZD) on foreign markets and exports materials, equipment, technologies and services of railway complex and related industries, signed an agreement with the North Korean Ministry of Railways to complete the reconstruction of the rail line from Russia’s border town of Khasan to Rajin.

This essay is aimed at reviewing the significance of the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR) in the proposed Eurasian Initiative and examining a stage-by-stage strategy for propelling the Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) project, plus the significance of the Trans-Korean, Trans-Eurasian Railway (TER) projects and related challenges. While analyz-

ing the logistical situation facing South Korea, Northeast Asia and Eurasia in recent years, it will evaluate the Rajin-Khasan project in connection of cooperation among the two Koreas and Russia. It will also touch on the limitation facing the railway network in Central Asia and challenges facing it.

II. The Implications of Relationship between the TKR and TER

In general, attaining integration and forming a community require mutual exchanges between groups, and individuals, an agreement on core values, relationships that share functional mutual interests, strong economic ties, the ability to integrate key regions and open social communications, among other things.¹⁾

If we want to turn the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia and Eurasia into a single economic bloc in the future, one of the basic requisites for attaining this goal is their mutual exchanges. Also important is our efforts to develop the Korean Peninsula into an open territory from a closed one, should we realize our future vision for the peninsula. The formation of a trans-Korean railway network is a very important strategy aimed at reinforcing economic and social ties between Northeast Asia and Eurasia and proliferating prosperity in some of their areas to all of their regions, and improving the geographical conditions and competitiveness of the Korean Peninsula in the course of these developments.

The TER project is meant for developing

closer inter-Korean relationship and opening an era of cooperation in Eurasia in a reformative way. "The Iron Silk Road," referring to the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR), a transcontinental railway network between Europe and Pacific ports in China, will help to not only reduce time and cost in freight transportation and promote inter-Korean economic cooperation but expand economic cooperation in Eurasia. The TKR connecting the two Koreas and running all the way through the Korean Peninsula will develop into an international passenger railway network integrating Northeast Asia, plus an international freight railway network running through Eurasia. This means the construction of an infrastructure for peace that will turn a long history of confrontation and dispute into a history of exchange and cooperation in this part of the world. The development of infrastructure in North Korea is a core strategic project serving as a driving force for recovering the moribund North Korean economy in connection with its development projects including the formation of special economic zones. Just as the railway, which was the product of imperialism and a symbol of colonial rule, has played a pivotal role for integrating Europe economically, socially and culturally, the TKR will play a role of land bridge linking Europe, Asia and the Pacific and serve as a new driving force for economic growth in Eurasia to accelerate the formation of an economic, social and cultural community there.

III. A Stage-by-Stage Strategy for Constructing the TKR and Challenges

The idea for building the Silk Road Express and the TER is very significant for the Korean Peninsula in terms of its role as a land bridge linking the continent with the ocean and connecting the Eurasian economic bloc with Asia-Pacific. Because of a drastic increase in passenger and freight traffic between Europe and Asia in recent years, facilities for logistics there have reached saturation point. Essential to properly handling an ever increasing freight traffic, there is a rail linking major countries in Northeast Asia with Eurasia. The TER under construction will likely develop into an international passenger railway network integrating Northeast Asia, plus an international freight railway network running through Eurasia. The TER linking Europe, Asia and the Pacific Ocean will promote economic cooperation not only between the two Koreas but between countries in Eurasia by reducing transportation time and costs. Necessary for the project is a stage-by-stage strategy to conduct lost-cost pilot projects in the initial phase, which are led by governments and whose impacts are great, to be followed by its expansion to large-scale high-cost ones open to international private investors. This is a strategy to modernize the TKR step by step and create a virtuous circle in the Eurasian logistics project, thus improving the international competitiveness of the countries involved.

Proposed here are measures to be taken on a step-by-step basis for the TKR aimed at improving its international competitive-

ness as follows: minimum renovation of the railway networks in the two Koreas → creation of profits through logistics projects and reinvestment → modernization of the North Korean railway network on a reform basis → expansion of logistics projects and formation of an international consortium → modernization of the North Korean railway network on a fresh conception basis → completion of a Eurasian land bridge. And there is the need to establish a stage-by-stage strategy and set tasks aimed at developing the North Korean railway network, while presenting short-, mid- and long-term road maps for its development. These measures are aimed at creating a virtuous circle of inter-Korean special economic zones and inter-Korean transport infrastructure.²⁾

In the first phase for connecting the railway networks in the two Koreas there should be the construction of infrastructure in the North Korean areas bordering South Korea, such as Kaesong and Mount Kumgang. The work to restore the railway lines of Gyeongui and Donghae, which run through the Korean Peninsula from Seoul to Sinuiju and along the eastern coastal areas, respectively, was completed for their opening to the traffic. But the operation of freight trains on the Gyeongui Line was suspended in 2008. In 2004, North Korea reached an agreement with South Korea to allow South Korean tourists to make overland trip to Mount Kumgang. The number of South Korean overland tourists to the North Korean scenic tourist attraction a year had once reached 300,000. Under inter-Korean agreements, South Korea can transport raw materials to the Kaesong Industrial

Complex and carry products there back to the South through the TKR. This railway network running through the Korean Peninsula can be used for the South's supply of goods in humanitarian aid to the North, inter-Korean trade of commodities, South and North Korean laborers' cross-border commuting and South and North Koreans' cross-border sightseeing tour. Also necessary are a step-by-step increase in infrastructure for logistics in accordance with progress in projects regarding special economic zones in border areas and brisk activities of an inter-Korean committee for managing the TKR, should the two Koreas run the system for cross-border passage and customs clearance effectively.

The second phase for repairing and innovating the North Korean railway network is the stage of propelling the construction of basic facilities in preparation for a rise in demand of passenger and freight traffic between North Korea and Russia, plus China, and freight traffic passing through the North. In the early days of this stage, priority should be given to freight traffic between countries in Northeast Asia, which passes through the North, because the freight traffic only within the North will be undoubtedly insignificant. Necessary for this is a tripartite cooperation involving the two Koreas and Russia and another three-way cooperation involving the two Koreas and China to explore projects to bring about their common benefit. In particular, most likely the Rajin-Khasan railway project propelled jointly by North Korea and Russia will positively affect the projects to build the TKR and TER. Once the innovation of the Gyeongui Line in the TKR is completed,

the two Koreas and China need to propel an international logistics project for Northeast Asia under close cooperation. For this, they need to push ahead with the operation of trains exclusively for container freight running on the railways linking Shenyang, capital of Liaoning Province in China, and the South Korean port city of Busan, via Pyongyang and Seoul. And South Korea is required to win full membership in the Organisation for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), an international organization established as the equivalent of the International Union of Railways (UIC) to create and improve the coordination of international rail transport, should the South play a role in the operation of the TKR in connection with China, Russia and Europe.

The third phase for modernizing the North Korean railway network is the stage to expand basic facilities for double-tracked railways and a speedy railway system to prepare for an increase in traffic in the North. This is the stage to modernize the North Korean railway network on the basis of the traditionally known fresh conception. On a long-term basis, this is the stage to build a network for basic facilities in Northeast Asia and to enhance internal potential for basic facilities on the Korean Peninsula.

