

## VANTAGE POINT

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**COVER PHOTO** : South Korea's Deputy Minister for National Defense Policy Ryu Je-seung (R) shakes hands with North Korea's Reconnaissance General Bureau chief Kim Yong-chol prior to their talks at the inter-Korean truce village, Panmunjom, on Oct. 15. The general-level talks, the first of their kind in more than three years, failed to reach any agreement on easing inter-Korean tensions. (Photo courtesy of Defense Ministry) (Yonhap)

## Seeking Turnaround from Inter-Korean Impasse

**Recent series of inter-Korean clashes casts a dark cloud over a long-awaited reconciliation created by top North Korean officials' sudden visit to Incheon.**

■ By Lee Kwang-ho

The burgeoning mood for an inter-Korean thaw is fading away as the rival Koreas confronted each other in a series of fire exchanges across the heavily-fortified border. The hope for the inter-Korean rapprochement came when a high-powered North Korea delegation made a surprise visit to South Korea in early October to attend the closing ceremony of the 2014 Incheon Asian Games.

During their one-day stay in the port city, the North Korean power elites agreed with top South Korean security officials to hold another round of high-level talks in late October or early November to find a breakthrough from inter-Korean impasse. Their Oct. 4 agreement to resume the high-level dialogue has created much-needed momentum for a thaw in cross-border relations, but doubts linger over the possibility of a breakthrough as there is still a wide gap between the two sides over a number of knotty issues.

The Pyongyang delegation's visit came as the bilateral relationship has been deteriorating with the North hardening its verbal attacks against the Seoul government and specifically President Park Geun-hye, who has continued to urge the North to give up nuclear arms and improve its dismal human rights conditions.

Despite South Korea's call for the meeting to be held on Oct. 30, it still remains unclear when the envisioned dialogue would be held. It would be the second of its kind under the Park administration, if held, since the first meeting was held in February. The agenda is expected to include lifting South Korea's bans on economic cooperation, resuming tours to the North's scenic Mount Kumgang and holding reunions of separated families - all of which are issues the two sides have struggled to resolve for years.

Complicating matters further, military confrontation resumed just two days after the friendly visit to Incheon, when South and North Korean patrol boats briefly traded fire after a North Korean naval vessel violated the Northern Limit Line (NLL), the de facto maritime border between the two.

Pyongyang has long disputed the line, claiming that it should be redrawn

further south as it was unilaterally set by the U.S.-led United Nations Command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. The NLL in the West Sea has long been a contentious issue in inter-Korean relations, a tinderbox on this divided peninsula.

Three days later, the communist country fired anti-aircraft machine guns on Oct. 7 at balloons flown by the South Korean civic groups containing leaflets criticizing the authoritarian regime. Military tensions between the two Koreas escalated further on Oct. 19 as the two sides exchanged gun shots near the border north of Seoul.

But the recent exchange of fire between the two sides over Seoul activists' scattering of anti-Pyongyang leaflets has raised concern over whether the second-round high-level meeting could be held as agreed.

### Top N. Korean Officials' Visit

Despite the military confrontation, the visit by three top Pyongyang officials, including Hwang Pyong-so, the newly elected vice chairman of the mighty National Defense Commission, was rare and sudden. Hwang was accompanied by another confidant of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, Choe Ryong-hae, the secretary of the Workers' Party Central Committee, and Kim Yang-gon, who heads the ruling party's United Front Department in charge of South Korean affairs.

Although their visit was made to attend the Asiad's closing ceremony, they held a series of closed-door talks with Seoul's Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae and Kim Kwan-jin, the chief of the national security office and former defense minister. Hwang said, "We have paved a small path this time. Let's make it lead to a



A top-level North Korean delegation -- Hwang Pyong-so, Choe Ryong-hae and Kim Yang-gon (L to R) -- waves towards their national team during the closing ceremony of the Asian Games in the South Korean city of Incheon on Oct. 4. Hwang, the director of the North Korean army's General Political Bureau, is widely believed to be the No. 2 man in the communist country. (Yonhap)

bigger one," which suggests a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations.

Observers explain that the time has come for Seoul to ease the sanctions and permit tourism to North Korea by taking the initiative in inter-Korean relations. The lifting of sanctions could also be a boon for business for both Koreas.

Amid growing concerns about recently escalated military tensions near the two nations' land and maritime borders, a senior presidential aide for national security expressed his optimism on Oct. 19 that both Koreas will have the high-level government contact as agreed.

"Because the two Koreas agreed on high-level talks during a luncheon on the final day of the Incheon Asian Games, I believe they will take place as scheduled," Ju Chul-ki, senior presidential secretary for foreign affairs and national security, said Oct. 19.

He also said President Park had broached

the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program and its human rights record at the biennial summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting because they are not only inter-Korean matters but also international concerns.

In a commentary on Oct. 17 at the Asia-Europe Meeting in Milan, the president criticized North Korea for initiating provocations while proposing talks. She urged the reclusive state to end its nuclear program and improve its dismal human rights record.

Park also called on more than 50 Asian and European leaders to support South Korea's efforts to bring peace to the divided peninsula. Park's remarks should be understood as suggestions to the North, Ju added. "She was urging North Korea to improve its human rights conditions and resolve the nuclear issue for its economic development," Ju said.

North Korea on Oct. 18 slammed President Park for her remarks, calling them an "unpardonable politically motivated provocation." It also complained Park spoiled a rare opportunity for inter-Korean reconciliation.

Ju also dismissed criticism that the Park administration had failed to maintain transparency in dealing with North Korea. After the two nations had military contact on Oct. 15, Seoul has kept its silence on the meeting. Pyongyang, however, disclosed details about the talks later on Oct. 16 and said the future of the high-level government contact is in danger.

But while Ju presented a sanguine forecast for the planned high-level government meeting, tensions between the two Koreas escalated further after South Korea fired warning shots toward a group of North Korean soldiers during a reconnaissance mission on Oct. 18 near the eastern inter-Korean border.

According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in

Seoul, the North Koreans retreated without engagement after seven hours and 30 minutes of reconnaissance activities near the border. The military stated that about 10 North Korean soldiers approached the border inside the demilitarized zone in the northern border county of Cheolwon, Gangwon Province. The mission lasted from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., the South Korean military said.

### Exchange of Fires at Border

On Oct. 19, South and North Korea exchanged fire across the heavily fortified border in the latest clash on the divided Korean Peninsula amid concerns that tensions could scuttle high-level talks between the two sides.

The incident occurred around 5:40 p.m. when South Korea, after broadcasting warning messages, fired warning shots against about 10 North Korean soldiers who were approaching the military demarcation line in Paju, said an official of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

It was not immediately known what prompted the North Korean soldiers to try to advance toward the military demarcation line in Paju, a city located about 40 kilometers northwest of Seoul. After South Korea's warning shots, North Korea apparently fired back against South Korea, the official said, noting two marks from North Korean rounds were found in a South Korean guard post.

Earlier in October, the rival Koreas also exchanged machine gun fire across the border after the North apparently tried to shoot down balloons carrying anti-Pyongyang leaflets. North Korea has repeatedly pressed South Korea to keep activists and North Korean defectors from flying propaganda leaflets critical of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. Still,

South Korea said there are no legal grounds to prevent its activists from floating the leaflets, citing freedom of expression.

Together with the recent exchange of fire across the border and a North Korean vessel that violated the maritime border, the government's sloppy handling and response to the military talks put a damper on the recent conciliatory mood for dialogue, according to critics.

The two Koreas held a furtive five-hour military meeting at the truce village of Panmunjom on Oct. 15 and Pyongyang's delegation was led by North Korean Gen. Kim Yong-chol, director of the Reconnaissance General Bureau. This was the first time in three years and eight months that the two countries' military officials sat down at a negotiation table, but the Park administration didn't announce it in advance and remained tight-lipped on what was discussed afterwards.

A Unification Ministry official in Seoul only explained that the North sent a proposal on Oct. 7 to have an emergency discussion about the gunfire exchange between the navies over the NLL in the Yellow Sea earlier that day.

### War of Nerves over Military Talks

The two Koreas again engaged in a war of nerves against a backdrop of recent military talks, prompting the North to threaten to back out of the planned high-level dialogue and casting a cloud over a long-awaited reconciliation.

According to a lengthy report carried by the North's Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) "to reveal the truth" about the inter-Korean talks, the communist country made several proposals to the South during the meeting on ways to prevent the recurrence of "the recent shameful incidents," including seeking ways



South Korea's Deputy Minister for National Defense Policy Ryu Je-seung (second from L) holds talks with North Korea's Reconnaissance General Bureau chief Kim Yong-chol (second from R) at the inter-Korean truce village, Panmunjom, on Oct. 15. (Photo courtesy of Defense Ministry) (Yonhap)

not to cross the sensitive sea border, stopping the leaflet propaganda campaigns and resolving issues via dialogue.

"But South Korea simply said it needs to take a closer look at our proposals due to differences between the two Koreas caused by long being separated," the report said, lashing out at the South for failing to make "any efforts to understand our sincerity."

The KCNA also claimed that North Korea requested the military talks to be open, while the defense official said that Seoul requested them to be closed, and the North agreed to this before the meeting.

The communist country's official media argued late Oct. 16 that it had consistently demanded that Kim Kwan-jin, chief of the presidential National Security Office, attend what it calls an "emergency one-on-one contact" with Kim Yong-chol, head of the North's Reconnaissance General Bureau. Officials at the defense and unification ministries in Seoul belatedly admitted to this, after initially arguing that Kim Kwan-jin had never been discussed as the chief negotiator, though his

name was on a letter as a recipient.

The officials had also claimed that the talks were held behind closed doors in accordance with Pyongyang's wishes, but again did an about-face following its revelation that the request was first made by Seoul. The rare military talks yielded little progress, with the North remaining unwavering on the issue of its 2010 attacks on the South's Cheonan corvette and Yeonpyeong Island.

Pyongyang also criticized Seoul for "having been reluctant to hold the urgent inter-Korean contact itself." Since the day of the clash in the Yellow Sea, the North had sent a letter three times to the South's national security adviser, Kim Kwan-jin, for an exclusive meeting.

But it took nine days for the South Korean government to agree to hold the talks and the South even fielded a lower ranking official than the North had expected, according to the KCNA. However, Pyongyang displayed a grim outlook, lambasting Seoul for sending Ryu Je-seung, deputy minister for national defense policy at the Defense Ministry, as the counterpart of Kim Yong-chol, a four-star general.

The communist North also refuted the South Korean government's earlier explanation that it had tried not to make the military talks public in accordance with the request from Pyongyang, saying it first suggested Seoul hold an open meeting "to better follow the dear leader's will to start the inter-Korean ties anew."

Expressing regrets over the North's "distortion" of relevant facts and posing a threat to the South Korean civic groups over their anti-Pyongyang campaign, Seoul's defense ministry called on Pyongyang to abide by the NLL and expressed hope for holding the high-level talks as agreed.

"With the aims of preventing military clash-

es in the Yellow Sea and building trust, our side had proposed the establishment of an inter-Korean hotline between the military authorities of the two Koreas (during the Oct. 15 talks)," the defense ministry said in a statement issued in response to the North's report.

The ministry did not say how the North reacted to the suggestion, but the talks ended without any agreement. Noting that the North has demanded the South's government control the press and civic groups, the ministry said the demand is unacceptable. It also urged the North to stop attempting to nullify the NLL.

## Demand for Pyongyang's Apology

Seoul has been demanding an official apology as a prerequisite for any relaxing of bilateral sanctions imposed in the wake of the North's torpedoing of South Korean warship Cheonan, which bar cross-border trade, investment, travel and other exchanges. "We clearly delivered the message that the North is responsible for the sinking of the Cheonan and the shelling on Yeonpyeong. "But they stuck to their existing position, expressing no apology or regret," the official added. The North Korean delegation refused to take responsibility for the March 2010 torpedoing of the South Korean naval vessel, which resulted in the deaths of 46 sailors. They have not apologized for the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island later that year.

Yet the South is hoping that its unruly neighbor will accept its Oct. 13 offer of a second high-level meeting to be held on Oct. 30 between Kim Kyou-hyun, vice chief of the National Security Office, and Won Tong-yon, deputy head of the United Front Department in the North's ruling Workers' Party.

The row evokes the last-minute cancelation of high-level talks in June 2013, which resulted from differences over the level of chief delegates. “The fact that the South dispatched a deputy minister who doesn’t have any authority to the emergency meeting, not the national security chief that we called for, represents a mockery and insult to inter-Korean dialogue,” the official KCNA said. “The undeniable reality is that the future of inter-Korean high-level dialogue is at risk.”

After all, North Korea appears to be showing to the world that it is trying to improve relations with South Korea, despite its continued nuclear weapons program. The South Korean government has repeatedly broached the issue of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program and missile launches.

For Pyongyang, its nuclear weapons program is a key agenda item to be negotiated with the United States, the main enemy of the communist country. Pyongyang has also insisted that the nuclear issue be resolved at the six-party talks created to end the North’s nuclear programs.

The six-party talks on denuclearizing North Korea have been dormant since late 2008 when Pyongyang walked away from the negotiating table. The forum involves the two Koreas, the United States, China, Japan and Russia. Since its third nuclear test last year, North Korea has repeatedly expressed its willingness to return to the six-party forum “without preconditions.”

Also at issue is North Korea’s dismal human rights record, which has been a major international concern at the United Nations this year. The European Union and Japan have written a draft resolution that calls for the U.N. Security Council to refer Pyongyang’s human rights sit-

uation to an international criminal justice entity.

In response, the North is drafting a resolution to counter the EU-led move, demanding that the U.N.’s debate on human rights should be conducted on the principle of guaranteeing sovereignty and mutual respect. The North is seeking to drum up support from a group of non-aligned countries for its proposed draft resolution.

In recent months, North Korea has been exploring new diplomatic territory, with high-level officials engaging Europe, Japan and the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Recently, the North’s mission to the U.N. even responded to a highly critical human rights report by acknowledging its labor camps which it defended as a means of “re-education and reform.”

Rather, North Korea seems to be posing a non-existent united front in order to put pressure on the U.S. to soften its stance toward the recalcitrant regime regarding its nuclear program and human-rights record, and to reconsider economic sanctions against the North. Seen in this light, the visit to Incheon was a way to persuade Seoul to put pressure on the U.S. to play nice, according to analysts.

But the North Korean delegation’s visit also appeared to have a domestic agenda. Experts said their surprise visit could also be viewed as a desperate attempt by Pyongyang to engage Seoul as well. Besides, North Korea has increasingly made efforts to engage Japan, while attempting to talk to Washington by using American prisoners as bargaining chips, moves that both point to Pyongyang’s deteriorating relationship with Beijing, which has been on the rocks since the regime’s third nuclear test in February 2013 despite China’s opposition. (Yonhap)

## Park's Suggestion to Discuss Lifting of May 24 Measure

**It was the first time that the South Korean leader officially suggested the possibility of the removal of the May 24 punitive measure, which has been a persistent demand of North Korea since she took office in February 2012.**

■ By Kim Tae-shik

In what could be a forward-looking suggestion, South Korean President Park Geun-hye proposed on Oct. 13 that the two Koreas seek a solution to the four-year-old sanctions against North Korea called the “May 24 Measure” through dialogue during the proposed second high-level talks between the two Koreas.

It was the first time that the South Korean leader officially suggested the possibility of the removal of the punitive measure, which has been a persistent demand of North Korea since she took office in February 2012.

Despite fresh tensions over the North's recent military actions against the South, Park reiterated her commitment for dialogue with North Korea to ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula although she warned of stern countering against Pyongyang's provocations.

“The two Koreas must continue dialogue to reduce tensions and establish peace on the Korean Peninsula,” Park said in a meeting of a blue-ribbon committee meant to make preparations for potential unification with North Korea.

South Korea on the same day proposed that the high-level talks be held on Oct. 30 to discuss the improvement of inter-Korean relations. The two Koreas earlier agreed to hold the meeting in late October or early November.

Park's suggestion followed North Korea's surprise dispatch of top officials to South Korea in early October and the latest exchange of fire between the two sides across the tense border a few days later.

The North Korean delegation, led by Hwang Pyong-so, vice chairman of the National Defense Commission and director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, produced a deal with South Korea to hold a second round of high-level dialogue later in October or in early November when they flew into the South to attend the closing ceremony of the 17th Asian Games held in the western port city of Incheon on Oct. 4, raising hopes for a thaw in inter-Korean relations.

President Park called on Oct. 6 for regular inter-Korean talks to improve relations and the North's sincerity.

“I hope that the two Koreas will open the door for peace through dialogue on the occasion of the visit,” Park said in a meeting with her top aides held two days after the surprise visit of the top North Korean officials. The North's delegation also included Choe Ryong-hae, secretary of the

North's ruling Workers' Party of Korea, and Kim Yang-gon, the North's point man on South Korea.

The hopes, however, were quickly dampened by the exchange of fire between South and North Korean navy patrol boats near their western sea border on Oct. 7 after a North Korean patrol ship crossed the Northern Limit Line into the South.

The sea border has been the site of several bloody skirmishes between the navies of the two countries, which are still technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce, not in a peace treaty.

The two Koreas also exchanged machine-gun fire across the tense land border three days later after the North tried to shoot down balloons carrying anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets critical of the North.

North Korea has reacted sensitively to leaflets that South Korean activists and North Korean defectors regularly send to North Korea to eventually encourage North Koreans to rise up against their leader, Kim Jong-un.

South Korea said there are no legal grounds to prevent its activists from floating the leaflets, citing freedom of expression in a democratic country.

North Korea's propaganda media lashed out at the latest leafleting campaign, saying the incident "could cause the planned high-level talks to fall through."

Still, Park indicated a strong desire for the talks.

"We should use the high-level contact as an opportunity to improve inter-Korean relations," Park said in the meeting of the Unification Preparation Committee.

In February, the two Koreas held their first high-level talks in seven years, though no major progress has since been made mainly due to tensions over a series of missile and rocket launches by North Korea.

She said the two Koreas should hold sincere dialogue to resolve the standoff over Seoul's sanctions against the North and urged North Korea to show sincerity through action.

## May 24 Measure

North Korea has repeatedly called for the lifting of the sanctions Seoul imposed on Pyongyang in May 2010 in retaliation for the deadly sinking of a warship.

In March that year, North Korea torpedoed the South Korean warship Cheonan near the Yellow Sea border, killing 46 South Korean sailors. Months later, it shelled Yeonpyeong Island, leaving four dead, including two civilians. In the wake of the sinking, the Seoul government imposed a set of sanctions against Pyongyang on May 24, 2010, which effectively halted all inter-Korean coopera-



President Park Geun-hye (second from R) speaks during a meeting of the presidential Unification Preparation Committee at the presidential office, Cheong Wa Dae, in Seoul on Oct. 13. She said that South Korea's door is always open for dialogue with North Korea. (Yonhap)

tion except for the joint industrial complex in the North's border town of Kaesong. The North has denied any involvement in the Cheonan case.

A South Korea-led international investigation found that North Korea torpedoed the vessel, although Pyongyang has denied responsibility.

Dismissing Pyongyang's repeated calls, South Korea has remained firm that the North should take responsible actions before it lifts the measures.

Seoul wants Pyongyang, among other things, to admit its involvement in the sinking before lifting the sanctions.

In rare military talks between the two Koreas on Oct. 15, North Korea again maintained its earlier position of not admitting that it was responsible for the 2010 deadly attacks against the South Korean warship and the sea border island.

Park also called on the committee officials to come up with an action plan for her initiative to build a peace park in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates the two Koreas.

She had called for the U.N. to take the lead in creating a peace park in her address to the U.N. General Assembly in September.

South Korea hopes that a proposed peace park could promote cooperation and build trust between the two Koreas.

## DMZ Peace Park

The project to build a peace park requires cooperation from North Korea, as well as the U.S.-led United Nations Command, which oversees the armistice.

Still, the North has publicly rejected the project.

Park urged the officials to expedite the designing and fulfillment of the action plans for the peaceful reunification, including the creation of the world ecology and peace park in the DMZ.

The president's remarks followed her earlier initiative announced in her Liberation Day message on Aug. 15 in which she proposed that the two Koreas create a channel for cooperation in the fields of the environment, people's livelihoods and culture.

Creating the DMZ peace park would be a concrete step for environmental cooperation between the two Koreas.

Park urged her officials to start the selection of a candidate for the peace park at an early date, make a basic design for creating the eco-friendly park and streamline road networks around the area.

Park stressed that the two Koreas and surrounding countries should build a tradition of cooperation and peace in the course of building the park.

Park also suggested that the government should consider ways to provide North Korea with a medical support system, including medical equipment and facilities in regard to the cooperation for the betterment of North Korean people's livelihoods.

Regarding the development of rural areas in the North, Park ordered the officials to study ways to provide fertilizer, and renovate household kitchens and village roads.

The committee revealed various inter-Korean cooperation projects, including a three-phase inte-

gration of the inter-Korean economy. The three phases are building inter-Korean trust, fostering the trust and having the trust take root.

In the trust-building stage, limited cooperation projects like an improvement of the North's livelihoods will be possible, the committee said while more aggressive economic cooperation and economic integration will be possible in the second and third stages.

## Preparation for Unification

For this, the preparation for the integration of the financial systems, foreign exchange rate and banking systems of the two sides will be necessary, the committee suggested.

The committee also suggested a three-stage project for the improvement of North Korea's living infrastructure. The first stage should select two villages and renovate water sewage, kitchens, bathrooms and roofs, and expand the work to 10,000 households in each province of North Korea. The committee suggests a total of 100,000 North Korean households will be improved for 10 years as the final goal of the infrastructure improvement project.

The committee also suggested that in order to link the railways running between the two Koreas to the Eurasian railway, North Korea's railway between Pyongyang and Rajin should be linked to the Trans Siberian Railway (TSR) first.

The connection of inter-Korean railway to the continental railway would have an effect of investing 1 trillion won (US\$945 million) in North Korea's infrastructure and raise the country's economic growth rate by 2 percentage points, the committee said.

The committee also revealed that it will draft a unification charter that contains principles and methods of unification by the end of this year and proclaim it on Aug. 15 next year.

As joint events with North Korea, the committee will suggest the holding of a DMZ peace culture and arts festival, a food festival, an academic conference, and male and female soccer competitions, as well as proposing to North Korea to sign an inter-Korean cultural agreement.

Under the instructions of President Park, the building of the DMZ peace park is expected to be accelerated.

The unification ministry, which is in charge of building the peace park, has planned to start construction this year to complete it in 2016 but has not made tangible progress yet as negotiations with North Korea have been in the doldrums.

Most of the budget set for the peace park project has not been used. Of the 30.2 billion won budget allotted for the project for this year, only 700 million won has been spent to make basic research work, according to the ministry.

The progress of President Park's overture and all these inter-Korean cooperation projects are depending on inter-Korean relations. As of Oct. 21, North Korea has not responded to Seoul's proposal to hold the second high-level talks on Oct. 30, which should deal with a wide range of inter-Korean issues. (Yonhap)

## N. Korean Leader's Return after 40-day Hiatus

**Kim seems to have hurriedly arranged public activity even before completely recovering from his apparent leg-related illness in a bid to squelch the rumors and show that he is well and maintains a firm grip on power.**

■ By Kim Tae-shik

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, leaning on a walking stick, stepped back into public view in mid-October after a 40-day break to quell the rumors and speculations rampantly spread during his longest-ever absence from public eye.

Kim gave "field guidance" at the Wisong Scientists Residential District, a newly built apartment complex in Pyongyang for satellite and nuclear scientists, according to the North's state news media, including the Rodong Sinmun, the North's main newspaper, and the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), on Oct. 14.

They released several photos of Kim, including ones of him beaming, walking and sitting with a cane for support.

The KCNA said "he (Kim) learned in detail about the construction of the district, looking round various places of the district..." indicating that he had no major problems moving around by himself.

Kim also visited the newly built Natural Energy Institute of the State Academy of Sciences on the same day, according to the KCNA.

It was his first public activity since Sept. 3, which suggests he has no critical health problems and he maintains a firm grip on power. Rumors around Kim's absence have ranged from health problems to a military coup.

The KCNA and the newspaper gave no exact date for his field guidance in their reports. It is presumed to have happened a day earlier, given that previous reports on the leader's activities were usually delayed one day.

South Korean officials said Kim's reappearance with a cane seems to be designed to show that he is well and his status as the supreme leader remains firm. In the photos, Kim is accompanied by North Korea's next two most powerful men -- Hwang Pyong-so, director of the Korean People's Army General Political Bureau, and Choe Ryong-hae, secretary of the North's ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

"I think it is the first time that North Korea has made public a photo of its leader resorting to such an assistive device as a cane," a senior unification ministry official in Seoul told reporters.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (R, front row) inspects the newly-built Wisong Scientists Residential District in Pyongyang. The (North) Korean Central News Agency released the photo on Oct. 14, but did not elaborate on when the visit was made. (KCNA-Yonhap)



## Swirling Rumors

The official also noted Kim's choice of the residential zone for the country's scientists especially involved in satellite and nuclear development. The North began the construction of the facilities in March at Kim's instruction.

"It may have some indications related with (his regime's) policy of simultaneously developing its nuclear program and economy," the official said on the condition of anonymity.

The unification ministry official added the South's government has no clear information on the reason for Kim's 40-day absence from public events.

Kim last appeared to the public on Sept. 3 when he attended a concert of the Moranbong Band. Speculation that there was something wrong with the North Korean leader soared when he missed important political occasions such as the 2nd Session of the 13th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) on Sept. 25 and the 69th anniversary of the foundation of the ruling WPK on Oct. 10.

Kim drew the attention of South Korean

news media on July 8 when he appeared to be limping in his right leg slightly during a memorial ceremony for his grandfather and North Korean founder Kim Il-sung.

On Sept. 9, North Korea's Central TV aired a documentary film which showed Kim limping on the opposite leg while inspecting a factory at the end of August.

North Korean media admitted Kim was "not well" on Sept. 25 when he missed the SPA meeting.

The South Korean and U.S. governments have dismissed speculation over political instability, citing their own intelligence.

Based on the analysis of relevant intelligence, the South's officials had three possibilities in mind, according to informed sources here.

One was that Kim may be afflicted with gout, which is potentially associated with heart disease, which killed his grandfather Kim Il-sung and father Kim Jong-il.

Other suppositions were that Kim either might have broken, or sprained, his ankle while playing basketball or he may have acute

inflammation in his feet.

South Korea's top diplomat in Beijing said Kim Jong-un has been treated by "foreign doctors" because of an apparent leg injury.

South Korean ambassador to Beijing Kwon Young-se told lawmakers during an annual parliamentary audit of his embassy on Oct. 14 that Kim "was suffering from problems in his leg and foreign doctors visited North Korea to treat him."

"To my knowledge, North Korean officials had also visited some foreign countries to get consultations about his treatment," Kwon said, citing information he obtained.

However, the South Korean Embassy in Beijing has not detected any indication that Kim's grip on power may be fragile. "As far as I understand, Kim is firmly in control of the North Korean regime," Kwon told lawmakers.

South Korean and Western media had reported rumors of caretaker leadership by Kim's sister Kim Yo-jong, mental illness and political strife among power elites.

North Korea watchers in Seoul say Kim seems to have hurriedly arranged the public appearance even before completely recovering from his apparent leg-related illness in order to squelch the rumors and show that he has a firm grip on power to the North Korean people and outside world.

## Records of Hiatus

It is not rare for a North Korean leader to have a prolonged absence from view. Kim's father Kim Jong-il was once out of public view for 87 days, the longest public absence, following the death of his father Kim Il-sung in 1994. Kim Jong-il also resumed public activities in early November of 2008 about 80

days after he suffered a stroke in mid-August of that year.

Kim Jong-un also disappeared for 24 days in 2012. Kim showed up again on July 1 that year to give field guidance at construction sites in Pyongyang following his previous public activities on June 7.

A North Korean defector in Seoul said Kim Jong-un's disappearance naturally drew keen interest of both North Koreans and outside news media as he has actively engaged in public activities, unlike his father and grand father, to show an image of an energetic young leader.

## Choice of Residential Area

North Korea observers also put significance to the fact that Kim chose an apartment construction site for scientists rather than a political event.

By visiting the apartment complex for scientists and the energy institute with his uncomfortable leg, Kim tried to present an image of a leader who devotes himself to take care of the economy and people's livelihoods, they said.

In his latest inspection tour, Kim praised the nation's scientists for their dedicated work and proposed building more apartment houses and public buildings like the Wisong Scientists Residential District in the Unjong science area to turn it into a world-class science city.

The KCNA quoted Kim as saying that the construction of the Wisong Scientists Residential District was not aimed to demonstrate the architecture of the country but to enable scientists to put their hearts and soul into scientific researches without any inconvenience.

"Our scientists are patriots who are devot-

ing all their lives to building a rich and powerful nation ... It is necessary to protect and treat scientists preferentially and always take care of them,” he was quoted as saying by the KCNA.

Kim Yong-hyun, a professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul, said the North’s leader seems to have deliberately chosen to visit the residential area rather than attend a political event as his first public activity since Sept. 3.

“He appears to have sought to enhance his image as a leader who cares for the people by visiting the residential complex for scientists, working to improve the quality of their life,” the professor said.

### Maximum Propaganda Effect

Even before Kim disappeared from the public scene North Korea released photos of Kim making field guidances with his limping leg since early July to spread the image of a devoted leader.

So Kim’s visit to the apartment complex and energy institute as the first public activity in 40 days was seen to create the maximum propaganda effect by using the image of a devoted leader.

Kim’s reappearance to public view also showed there were no problems in his leadership during the hiatus.

North Korea on Oct. 4 sent a high-powered delegation to South Korea for the closing ceremony of the 17th Asian Games in Incheon. The delegation met South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won and top security officials and sealed an agreement for the second high-level talks between the two Koreas.

The North’s delegation led by Hwang

Pyong-so, the number-two man, acted as Kim’s special envoy, using Kim’s airplane, indicating that the visit was arranged by Kim. Choe Ryong-hae and Kim Yang-gon, Pyongyang’s pointman on South Korea, were also among the visitors.

Chang Yong-suk, a researcher at the Institute for Peace and Unification Studies at Seoul National University, said “By resuming public activity, Kim showed there were no problems in his decision making or handling state affairs although he had a leg problem.”

Chang added that it is not likely there will be any major problems in inter-Korean relations or North Korea’s foreign relations even though there could be another break in the leader’s public activities in the future.

Meanwhile, the United States said on Oct. 14 that it sees no reason to question the authenticity of the recent pictures North Korea released of its leader Kim Jong-un that showed him safe and relatively well after a long absence from public view.

“We’ve seen the same reports and images. We don’t have any reason to doubt authenticity at this time,” State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said at a regular briefing. “But of course given the North Korean regime is one of the most opaque on Earth, there is always a question about reliable information about what’s publicly available.”

Psaki said the U.S. is “obviously watching very carefully what’s happening in North Korea,” adding that the communist nation is one of the countries that the United States monitors “with great attention.” She declined to discuss the issue any further. (Yonhap)

## Confrontation over Anti-Pyongyang Leaflets

**North Korea fired anti-aircraft machine guns to shoot down dozens of balloons  
South Korean civic groups flew with leaflets criticizing the communist regime.**

**D**ampening hopes for the inter-Korean talks, South and North Korea exchanged fire on Oct. 10 after the North began shooting heavy machine guns, apparently aiming at balloons launched by South Korean civic activists.

The North fired anti-aircraft machine guns to shoot down dozens of balloons South Korean civic groups flew with leaflets criticizing the communist regime, with some rounds landing in a residential area in the inter-Korean border county of Yeoncheon, Gyeonggi Province.

After some North Korean machine gun rounds were discovered south of the border, South Korea's military fired back about 40 K-6 machine gun rounds, which was followed by another round of the North's machine gun attack.

The clash came three days after a North Korean boat crossed the disputed western sea border, inciting a brief firefight with South Korean patrol ships.

These provocative acts followed a surprise visit to Incheon early in October by three top aides to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. During the visit, in time for the closing ceremony of the Asian Games held in the port city of Incheon, they met with senior South Korean officials and agreed on the resumption of high-level talks in early November at the latest.

Though no casualties or property damage

from the firing was reported, it was the first time in nearly four years that the two neighbors have exchanged gunfire across the land border. Additionally, a number of high-caliber rounds were found not only near South Korean border posts but also civilian residential districts.