IV. Logistics Situation Facing the two Koreas and Northern Part of Eurasia

South Korea joined the so-called one-trillion-dollar trade club in 2011, with its trade crossing the US\$1 trillion mark. Northeast

Asian countries, including China, Japan and Russia, were responsible for one-third of South Korea's trade that year. Trade between Northeast Asian countries has ever increased in recent years, and a railway network linking key countries in Northeast Asia and Europe is badly needed for meeting an ever rising freight traffic demand in this part of the world.

The following is the result of a survey of freight traffic from South Korean ports to key areas in Northeast Asia, Far East and Siberia.³⁾ Chinese ports involved are Dangdong, Dalian, Tianjin and Yingkou and ports in the Russian Far East are Vladivostok, Vostochny, Nakhodka and Zarubino. In case a railway network will be formed in Northeast Asia and Eurasia, the ship cargo there will turn into rail freight to be transported overland. In the case of direct trade, freight is increasing at a rapid pace not only in the Yellow Ocean-rim areas but also the East Sea-rim ones. In the case of trans-shipment freight, the Busan port has overwhelming comparative advantage over other ports in the regions. Traffic of high value-added container freight is rising continually, and the sector of trans-shipment freight is showing a rapid recovery after the global financial crisis in 2008. Under the current trend, freight traffic there will double in 15 years. Under this development, not only the Rajin-Khasan railway line but the TKR and the TER will likely secure freight enough for normal operations.

And freight traffic in the Far East and Siberia through the TSR has continued to increase since 1999. International container freight traffic rose from 70,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) in 1999 to 620,000

The Gist of 'Eurasian Initiative'

Proposed by South Korean President Park Geun-hye at the Global Cooperation in the Era of Eurasia conference in Seoul in October 2013.

- ▶ To build the "Silk Road Express" -- from Busan to Europe via North Korea, Russia, China and Central Asia -- by connecting the northeastern part of Eurasia with railways and roads to establish a multipurpose logistics network
- ▶ To provide the eastern end of Eurasia with access to the sea by connecting the Northern Sea Route, which is newly emerging as a shipping lane
- ▶ To increase energy cooperation between nations in the region, saying that they must take advantage of the fact that it includes the world's leading producers and consumers of energy.
- ▶ To make Eurasia a continent of creativity. There is need to create an environment where creativity of the people in Eurasia can be fully demonstrated and industries, technology and culture can be fused.
- ▶ To expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges. An exchange network linking the young people of Eurasia needs to be put into place so that future leaders of Eurasia are able to experience each other's languages and cultures, talk about their visions for the future and put their heads together to find solutions to important regional issues such as poverty and environmental degradation.
- ▶ To make Eurasia a continent of peace. Threats to peace and security are the biggest obstacles to trade and cultural exchanges.

TEUs in 2007, a nine-fold increase. That figure decreased to 270,000 TEUs in 2009 because of the U.S.-originated financial crisis, but the container freight traffic is in a phase of full-fledged recovery.

Here are estimates on the transportation demand in 2030 for the TKR based on a scenario drawn from a status quo basis and a more optimistic one.⁴⁾ In the first scenario, there will be 80 million tons of freight traffic demand in the Kaesong Industrial Complex that year, with a freight

traffic demand ranging from 20 million tons to 30 million tons along the Gyeongui Railway Line and another 10 million to 20 million tons of demand along the Donghae Railway Line. In the second scenario, there will be 150 million tons of freight traffic demand in the areas bordering the Gyeongui Line and 130 million tons of demand in the areas bordering the Donghae Line, with 100 million tons of freight traffic demand in other areas on the Korean Peninsula.

V. Evaluation of the Rajin-Khasan Project

The Rajin-Khasan project is to complete the reconstruction of the rail line from Russia's border town of Khasan to No. 3 quay in the North Korean port of Rajin. The project calls for renovating the railway, reconstructing the 54km dual-track railway line with 1,520mm and 1,435mm gauges, three tunnels, repairing a border railway bridge and building a freight terminal that can handle 4 million tons of freight a year at Port Rajin. In other words, the Rajin-Khasan project is a logistics project connecting Port Rajin with the TSR. Possibilities are high that the project to transport container freight through the TSR after their shipment from Busan to Rajin will succeed commercially when the Rajin-Khasan Railway opens for traffic. For South Korea, its political and economic effect is great because the South can secure a strategic value of the Rajin-Sonbong (otherwise known as Rason) region designated as a special economic zone.

Port Rajin links with the TSR in Khasan and serves as the terminal of the Northeast rail network connecting North Korea and Manchuria, a large region in Northeast China consisting of the provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning, functioning as a key port linking freight heading to Harbin, the capital of the Heilongjiang Province, and Tumen, a county-level city in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture of Jilin Province, with international trade. At present, Port Rajin is equipped with 15 berths in three quays where 5,000 ton to 10,000-ton ships can dock, and the length of the quay wall totals 2,448 meters. There

is no trouble in bringing 10,000-ton ships alongside the pier because the maximum depth of the pier front is 11 meters. No. 1 and No. 2 quays are used mainly by China for transporting coal to China, and No. 3 quay is under development in connection with the Rajin-Khasan Railway project. Mechel OAO, one of the leading Russian mining and metals companies, has proposed the participation of POSCO, one of the world's leading steelmaking companies, in the Rajin-Khasan railway and port development project. South Korea has formed the aforementioned consortium and is undertaking negotiations with Russia, while making the field survey last February. North Korea and Russia plan to develop Port Rajin handling mainly container freight into a port dealing with bulk coal. Russia has asked South Korea to take over 49 percent of its stake in the project. To lead the Rajin-Khasan project to success, the two Koreas and Russia need to agree on 1) a competitive wage system, 2) shortest transport time, 3) procedures for transparent, speedy customs clearance, and 4) proper port infrastructure. In particular, South Korea and Russia are required to exert their best efforts to providing customers with best logistics services, reducing charges for the port and rental for freight cars, along with discount transportation charges, speedy transportation and brief procedures for customs clearance.

The Rajin-Khasan, a pilot project in the proposed TER is profitable to both the two Koreas and Russia. Through the project, North Korea can vitalize its economy in the Rason region by renovating some of its outdated railway facilities and develop its

close relations with Russia. And once it succeeds in improving its relations with the United States, a North Korean process of developing multilateral cooperation, if any, can gain momentum. Russia can solve problems plaguing its ports in the Far East, which have reached saturation point and can vitalize the logistics network in Eurasia by promoting the competitiveness of the TSR. Russia can also develop its closer ties with North Korea and increase its political and economic influence over Northeast Asia as a railway and energy power. Through the project South Korea can not only gain new driving force for its economic cooperation with Russia but propel a new type of inter-Korean cooperation through projects requiring multilateral cooperation, like the Rajin-Khasan project. The advantage of this project is in its effect of reducing transportation time and costs. The Rajin-Khasan Railway will help shorten the time for transportation of freight from Busan to Moscow by about 20 days. The project will likely create much demand in relation to automotive industry because it can curtail the period for stock of high value-added goods. Port Rajin will have advantage in logistics costs over ports in the Russian Far East because of the low costs of purchasing freight cars there. In case this turns out to be true, Port Rajin will also be competitive in the freight transportation market in Central Asia. If this project proceeds successfully, it will help the Korean Peninsula establish a foothold in Eurasia, securing economic feasibility as a business package in connection not only with logistics but natural resources development in Central Asia and Siberia.