### First Military Action

The Oct. 10's firing was North Korea's first military action against the balloons, although it has repeatedly threatened to retaliate. The incident marked a rare military engagement across the heavily militarized land border, though the disputed maritime frontier has seen rounds of skirmishes in the past.

Pyongyang has time and again demanded the South Korean government stop the civic groups, mainly comprised of North Korean defectors, from dispatching balloons over the border, which were filled with flyers denouncing the communist regime, one dollar bills, mini radios and other items.

Just days before the clashes on Oct. 4, there was a reconciliatory mood between the two Koreas when North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's close confidants Hwang Pyong-so, Choe Ryong-hae and Kim Yang-gon made a surprise visit to the South to attend the closing ceremony of the Asian Games in Incheon.

The three visitors -- Hwang Pyong-so, vice

chairman of the powerful National Defense Commission, and two other senior officials from the Workers' Party of Korea, Choe Ryong-hae and Kim Yang-gon -- met with the South Korean prime minister, national security adviser to the president, and the unification minister.

During their one-day stay, they delivered leader Kim Jong-un's "warm greetings" to South Korean President Park Geun-hye, met with Prime Minister Chung Hong-won, held talks with their Seoul counterparts and agreed to reopen high-level dialogue in late October or early November.

Officials in Seoul are accustomed to the unpredictable regime's pattern of peace gestures accompanied by provocative acts. The North may be seeking to gain the upper hand in the lead-up to the resumption of inter-Korean dialogue and avoid letting its latest conciliatory move toward the South be interpreted as weakness.

### 'Unacceptable' Provocation

But Pyongyang in state media has threatened to cancel the talks in response to the release of the anti-North leaflets, claiming Seoul and Washington are behind them. "From now on, the progress of North-South relations completely depends on South Korea's attitude," said an article printed in the North's official Rodong Sinmun on Oct. 12.

Yet Pyongyang's state media on Oct. 11 said the planned meeting has "practically gone down the drain," blaming Seoul for letting cross-border ties go "back to square one for collapse" by not stopping the activists' plans.

"The leaflet-spraying is an unacceptable political provocation against us and marks a frantic effort in the throes of death to block the



A group of civic activists, mostly North Korean defectors, is ready to fly balloons carrying anti-Pyongyang leaflets to North Korea at a parking lot in the South Korean border town of Paju on Oct. 13. (Yonhap)

rare mood for improved inter-Korean relations driven by the trip to Incheon by our director of the General Political Bureau (of the Korean People's Army)," the official Korean Central News Agency said, referring to Hwang.

In an article carried by North Korea's main Internet website Uriminzokkiri on Oct. 11, Pyongyang said the Seoul government not only "failed to take proper actions to prevent the civic groups from launching the propaganda campaign but rather turned a blind eye and even sided with them."

Claiming that the United States and its "puppet authorities (South Korea) master-

mind the leaflet campaign,” the North said “such an irresponsible and provocative action drove the inter-Korean ties into catastrophe.”

## Fire Exchange

But South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said later that North Korea fired machine gun rounds toward propaganda leaflets hours before a similar action that led the two sides to exchange fire.

According to testimony from the JCS during a parliamentary audit on Oct. 13, the North fired anti-aircraft machine guns at the balloons containing leaflets criticizing the authoritarian regime early on Oct. 10.

“The shots were heard from the Odusan Unification Observatory in Paju, and we later learned that the North shot them some 7 to 8 kilometers away from the border town,” Lt. Gen. Shin Won-sik told lawmakers. “No bullets were found in our territory, and that is why we did not fire back.”

The military had not previously made the incident public. At around 11 a.m. Oct. 10, the South Korean civic group named Fighters for Free North Korea flew some 200,000 anti-North Korean leaflets in 10 balloons from Paju, about 40 kilometers northwest of Seoul.

The shots came hours before another attempt to bring down some 23 balloons carrying 1.32 million similar leaflets launched from Yeoncheon, some 60 kilometers north of Seoul.

Responding to criticism that the military took several hours to determine the origin of the attack, JCS chairman Adm. Choi Yun-hee cited the mountainous terrain in the border region, while stressing the need “to be prudent to sternly deal with enemies’ provocations while not making the situation worse.”

With the hard-line campaigners vowing to carry on with their crusade, the dilemma is deepening for Seoul officials over how to balance the need to maintain stable inter-Korean ties and ensure the citizens’ right to freedom of assembly and association.

The South Korean government said Oct. 13 it is weighing “appropriate” measures to protect its nationals from North Korean threats over the scattering of leaflets critical of the communist regime.

The government, however, has no plans to take any forcible measures against the civilian-led spread of such leaflets across the border, according to unification ministry spokesman Lim Byeong-cheol. “As we said previously, there is no legal ground or relevant regulation to forcibly block the leaflet scattering as it is a matter to be handled by civilian groups on a voluntary basis,” he said at a press briefing. “The government, which is in charge of the safety and security of our people, will instead push for appropriate steps to deal with the matter.”

Lim pointed out the government has advised activists to refrain from sending leaflets into the North. In the past, police have blocked activists planning to send leaflets from entering border regions in order to prevent possible clashes between them and local residents, he added.

The North’s latest provocation demonstrated its sensitivity to leaflets from the South, which apparently damage its authoritarian control of people there. The two Koreas had conducted a “propaganda war” until a decade ago, trading a massive amount of leaflets and propaganda messages using loudspeakers near the border. The South’s military and intelligence agencies abandoned the so-called psychological warfare on the North in June 2004, when the two sides

agreed to stop slandering each other.

Anti-North Korea activists here, especially defectors, have since scattered leaflets across the border. They float balloons carrying leaflets condemning the North's leader and human rights abuse as well as radios, DVDs, one dollar bills and other materials. Still, only around 10 percent of them reportedly reach the hands of North Koreans.

However, Park Sang-hak, president of the nonprofit Fighters for Free North Korea, one of the most active groups spreading anti-Pyongyang leaflets, said he intended to continue the campaign, citing freedom of expression. "The North fired machine guns at our propaganda balloons with the purpose of striking fear into the people in the South and causing conflicts among them," he told reporters.

Lee Min-bok, a representative of the Campaign for Helping North Koreans in Direct Way, echoed Park's words. "Firing on a peaceful leaflet campaign is wrong," he said. It was Lee's group that launched the balloons in Yeoncheon on Oct. 10, provoking the North's gunshots.

## Public Concerns

In response, Yeoncheon residents are arguing that people living in border villages are the biggest victims of the leaflet campaigns. "We have been tolerating such campaigns so far, but after the latest exchange of fire, we will from now on strongly oppose the groups," Yeoncheon resident Lim Jae-kwan told reporters. Residents parked tractors and trucks in front of the village entrance on Oct. 11 to prevent the anti-North Korean groups from entering.

Public concerns have sharply grown over the controversial civilian campaign. Critics also say that though many organizations carry

out their movements in private, some intentionally pick politically sensitive times to draw media attention, boost their profile and ultimately raise more funds.

Lawmakers from both the ruling Saenuri Party and the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy (NPAD) sided with the residents. "Activists must refrain from carrying out their leaflet campaign, as it directly affects the safety of residents there," said ruling party Chairman Kim Moo-sung. "It's desirable to expand inter-Korean exchange and dialogue in the direction of not antagonizing North Korea."

Kim added, "I think if possible it's best not to engage in acts that will provoke North Korea. We will be the ones negatively impacted if we provoke North Korea and talks don't happen."

The main opposition party urged the government to stop the civic groups' attempts to fly their materials. "The Park Geun-hye administration must stop these civic groups from sending more leaflets, even if it requires the government to mobilize the military," interim NPAD Chairman Moon Hee-sang said.

Moon added that the people's safety and lives were threatened by the government's irresponsible and indifferent attitude toward the civic groups, but at the same time criticized those organizations for escalating tensions between the two Koreas. "Related activists need to understand that leaflets will never change North Korea," said Rep. Moon. "The sole method to change North Korea is exchange and cooperation."

Earlier on Oct. 13, North Korea repeated its calls for the South to take "substantive" steps to block leaflet launches. The North's main newspaper Rodong Sinmun described it as the "worst obstacle" to inter-Korean ties and warned of larger military conflicts. (Yonhap)

## Int'l Pressure on N.K.'s Human Rights Record

**A U.N. resolution linking the Kim Jong-un regime with crimes against humanity is expected to make a strong impact on Pyongyang.**

■ By Lee Kwang-ho

As North Korea is accused of gross human rights violations, the international community is stepping up pressure to punish the socialist regime for its rights abuses. In sharp contrast, North Korea has accused some Western countries including the United States of having a “distorted view” of its human rights conditions.

North Korea's human rights situation has been under the spotlight since the U.N. Commission of Inquiry (COI) made public a report on the North's human rights conditions in February after a yearlong probe. The communist country's rights violations include holding hundreds of thousands of political prisoners in concentration camps and conducting public executions.

In recent weeks, North Korean diplomats have been unusually active in defending the country's human rights situation as the European Union and Japan have encouraged the U.N. Security Council to refer North Korean leaders to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in line with a report from the COI that branded Pyongyang's human rights violations “crimes against humanity.”

Pyongyang, however, has dismissed the

accusations as a U.S.-led attempt to topple its regime. In September, the North released its own human rights report, claiming the country has the world's most advantageous human rights system and policies.

More recently, the European Union created a draft of a North Korea's human rights resolution and circulated it during closed-door consultations to concerned countries. After further discussions, the draft will be sent in November to the U.N.'s Third Committee, which handles social and humanitarian affairs and human rights issues. If it passes the committee, the resolution will be sent to the U.N. General Assembly in December.

The Third Committee of the U.N. General Assembly is scheduled to be held on Oct. 28 in New York, where North Korea's human rights situation will be discussed. But it is unlikely such a move will become a reality. Diplomatic sources said the resolution itself could be watered down in the course of being finalized, and if it maintains its current toughness, China and Russia will probably veto it at the Security Council.

Moreover, Pyongyang can ignore the unbinding resolution, not least because the

reclusive country is outside the ICC regime. Resolutions on North Korea's human rights record have been adopted at the General Assembly every year since 2005, but they have not been approved at the Security Council. The ICC can only investigate crimes in its member states, but if the U.N. Security Council gives the ICC jurisdiction, it can pursue crimes in non-state parties as in the cases of Libya in 2011 and Sudan in 2005.

Although U.N. General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, a resolution directly linking the Kim Jong-un regime with crimes against humanity at the U.N. level would be expected to have a strong impact on Pyongyang. The attempt itself will probably impose a heavy psychological burden and considerable economic damage on the reclusive regime as the international community alienates it even more.

### U.N. Move to Punish Pyongyang

After the COI issued a landmark report, the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva endorsed in March a resolution condemning North Korea for "systemic, widespread and gross human rights violations," by an overwhelming majority. The resolution urged the U.N. General Assembly to formally submit the report to the U.N. Security Council. The Security Council had a closed-door meeting on the issue in April with China and Russia not attending.

In the wake of the COI report, the North has made diplomatic efforts to avoid international pressure. The North's mission to the U.N. held a briefing Oct. 7, claiming that the country is trying to guarantee human rights for its people and is open to genuine human rights talks with



Ri Tong-il (C), the North Korean deputy ambassador to the United Nations, holds a briefing session on his country's human rights conditions at the U.N. headquarters in New York on Oct. 7. The North hastily arranged the event in defiance of an international move to bring its leader Kim Jong-un to the International Criminal Court. (Yonhap)

all countries. North Korean diplomats acknowledged that the country maintains labor camps as correctional facilities, but reiterated the country's long-standing position that there are no political prison camps in the country.

In response, the United States urged North Korea on Oct. 8 to take concrete steps to dismantle its political prison camps. "We've continued to urge, and urge again, North Korea to take concrete steps, as outlined by the U.N. Commission of Inquiry, to dismantle the prison camps," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters at a regular press briefing.

A U.S.-led minister-level meeting was held in New York on Sept. 23 on North Korea's human rights problem, marking the first-ever ministerial forum held on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly. During the 30-minute meeting, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry called for greater international attention to North Korea's human rights violations, saying that remaining silent about the problem would be the "greatest abuse of all."

Kerry urged Pyongyang to shut down all political prison camps across the communist

nation. He described the camps as an “evil system.” “We simply cannot be blind to these egregious affronts to human nature and we cannot accept it, and silence would be the greatest abuse of all,” Kerry said. He also said the North’s sentencing of American citizens to hard labor “without a trial, a fair trial, is just as unjust as it is reprehensible.”

During the U.N. meeting, South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se praised the COI report for promoting international awareness of the problem and urged North Korea to comply with the COI’s recommendations. He also stressed that it makes no sense for the North to claim it will try to improve human rights through nuclear development.

Yun proposed to hold human rights talks with the North, saying he welcomes Pyongyang’s recent expression of willingness for dialogue on the issue. He also urged the North to resolve such human rights issues as the plight of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War and the issue of South Korean prisoners of war.

## War of Words

At this juncture, South and North Korea have engaged in a heated war of words amid lingering tensions on the Korean Peninsula. For the first time as South Korea’s leader, President Park Geun-hye raised the issue of the North’s human rights conditions at the U.N. General Assembly on Sept. 24. In her speech, she urged North Korea to improve its human rights record, bringing attention to human rights abuses by the Pyongyang regime.

Park also called on the U.N. and other countries to ensure North Korean defectors can choose the country they want to settle in, in an

apparent appeal to China not to send North Korean defectors back to their country. As Pyongyang’s key ally, China does not recognize North Korean defectors as refugees and regularly repatriates them to their home country, where they can face harsh punishment.

On Sept. 27, North Korea’s foreign minister, Ri Su-yong, said in an address to the U.N. General Assembly that his government is willing to discuss human rights with the international community. Ri said that he sought to participate in an unprecedented high-level meeting that the U.S. hosted days before to discuss the North’s human rights, but the U.S. prevented the North’s participation.

Ri is the first North Korean foreign minister to attend the U.N. meeting in 15 years. His trip to New York was the latest in a series of overseas trips by senior North Korean officials that are seen as being aimed at reducing the country’s diplomatic isolation.

On relations with South Korea, Ri claimed the North is “sincerely striving both in words and deeds” to improve inter-Korean ties, but rejected the South’s proposal for laying the groundwork for unification of the divided states. Ri said the South “should refrain from prattling about the unrealistic and fictitious proposal for national unification copied from the formula of other countries.”

Meanwhile, North Korea attacked President Park’s U.N. speech, saying, “President Park will pay the price for her provocative and unacceptable speech.” Firing volleys of criticism were the National Defense Commission (NDC), Pyongyang’s top decision-making body, and two other organizations affiliated with the communist regime’s ruling Workers’ Party -- the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) and the

Rodong Sinmun newspaper.

The NDC lashed out at President Park for taking issue with its human rights record, claiming that it has no human rights problems at all. “Park Geun-hye is the primary root cause of deteriorating north-south relations and fostering mistrust and confrontation,” the commission said.

## N. Korea’s Verbal Attack

On Sept. 28, the Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the Workers’ Party, said her speech will “lead to extreme calamity.” It said its nuclear weapons are a means of self defense against South Korea and the U.S. The CPRK, an offshoot of the Workers’ Party that handles inter-Korean issues, said that Park’s speech was a form of “provocative action that puts inter-Korean relations on the brink.”

More recently, North Korea circulated its own draft resolution on the country’s human rights record at the United Nations on Oct. 15 in an effort to counter the EU-initiated separate proposal. Officials of the North’s mission to the United Nations showed the draft resolution to some 60 diplomats invited from U.N. member states during a closed-door meeting at the U.N. headquarters earlier in the day, the sources said.

In the text, the North reportedly claimed it is making great efforts to improve its human rights situation, including by signing the Optional Protocol to Convention on the Rights of the Child aimed at ending child trafficking and prostitution. It also said in the text the issue of human rights should not be abused for political purposes.

On Oct. 13, North Korea slammed the United Nations for its efforts to take legal

action over the North’s human rights violations, labeling it an attempt to interfere in the communist country’s internal affairs. North Korea’s Rodong Sinmun said that the U.N. should respect each country’s sovereignty and refrain from interference in the domestic affairs of the countries.

“If the U.N. fails to live up to its contemporary responsibilities and functions, the world will turn its back on the U.N. for its anachronisms and lack of democracy,” the newspaper said.