VI. The Limitations of an Integrated Central Asian Railway Network and Challenges

The Eurasian Initiative proposed by President Park Geun-hye calls for Korea's cooperation not only with Russia but with Central Asia comprising the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in the Eurasian inland area. The railway networks in Central Asia includes those in the five CIS countries, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, located in the center of Asia and with their approach to oceans blocked by China, Mongolia, Russia and Middle East countries. Each of their huge railway networks was built in the era of the Soviet Union to transport freight between Moscow and their cities. Before their independence from the Soviet Union, the Central Asian Railway Bureau, whose main office in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan, had managed the Central Asian railway network.⁵⁾ Since their independence, the five countries have been responsible for the operation of their own railway networks, in the form of private, or state management.

The Central Asian railway network stretches as long as 22,511 kilometers. About 70 percent of the Central Asian economy is in close relation with the railway network, and one-fifth of the population in Central Asia or about 60 million people reside in the areas along the railways there. Upon the collapse of the socialist bloc, the administrative lines drawn in the Soviet era turned into bor-

ders, and this change resulted in embarrassing procedures for cross-border passage and customs clearance, keen competition between neighboring countries, regional disputes and economic slump, which serve as stumbling blocks to free passage of trains and regional cooperation in Central Asia. And the collapse of the traditional channel for goods supply between the Soviet Union and Central Asia has brought about the shrinking of the base for the transportation industry there, and the distorted structure and wornout facilities of the railway network in Central Asia have served as critical factors hampering the development of the Central Asian economy. The competition between superpowers for occupying a new corridor in the region and their conflicting interest, plus international confrontation and disputes in border areas, have weakened the competitiveness of the communications and logistics system in the whole of Central Asia at a rapid pace.

Solutions to these problems first require mutual understanding and cooperation between countries in Central Asia. They need to form environments favorable for regional cooperation in the administrative level as seen in the Soviet era, by drastically simplifying procedures for cross-border passage and customs clearance. For such regional cooperation, there may be a need for an agreement for integrated operation of their railway networks and a railway council for Central Asia. In a move to seek multilateral cooperation on an international basis, they need to strengthen cooperation with international organizations such as the UNDP and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the

Pacific (UNESCAP). They need to put top priority on their beyond-national border efforts to share their infrastructure, plus investment and profit, with each other. South Korea needs to form environments where it can work in cooperation with international and other related organizations, which participate directly, or indirectly in the project to form an international corridor in Central Asia, including UNESCAP, UNDP, OSJD, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Coordinating Council on Trans-Siberian Transportation (CCTT) of Russia. In preparation for its joining the railway logistics market in Central Asia, it needs to train experts specializing in regions and countries in Central Asia, while launching its railway-related cooperation with Central Asia as soon as possible. It also needs to provide a strategy for supporting Central Asian countries concerned with technological advices and activities, forming a task force regarding the railway network in Central Asia. Also necessary for South Korea is to provide a public fund for supporting surveys of the countries there which are its potential market and conduct a feasibility survey of its participation in projects there under the initiative of private capital.⁶⁾

VII. Conclusion

The KTR and the TER will eventually develop into an international passenger railway network integrating Northeast Asia and an international freight railway network running through Eurasia, respectively. Now is the time for the two Koreas to

be furnished with a new strategy to upgrade an integrated railway network on the Korean Peninsula to a new competitive one that connects to Eurasia and that in Northeast Asia, rather than remaining in a simple logic to connect the TKR with the TSR, the Trans-Chinese Railway (TCR), the Trans-Mongolian Railway (TMGR) and the Trans-Manchurian Railway (TMR).

Under this context, the two Koreas and Russia need to propel the freight railway project in Eurasia, in its initial stage, as a project to link the TKR and the TSR and push forward the railway network project in Northeast Asia as a railway network exclusively for container freight running between the two Koreas and China.

There is the need for the parties involved to develop a cooperative model for integrated infrastructure in Eurasia, including Northeast and Central Asian countries on a mid- and long-term basis.

In particular, South Korea and other Northeast Asian countries need to play a leading role in this project through their close cooperation because they are located geographically on a land bridge connecting the Eurasian economic bloc and the Asian-Pacific one. This is meant not only for an economic effect but the establishment of a peace infrastructure on the Korean Peninsula, ushering in a new era for the divided countries. In other words, this is a comprehensive project essential for South Korea to secure a new future-oriented vision in Eurasia.

(This is an excerpt from the original Korean essay carried in the February 2014 edition of the “KDI Review of the North

Korean Economy” published by the state-invested Korea Development Institute in Seoul, South Korea.)

Notes:

- 1) Deutsch, Karl W. (1957), *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton: Princeton University Press; Jacob, Philip E., and Henry Teune (1964), “Integrative Process: Guidelines for Analysis of the Bases of Political Community,” *The Integration of Political Communities*, edited by Philip E. Jacob et al., Philadelphia, PA: J.B. Lippincott.
- 2) Na Hee-seung, “A Stage-by-Stage Plan for Building a Trans-Korean, Continental Railway And Railway-related Cooperation between Korea and Russia,” a journal published by the Korean Association of Siberian Studies, 2009.
- 3) UNDP GTI, *Integrated Transport Infrastructure and Cross-Border Facilitation Study for the Trans-GTR Transport Corridors*, 2012.
- 4) The Korea Railroad Research Institute, *An Integrated Railway Network on the Korean Peninsula*, 2010.
- 5) Under a decision of the Soviet Cabinet in 1964, the Central Asian Railway Bureau of the Soviet Union was established, with its main office in Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan. At present the bureau is responsible for the management of the railway networks in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan
- 6) Na Hee-seung, “The Current Situation facing the Railway Network in Central Asia And Chances for South Korea to Find Inroads into the Railway Market There,” a paper presented in an academic forum held in autumn 2013 by the Korean-Central Asian Economic Association.

Internal Affairs**N. Korean leader pays tribute to founder on birthday**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un paid respects to his grandfather and founder of the communist country on April 15 marking his 102nd birthday, the North's state media said.

Kim visited the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, where the body of Kim Il-sung, along with his son and former leader Kim Jong-un, lies in state, according to the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The founding father died in 1994, and his birthday is one of the most important holidays in North Korea.

In his visit to the palace, the young leader Kim was accompanied by senior officials, including Choe Ryong-hae, the military's top political officer, and Jang Jong-nam, the minister of the People's Armed Forces, the KCNA said.

Those accompanying Kim "made a pledge to complete the revolutionary cause and the military-first policy" initiated by the two predecessors, according to the media.

The junior Kim took the helm of the communist country in 2011 following the sudden death of Kim Jong-il, who also inherited power from his father Kim Il-sung. (Yonhap)

N. Korea hit by extensive outbreak of bird flu

North Korea has experienced an outbreak of bird flu since March, culling tens of thousands of poultry so far, its news agency said on April 9.

A chicken farm in the capital city of Pyongyang first reported symptoms of avian influenza (AI), known as the H5N1 virus, on March 21, and the virus has been spreading to other poultry farms, the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported, citing Director Ri Kyung-kun of its agricultural ministry.

"(We) are suffering from extensive economic damage as tens of thousands (of poultry) have either fallen dead or been culled," the KCNA said.

As part of efforts to contain the highly contagious virus, the North Korean authorities "set up an emergency quarantine commission and declared an emergency prevention situation across the nation," the report added.

"(The government) has controlled traffic, come up with quarantine measures and buried the culled. But the disease shows no sign of dying down and continues to spread," the KCNA said.

North Korea sustained extensive damage by AI last year. (Yonhap)

N. Korea's fertilizer imports from China soar in Feb.

North Korea continued to buy fertilizer from China in bulk in February, data showed on March 28, as the impoverished nation has revved up efforts to increase food production.

The North brought in 13,769 tons of Chinese fertilizer in February, a whopping 13 times more than some 1,064 tons from a year earlier, according to the data compiled by the Seoul-based Korean Rural Economic Institute (KREI).

In the first two months of the year, Pyongyang imported 48,882 tons of Chinese fertilizer, which is far higher than 1,066 tons from the same period a year earlier, the data showed.

“The 2013 figure is unprecedented, as the North used to buy a limited amount in the winter season. It seems to be very proactive in securing fertilizer long ahead of its usual schedule, and that indicates farm output improvement is its top priority,” said KREI researcher Kwon Tae-jin.

In his New Year's message, the North's young leader Kim Jong-un stressed boosting food production, saying all efforts “should go for agriculture ... in order to build a strong economy and to improve the people's livelihoods.”

Last year, Pyongyang bought a total of 207,334 tons of fertilizer from China, down by 18 percent from the previous year. (Yonhap)

N. Korean leader flew to Wonsan before rocket launch

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un had flown to an eastern test site one day before his military fired off an unprecedented number of rockets from there, a military source said on March 21, an indication that he may have had a direct hand in the March 16 night launch.

Kim visited the eastern city of Wonsan via a light aircraft, believed to be one of the Cessna models, on March 15. The North fired off 25 ground-to-ground FROG-7 rockets into the sea the following night.

“It seems that Kim may have planned the rocket launch as the North Korea military fired off an unprecedented large number of rockets the following evening from Wonsan,” the source said, asking not to be named.

With the joint military drills underway, the South Korean and U.S. forces have maintained a high level of vigilance because about 10 mobile launchers have been spotted at the same test site since the latest launch, in a potential sign of additional provocations.

Kim's latest inspection illustrates the different leadership style from his late father Kim Jong-il, who had always used trains due to his fear of flying triggered by a 1976 helicopter crash that seriously injured him.

“Although Kim Jong-il had used trains for his provincial trips, Kim Jong-un has sometimes flown by a light airplane when visiting regions where there are airstrips,” another source said, requesting anonymity. “It maybe be attributable to the young leader's more liberal nature.” (Yonhap)

North Korea turns to online promotion of Mt. Kumgang tours

North Korea has turned to active online advertising to attract more foreign tourists to its scenic mountain resort, which observers say is apparently linked to its efforts to earn much-needed hard currency.

The Korea International Travel Company, the North's state-run tourist operator, said on its website on March 16 that the number of tourists from European and Asian countries to Mount Kumgang is on the rise.

“(Foreign tourists) have constantly expressed admiration and praised Mount Kumgang,” one of the postings on the site said.

The website also included several postings by Chinese and Taiwanese tourists who uploaded their travel epilogues and praises of the mountain resort.

The move is the latest effort by the heavily sanctioned country to diversify ways to entice more tourists and secure foreign currency amid a dispute between the two Koreas over their stalled joint tour program at Mount Kumgang.

The resort, just north of the inter-Korean border, is one of the symbols of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation efforts. It was started and handled by South Korea's leading conglomerate Hyundai Group in 1998 with the backing of the Seoul government. The tour program was halted in 2008 when a South Korean tourist was fatally shot near the resort for allegedly wandering into a restricted military zone.

Pyongyang has since turned to foreign tourists to maintain the tour business and make up for the losses.

North Korea is also trying to link the tour to its recently opened ski resort, the Masik Pass Resort, on its east coast city of Wonsan, to draw visitors. Pyongyang is promoting Masik as “the most exotic ski destination on earth.” (Yonhap)

External Affairs

N. Korea warns Japan over de facto embassy in Tokyo

North Korea warned Japan against selling a property in Tokyo that serves as the North's de facto embassy during their first high-level talks in more than a year, the chief Pyongyang delegate said on April 1, adding that there would be “no need” for progress in bilateral talks unless Japan addresses the issue.

The strongly worded remarks by Song Il-ho, North Korea's ambassador in charge of talks to normalize relations with Japan who led the two-day talks that ended on March 31 in Beijing, suggested that the two sides ended the Beijing talks apparently without even starting serious discussions on key pending issues, including the North's admitted abduction of more

than a dozen Japanese citizens decades ago.

A Tokyo court ruled the previous week that a Japanese real estate firm could buy the property of the General Association of Korean Residents in Tokyo, known as Chongryon, which represents North Korean interests in Japan. The Chongryon property has been put up for auction after being seized over unpaid debts.

“The issue of the Chongryon building is one of fundamental matters in the progress of North Korea-Japan relations,” Song told reporters before leaving for Pyongyang at the Beijing airport. “Unless this issue is resolved, there would be no need for making progress in North Korea-Japan relations.”

North Korea expressed “strong concerns” over the Chongryon property, describing the ruling by the Tokyo court as “unfair.” (Yonhap)

Inter-Korean Affairs

Gov't launches land survey for DMZ peace park

Despite renewed inter-Korean tension, South Korea has started preparatory work for building a peace park inside the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), officials said on April 16.

As part of efforts to boost inter-Korean ties, President Park Geun-hye proposed that the two Koreas build an international park inside the last-remaining Cold War frontier. For the outreach project to Pyongyang, Seoul set aside 40.2 billion won (US\$38.4 million) in this year's budget.

Members of the task force team at Seoul's Ministry of Unification visited three candidate cities -- Paju in Gyeonggi Province, and Cheorwon and Goseong in Gangwon Province -- several times in February and March for field investigations.

During the visits there, they met local officials and were briefed on the overall circumstances of each region and received cadastral data to review, according to officials of relevant agencies.

The candidate towns along the border are well-known for DMZ tours.

After additional field surveys and necessary reviews, the Seoul government is scheduled to unveil its blueprint “soon,” according to the officials.

“We've gotten prepared to establish the peace park, and some progress has been made,” a ministry official said.

“But the government has yet to decide on when to announce the plan due mainly to sour inter-Korean relations,” the official said, adding the key is “to create circumstances good enough for us to make an official proposal about the project to the North.”

In her speech in the former East German city of Dresden in March, President Park once

again expressed her hope to build the park inside the DMZ, saying it will “presage the replacement of tension with peace on the DMZ, division with unification and conflict in Northeast Asia with harmony.”

But the North flatly rejected her package of initiatives, calling it “irrelevant and nonsensical,” and has taken a series of provocative acts, including firing missiles into the sea and threatening nuclear war. (Yonhap)

Eximbank opens center to study inter-Korean economic development

The state-run Export-Import Bank of Korea said on April 16 it has opened a center to study inter-Korean economic development and integration to support the government policy on national unification.

The Eximbank said the center will study issues related to North Korean economic development and provide its views on North Korea policy. It will also research ways to revive inter-Korean economic cooperation and help the North serve as a member of the international community, the bank said.

Eximbank is entrusted by the government to operate the inter-Korean cooperation fund and the economic development cooperation fund.

The new center will conduct studies on cutting costs of unification and help establish specific action plans for development projects by using its experience in operating the state funds, the bank said. (Yonhap)

S. Korea voices regret over detained missionary in N. Korea

South Korea expressed regret to North Korea on April 15 for detaining a South Korean Christian missionary for more than six months without granting him access to an attorney and his family.