South Korea is likely to raise North Korea’s rights violations at the United Nations, diplomatic sources said on Oct. 14. The sources said that Seoul is likely to co-sponsor the resolution by calling on Pyongyang to improve its human rights conditions, but the strength of its condemnation may be eased ahead of expected high-level inter-Korean talks.

Even if the resolution is passed at the General Assembly, it is likely to hit a snag at a meeting of the 15-member Security Council, given that China and Russia, which both have veto powers, have opposed passing country-specific resolutions.

Yet Seoul, because of its peculiar situation of confronting and conversing with one of the world’s most reclusive regimes, is placed in a very sensitive situation in dealing with the North’s rights issues. Experts say the increasing pressure on the North and the tighter economic sanctions could aggravate the already dire economic situation of North Koreans, who struggle to eke out a living.

Observers also say driving North Korea into a corner with its human rights problems is highly likely to threaten the ongoing mood for an inter-Korean thaw. (Yonhap)

## North Korea's Strides at Asian Games

**North Korea watchers say the Asian Games showed that sports are not simply athletic competitions for North Korea but have a special significance in socio-political aspects, arousing the people's patriotism and loyalty.**

**N**orth Korea, which has been making a vigorous effort to become a sports power, reaped better-than-expected results at the 17th Asian Games held in the South Korean city of Incheon from Sept. 19-Oct. 4, and its state media are stepping up propaganda that the success was thanks to the wise rule of leader Kim Jong-un.

North Korea, which had hoped to place among the top 10 players, recorded its best performance ever at the Asian Games, finishing seventh with 36 medals, including 11 gold, 11 silver and 14 bronze medals. It was the first time that the reclusive country had placed in the top 10 since 2002, when it finished in ninth place with nine gold, 11 silver and 13 bronze medals at the games held in Busan, South Korea.

In the previous Asiads in Doha, Qatar, in 2006, and in Guangzhou, China, in 2010, North Korea finished 16th and 12th, respectively.

North Korea was most successful in weightlifting, in which its athletes won four gold medals and set five world records.

North Korean athletes were also brilliant in soccer, a sport that was particularly emphasized by Kim Jong-un. North Korea's women's

soccer team won the gold medal, beating Japan in the final, while its male counterpart finished in second place behind South Korea.

North Korea won two gold medals in gymnastics and one each from shooting, wrestling, boxing and table tennis.

As a matter of course, North Korea offered a lavish welcome to its athletes and coaches who returned to the country from Incheon and the North's state media provided wide coverage of the games and athletes.

### Warm Welcome

Upon returning to Pyongyang, North Korean athletes and coaches received an enthusiastic welcome from Pyongyang citizens packing the streets.

The Central Committee of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and the National Defense Commission (NDC), two very powerful organizations in the socialist country, jointly threw a banquet at the Mokran House on the same day in honor of the participants in the Asian Games.

Top military, party and state officials like Hwang Pyong-so, vice chairman of the power-

Citizens in Pyongyang enthusiastically welcome the returning North Korean national team for the Asian Games held in the South Korean city of Incheon on Oct. 5. (KCNA-Yonhap)



ful NDC; Choe Ryong-hae, a WPK secretary; and Kim Yang-gon, who is in charge of Pyongyang's relations with Seoul, were present at the banquet to congratulate the athletes, coaches and officials who participated in the games.

The three officials had made a surprise visit to South Korea on Oct. 4 to attend the closing ceremony of the Asian Games.

In a speech, Choe warmly congratulated players and coaches who returned home after proving successful at the games upon the authorization of Kim Jong-un. Kim had been absent from public occasions for 40 days before he reappeared in the news media on Oct. 14.

The North's players and coaches fully demonstrated their great abilities as the strongest team and strongest athletes in Asia and greatly contributed to promoting national reconciliation, unity, friendship and peace with various countries, Choe said.

The Rodong Sinmun, North Korea's main newspaper, on Oct. 6, carried intensive coverage of the country's better-than-expected per-

formance at the Asiad in Incheon, saying the good results were a fruit of Kim Jong-un's leadership.

The paper, however, kept mum on Pyongyang's dispatch of a high-powered delegation to the closing ceremony.

The organ of the North's ruling party filled the front three pages of its Oct. 6 issue with stories about North Korean athletes returning from the Incheon Asian Games, especially those who won gold medals.

Photos of gold medal winners -- including the North Korean national women's football team and weightlifters Kim Un-guk and Om Yun-chol -- filled the newspaper's front page as the daily celebrated its delegation's triumphant return home from the games.

Also covered in the daily were a press conference with the North Korean athletes and leader Kim Jong-un's morale-boosting meeting with the national women's football team in August.

Kim's personal cheering for the women's team has been "the sign of the victory and the main source of their iron-will mental power," the newspaper noted in an article.

“The women’s football team defeated all their enemies to claim the victorious top spot and new world and Asian records were set in the weightlifting section,” Kim Pyong-sik, vice minister of the country’s sports department, was quoted as saying in a news conference.

The newspaper also carried details of a street parade for the athletes put on after they returned from the Asiad.

Little was said, however, about the surprise visit to the closing ceremony of the Asian Games by the top North Korean officials on Oct. 4.

The three North Korean officials met with the South Korean prime minister and the South’s security officials, forging an agreement to hold another round of high-level talks between the two Koreas in the near future, at the end of October or in early November.

A day earlier the paper said in an editorial that the successes made by the North Korean players “strikingly demonstrated the great vitality of the Workers’ Party of Korea’s plan for building a sports power and its idea of attaching importance to sports.”

“The shining successes are a powerful demonstration of the might of the single-minded unity of the DPRK (North Korea) in which its people forms a harmonious whole with the leader.”

Meanwhile, a considerable number of the North Korean medal winners were known to be members of the April 25 Sports Team under the Korean People’s Army.

The table tennis duo Kim Hyok-bong and Kim Chong drew attention when they gave a military-style salute in the medal ceremony after they won the gold in the mixed-doubles competition of the sport on Oct. 3.

Kim Un-guk, who won the gold medal while

setting a new world record in the men’s weightlifting 62-kilogram division on Sept. 21, and Jong Hak-jin, the gold medal winner of the men’s freestyle wrestling in the 57-kg category, were also members of the sports team.

Other medal winners who belonged to the military sports team include Kim Yun-mi and Ho Un-pyol of the North’s women’s football team. The April 25 Sports Team derived its name from the foundation day of the North’s military.

North Korea watchers say the Asian Games showed that sports are not simply athletic competitions for North Korea but have a special significance in socio-political aspects, arousing the people’s patriotism and loyalty to the party and its leader.

## Sports as Ruling Skill

North Korea also aims to channel the patriotism arising from sports events to an impetus to invigorate its economy.

The Rodong Sinmun said in the Oct. 5 editorial that the successes made by the DPRK players “serve as an engine instilling into all the service personnel and people great national pride and self-confidence and encouraging the whole country to effect a surge in production.”

“We should consolidate the successes already made (in sports) and bring about leap forward in all fields for building a thriving nation and fully demonstrate the heroic spirit of Songun Korea dashing toward the final victory,” it stressed.

The newspaper also said in an article that miners of Namdok Mine surpassed their planned coal production because of the news of the North Korean athletes’ victories and claimed that the sports fever sweeping across

the country was impetus for increased production.

Under Kim's leadership, North Korea has been making all-out efforts to promote its sports and foster its athletes in order to make the country a sports powerhouse as a means of accomplishing its goal of building a socialist "kangsong taeguk," or a great, prosperous and powerful nation, since the young leader took the helm of the reclusive country in late 2011.

Kim, himself an avid sports fan, has made vigorous attempts to boost sports and create a sports fever among the people, making frequent visits to sports facilities under the name of "field guidance" and instructing officials to renovate obsolete sports facilities and build new ones.

Statistics from the South's unification ministry showed that Kim appeared at sports events 25 times in the first 11 months of 2013, compared with only six appearances in the previous year.

Of those 25 visits, 16 were made in the latter half of the year, indicating his activities were increasing.

The Rodong Sinmun said in September 2013 that Kim made 16 public appearances in August and eight of them were for sports events.

In September 2013, Kim visited the Pyongyang Gymnasium, the largest indoor sports facility in North Korea, which has just completed its renovation work.

The KCNA also reported that Kim, along with his wife, Ri Sol-ju, watched the 2013 Asian Cup weightlifting championships in Pyongyang on Sept. 15.

Kim watched a basketball game with Dennis Rodman, a former National Basketball Association star, who visited Pyongyang in

early September and met with table tennis players who won the mixed doubles event of the World Table Tennis Championships in late August.

He also encouraged meritorious athletes and coaches and ordered officials to give various favors to sports figures to raise their morale.

North Korea also has made massive investments in building and renovating sports facilities. Representative investments include the construction of an international football school in Pyongyang, construction of the Masik Pass ski resort and building of an apartment complex for sports people.

North Korea has created various sports facilities for people and to organize sports competitions for ordinary citizens, and increased investment in developing new sports like mixed diving, roller skating, trampoline and cycle.

North Korea organized associations for roller skating, roller figure skating and trampoline early this year and is preparing to participate in international championships of these sports.

Koh Yu-hwan, a professor of North Korean studies at Seoul's Dongguk University, said that sports is a kind of ruling skill in North Korea and that the North Korean leader seems to be trying to defuse people's political dissatisfaction by boosting sports fever.

Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said underdeveloped countries or countries under dictatorship usually utilize sports to consolidate their systems and North Korea is no exception. He added that because Kim Jong-un is young, he seems to be very interested in fostering sports. (Yonhap)

# Kim Jong-un's Educational Reform

**North Korean leader Kim Jong-un addressed the direction of education reform in his era and urgent tasks based on the assessment of education in North Korea**

■ By Cho Jeong-ah. *director of the Information Center for Unification Studies of the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul*

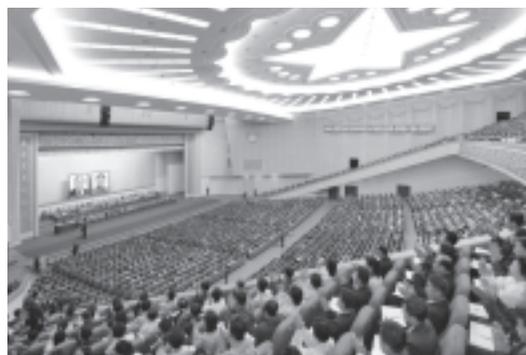
On Sept. 5, Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) First Secretary Kim Jong-un's newest statement on education, "Let Us Make a Revolution in Education in the New Century to Glorify our Country as One of Education and a Power of Talent," was announced at the 13th National Meeting of Educators held in Pyongyang. Enunciated at the first such meeting in ten years, the statement addressed the direction of education reform in the Kim Jong-un era and the most urgent tasks based on an assessment of the condition of education in North Korea. Kim stated that the goal of "the revolution in education in the new century" is to "turn the country into a power of socialist education in the 21st century by bringing up all school youth and children as reliable pillars for the building of a thriving nation and educating all the people to be well versed in science and technology." On the direction of education reforms, he addressed: first, the full establishment of the education system and the improvement of guidance and management of education; second, the innovation of educational content and methods; and third, the fundamental innovation of the environment and conditions in education. Also, he laid out specific tasks relevant to these goals.

## Direction of Education Reform

Concerning the full establishment of the education system and improvement of guidance and management of educational material, the enhancement of secondary general education was noted as a task of utmost priority. This appears to be the North Korean authorities' solution to the decreasing school attendance rate, due to the transferred burden of education costs at public education institutions to parents, and decreasing motivation to learn. This also relates to the successful implementation of "universal 12-year compulsory

education,” which was announced in September 2012 and has been gradually taking root. Kim’s statement stressed the necessity of improving secondary general education’s curricula in accordance with the country’s current conditions and the global trend of education for the enforcement of 12-year compulsory education. In particular, he called for “intensifying education for the gifted within secondary general education and elevating the level of general education at the same time.” He also pledged to lay the foundations for lifelong learning for all students. This indicates a shift in the direction of education policy which focused on education in excellence from the 2000s.

With regard to higher education, in accordance with the assessment that the current higher education system has limitations as an education system in “the era of industrial economy,” Kim addressed the need to foster “academic talents” and “practical talents.” He laid out specific tasks such as developing “combined undergraduate/graduate studies programs” that link universities and graduate schools, increasing the number of “baksawon,” an equivalent of graduate school, researching the adoption of bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degree programs, increasing the number of universities, merging colleges and universities, and transforming colleges to vocational training universities. The current North Korean higher education system is centered on small colleges that have the goal of fostering technicians specializing in narrow research fields. As the statement pointed out, there are many areas, such as curricula, size of university and so on, that do not meet the international standards. Kim gave instructions to improve these shortcomings through research.



North Korea opens the 13th National Meeting of Educators in Pyongyang on Sept. 5. (KCNA-Yonhap)

## Innovation of Education Contents

In addition to reorganizing the education system, also addressed was the role of regime bodies that patronize schools at the provincial, municipal, county level and the management of students and teachers. Especially, it is noticeable that directions have been made to implement an academic credit-based system and to improve the university admission system through research and evaluation. As for the instruction to improve the university admission system, this is a result of awareness of the problem that the academic level of undergraduates and the quality of university education have been deteriorating due to widespread corruption involving university admission.

The second direction of the reform addressed in the statement involved innovating educational content and methods so that “they encourage a student’s noble spirit and creativity.” It said that education in “the era of a knowledge-based economy” should not merely transfer knowledge but “make the students learn faster.” On the reorganization of university educational content, the statement called for the intensifying links between basic educa-

tion and major education, greater reflection of the achievements of modern science technology, and increasing the hours allotted for experiments, exercise, and technical training. Noting that education remained mainly an exercise in knowledge transfer, Kim requested the development of educational and teaching methods to improve students' intellectual and applicative ability as well as to revise the method of academic evaluation and exams.

### Coping with Global Trend

In addition to improving educational content and methods, Kim Jong-un mentioned tasks such as enhancing research in education, integrating educational research institutes and increasing their role, and boosting educational research capabilities. It is worth taking notice of the fact that Kim insisted that educational research must be actively engaged in with international organizations and the international community. Understanding global education trends and the efforts to improve the system based on this understanding are distinct characteristics of the education policy in the Kim Jong-un era.

Regarding the fundamental innovation of the educational environment, the third direction of reform, the following tasks were addressed: improving education facilities, building an education-friendly environment, reviewing education-related laws, increasing investment in education, strengthening the training and re-education of teachers, and intensifying the party guidance in education. It seems that as a follow up measure for the enactment of the General Education Act and Higher Education Act in 2011, additional amendments and enactment of education-relat-

ed laws will be carried out. The development of the North Korea's educational reforms should be closely observed considering the fact that reform in higher education was also carried out in China's reform process.

### Prerequisite for Reform

Nonetheless, several conditions have to be instated as a prerequisite for the aforementioned education reforms to succeed. First of all, tasks such as improving education facilities and conditions, increasing the number of teachers and assuring their living standards, and informatizing the education sector require substantial budget increases in education. It seems highly possible that in situations where the procurement of such funds is difficult, the regime will rely on nationwide mobilization or international support. It is very likely that the North Korea's international exchanges, which have been greatly visible in the fields of tourism and sports, will expand to the education sector.

Nevertheless, the strictly-restricted and excessive education on political ideology, the fundamental issue in North Korean education, will ultimately hinder the goal of cultivating creative talent appropriate in the era of the "knowledge-based economy." Despite this fact, it seems certain that at least in education, North Korea in the Kim Jong-un era seems to be prepared to seek "globalization" and raise talented students.

(This is an analysis, published under the title of "North Korea's Strategy for Educational Reform Seen Through Kim Jong-un's Remarks at the National Meeting of Educators" as part of the Korea Institute for National Unification's Online Series on Sept. 16.)