Kim Jong-uk has been held in the communist country since Oct. 8 when he was arrested on charges of spying for the National Intelligence Service (NIS), South Korea’s top spy agency.

Kim confessed to committing anti-state crimes and appealed for mercy during his first news conference in Pyongyang in February.

He also said he was trying to set up a “head office of the dissident underground church network” in Pyongyang to help eventually topple the North, the North’s official Korean Central News Agency reported in February.

“It is regrettable for the North not to meet our demand that North Korea grant him access to an attorney and his family, and release and repatriate him,” an official of South Korea’s unification ministry said.

The comment came hours after Uriminzokkiri, North Korea’s Internet-based propaganda website, reported that Kim had received money from the NIS for his campaign to build

underground churches in the North.

“It is not a secret among South Korean missionaries in the Chinese city of Dandong that I worked for the NIS while conducting missionary work in Dandong,” Uriminzokkiri quoted Kim as saying in an interview by Radio Pyongyang, the North’s state-run media, on April 14.

Kim said he met with several South Korean intelligence officials in Seoul and Dandong, and said it is “very irresponsible” for the NIS to deny the meetings.

The NIS dismissed the Uriminzokkiri’s report on Kim as groundless.

“We have nothing to do with” Kim, an official of the NIS said. He asked not to be identified, citing policy.

Kim also told Radio Pyongyang that he had trained 33 North Koreans about underground churches, and the North withheld his identity until after it confirmed which North Koreans Kim had trained. (Yonhap)

360 N. Korean defectors arrive in South in Q1

A total of 360 North Koreans fled their home and arrived in South Korea in the first quarter of this year, registering a slight increase from a year earlier, the unification ministry said on April 8.

According to the data compiled by the ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, 153 North Koreans settled in the South in January, 111 in February and 96 in March.

The figure for the quarter was slightly higher than the 319 entrants for the same period in 2013 and the 352 people in 2012, the data showed.

“The 2014 tally was slightly higher than that of the previous two years, but it remains to be seen until the end of this year if it indicates any significant changes,” a ministry official said.

Last year, a total of 1,516 North Koreans settled in the South, up slightly from 2012 when 1,502 people crossed the border, according to ministry data. South Korea is now home to 26,124 North Koreans.

A steady stream of people from the communist country has fled their home to avoid chronic food shortages and harsh political oppression, prompting the authorities to strengthen their patrol along the border with China, according to sources. (Yonhap)

S. Korea returns three rescued N. Korean sailors, two bodies

South Korea handed over three rescued North Korean sailors and two bodies to the North on April 6, an official said.

The repatriation took place at the truce village of Panmunjom inside a military buffer zone that separates the two Koreas, according to the government official.

The move came two days after the North asked for the repatriation of its surviving crew members and the bodies of the dead through a dialogue channel at Panmunjom.

On April 4, a Mongolian-flagged cargo ship sank some 63 kilometers off the coast of

South Korea's southern city of Yeosu, killing two out of 16 North Korean crew members on board and leaving 11 others missing.

South Korea's Coast Guard rescued the three North Korean sailors.

South Korea dispatched boats and aircraft to the scene to try to find the missing North Koreans and their ship for a third straight day on April 6, though bad weather has been hampering search and rescue operations.

The 4,300-ton boat, carrying some 50 tons of heavy oil and 6,500 tons of steel products, was en route to China from the North Korean city of Chongjin, according to South Korean officials. (Yonhap)

Seoul mulling U.N. office on N. Korean human rights

South Korea will positively consider hosting a United Nations office on North Korea's human rights violations if it receives a formal request, the foreign ministry said on April 8.

Following a U.N. commission of inquiry's report accusing the North of dire human rights violations, the U.N. Human Rights Council adopted a resolution in late March calling on the international community to take steps to bring those responsible to justice.

The resolution also called for the establishment of a field office in charge of further investigation and follow-up measures to address North Korea's human rights violations.

"Currently, discussions are under way over the location of the field office," Foreign Ministry spokesman Cho Tai-young said in a briefing. "The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the U.N. is looking for a location agreeable to member countries of the human rights council.

"Seoul's stance is that it will positively review a request if it is made by the U.N. and the human rights council," the spokesman said. "The South Korean government has coherently supported the U.N.'s resolutions on North Korea under the principle that human rights should be respected as a universal value for mankind."

Cho's comments came in response to a local news report that Seoul has rejected a U.N. request to set up a field office here due to concerns that it could hamper humanitarian projects between the two Koreas, including the occasional reunions of separated South and North Korean families.

"The report is not true at all," he said.

North Korea has strongly denounced the recent U.N. report that accused the regime of "systemic, widespread and gross" violations of North Koreans' human rights, threatening to conduct a "new form of nuclear test." (Yonhap)

Incheon Asian Games organizer seeks IOC help for N. Korean participation

The top organizer for this year's Asian Games in South Korea has asked the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to help North Korea take part in the event, officials here said on

April 1.

Kim Young-soo, president of the organizing committee for the Incheon Asian Games, met with Thomas Bach, head of the IOC, during his visit on March 31 to the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) headquarters in Kuwait, the Asiad officials said in a statement. There, Kim asked Bach for the IOC's cooperation in ensuring North Korea's presence in the quadrennial continental competition.

The organizing committee noted that it was the first time Kim discussed North Korea's Asian Games participation with Bach.

According to Incheon officials, Bach responded that the IOC would spare no effort in assisting South Korean organizers, since the Asian Games wouldn't be complete if any one country were missing.

The organizing committee added that Bach offered to attend the Asian Games opening ceremony on Sept. 19 in Incheon, a metropolitan city located just west of Seoul.

In February, Pyongyang officials told South Korean journalists that North Korean athletes would compete in all events at the Asian Games. The South Korean pool reporters were at the Mount Kumgang resort north of the border to cover reunions of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War.

A month earlier, North Korea announced through its state-run news agency that its male and female football teams would compete in Incheon.

In 2002, North Korea sent 184 athletes and more than 100 female cheerleaders to Busan, South Korea's second-largest city, for the Busan Asian Games. (Yonhap)

Women's groups of two Koreas meet over comfort women

More than 30 citizens of the two Koreas met on March 28 for the first time in seven years to deal with the issue of Korean women forced to serve as sex slaves for the Japanese army during World War II.

The two sides held a dinner together at a hotel in the northern Chinese city of Shenyang. No details of their meeting were immediately available.

They held their last meeting in 2007 when a North Korean civilian delegation visited Seoul for an Asian conference on former sex slaves, euphemistically called "comfort women."

The meeting comes days after China revealed a wartime letter written by a Japanese national that confirmed Japan had forced Korean women into sexual slavery for the Japanese army.

Historians say up to 200,000 women from Korea, China and other Asian nations were coerced into sexual servitude at front-line Japanese brothels during the war.

Japan ruled the Korean Peninsula as a colony from 1910-1945 and controlled much of China during World War II.

In 2007, the United States defined the comfort women program as the systematic enslavement of women of subject populations for sexual purposes. (Yonhap)

N. Korean defectors float propaganda leaflets across border

A group of North Korean defectors floated hundreds of thousands of propaganda leaflets into the communist nation on March 25, denouncing Pyongyang for its deadly sinking of a South Korean warship four years ago.

The event came on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the March 26 sinking that killed 46 South Korean sailors near the western sea border with North Korea.