# The Real Situation of Forest Destruction in North Korea and Ways to Provide Assistance for Restoration

## I. Introduction

Already in the early days after its inauguration as a socialist state under the official name of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in September 1948, North Korea began to draw a plan to actively utilize forests on and other natural resources in mountains and uplands, which account for some 80 percent of its land territory. In its early stage, the North created a policy geared toward maximum utilization of the economic value of its forests, in a move to form a socialist economic system. In an effort to attain this policy objective, the North nationalized forests while establishing a system for afforestation, plus the utilization and management of forests, to be operated by the state and social organizations. It handled forest management as part of its economic plan and policy, focusing on forestry and silviculture. But the forests in the North were destroyed at a rapid pace when the North Korean central government neglected policy measures for afforestation and forest management while encouraging terrace farming aimed at making up for the shortage of cultivated land. The North was eventually trapped in a situation where it was unable to take measures to prevent forest destruction on a large scale, which started in the mid-1990s when its chronic economic difficulties turned worse and many North Korean farmers rushed to slopes to form small cultivated fields and to mountains to obtain firewood, resulting in trees being chopped down. These unfavorable developments led the concerned North Korean authorities to scrap their traditional forest management formula dealing with timber production and employ a new forest management method aimed at conserving their national territorial environment.

North Korea enacted the Forest Law in 1992 and established the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection in 1998, in a move to attain its policy goals for more intensive management and unified

Park Kyung-seok,  
senior researcher at the Korea  
Forest Research Institute in Seoul

state guidance regarding the forests. And it turned more active in taking measures for environment conservation at the turn of the century, asking South Korea and the international community for assistance necessary for the rehabilitation of its despoiled woodlands. In response to the North's appeal, two non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the South -- Forest for Peace and Green One Korea -- began to provide the North with assistance in 1999. But their assistance was suspended under the sanctions imposed on the North by the South Korean government on May 24, 2010, after the communist country's deadly torpedoing of a South Korean warship, the Cheonan, in the West Sea in March that year.

In an encouraging development in the South, however, the new government led by President Park Geun-hye inaugurated in February 2013 has presented fresh keynote policies which call for, among other things, a trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula and a common natural environmental community on the peninsula between the two Koreas through "green detente." The goal of green detente is to attain green economic cooperation between the two neighbors, with regards to afforestation, climate change and agriculture, in a move to rehabilitate the degraded forests in the North, promote inter-Korean agricultural cooperation, create an estate for renewable energy in the Kaesong Industrial Complex in the North and turn the demilitarized zone (DMZ), an inter-Korean buffer zone formed at the end of the Korean War in July 1953, into a world peace park. Green detente is aimed at easing tension on the Korean Peninsula and promoting peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas through green

economic cooperation. Programs for inter-Korean cooperation under this formula will include restoration of the despoiled forests and forest protection from diseases and harmful insects, the operation of a pilot farm in the North, and a joint geological, ecological survey of the Korean Peninsula. This kind of inter-Korean cooperation is feasible because not only the two Koreas but the international community as well agree on its necessity.

## II. The Real Situation of Forest Devastation in North Korea

Forests will be one of North Korea's valuable natural resources once trees fill mountains, which account for some 80 percent of its land territory. In the North Korean society, natural resources exist for the masses, who are masters of labor for production, and nature is an object that is subject to reshaping so the masses can live affluently.<sup>1)</sup> According to the *juche* idea of self-reliance, said to be created by North Korea's founding father, Kim Il-sung, man, as the master of his own destiny and the world, is the being who controls nature and society, and rules all things in the world and brings them under his control. This North Korean ideology defines nature as part of its territorial resources that should be managed and utilized generally and effectively for the development of the people's economy and people's living. In other words, nature is an object that is subject to reshaping, and the conservation and development of nature requires man's active judgment and action because it is his choice.<sup>2)</sup>

North Korea launched a campaign for reshaping nature soon after the inauguration of

its socialist regime in September 1948, first with a program to improve the quality of its cultivated land and then with a more comprehensive one in 1976, armed with a five-point guideline aimed at enhancing the efficiency of land management and increasing productivity.<sup>3)</sup> Forests have become an integral part of the project to reshape nature. This is aimed at raising people's standards of living and constructing a self-reliant national economy. Timber is necessary for industrial construction and serves as the source of national wealth,<sup>4)</sup> playing an important role not only for preventing water resources from drying up and torrential rains from turning into floods, and making the cultivated land fertile, but also for promoting the beautification of landscapes and people's health.

Based on this project, the North has set up the basic goals of afforestation, and forest conservation to meet the demand of forest products necessary for the development of its people's economy, including timber, textiles, paper, oil, medicinal herbs and animal feeds, and provide a firm physical and technical base proper for the socialist society to achieve a complete success. The North emphasizes the significance of forest conservation and management as follows.<sup>5)</sup>

1) Afforestation and forest conservation are important because they guarantee the production of raw materials that are necessary for an economic unit to singlehandedly construct things.

2) Production of agricultural products in mountainous areas will be increased and differences in the living conditions for farmers will be removed through afforestation and forest conservation.

3) Cultivated land can be protected and the

landscapes of the nation can be beautified through forest conservation.

4) The national land territory can be beautified by means of conserving the dense forests that have been the pride of the state and nation for a long time.

North Korea began to implement a forest policy in the late 1950s in a way to produce and supply timber, and develop and utilize the maximum forest resources, when the demand of timber increased at a rapid pace under economic programs for the reconstruction of industrial facilities destroyed during the Korean War and under an economic development policy focusing on heavy industries. But deforestation began in the North when the central government reduced its support for afforestation and forest conservation while entrusting local governments with those tasks, and the North encouraged terrace farming to make up for the shortage of cultivated land. Moreover, the extremely adverse economic situation facing the North in the mid-1990s resulted in the rapid deforestation across the country. Many people rushed to mountains and chopped down trees in search of food and firewood and in a move to form terraced fields at a time when the North Korean government suspended food rationing to most of its citizens amid severe economic hardship. The collapse of the socialist bloc isolating the North from the international community, plus natural disasters in the mid-1990s, resulted in the worst economic situation in the North's history, forcing North Koreans to make a "painful march under trials" and resulting in forest despoliation at a more rapid pace.

According to an analysis of satellite data on North Korean territory made by the Korea Forest Research Institute in Seoul, the area of

degraded forest in 1999 stood at 1.63 million hectares, which accounted for 18 percent of the total forest area in the North. But the comparable figure rose to 2.84 million, or 32 percent of the total, in 2008. As aforementioned, the area of despoiled forest increased at a rapid pace because many North Koreans cut down trees at random to get food and firewood and create land for terraced fields. Moreover, the persisting adverse situation facing the North resulted in a shortage of foreign currency held by the government and enforced it to suspend its imports of timber from foreign countries and chop down more of trees to meet domestic timber demand, accelerating the pace of forest despoliation. To make the situation worse, timber exporters encouraged deforestation. The area of despoiled forests, however, will unlikely increase at a rapid pace in the future but will most likely continue to rise.

The ruined forests in North Korea have become a topic of the international community. According to Germanwatch, a Bonn-based NGO known for its evaluation of the climate protection performance of 58 countries responsible for over 90 percent of global energy-related carbon dioxide emissions, North Korea ranked seventh among the 10 most affected by climate change from 1992 to 2011. The “Long-term Climate Risk Index” of Germanwatch covering that 20-year period put figures for North Korea as follows: deaths per 100,000 inhabitants at 0.33, total losses at US\$3.2 million, losses per unit of GNP at 7.64 percent and total number of weather-related loss events at 37. The North ranked No. 1 in losses per unit of GDP in percentage. The disasters suffered by the North are ascribable mainly to deforestation. And the North ranked third in 2012 in the forest diversion index by

Maplecraft, an international surveyor, after Nigeria and Indonesia.

An analysis of satellite photos of Pyongyang taken in 2012 revealed that the increase in the area of forest despoliation was not remarkable, but that soil in and around the despoiled forest was continually washed away, deepening forest devastation as no forest rehabilitation efforts were made. If the North continues to not take any specific measures to fix its despoiled forests, costs for forest rehabilitation will increase remarkably even if the North begins projects for forest rehabilitation in the near future because the success of the projects will require facilities for soil erosion control. And if and when it fails to prevent the increase of despoiled forests, the North will hardly be able to avoid damage from severe droughts and floods caused by annual global climate change.

### III. North Korea's Efforts for Rehabilitating Despoiled Woodlands and Their Limitations

The adverse economic situation facing the North since the turn of the 1990s has brought about a change in the nature of its command economy, with the weakening functions of the central government for controlling and planning economic projects, as well as the ever spreading market functions and the spontaneous emergence and spreading of public slogans for self-rehabilitation throughout the country. Self-rehabilitation refers to the requirement that most North Koreans should acquire food, instead of relying on food rationing by the state. Their efforts to obtain

food for their survival resulted in their moves to secure an income and get the cash necessary to buy food on the market as well as come up with methods to produce food. The situation turned troublesome when many farmers focused their efforts for producing more food grain on obtaining additional cultivated land because additional capital goods and intermediate goods, which are essential to an increase in their grain production, were unavailable. The North's persistent policy to secure more cultivated land resulted in turning most hills into terraced fields. This was followed by attention being placed on more steep mountainous areas filled with trees. This led to a widespread public movement to turn steeper mountain areas into patches of field, terraced fields and sloping fields, only to further uproot forests. This reclamation campaign was participated in not only by individual farmers but most economic entities, including enterprises, as well. Many military units were even given instructions to secure their own food production bases.

These North Korean farmers' moves to increase their cultivated land for survival were either approved by the North Korean authorities tacitly or officially. The North even instituted a system to impose fees on "sotoji," or small pieces of land turned by farmers into terraced fields to grow farm products. Members of forest utilization teams were often involved in this type of cultivation. Since the 1990s, the North Korean authorities have pushed ahead with harmonizing farmers' desires to obtain more cultivated land with the state policy for afforestation and forest conservation. The North organized elderly people and other vulnerable people into forest utilization teams and entrusted them with a job to manage forests on

mountains while allowing them to grow maize and other dry field products between saplings planted on woodlands.

These small pieces of cultivated land in forests have actually really helped the vulnerable classes secure food, but it is also a fact that they have played a role in accelerating forest despoliation when members of the forest utilization teams were more concerned with cultivation of farm products than with afforestation and forest conservation, and reclaimed more woodlands than the area allowed by the concerned authorities.

Awakened to this problem triggered by their cultivation of sotoji, the North Korean government has recovered those small pieces of land regularly from the members of the forest utilization teams and has taken other measures to restrict their cultivation, but the policy efforts against forest despoliation have yet to pay off. At stake is the fact that forest despoliation for obtaining slash-and-burn fields or sotoji is carried out mainly by the people on the margins of North Korean society. The guidelines of the authorities concerned with forest degradation are widely disregarded in the North. Their violators are mostly retired elderly people who cannot afford food grain but get it through the cultivation of sotoji. Turning the situation worse in recent days, more and more powerful classes and cash-laden ones have brought those troublesome pieces of farmland under their control for their trade and hereditary succession, making forest rehabilitation even harder. And many North Korean families are using forests as a place for their most important source of energy at a time when the North is suffering from a chronic energy shortage. In other words, more and more North Korean families are using wood taken from forests for

cooking and heating only to facilitate deforestation. Most North Korean farmers began to use firewood for cooking in the latter half of the 1980s and that behavior spread throughout the country, except in some large cities. The rapid deforestation in the North in recent decades is attributable to this development. In recent years even saplings planted for afforestation by the authorities concerned were often pulled up or chopped down to be used as firewood.

Market functions, including trade, and dependence on commodity exports have also been rising in recent decades while the central government has seen its ever weakening ability to control the national economy and economic activities. In this situation, an increase in the lumber trade is naturally resulting in a rise in illegal deforestation. Prevalent in the areas bordering China is the illegal activity of cutting trees down for the production and exportation of timber to the neighboring country because most businessmen in the North put a priority on exports to earn foreign currency. Organizations under the control of the Workers' Party of Korea, the North Korean version of the Communist Party and the Korean People's Army of the North are authorized to have access to most natural resources that can be export goods. Forest resources are not an exception. Policy priority could be placed on gaining short-term profits, namely, foreign currency, rather than on the long-term policy goal of conserving the forests.

Timber is a good whose demand is high not only in the export market but in the domestic market. Timber is traded briskly on the domestic market as firewood and as an industrial raw material. Legal trade of timber is partly allowed in the North Korean market, but a

considerable portion of the timber trade there is unofficial and illegal. For this reason, deforestation is prevalent.

Awakened to the fact that forest despoliation is one of the factors responsible for increasing the dangers of floods only after experiencing a series of disastrous floods, including one in 1995, the North Korean authorities concerned began to push ahead with a policy for afforestation and forest conservation. The North, which had enacted a forest law in 1992, established a 10-year afforestation plan in December 2000 that was implemented the following year until 2010. The plan calls for annual afforestation on 150,000 hectares of land, but the North's efforts for implementing the plan have yet to pay off because of the persistent adverse economic situation and famine facing the country.<sup>6)</sup> Under a decision of the Workers' Party in September 2008, the North banned members of the forest utilization teams from cultivating sotoji starting in 2009 while allotting a certain amount of land to each enterprise for planting trees that can later be used for firewood. But they resisted the measure against the cultivation of sotoji because they are people on the margins of North Korean society with no money to buy food on the market at a time when the food rationing system of the state is dysfunctional. They resisted the ban on sotoji, setting fire to confiscated land and slashing and burning fields in the forest.

The policy to regulate sotoji cultivation turned out to be unsuccessful, and similar regulations won't be effective in the future unless the North finds a solution to the chronic famine.

Kim Jong-un -- the third and youngest son of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, who vir-

tually ruled the North for nearly four decades until his death in December 2011 -- completed his official hereditary succession to leadership in the 4th conference of representatives of the Workers' Party on April 11, 2012, and in a session of the Supreme People's Assembly, the North's rubber-stamp parliament, held two days later. The young Kim became the Party's leader in his capacity as the first secretary of the Party Central Committee and the government's leader in his capacity as the first chairman of the National Defense Commission. In less than half a month after his official leadership takeover, Kim Jong-un presented his policy on forest management in talks with senior officials from the Party, state economic offices and laborers' organizations, held under the heading of "On Effecting a Drastic Turn in Land Management to Meet the Requirements for Building a Thriving Socialist Nation."

First of all, he said: "We've planted a lot of trees in spring and autumn every year, but the state of forests in the country has not improved much." While deploring formalism prevalent in the country, he said that there are just a few trees even on the mountains carrying signboards calling for forest conservation and indicated that they are a "youth's forest" or a "boys' forest."

"It is the unswerving determination and will of our Party to afforest all of the mountains with no trees within 10 years, decisively innovating the project for afforestation and forest conservation," Kim said. He added that forest conservation requires a solution to the question of fuel, the prevention of forest fires on mountains and forest protection from diseases and harmful insects, among other things.

As shown in Kim's remarks, the North has adopted an afforestation method to counter the

practical causes of forest damage. It has introduced the formula of planting trees and cultivating farm products and medical herbs simultaneously on slopes as it could not implement the planting of trees on sotoji because of strong resistance from the people. The North has shown its willingness to proliferate this composite formula mixing afforestation with cultivation whenever the premier of the Cabinet makes on-spot inspections of areas for that project.

#### **IV. Achievements in South Korea's Assistance for North's Forest Rehabilitation and Its Strategy for Future Assistance**

##### **1. Achievements**

South Korean civic organizations' forest assistance to the North began with the launch of Forest for Peace in March 1999. Most of its programs for assistance to the North, however, were criticized as one-time events and voices mounted for systematic afforestation aid to the North. These movements were followed by the launch of Green One Korea, a more comprehensive NGO, in the South in 2007. Then came the North's deadly attack on the Cheonan warship in March 2010, only inviting South Korean sanctions on May 24 of that year, which ban all South Korean trade with, investment in and assistance to the North.

Thanks to the South's modernization programs for tree nurseries in North Korea prior to the May 24 measures, however, the North developed rotating sprinklers, plus the methods of producing saplings on a lot of nutrient-

rich soil, utilizing non-woven fabrics, and supplied the sprinklers to tree nurseries throughout the country, for the production of saplings in a scientific, intensive and industrial way.

Among the short-term projects provided by the South aimed at protecting forests from diseases and harmful insects was the successful one for pine trees on Mt. Kumgang, which had been harmed by pine leaf gall midge. Despite the May 24 punitive measures, the North has indirectly asked the South for assistance in protecting the pine trees around the tomb of King Tongmyong, who founded the Goguryeo Kingdom, near its capital of Pyongyang. The South also has helped the North form an area of 120 hectares on Mt. Kumgang, filled with chestnut trees. In 2009, saplings from the South were planted in an area of 100 hectares near Pyongyang as a pilot afforestation project. South Korean civic organization's persistent forest assistance to the North over the past 10 years has changed the attitude of the North Korean authorities concerned, which had been passive in opening any of the North's pilot afforestation areas, building inter-Korean trust in the afforestation and forest conservation sector. But many South Korean NGO assistance programs fell far short of the North's expectations because they were small in scale and one-time events in nature. The NGOs are also experiencing difficulties in raising funds to finance the assistance programs.