“Now that four years have passed since the sinking of the Cheonan, the government has started to show less interest, while North Korea still hasn’t apologized, so we decided to organize this event,” said Park Sang-hak, the leader of Fighters for Free North Korea, a group of defector activists.

The defectors, together with members of the conservative South Korean group, National Action Campaign for Freedom and Democracy in Korea, launched 600,000 leaflets vowing revenge on behalf of the victims and condemning the regime of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

The leaflets were tied to 20 large balloons and floated across the border from the South’s northwestern city of Paju.

South Korean activists and defectors frequently send hundreds of thousands of anti-North Korea leaflets across the border by balloon, despite the North’s repeated threats of retaliation.

The Koreas have remained divided by the border since the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce, not a peace treaty. (Yonhap)

N. Korea builds new high-speed infiltration boat

North Korea has been building a new high-speed, wave piercing craft to deploy them front-line troops as part of efforts to enhance its infiltration capabilities through sea routes, a military source said on March 23.

Pyongyang has been building a Very Slender Vessel (VSV), which can move over 100 kilometer per hour with a small number of special forces aboard. The cylindrical vessel is about 10-15 meters long with a small-cross section that can pierce straight through waves.

The VSV is much faster than air-cushion vehicles deployed by North Korea, which can move at speeds of up to 96 km/h. The communist state has deployed about 70 air-cushion vehicles on its west coast and 60 of the amphibious vehicles in the east at its four hovercraft bases, according to a report by the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff.

“North Korea has been constructing the very slender vessel since last year to enhance its commandos’ maritime infiltration capability,” the source said, asking for anonymity. “This is believed to be ready for deployment.”

The ship was first spotted in satellite imagery last year when Pyongyang conducted its first test run in the East Sea, the source said.

Seoul officials consider the high-speed craft as a big threat to front-line islands, especially after the North torpedoed South Korean Navy's Cheonan warship in the tensely guarded western sea three years ago, killing 46 sailors on board.

"North Korea has continuously stepped up its maritime infiltration capability since the Cheonan sinking, and production of the high-speed craft is believed to be part of its plans to build up its capability," a senior military official said, asking not to be named.

"If the VSV is deployed, it will be a big threat (to South Korea) along with the midget submarines that have already been in operation."

The new vessels are expected to be forward deployed in the eastern coast, the official said, raising the possibility that the North may paint them with stealth paint to camouflage its warships.

The communist nation has regularly carried out landing operations using amphibious vehicles, which Seoul officials believe are aimed at infiltrating the inter-Korean sea boundary to quickly occupy South Korean border islands in case of war. (Yonhap)

S. Korea rejects North's offer, wants wage talks in July

South Korea is seeking to hold wage talks with North Korea in July for tens of thousands of North Korean workers at their joint factory park in Kaesong, an official said March 21, in a rejection of the communist country's demand that the talks be held within March.

Unification ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do said South Korean factory managers in the North's border city reached the consensus that the talks should be held in July as usual.

The South Korean authorities plan to hold consultations with their North Korean counterparts on the issue, he said.

Kim also said South Korea cannot accept the North's recent demand that the rival Koreas hold wage talks in March and that South Korean companies raise the base pay of their North Korean workers by 10 percent.

The base pay of North Korean workers at the factory park is set at about US\$67 per month. South Korean companies have given a 5 percent raise to them annually since 2007, according to the unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs.

North Korea shut down the factory park in April last year in anger over South Korea-U.S. joint annual military exercises.

Still, Pyongyang later pledged not to shutter the park again "under any circumstances" and reopened it in September.

More than 44,600 North Koreans work at 120 South Korean firms operating in the park to produce clothes, shoes, watches and other labor-intensive goods. The project serves as a major legitimate revenue source for the impoverished communist country. (Yonhap)

S. Korea remains cautious on fertilizer aid to N. Korea

South Korea is cautious on fertilizer aid to North Korea by private relief agencies, an official said on March 17, amid fresh signs of tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

Unification ministry spokesman Kim Eui-do said private organizations should consult with the government on the issue of fertilizer aid to the North.

The comments are widely seen as disapproval of the plan to ship fertilizer to the North by a coalition of about 200 South Korean civic groups.

South Korea has banned fertilizer aid to the North by its private relief agencies since May 2010, when Seoul slapped sanctions on Pyongyang in retaliation for the deadly sinking of a warship blamed on North Korea.

The North has refused to take responsibility for the sinking that killed 46 South Korean sailors.

Kim also reaffirmed that the government is not considering providing fertilizer to the North.

His comments came a day after North Korea fired 25 short-range rockets into waters off its east coast in what may have been a routine military exercise.

The South Korean government gave 2.45 million tons of rice to North Korea between 1995 and 2010, and 2.55 million tons of fertilizer between 1999 and 2007, according to the unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs. (Yonhap)

FOREIGN TIPS

China starts 2nd rail travel service to N. Korea

China has launched the second train service to North Korea, state media reported on April 14, a move expected to boost travel between the two nations.

The April 13 opening of regular rail services from China's northeastern city of Jian to the North Korean capital of Pyongyang makes Jian the second city offering such service after another Chinese border city of Dandong, Xinhua news agency reported.

North Korea is one of the world's most secretive and isolated nations, but Pyongyang has stepped up efforts to attract foreign tourists since last year by offering more international and domestic flights.

In Jian, Chinese tourists can apply for a one-day round trip, which is available once every four days, to North Korea for US\$480 per person, the report said.

Zang Wanghong, director of the Jian Tourist Board, said the tour agency will begin selling the tour package to the North's western port city of Manpo before May 1, according to the report. (Yonhap)

U.S. exports to N. Korea jumps nearly 20-fold in Feb.

U.S. exports to North Korea jumped nearly 20-fold in February from a year earlier, a U.S. radio report said on April 8.

The volume of trade between the two countries reached US\$1.2 million in February, compared with \$62,000 a year earlier, the Voice of America (VOA) reported, citing data compiled by the U.S. Commerce Department.

The VOA said that humanitarian assistance provided by U.S. private agencies accounted for 95 percent, or \$1.13 million, of the total U.S. shipment to North Korea in February.

The rest of the U.S. exports to the North included poultry, footwear and plastic products, the radio report said.

The U.S., however, imported nothing from North Korea during the cited period, it said.

The two countries do not have diplomatic relations following the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in a cease-fire, not a peace treaty. (Yonhap)

U.N. to provide US\$400,000 to N. Korea over FMD: report

The U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) plans to provide US\$400,000 to North Korea to help eradicate the rapidly spreading foot-and-mouth disease there, a U.S. radio report said.

The Voice of America (VOA) reported on April 3 the U.N. body was considering a proposal to North Korea over the infectious animal disease that broke out near Pyongyang in early January, citing the FAO's Chief Veterinary Officer Juan Lubroth.

The FAO also plans to send quarantine officials to North Korea after finalizing its aid program there, the VOA said.

Foot-and-mouth disease is an infectious and sometimes fatal disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals such as pigs, cattle, deer and sheep.

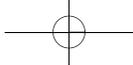
In February, the North's state media reported that the country had culled 2,900 pigs as a preventive measure to stop the spread of the disease and buried about 360 others that had died from the disease.

Still, North Korea remained mum for over a month on South Korea's offer of assistance to contain foot-and-mouth disease.

The North's silence comes amid tensions on the Korean Peninsula over the exchange of fire by the rival Koreas across their disputed western maritime border, as well as Pyongyang's threat of a nuclear test.