## **2. Recommendations for South's Strategy for Helping North Rehabilitate Its Despoiled Woodlands**

As aforementioned, the North Korean authorities have opened one of its model afforestation areas to the South, thanks to the

mutual trust between them and South Korean NGOs, which have steadily assisted the North's forest rehabilitation. If inter-Korean cooperation is resumed in the forest sector, the South should establish a strategy to rehabilitate the despoiled forests there by considering the situation there, not by considering its own position.

North Koreans have increased their economic activities as market functions have proliferated throughout the North after the country was trapped in economic difficulties. In this climate, the interests of state offices, Party organizations, local governments, enterprises and people can conflict with each other. Because of its weakening social control, the North Korean central government is experiencing difficulties in preventing people's deforestation aimed at reclaiming forest areas into cultivated fields or obtaining firewood. To achieve green detente, the South needs to establish a strategy to help the North rehabilitate its despoiled forest in consideration of the changing socio-economic situation facing the North as follows.

First, assistance related to the rehabilitation of degraded forest should be given to the North in consideration of the interests of local governments, enterprises and laborers. This has become complicated since the turn of the 21st century when the mechanism of the centrally planned North Korean command economy collapsed.

Second, as forest rehabilitation requires long-term plans and projects, forest management should continuously provide benefits to North Korean participants such as an income under a new system.

Third, it is important to lower North Koreans' dependence on forests in connection

with their food and firewood, linking the forest rehabilitation projects with programs that supply food and energy to the people.

Because such structural causes as economic difficulties and the shortage of energy resources are responsible for forest devastation, a plan to rehabilitate forests that only establishes measures for afforestation and those for protecting forests from diseases and harmful insects will only produce transient effects. Lasting achievements may require a comprehensive package calling for establishing a special forest district and the linking of a forest structure improvement program with a regional development project, and a successful model. The North and assistance providers may need to make an attempt for forest rehabilitation based on this project and model.

And because the forest rehabilitation needs a large-scale budget and policy support, it is desirable for NGOs and local governments in the South to assist the North in tandem.

At the same time, they need to develop closer forest-related international cooperation, in an effort to push ahead with the forest rehabilitation project of the North in connection with the international community and organizations. In cooperation with such international organizations as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification (UNCCD), particularly in Africa, the South Korean government needs to play a leading role in producing an international agreement on sustainable forest management (SFM) of the North's forests.

## V. Conclusion

Because forest despoliation in North Korea was attributable to an array of socioeconomic problems such as economic difficulties, the shortage of energy resources and chronic famines, successful forest rehabilitation there first requires solutions to these problems. If the North Korean government bans its people from utilizing forests without presenting any alternatives, the North Korean people will resist the measure and will be reluctant to participate in an afforestation project requiring manual labor. For this reason, forest rehabilitation projects should be carried out in combination with programs to solve problems that provide benefits to participants such as additional income. Given this situation, this essay will now make a four-point recommendation for South Korea's forest assistance to the North.<sup>7)</sup>

First, the assistance should be made in consideration of interests involving various elements in the North. An economic crisis in the North in the mid-1990s resulted in considerably weakening the North Korean central government's capability to implement its policies. If the interest of the central government conflicts with that of local governments, or enterprises or laborers, it will struggle to implement its policies. For this reason, the assistance providers in the South should approach afforestation in the North in a way that considers the interests of the central and local governments, laborers and other elements related to the project.

Second, they need to establish an assistance system for the forest rehabilitation project in a way that provides North Korean people participating in afforestation with on-site economic benefits.

Third, the assistance providers need to connect the forest rehabilitation project with a general project for developing rural areas. If they only create a program that addresses afforestation, the providers will likely fail in their forest rehabilitation because the North Korean general public depends heavily on forests for their survival. It is essential for them to get financial support from international institutions such as the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to finance the huge costs for the general development project for North Korean rural areas, which will eventually help increase the income of North Koreans in rural areas and lower their dependence on forests.

Fourth, it's important to build an effective forest management system, utilizing the existing socialist administrative management system there. A successful forest rehabilitation project requires short-term measures along with a long-term policy. The forest management system is for mobilizing the necessary manpower for large-scale afforestation and preventing forest despoilation. Currently, the North Korean forest management system is dysfunctional because the mechanism for the command economy has collapsed due to the government's inability to control economic activities. But there still exists in the North an administrative system for forests to swiftly implement administrative measures and some institutional tools for mobilizing North Korean citizens, including a system for designating the people who will handle certain matters. Accordingly, an important task of the North and those providing assistance is to establish a forest management system utilizing the existing socialist tools in a way that systematically

manages the forests after afforestation.

(This is an excerpt from the Korean paper carried in the September 2014 edition of the KDI Review of the North Korean Economy, a journal published by the Korea Development Institute (KDI), a government-financed think-tank in Seoul.)

#### Notes:

- 1) North Korea has launched a three-point "remaking" campaign regarding human beings, society and nature. Seo Yoo-seok, "The Three-point Remaking Project in North Korea," North Korea Studies, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Seoul, The Institute of North Korea Studies in Dongguk University, 2008), p. 104.
- 2) In North Korea, "The preservation of nature is a prerequisite to continually increasing national resources and developing and utilizing them systematically." The Publishing House of the Academy of Social Sciences, Dictionary 2 (Pyongyang, 1985).
- 3) Seo Yoo-seok, op. cit., p. 105.
- 4) A written decision made by the Standing Committee of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, "On the Measures to Strengthen the Forestry Project," Sept. 23, 1953.
- 5) Kim Su-yon, A Great Change in the Project to Manage National Land Territory (Pyongyang, The Publishing House of the Academy of Social Sciences, 1992), pp. 79-82.
- 6) Park Kyung-seok et al., A Study on the Traits of the Forest System of the North Korean Central and Local Governments and its Management System (Seoul, the Korea Forest Research Institute, 2008), pp. 4-5.
- 7) Park Kyung-seok et al., "A Study on the Basic Direction for the Rehabilitation of Despoiled Forests in North Korea in Consideration of Its Socioeconomic Situation," Journal of Korea Forest Society, Vol. 100, No. 3 (2011), p. 430.

**Internal Affairs****N.K. leader's aunt shown again on TV**

The aunt of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was shown again on state television on Oct. 12 in a re-run of a documentary, reinforcing views that she hasn't been removed from the country's power elite despite the execution of her once powerful husband.

Kim Kyong-hui, the current leader's aunt and younger sister of late former leader Kim Jong-il, has not been seen in public since her husband, Jang Song-thaek, was executed last December on charges of treason.

The last time she was seen on television was April 29, when the North's Korean Central TV ran a documentary film about Kim Jong-un's efforts to promote sports. In the documentary, the 68-year-old aunt was spotted close to her nephew at a football stadium.

On Oct. 12, the TV station broadcast the same documentary film.

Speculation about the aunt's removal from power had emerged after the TV station replaced footage of her in a separate documentary aired on April 15. North Korea has often indicated the purge of high-ranking officials by deleting scenes in which they appear.

The aunt, a former senior secretary of the North's ruling Workers' Party, is now believed to have stepped down from her official posts due to health problems.

In early October, a source familiar with affairs inside the communist state claimed that a Korean-American cardiologist arrived in Pyongyang in late September to treat the aunt who has been known to have a heart disease, prompting speculation that she may have fallen into critical condition. (Yonhap)

**N. Korea stresses loyalty to leader ahead of party anniversary**

North Korea's main newspaper called on Oct. 7 for "unchangeable" allegiance to its leader Kim Jong-un ahead of the anniversary of the founding of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK).

"The party, under the fluttering (North Korean) flag of the sun, will remain faithful to the ideology and the achievements of our leader," said the Rodong Sinmun, an organ of the governing party, said in an editorial.

The 69th anniversary of the founding of the sole political party in the communist country falls on Oct. 10.

"Our party's firm belief is that the blood and revolutionary traditions of Paektu can never change nor be drained."

Propaganda in the regime regularly describes the ruling Kim family as belonging to the bloodline of Paektu, the highest mountain in the North.

The editorial also included a stern warning against potential rebellion.

“(The country) uncovered and sternly purged modern-time sectarian elements,” the newspaper said, apparently referring to the shock execution of Jang Song-thaek last December.

The once-powerful uncle of Kim Jong-un was charged with attempting to overthrow the regime.

The party is equipped with the “revolutionary spirit to mercilessly destroy impure elements who challenge the leader’s ideology and his leadership,” the editorial added. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea stresses etiquette in mobile phone use**

With growing access to mobile phones in North Korea, the communist country has published a set of guidelines on how to treat others with respect through the new medium.

A quarterly North Korean magazine on culture, obtained by Yonhap News Agency on Sept. 28, includes a piece titled “Language etiquette in phone conversations,” which stresses the importance of proper manners in mobile phone use.

“As mobile phones are being used increasingly in today’s society, there has been a tendency among some people to neglect proper phone etiquette,” according to the piece in the latest issue of the magazine, published on Aug. 27.

“On mobile phones, unlike on land lines, conversations usually take place with knowledge of the other person. However, even in such cases, one must not neglect to introduce oneself or offer greetings,” it says, apparently referring to the fact that the caller’s number appears on mobile phones.

In an example, the magazine claims that if the recipient does not introduce himself upon answering a call, the caller must go through the process of asking, “Hello? Is it you, comrade Yeong-cheol?”

It also stresses that it is more polite for the recipient to not only introduce himself but to also acknowledge that he is aware of who the caller is.

If not, the caller must go through the inconvenience of identifying himself, the magazine says.

“Speaking loudly or arguing over the phone in public places where many people are gathered is thoughtless and impolite behavior,” it adds.

North Korea keeps a tight control on the flow of information within and across its borders.

Still, about 2.5 million people are estimated to be subscribed to the country’s mobile operator Koryolink, a joint venture with Egypt’s Orascom Telecom. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea replaces vice chairman of National Defense Commission**

North Korea replaced the vice chairman of its powerful National Defense Commission in this year’s second session of the rubber-stamp parliament on Sept. 25, the country’s media said.

Hwang Pyong-so, the top political officer of the Korean People’s Army, was elected as vice chairman of the all-powerful defense commission, replacing Choe Ryong-hae who had taken the position in the past parliamentary session in April, the North’s Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said in an English report, monitored in Seoul.

The North’s top leader, Kim Jong-un, who heads the commission, was absent in the meeting, it

said.

Kim, who last appeared in public on Sept. 3 to attend a concert, has been seen walking with a limp in recent video footage released from the North. This has fueled wild speculations that he may have a health problem.

“It (the parliamentary session) recalled Deputy Choe Ryong-hae from the post of vice chairman of the National Defense Commission of the DPRK due to his transfer to another post,” the report said.

Since his ascent to the top political officer at the military in May, Hwang has been widely believed to be at the center of power in the Kim regime.

The second parliamentary session also discussed the country’s 12-year compulsory education system, adopted in 2012, the report said.

The 13th Supreme People’s Assembly usually holds its annual session in March or April, bringing together 687 delegates from across the country. This year, the first session was held in April.

A second session is sometimes convened in the autumn to approve key public policy or legal measures. (Yonhap)

## External Affairs

### **N. Korea blames U.S. for halt to remains recovery work**

North Korea claimed on Oct. 13 the United States is fully responsible for the suspension of work to unearth the remains of American troops killed in the 1950-53 Korean War.

It accused the Obama administration of making no sincere efforts to bring the remains of the fallen soldiers back home despite its public promise not to forget any of them.

“Lots of remains” of U.S. soldiers are left in North Korea and “uncared and carried away en masse” due to construction of hydropower stations and other development projects, the Panmunjom Mission of the Korean People’s Army said in a statement. Panmunjom is the truce village inside the Demilitarized Zone.

It stressed the remains recovery work has been suspended due to Washington’s “unilateral attitude” of labeling Pyongyang’s satellite launch for peaceful purposes as “a provocation.”

It was countering U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel’s remarks in September that the recalcitrant communist nation was to blame for the failure to restart the unearthing of the remains of the U.S. soldiers in its territory.

The U.S. launched such a recovery work in North Korea in 1996, but it was halted in 2005 amid security concerns to its unearthing team.

The project resumed in 2011, but it was suspended again a year later as Pyongyang fired a long-range rocket.

“It is long since the organization for surveying and unearthing remains operating in the DPRK was disbanded due to the unilateral measure of suspending the work, pursuant to the U.S. administration’s unreasonable hostile policy towards the DPRK,” the North said in the statement translated and carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. The DPRK is the acronym for the country’s official name: the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. (Yonhap)

## **N.K. leader sends congratulatory message to Xi Jinping**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un delivered a congratulatory message to Chinese President Xi Jinping on the occasion of the 65th founding anniversary of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), according to Pyongyang’s media on Oct. 1.

In the three-paragraph message of “greeting,” Kim expressed hope that “the Chinese people will achieve bigger successes in the efforts for the development and prosperity of the country,” the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

He also wished China prosperity and its people happiness in the message, it added.

Kim, however, skipped routine wording such as “friendship” often used to stress the importance of their communist alliance.

There are some indications that North Korea-China relations are not like before. The number of high-level exchanges between the two sides have notably decreased this year.

North Korea watchers say Pyongyang appears to be seeking instead to improve ties with Moscow.

Kim sent messages to Chinese leaders both in 2012 and in 2013 to congratulate them on the PRC founding anniversary, in which he emphasized the need to further develop the two nations’ friendship cultivated by their leaders of the previous generation. (Yonhap)

## **Key N. Korean diplomat returns home without meeting Chinese officials**

A key North Korean party official, who oversees Pyongyang’s foreign policy, returned home from Beijing on Sept. 22, wrapping up his five-nation tour but without meeting with Chinese officials, a diplomatic source said.

The absence of a meeting between Kang Sok-ju, the secretary handling international relations at the North’s ruling Workers’ Party, and Chinese officials on the way to or from the trip represented strained political relations between Pyongyang and Beijing, the source said on the condition of anonymity.

Kang arrived in Beijing on Sept. 21 from Ulan Bator, the final leg of his five-nation tour that had taken him to Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Italy, and flew to Pyongyang on Sept. 22 via an Air Koryo flight, the source said.

When Kang left for Germany on Sept. 6, he had been anticipated to meet with Wang Jiarui, head of the Chinese Communist Party’s international department, in Beijing because the Chinese capital serves as the only gateway to the isolated North Korea.

“To my knowledge, Kang didn’t hold a meeting with senior Chinese officials, including Wang,

during his trip,” said the South Korean diplomatic source who was briefed by the Chinese side.

Political ties between North Korea and China became strained over the North’s third nuclear test in February last year and the execution of the North Korean leader’s once-powerful uncle, Jang Song-thaek, who had close ties with Beijing.

China, North Korea’s last-remaining patron, supplies nearly all of the North’s energy needs, but Beijing has been unsuccessful in getting Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons program.

The execution of Jang in December last year caused North Korea’s political ties with China to deteriorate further because Jang played the most important role as a conduit between the two nations.

This month’s rare overseas trip by Kang suggested that North Korea may take a more proactive diplomacy, but South Korean officials described it as an attempt to break its isolation.

Kang, the key architect of North Korea’s nuclear diplomacy, brokered a nuclear deal in Geneva with the United States in 1994. (Yonhap)

## **Key N. Korean diplomat meets with Mongolian foreign minister**

A key North Korean party official, who oversees Pyongyang’s foreign policy, visited Ulan Bator on Sept. 19 and held talks with Mongolia’s foreign minister, Mongolia’s foreign ministry said.

Kang Sok-ju, the secretary handling international relations at the North’s ruling Workers’ Party, was on the final leg of his five-nation tour that had taken him to Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Italy.

In Ulan Bator, the 75-year-old Kang met with Mongolian Foreign Minister Luvsanvandan Bold and paid courtesy calls on Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj and Prime Minister Altankhuyag Norov, the Mongolian foreign ministry said in a statement posted on its website.