Pyongyang has also threatened to carry out a "new form" of nuclear test in anger over a United Nations condemnation of its recent ballistic missile launches. North Korea conducted nuclear tests in 2006, 2009 and 2013, drawing international condemnation and U.N. sanctions.

South Korea has vowed to continue humanitarian assistance to the North regardless of political tensions. (Yonhap)



U.N. fund gives US\$6.5 mln to its partners in N. Korea

The United Nations humanitarian fund created to speed up relief efforts around the world has given US\$6.5 million to its partners operating in North Korea, a U.S. radio report said.

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) provided the money to the World Food Program, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the World Health Organization and the U.N. Population Fund, the Washington-based Radio Free Asia said on April 1.

The CERF said on its website in January that it allocated \$6.5 million to help humanitarian partners sustain emergency aid operations in the North.

In 2013, North Korea received more than \$15 million from the CERF.

North Korea has been on the list of recipients of the CERF since 2006 when the U.N. General Assembly established the emergency fund, the RFA said.

The CERF pools donor contributions into a single fund to ensure money is available to start relief work immediately when needs arise, according to ReliefWeb, a website run by the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

The North has relied on international handouts since the late 1990s when it suffered a widespread famine that was estimated to have killed 2 million people. (Yonhap)

N.K. imports more cargo machinery as it develops port for Russia project

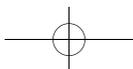
North Korea has visibly increased imports of cargo-handling machinery from Russia, a possible sign that the two countries are stepping up economic cooperation in developing a strategically located North Korean port, a trade agency report issued in Seoul showed on March 30.

Russia exported US\$21.16 million's worth of jib cranes, machinery used mostly for cargo handling at ports, to North Korea last year, accounting for nearly 22 percent of its total exports to the North, according to the report by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). The amount surpasses that of Russia's traditional export goods such as coal, petroleum and bituminous oil.

There were no records of the machines being exported to North Korea the year before, with the 2011 amount standing at \$139,000.

North Korea and Russia maintain economic relations that include a project that would make North Korea's northeastern port city of Rajin a logistics hub by connecting it to Russia's Trans-Siberian Railway. North Korea is said to have agreed to a long-term lease of the No. 3 dock at Rajin port to Russia and that it is modernizing facilities there. The cranes may be for such modernization efforts, the KOTRA report said.

Also noteworthy is Russia's exports of ambulances to the North, amounting to approximately 10.1 billion won (\$9.45 million), the fourth largest in terms of value. Ambulances are a relatively new product on the trade list. (Yonhap)



N. Korea builds statues of Zimbabwe's president: report

North Korea has completed two statues of Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe, according to a belatedly-monitored news report, in Pyongyang's latest lucrative project in Africa.

The US\$5 million project is to mark the 90th birthday of the long-time leader of the southern African nation, the Telescope News reported in February.

The two statues, which began being crafted by Pyongyang in 2009, are believed to be ready for delivery, said the online news website, which specializes in African news.

The bigger bronze statue, worth \$3.5 million, will be erected at a prominent place in Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare, while the smaller one with a price tag of \$1.5 million is earmarked for the president's rural home in Zvimba, the website said, citing unidentified sources at Zimbabwe's National Museums and Monuments.

In 2010, North Korea also built a gigantic statue in Senegal in what the western African nation's president called a monument to Africa's renaissance. (Yonhap)

N. Korea's per-capita GDP grows 4.8 pct in 2013: report

North Korea's per-capita gross domestic product (GDP) rose 4.8 percent on-year in 2013 from an improved grain harvest and expanded investment in the mining, utility and other segments, a report showed on March 16.

The North's per-capita GDP for last year is estimated at US\$854, up \$39 from a year earlier, according to the report released by the Hyundai Research Institute (HRI), a South Korean private think tank.

The North's 2013 per-capita GDP amounts to a mere 3.6 percent of South Korea's per-capita GDP of \$23,838 for the same year, it said.

North Korea's grain production improved on the back of favorable weather conditions, while the country also expanded its investment in various industrial sectors, the report said.

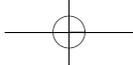
The communist state's grain production is estimated to have grown some 5 percent last year from a year earlier. The country saw an 8.5 percent on-year rise and 10 percent gain in its grain production, respectively, in 2011 and 2012.

Also, the reclusive nation increased its budget spending for railroads, metal and power generation sectors, which contributed in boosting its economy, the report showed.

Trade between North Korea and its strongest ally China jumped 10.4 percent on-year to reach \$6.5 billion last year, while inter-Korean trade sank 42 percent to \$1.1 billion due to a five-month halt of a jointly run industrial park.

The Kaesong Industrial Complex was shut down in early April 2013 after the North unilaterally pulled out all of its workers at 123 South Korean firms. It reopened in September after Pyongyang agreed not to repeat such a suspension.

Assistance from the international community to the North also dropped 47 percent on-year to reach \$63.1 million last year, the report said. (Yonhap)



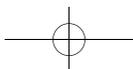
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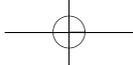
Kim Jong-un : Supreme Commander of the (North) Korean People's Army (KPA), First Secretary of the Workers' Party of (North) Korea, First Chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC)

- March 17 enjoys a performance given by the Moranbong Band together with service personnel of the KPA.
- 17 guides a firing competition among commanding officers of the armed services and corps-level units.
- 17 guides a flight exercise of the KPA Air and Anti-Air Force Unit 188 honored with the title of the O Jung Hup-led 7th Regiment.
- 19 guides a firing competition among educators of Kim Jong Suk Naval University and Kim Chaek Air Force University.
- 20 provides field guidance to a machine plant managed by Kang Thae-ho.
- 22 provides field guidance to Ryugyong Dental Hospital and Okryu Children's Hospital.
- 22 watches a performance given by the Moranbong Band at the April 25 House of Culture with his wife Ri Sol-ju.
- April 1 meets the commanding officers of the combined units of the KPA who had completed their study tour of battle sites near Mt. Paektu.
- 10 has a photo session with the deputies of the 13th Supreme People's Assembly in front of the statues of President Kim Il-sung and leader Kim Jong-il on Mansu Hill in Pyongyang.
- 15 visits the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun at 00:00, on April 15, the birth anniversary of Kim Il-sung (Day of the Sun).

Kim Yong-nam : President of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA)

- March 20 sends a message of greeting to Al Moncef Al Marzouki, president of Tunisia, on the occasion of the country's national day.
- 21 sends a message of greeting to Hassan Rouhani, president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on the occasion of the Iranian New Year.
- 22 meets with Rustam Minnikhanov, president of the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation, and his party at the Mansudae Assembly Hall in Pyongyang..
- 25 sends messages of greeting to Abdul Hamid, president of Bangladesh, on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of its independence and to Carlos Papoulias, president of Greece, on the occasion of its national day.
- April 6 sends a congratulatory message to Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, upon her election as president of Malta.

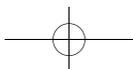


**Pak Pong-ju** : Premier

- March 18 makes a field survey of the Pukchang Thermal-power Complex.
 26 meets Alexander Galushka, minister of the Development of Far East of Russia, and his party.
 28 makes a field survey of the construction of Satellite Scientists Street.
- April 2 makes a field survey of the farming of co-operative farms in Yonan, Chongdan and Paechon counties in South Hwanghae Province.
 4 makes a field survey of the construction of the power stations in tiers on the Chongchon River.