The two-sentence statement gave no further details, including the topics.

Kang’s rare overseas trip suggested that North Korea may take a more proactive diplomacy, but South Korean officials described it as an attempt to break its isolation.

Kang, the key architect of North Korea’s nuclear diplomacy, brokered a nuclear deal in Geneva with the United States in 1994. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea, China to open major bridge in October**

North Korea and China are set to open a major suspension bridge across the Amnok River in October, paving the way for closer economic relations between the allies, China’s state media reported on Sept. 18.

The 3-kilometer, 2.2 billion yuan (US\$357 million) bridge links the North’s border city of Sinuiju to the neighboring Chinese city of Dandong over the river, also called the Yalu River in China. Dandong handles more than 70 percent of bilateral trade with North Korea.

The official China News Service, without citing any sources, reported that the bridge will be opened in October, when the two nations hold a joint trade fair in Dandong.

If the Chinese-funded bridge opens, the report said, “Dandong will become more important in China-North Korea trade.”

The bridge illustrates the view in China that economic engagement with North Korea is a prerequisite to persuading it to abandon its nuclear weapons program, and its resistance to U.S. calls to exert more economic leverage to restrain the regime.

A series of provocations by the North, including last year’s nuclear test, have strained political ties with its last-remaining ally, China. Still, many analysts believe that Beijing will not put strong pressure on Pyongyang due to the risk of aggravating the current situation. (Yonhap)

## Inter-Korean Affairs

### S. Korea deploys more weapons to border regions to deter N. Korea

The South Korean military said on Oct. 13 it has deployed additional weapons to islands near the tense western maritime border to better deal with North Korea’s growing threats.

The disputed sea border remains a powder keg with the two Koreas fighting bloody battles there in 1999, 2002 and 2009. In the latest incident, both sides briefly exchanged fire on Oct. 7 as a boat from the North violated the Northern Limit Line (NLL).

Drawn by the U.S.-led United Nations Command at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, the NLL acts as the de facto sea border between the two Koreas, but Pyongyang does not recognize the border.

“To strengthen preparedness against the North’s surprise attacks on and occupation of border islands in the Yellow Sea, (the military) has additionally dispatched Chiron Man missiles and armored vehicles in the regions,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a report, citing the country’s portable surface-to-air missiles.

“The military devised a timetable on how to respond to North Korea’s possible provocations after the reassessment of its recent military buildup and attack patterns,” the JCS said, without elaborating further.

The report was presented to the parliamentary defense committee for the regular audit of the JCS. (Yonhap)

### Vice FM: S. Korea to invite N. Korea to forum on Park’s peace vision

South Korea plans to invite North Korea to an international forum it is hosting in late October to promote President Park Geun-hye’s vision for bolstering regional peace and cooperation, a senior diplomat from Seoul said Oct. 10.

Vice Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul made the remark in a speech at a Council on Foreign Relations forum, stressing that Park’s peace vision, the “Northeast Asia Peace Cooperation

Initiative,” (NAPCI) is not aimed at excluding and further isolating the North.

“We absolutely have no intention of excluding North Korea ... We will leave the door open for North Korea to participate in the whole process, including in whatever area of its interest and at any time of its own choice,” he said. “In this regard, we are going to invite North Korea to participate in the international forum on NAPCI.”

The peace vision is aimed at promoting peace in the region by building trust in a step-by-step manner. It calls for countries in the region to start with softer, non-political issues, such as environmental issues and disaster relief to foster trust before expanding cooperation to tackling serious political and security matters.

Northeast Asia has long been plagued by historical and territorial rows in addition to military tensions stemming from North Korean provocations. Japan remains at odds with its two key neighbors South Korea and China over its militaristic past and territorial claims.

“The source of tension in the East China Sea has yet to be resolved, while regional conflict arising from Japan’s historical revisionism is continuing to increase,” Cho said.

“North Korea, which has been posing a serious threat to regional security with its nuclear tests, is still engaging in a series of provocations. Since last February, North Korea has fired over 270 rockets and missiles,” he said.

Cho stressed that the source of such tension conflict “lies in a deficit of trust.”

He also said the peace initiative is not aimed at resolving the North Korean nuclear standoff or replacing the six-party nuclear negotiations, though greater trust generated through the vision could contribute to resolving the nuclear issue.

Cho called for U.S. support, saying the initiative will contribute to its “rebalancing to Asia” policy.

“If the Korea-Japan relations can be steadily managed within the multilateral cooperation framework, it will certainly contribute to strengthening the trilateral security cooperation among Korea, the U.S. and Japan,” he said. “As such, NAPCI not only serves but also reinforces the strategic interests of the U.S.” (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea declares 2015 year of unification, boosts readiness for all-out war: Seoul**

With a goal to achieve national reunification in 2015, North Korea has geared up for all-out wars by conducting tactical trainings and boosting its attack capabilities, Seoul’s defense ministry said on Oct. 7.

“After declaring 2015 the year of completing unification, North Korea has been prepared for full-scale wars,” the ministry said in a report presented to the National Assembly for an annual audit of state agencies.

The communist country has ratcheted up tensions on the Korean Peninsula by firing off a series of rockets this year, though it has made peace offensives toward the South recently.

“For that goal, the North doubled the number (of servicemembers) involved in its summer trainings compared to previous years. It has also boosted its attack capabilities in a consistent manner,” the ministry noted.

North Korea also added 300 units of multiple rocket launchers over the past two years to bring the

total number to some 5,100, according to the Seoul ministry.

The rockets with 240-millimeter caliber can fly some 60 kilometers to reach the capital city of South Korea, and the 300mm ones have a range of 200 kilometers to pose threats to the military headquarters in central South Korea.

This year alone, Pyongyang launched rockets 19 times, with the latest one in early September, firing a total of 111 projectiles.

In a move to counter such threats, the Seoul government devised “a timetable” to launch precise strikes against the origin of provocations on the ground, at sea and in the air but also forces supporting it and its commanders.

“South Korea has maintained a firm readiness against North Korea’s limited provocations and any attempts to wage full-scale wars,” the ministry said. “We are trying to boost security posture in capital areas to deter diverse and novel types of threats by the enemy.” (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea urges implementation of past reconciliatory pledges**

North Korea called on the South on Oct. 7 to follow past reconciliatory agreements with the communist country.

“The North and the South, as well as all the (Korean) people overseas, should uphold the June 15 and Oct. 4 declarations as they did in the past in order to defeat the obstruction and challenges of anti-unification forces, and to open up a new era of autonomous unification and peaceful prosperity,” the Rodong Sinmun newspaper, an organ of the North’s ruling party, said.

The declarations refer to two landmark agreements forged under liberal South Korean presidents in 2000 and 2007.

They called for inter-Korean efforts toward unification and cooperation in economic, humanitarian and other sectors.

“The bright path to (better) North-South relations, autonomous unification and peaceful prosperity lie in compliance with the June 15 joint declaration and the Oct. 4 declaration,” the newspaper said.

The call comes three days after the North unexpectedly dispatched a high-level delegation led by Hwang Pyong-so, vice-chairman of the powerful National Defense Commission, to the South.

The delegation, sent to the closing ceremony of the Incheon Asian Games on Oct. 4, held rare high-level talks with top-ranking South Korean security officials and agreed to hold another round of high-level dialogue in the near future.

The gesture from Pyongyang has since spawned hopes for a thaw in the frosty relations between the rival Koreas.

Echoing the Rodong Sinmun, North Korea’s propaganda website Uriminzokkiri said, “Compliance with the June 15 and Oct. 4 declarations is the path toward conciliation, unity and better North-South relations while denial of them means distrust and confrontation.” (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea holds unusual event at Mount Kumgang**

North Korea has held an extraordinary ceremony at Mount Kumgang to commemorate its late leader Kim Jong-il's visit there more than a decade ago, an apparent show of its desire to restart the inter-Korean tour business.

The event was held on Sept. 30 to mark Kim Jong-il's "field guidance" in 2000 to Mount Kumgang, the scenic mountain on the communist nation's eastern coast, according to the North's Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). It is home to a resort developed by South Korea's Hyundai Group.

Attendees included Won Tong-yon, the deputy head of the United Front Department, and Hwang Ho-yong, director of the North's Guidance Bureau of Special Zone for International Tour of Mount Kumgang. Won served as Pyongyang's top delegate to the high-level talks with Seoul in February.

It is quite unusual for the North to hold such a ceremony there and its state media to release a related report.

The move was seen as intended to press the South to resume the joint tour program, a fruit of the 2000 inter-Korean summit talks. Having served as a cash cow for the North, it was suspended in 2008 after a South Korean tourist was shot to death by a North Korean coast guard there.

Seoul has rejected Pyongyang's repeated calls for the resumption of the business, demanding that it first offer a formal apology and guarantee the security of South Korean travelers.

In the Sept. 30 event, Hwang said the late leader Kim entrusted the tour business to the South Korean conglomerate and resolved every related problem, KCNA reported.

It quoted him as adding that Kim led the tour program to contribute to cooperation and reconciliation between the two Koreas. (Yonhap)

## **S. Korea flexible on fertilizer aid to N. Korea**

South Korea is leaving open the possibility of fertilizer aid to North Korea as the impoverished neighbor is apparently stepping up efforts to increase crop yields, officials here said on Sept. 30.

A unification ministry official said the government will review whether to allow civilian relief groups to ship fertilizer to the North if they make such a request.

"Everything can be a humanitarian aid item (for North Korea)," the official told reporters on condition of anonymity. "In case of an application (by civic groups for approval for fertilizer aid), we will review it."

The position contrasts with the government's clearly negative view months ago of fertilizer aid to the communist nation, which refuses to apologize for the 2010 deadly attack on a South Korean warship, the Cheonan.

In March, Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae openly said it was not an appropriate time to send fertilizer to the North.

He was responding to a campaign led by the Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation (KCRC), a coalition of nearly 200 civic groups. Fertilizer is a sensitive aid item just as rice and corn.

The government has effectively barred the shipment of such products to the North since the sink-

ing of the Cheonan.

Seoul has instead allowed “pure” humanitarian assistance for babies, children and pregnant women as well as those with infectious diseases.

But the government has shown signs of being more flexible on North Korean aid since President Park Geun-hye’s “Dresden Declaration” in March.

On her trip to the former East German city, Park vowed efforts for the “humanity, co-prosperity and integration” of the two Koreas through various programs including more humanitarian aid and agricultural cooperation.

Another unification ministry official said, meanwhile, the North seems to be expanding its economic reform measures.

The communist nation, known for its tight control of the economy, is reportedly giving more rights and benefits to factory workers and farmers in order to boost productivity.

The government “also assumes” that North Korea is redoubling efforts to improve its economy via such measures, said the official. (Yonhap)

## Seoul approves 200 mln won aid plan for N. Korea

The unification ministry said on Sept. 29 it has approved a local aid group’s plan to provide 200 million won (US\$190,512) worth of agro-materials in humanitarian assistance to North Korea.

Upon the approval, Ace Gyeongam, the foundation run by bed maker Ace, will cross the inter-Korean land border on Sept. 30 to deliver the agricultural materials, including greenhouse goods, to North Korea’s North Hwanghae Province, according to the ministry.

Six officials from the foundation will visit North Korea to supervise the distribution before returning home on Oct. 4, the ministry said.

South Korea has continued to approve humanitarian assistance to the North in spite of sanctions on the country imposed after its deadly torpedoing of a South Korean Navy ship in 2010.

The sanctions have put almost all inter-Korean economic exchanges on hold, except the joint Kaesong Industrial Complex economic project. Some South Korean businessmen and activists, and Pyongyang, have long called on the South Korean government to withdraw the so-called May 24 sanctions in order to help improve icy relations between the two Koreas. (Yonhap)

## S. Korea, neighbors vow to develop tourist site near N. Korean river

Officials from South Korea, China, Mongolia and Russia have agreed to develop a “world-class” travel destination near a North Korean river that forms the border with China and Russia, China’s state media reported Sept. 22.

The agreement was reached on Sept. 18 at a meeting of tourism officials from the four nations in northeast China’s Hunchun city in Jilin Province, as part of the Greater Tumen Initiative supported by the United Nations Development Program, the China Daily reported, citing a Chinese official.

The North’s 512-kilometer-long Tumen River serves as the boundary between China and Russia.

Zhao Xiaojun, director of the Jilin Provincial Tourism Administration, told the newspaper that the four nations could learn “cross-border tourism experiences” from the European Union and North America to build tourist sites at the Tumen River Delta.

“The area will become a borderless tourism demonstration pilot connected by highways, railways, aviation networks and land-ocean routes with support of China, Mongolia, Russia, the ROK (South Korea), the DPRK (North Korea) and Japan,” the report said. (Yonhap)

## Seoul approves humanitarian aid to N. Korea

The government approved two local charity groups’ plans to send humanitarian aid to North Korea, the unification minister said on Sept. 19.

The approval allows the aid groups including the Association of People Sharing Love to ship food or medical goods to underprivileged people in the North.

Information on the specific items and the size of the assistance was not released.

The latest approval of humanitarian aid to the country marks the first of its kind since the North strongly protested Seoul’s joint military drills with Washington held in late August.

The North has also reportedly accepted the planned aid shipment despite its general boycott of even humanitarian assistance from Seoul this year amid frosty relations with the South.

“The North has not been willing to accept humanitarian aid (from the South) lately but it was taking aid from South Korean groups that tend to help the county somewhat quietly,” a government official said.

President Park Geun-hye and the unification ministry have repeatedly expressed their intention to continue humanitarian assistance to the North in spite of sanctions on the country imposed after its deadly torpedoing of a South Korean Navy ship in 2010. (Yonhap)

## N. Korea eyes Rio Olympics, led by key sports panel: report

Led by a major national sports body, North Korea is already gearing up for the 2016 Summer Olympics to be held in Brazil, a pro-North Korean newspaper published in Japan said on Sept. 19.

The North’s State Physical Culture and Sports Guidance Commission is in charge of the country’s overall sports projects, said the Choson Sinbo, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper based in Japan.

The commission’s current major task is to prepare for the 2016 Olympics to take place in Rio de Janeiro, including the training of athletes, it added. The commission is known to have been previously chaired by the now-purged uncle of the North’s supreme leader, Kim Jong-un.

The report shows the sports organization, created in 2012, is back in full operation after a lengthy lull apparently attributable to the execution of Kim’s once-powerful uncle Jang Song-thaek in late 2013 for alleged corruption.

Jang served as the first chairman of the commission launched in the inaugural year of the Kim Jong-un regime. Jang’s successor remains unknown. (Yonhap)

**FOREIGN TIPS****N. Korean imports of Swiss tobacco machinery parts jump in H1**

North Korea's imports of cigarette-making machinery parts from Switzerland soared in the first half of this year, compared with last year, a report showed on Oct. 15.

The communist country's imports of Swiss tobacco machinery components reached US\$180,000 in the January-June period, far more than the \$24,000 worth of imports recorded for all of 2013, according to the report by the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA).

The latest spike is seen as indicating North Korea's growing interest in investing in the country's cigarette industry.

According to a previous KOTRA report, North Korea's cigarette imports far exceeded its exports last year.

The country imported \$65.28 million of tobacco in 2013, about 77.8 times what the country sold overseas, the report showed.

Another academic report showed that the smoking rate among North Korean men aged 15 or more stood at 45.8 percent, while the global average was 31.1 percent.

Meanwhile, the latest KOTRA report said North Korea's imports of Swiss watches and related watch components fell to zero in the first six months of this year. The country imported \$116,000 worth of Swiss watches and related goods for the whole of 2013. (Yonhap)

**About 7,000 N. Koreans work in Chinese border cities: diplomat**

About 7,000 North Koreans are estimated to be working in China's border cities with the North, bringing hard foreign currency to the cash-strapped regime, a senior South Korean diplomat said on Oct. 14.

"We have estimated that there are around 2,500 North Korean workers in Dandong and some 4,500 North Korean workers in Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture," said Shin Bong-sup, consul general at the South Korean Consulate in the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang.

Dandong is a Chinese border city where more than 70 percent of bilateral trade between North Korea and China is conducted. Yanbian, home to ethnic Koreans in China, also borders North Korea.

Shin gave the estimated number of North Korean workers in the Chinese border cities during an annual parliamentary audit in Beijing.