CHRONOLOGICAL REVIEW**(Local Events)**

- March 17 An enlarged meeting of the Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea is held under the guidance of Kim Jong-un.
 20 An annual meeting of the DPRK Olympic Committee takes place to review the work done by the committee last year and discuss the direction of its work for this year.
 20 The fourth national technological innovation exhibition of the three-revolution teams opens at the Three-Revolution Exhibition House.
 22 Choe Ryong-hae, director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, makes a field survey of the construction of Satellite Scientists Street.
 24 The Pyongyang Photo Exhibition "History of Friendship" opens at the People's Palace of Culture to mark the 65th anniversary of Kim Il-sung's first official visit to the former Soviet Union.
 26 Farms in the western coastal area of the DPRK start sowing rice cold beds.
 31 Rodong Sinmun dedicates an editorial to the first anniversary of the new policy on simultaneously pushing forward economic development and building nuclear weapons advanced at a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the WPK.
- April 1 The 76th enlarged plenary meeting of the Central Committee and the General Federation of Trade Unions of Korea (GFTUK) takes place in Pyongyang.
 1 The Mangyongdae Prize Sports Contest begins at Pyongyang Indoor Stadium in the run-up to the 102nd anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung.
 1 The universal 12-year compulsory education is put into practice across the DPRK with the start of the new school year (2014-15).
 2 The 69th enlarged plenary meeting of the Central Committee and the Union of Agricultural Workers of (North) Korea is held in Pyongyang.
 3 The National Martial Art Championship for Mangyongdae Prize opens at the Taekwon-Do Hall.

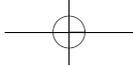


- April 4 The DPRK (North Korea) produces posters on the 29th April Spring Friendship Art Festival to celebrate the birth of Kim Il-sung.
- 4 The Moranbong Band leaves Pyongyang by air and arrives in Samjiyon to make a tour of Ryanggang Province after successfully winding up its performances in Pyongyang.
- 8 A national meeting takes place in Pyongyang to celebrate the 21st anniversary of the election of former leader Kim Jong-il as chairman of the National Defense Commission (NDC).
- 8 A week of film showings opens in the DPRK to celebrate the birth of Kim Il-sung.
- 8 A meeting of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the WPK is held under the guidance of Kim Jong-un.
- 9 The first session of the 13th SPA elects Kim Jong-un as first NDC chairman and other NDC members.
- 9 The first session of the 13th SPA appoints Premier Pak Pong-ju and other Cabinet members.
- 9 The first session of the 13th SPA elects Kim Yong-nam as president of the Presidium of the SPA and other presidium members.
- 10 A Pyongyang city rally takes place at Kim Il-sung Square to congratulate Kim Jong-un on his re-election as first NDC chairman.
- 13 The 16th Kimilsungia Festival opens in Pyongyang on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Kim Il-sung.
- 13 Dancing parties of youth and students take place in various parts of the DPRK to celebrate the 2nd anniversary of Kim Jong-un's election to the top posts of the Workers' Party of Korea and the state.
- 14 A national meeting takes place at the Pyongyang Indoor Stadium to celebrate the birth of Kim Il-sung.
- 15 Kim Yong-nam, Pak Pong-ju and other senior party and state officials visit the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun, on the anniversary of the birth of Kim Il-sung.

(Foreign Events)

- March 17 Wu Dawei, special envoy of the Chinese government for the affairs of the Korean peninsula, and his party arrive in Pyongyang.
- 17 A week of Russian film showings opens to mark the 65th anniversary of the agreement on economic and cultural cooperation between the DPRK and the Russian Federation.
- 20 Kim Yong-dae, vice president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, meets with Wu Dawei, special envoy of the Chinese government for the affairs of the Korean peninsula, and his party at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
- 21 Rustam Minnikhanov, president of the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation, and his party arrive in Pyongyang to mark the 65th anniversary of the agreement on economic and cultural cooperation between the DPRK and Tatarstan.

- March 21 An agreement on cooperation between the Chamber of Commerce of the DPRK and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation is signed in Pyongyang.
- 21 Talks between Ri Ryong-nam, minister of Foreign Trade of the DPRK, and Rustam Minnikhanov, president of the Republic of Tatarstan of the Russian Federation, are held at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
- 22 A delegation of the Ministry of Public Health of the DPRK leaves Pyongyang to attend a World Health Organization meeting of the Regional Certification Committee for Polio Eradication to be held in New Delhi, India.
- 23 A delegation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation visits the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun.
- 24 Alexander Galushka, Russia's minister of the Development of Far East, arrives in Pyongyang on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of the agreement on economic and cultural cooperation between the DPRK and the Russian Federation.
- 24 Kim Yong-il, an alternate member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the WPK, meets with the delegation of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.
- 25 Alexandr Galushka, Russia's minister of the Development of Far East, and his party visit the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun.
- 25 The Korean Central News Agency says the NDC statement, "The DPRK Clarifies Its Stand on the U.S. Hostile Policy towards It at Home and Abroad as Regards the Prevailing Situation," was distributed at the U.N. Security Council as official document "S/2014/194" on March 20.
- 26 Minutes of talks on cooperation in trade, economy, science and technology between the governments of the DPRK and Russia are signed in Pyongyang.
- 26 A delegation of the Information Committee of the DPRK led by Vice Chairman Jong Tong-hak leaves Pyongyang to visit Singapore and Qatar.
- 28 A delegation of the Maritime Territorial Regional Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation headed by V.V. Grishkov, first secretary of the committee, arrives in Pyongyang.
- 28 A DPRK foreign ministry spokesman blasts the U.S. for allegedly intensifying military provocations disturbing peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.
- 29 Rodong Sinmun claims the South Korean president groundlessly attacked the DPRK over its nuclear programs at a nuclear security summit in the Netherlands.
- 30 The Foreign Ministry of the DPRK issues a statement blasting the United Nations for its "illegal action of taking issue with the justifiable rocket launching drills conducted by the Korean People's Army."
- 31 Mongolia's Minister of Industry and Agriculture Khaltmaa Battulga and his party arrive in Pyongyang.
- April 1 Talks between Ri Ryong-nam, minister of Foreign Trade of the DPRK, and Mongolian Minister of Industry and Agriculture Khaltmaa Battulga take place in Pyongyang.



- 2 A memorandum of understanding on setting up the DPRK-Mongolia friendship joint company between the DPRK and Mongolian governments is inked in Pyongyang.
- 7 Jang Myong-ho is appointed as DPRK ambassador to Syria, according to a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly.
- 10 An Indonesian government cultural delegation headed by Hari Untoro Dradjat, senior advisor to the minister of Tourism and Creative Economy, arrives in Pyongyang to participate in the 16th Kimilsungia Festival.
- 12 The North's National Peace Committee of Korea denounces the Max Thunder joint air exercises as an undisguised challenge to all Koreans desirous of improved inter-Korean relations, and peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia.
- 12 Rodong Sinmun slams South Korean President Park Geun-hye's unification initiative as "a revelation of the trick to pass the buck for tensions between the north and the south to the DPRK and carry out its confrontational policy at any cost." (Yonhap)

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Subscription rates (mailing cost included) : US\$70.00 for one year, US\$7.00 per copy

VOL. 37 NO. 5 Copyrights © 2014 by **YONHAP NEWS AGENCY**
Publication Registration No : Culture RA-08259
Printed by Hansan HEP, Paju, Korea