Impoverished North Korea has recruited its people to work abroad and reportedly kept most of their earnings, one of the few sources of hard currency for the isolated regime.

Along with China, Russia and the Middle East are also reported to be major destinations for North Korean laborers. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea's rice production to remain at same level as last year: U.N. report**

North Korea's rice production this year is expected to be about the same as last year, a U.N. report said on Oct. 12, reinforcing forecasts that grain production will not fall despite a severe drought in the country.

Rice production this year is estimated at 1.9 million tons, the same level as last year, while maize and pork production are expected to increase slightly to 2.3 million and 114,000 tons, respectively, according to the October edition of Food Outlook, a biannual publication of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

In May, the FAO estimated the same production levels for North Korea, with the exception of pork, which was forecast at 113,000 tons.

With this year's rice production, each North Korean is expected to eat 67.8 kilograms of rice between this fall and next summer, according to the report.

North Korea has long been a recipient of international food aid due to shortages caused by droughts, flooding and poor economic management.

However, the FAO representative in North Korea recently said in an interview that the country is projected to produce 6 million tons of grain this year and attain self-sufficiency in food within three to four years. (Yonhap)

## **Chinese media urges N. Korea to give up nuclear program**

In a rare commentary that explicitly calls on North Korea to change course, Chinese state-run media urged Pyongyang on Oct. 8 to abandon its nuclear weapons program to help rebuild its moribund economy and diplomatically engage with the international community.

The Beijing News daily newspaper, run by the Beijing city government, also pointed out that North Korea should break its long-standing tactical pattern of seeking economic and other concessions through provocations, citing Oct. 7's violation of a de facto inter-Korean sea border by a North Korean patrol boat that sparked an exchange of warning shots between the two Koreas.

"Since North Korea conducted its third nuclear test last year, the international community has been no longer willing to compromise and demands North Korea abandon its nuclear program," the commentary said.

"On many occasions, Chinese leaders have stressed the pledge toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," it said. "Therefore, North Korea must abandon its nuclear program."

China has signaled its growing frustration over North Korea's nuclear ambition since it agreed to tighten U.N. sanctions after the North's third nuclear test in February last year, although it remains unclear how much influence Beijing has with Pyongyang.

North Korea wants an unconditional resumption of the six-party talks, which bring together the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the U.S., and have been deadlocked since late 2008.

South Korea and the United States demand that Pyongyang first take concrete steps toward its denuclearization commitment. (Yonhap)

## **U.N. food aid to N. Korea still underfunded despite some growth**

The U.N.'s food aid to North Korea has been on the rise in recent months, but its program remains seriously underfunded, a news report said on Oct. 8.

The World Food Program (WFP) provided North Korea with around 2,300 tons of food assistance in September, only half of its target amount, according to Radio Free Asia (RFA) based in Washington D.C.

It marks a 10-percent increase from 2,075 tons delivered to the communist nation in August.

The number of North Korean kids and pregnant women who received the aid also jumped from about 700,000 to more than 913,000, it added.

The WFP's assistance for the North grew for the third consecutive month since July, but it still suffers a lack of funding, Silke Buhr, the agency's regional public information officer for Asia, told the RFA.

The WFP aimed to offer "nutritional assistance" to 1.8 million North Koreans in need in September, he added.

In 2013, the organization launched a two-year program to help 2.4 million people there.

However, it has been forced to scale down the project due to low funding, which is apparently attributable to donor fatigue amid the communist nation's continued development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. (Yonhap)

## **Total area of N.K. gulags twice as large as Seoul: lawmaker**

The total area of North Korea's concentration camps for political prisoners is twice the size of Seoul, a South Korean lawmaker claimed on Oct. 8, citing satellite imagery.

North Korea is accused of holding hundreds of thousands of political prisoners in concentration camps as part of efforts to suppress dissent and preserve its communist regime.

According to a report published in June by the Seoul-based Korea Institute for National Unification, North Korea is believed to hold 80,000-120,000 prisoners in a total of five concentration camps across the country. The report was based on interviews with North Korean defectors in the South.

"Based on material from research institutes at home and abroad and the analysis of satellite imagery, the total area of North Korea's five prison camps was found to be 1,247.9 square kilometers," Rep. Yoon Sang-hyun of the ruling Saenuri Party said. "This amounts to twice the area of Seoul, which is 605.2 square kilometers."

The notorious Yodok prison camp in the eastern South Hamgyong Province of the communist country, in particular, occupies 40 percent of the Yodok area at 551.6 square kilometers, he said.

"Concentration camps for political prisoners are the pinnacle of the reign of terror, which carries out the worst violations of human rights," the lawmaker said. "The international community should step up reporting and monitoring efforts aimed at dismantling North Korea's concentration camps." (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea imports US\$644 mln worth of luxury goods in 2013: lawmaker**

North Korea imported US\$644 million worth of luxury goods last year despite U.N. sanctions banning the transfer of such goods to the country, a South Korean lawmaker claimed on Oct. 7, citing Chinese customs data.

Luxury goods, including certain kinds of jewelry, precious stones, yachts, luxury automobiles and racing cars, have been banned from transfer to North Korea under a U.N. Security Council resolution adopted in response to the North's nuclear test in February 2013.

Still, North Korea continues to buy luxury items from China, Europe and Southeast Asia, Rep. Yoon Sang-hyun of the ruling Saenuri Party said, citing Chinese customs data on two-way trade with North Korea and studies on North Korean trade patterns.

“(North Korea) is increasing the supply of goods at department stores for Pyongyang's elite, while also increasing the import of goods to be used as gifts for senior party and military officials who form the core class that preserves the regime,” Yoon said.

In recent years, the communist country has especially bought more liquor, watches, handbags, cosmetics, jewelry and carpets, leading to a doubling of imports of luxury goods under the current leader, Kim Jong-un, from an average of \$300 million under his father and former leader Kim Jong-il, who died in December 2011.

North Korea also spends about \$200,000 annually on imports of purebred pet dogs, such as shih tzus and German shepherds -- which are not classified as luxury goods -- and related care products from Europe, Yoon said.

With the money spent on importing luxury goods last year, North Korea could buy more than 3.66 million tons of corn or 1.52 million tons of rice, far more than the country's food shortage of 340,000 tons estimated by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and World Food Program for the year 2013-2014, he added. (Yonhap)

## **S. Korea, U.S. seek missile defense plan against N.K. threats**

South Korea and the United States are drawing up a joint contingency plan to employ Washington's missile defense (MD) system against growing threats from North Korea's ballistic missiles, a government source here said on Oct. 7.

Pyongyang's missile program has long been a key security concern for Northeast Asia and beyond, together with its nuclear weapons development. The two programs are seen as aimed at ultimately developing long-range nuclear missiles that can reach as far as the mainland U.S.

North Korea has conducted a series of long-range rocket tests, with the latest one, in December 2012, putting a satellite into orbit. Citing recent satellite imagery, a U.S. think tank said the previous week that North Korea is believed to have carried out yet another engine test of its new intercontinental ballistic missile, the KN-08.

“As the key to the allies' efforts to develop their capabilities to counter growing threats from the North's ballistic missiles in a comprehensive manner, the two countries are devising the concept and

principles of their joint operations,” said a Seoul government source, requesting anonymity.

The joint contingency plan would employ not only missiles and surveillance equipment the U.S. Forces Korea and South Korea have been developing under their Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) project, but also key assets of the U.S. MD system, according to the source.

The U.S. air defense includes the X-band radar system, the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system and the high-altitude, unmanned aerial vehicle, Global Hawk. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea shuts down 5-MW reactor: think tank**

North Korea is believed to have shut down its sole plutonium-producing nuclear reactor either for refueling or maintenance purposes, a U.S. think tank said on Oct. 5, citing commercial satellite imagery.

The Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) said it reached the decision based on the absence of two key indicators of operations at the 5-megawatt reactor: steam venting from the reactor and cooling water discharge from it.

“In imagery dated Aug. 27 and Sept. 29, 2014, both these signatures are missing,” ISIS said in a report authored by David Albright, a nuclear expert and chief of the institute, and another researcher, Serena Kelleher-Vergantini.

“ISIS assesses that it is possible that the reactor is partially or completely shut down,” it said.

It is unclear what exactly led to the shutdown, but the North could be carrying out a partial refueling of the reactor’s core if some fuel rods are defective, the institute said. A total core refueling is unlikely because the reactor has only been running for a year, it said.

The institute also said the North could have shut down the reactor for maintenance or renovation purposes. Satellite images show unidentified activity taking place on the roof of the reactor’s turbine building, it said.

The reactor at the North’s main Yongbyon nuclear complex has been the source of weapons-grade plutonium for the communist nation. The small reactor is capable of producing spent fuel rods which, if reprocessed, could give the regime enough plutonium to make one bomb a year.

Plutonium from the reactor was used in at least two of the three nuclear tests the North has conducted.

Separately from the 5-megawatt reactor, the North has also been building a larger-scale light water reactor at Yongbyon that experts say could give Pyongyang enough plutonium to make about five or six weapons a year.

ISIS said that the start-up date of the light water reactor still remains unclear.

“Satellite imagery shows no signs of activity or even movement of objects at the site. However, activity may be occurring inside the building; and some foreign procurements continue for this reactor. Thus, North Korea is expected to operate this reactor at some point,” it said.

The institute said the North is believed to be working on a project to expand its uranium-enrichment centrifuge plant at its Yongbyon complex as the latest imagery shows activity renovating the roof of a building adjacent to the centrifuge plant.

“It is likely that North Korea has installed centrifuge cascades inside the new section of the cen-

trifuge building,” it said. “However, it cannot be determined whether North Korea has finished the expansion of this centrifuge plant.” (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea may become self-sufficient in food in 3-4 years: FAO official**

North Korea may become self-sufficient in feeding its own people in three or four years, a representative who heads the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) office in the communist country said on Oct. 4.

Speaking at a Voice of Russia (VOR) program, Belay Derza Gaga said the North is expected to produce some 6 million tons of grain this year and that output has been growing steadily.

He pointed out that policymakers have been emphasizing the importance of agriculture in economic policies that has led to more investment in related fields.

Gaga, however, said that the country still suffers from shortfalls in electricity, fuel and farm equipment.

The FAO official said in the VOR program monitored in Seoul that Mongolia’s plan to provide 10,000 livestock to the North is part of a move to help the North feed itself.

The animals are expected to be shipped to a special region in the North that will be used as a new base for the country’s livestock industry. (Yonhap)

## **Charity foundation to ship TB medicine to N. Korea**

A team of officials from the Eugene Bell Foundation, a charity group, plans to visit North Korea late October to bring tuberculosis medication to the impoverished communist nation, an official said on Oct. 2.

John Rogers, executive director for the U.S.-based foundation, said details of the upcoming trip have yet to be finalized, but the team of about a dozen people, including doctors and nurses, will be staying in the North for some three weeks.

It will be the second trip to the North for the foundation, focused on providing medical aid to rural North Korea. The first was in April.

The team plans to bring 770 million won (US\$750,000) worth of TB medication to the North. Seoul’s unification ministry approved the shipment plan in July.

“The (North’s) Ministry of Public Health very much wants to see us expand the number of patients in the program and treat more of those suffering from drug-resistant TB,” Rogers said. “We are very thankful to our donors who are allowing us to bring these expensive medicines and to help more North Koreans that are sick with this disease.” (Yonhap)

## **N. Korean ping-pong legend injured in car accident**

Li Bun-hee, a former North Korean table tennis star, has been seriously injured in a car accident in Pyongyang, an informed source here said on Oct. 2.

The news surprised many South Koreans and dimmed hopes of Li's visit to the South for the upcoming Incheon Asian Para Games.

Li, currently the chief of North Korea's disabled athletes association, is popular not only in the communist nation but also in South Korea. Li played on a unified Korea team in the 1991 table tennis championships. She played with Hyun Jeong-hwa, a South Korean ping-pong legend, to win the women's doubles title.

Li, 47, was driving a sedan, also carrying two disabled kids, when it hit a truck in the North's capital in late September, said the source with close ties with her.

"I was told about a week ago that she was severely injured and was hospitalized. The North Korean side asked me not to make that public since it is not good news," the source said. "That's why I did not tell the media about that till now."

Earlier in the day, however, the Washington-headquartered Voice of America (VOA) broke the news.

It said Li's neck was broken in the Sept. 25 accident, quoting Lee Seok-hee, a pastor leading a London-based North Korea relief agency.

Lee told the VOA that the British Embassy in Pyongyang has confirmed Li's injury.

South Korea's unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, would not confirm the report.

"We have no information about it," a ministry official told reporters.

Li was scheduled to visit Britain late October, along with North Korean disabled students for performances at Oxford University and Cambridge University.

Li was also widely expected to join the Incheon Asian Para Games to be held in the South Korean port city from Oct. 18-24, leading the North's delegation.

Pyongyang said it will send nine athletes to the games, the reclusive nation's first participation at an Asian Para Games. While the North stopped short of sending the final list of delegates, its decision raised expectations for the first meeting between Li and Hyun in 23 years.

On Oct. 1, Hyun resigned from the post of the head of the athletes' village for the Asian Para Games after being booked without physical detention for causing a car accident while driving under the influence of alcohol. (Yonhap)

## **N.K. completes upgrade of rocket launch pad, conducts ICBM engine test**

North Korea has completed the expansion of its main rocket launch site on the country's northwest coast and a new rocket launch could come before the end of the year, a U.S. think tank said on Oct. 1.

Since late last year, the North has worked to upgrade the Sohae Satellite Launching Station to accommodate larger rockets with heavier payloads. Recent satellite imagery shows that the project has been completed, according to the website 38 North.

"North Korea is now ready to move forward with another rocket launch. Should a decision be made soon to do so in Pyongyang, a rocket could be launched by the end of 2014," said the website

run by the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

According to the report, the garrison and support base for the main construction unit, which was built in the summer of last year, was completely dismantled between Aug. 11 and Sept. 4. Beginning in August, 21 small shelters were also removed, it said.

In December 2012, the North put a satellite into orbit on an Unha-3 long-range rocket, fired from the Sohae launch pad in a surprise move that demonstrated to the world that it has moved closer to developing a nuclear missile that can reach the U.S. mainland.

The most likely candidate for a new launch is still the Unha-3 rocket because a much larger rocket reportedly under development is at least several years from becoming operational, according to the website.

“Continuing activities on the ground at Sohae merit close watching. Imagery from mid-September spotted tanks near the propellant storage buildings at the launch pad for the first time since the 2012 launch,” it said, adding the exact purpose of the activity is unclear.

Earlier in the day, the website released a separate photo of the launch site, saying the North is believed to have carried out yet another engine test of its new intercontinental ballistic missile, the KN-08.

The test of the missile’s first-stage engine took place in mid-August, adding to a series of KN-08 engine tests Pyongyang has carried out since late 2013, said Joel Wit, a security expert who now serves as editor of the website specializing on North Korea issues.

“If we see these tests being completed and there’s no more, that tells us that the North Koreans may be moving on to possible full-scale tests of the KN-08 in the future because this is a stepping stone to missile tests of that particular weapon,” Wit said during a forum on North Korea at the university.

The missile is believed to have a range of at least 5,500 km, which puts Alaska at risk.

Wit said he believes that Adm. Samuel Locklear, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, was referring to the progress the North has made in the development of the KN-08 in a media interview in the previous week.

Locklear told the Bloomberg Government news service that the North is taking steps to deploy the KN-08. He also expressed concern the missile is harder to keep an eye on as it can be launched from mobile launchers, stressing that building a missile defense system for such weapons is a priority.

“They are moving forward, as Adm. Locklear said, with the development of a road-mobile ICBM,” Wit said. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea begins work to refurbish cemetery for Chinese war dead**

North Korea has begun renovation work on a cemetery in the North’s capital for Chinese soldiers who were killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, China’s state media reported on Sept. 30.

China’s ambassador to North Korea, Liu Hongcai, attended a ceremony in Pyongyang to celebrate the start of renovation work, the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece, the People’s Daily, reported on its website.

Work to refurbish cemeteries for Chinese war dead has also been underway in some North

Korean cities, including Kaesong and Anju, since earlier this week, the report said in a brief dispatch from Pyongyang.

China fought alongside North Korea in the 1950-53 Korean War, while the United States and 20 other allied countries fought on the side of South Korea under the U.N. flag. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea's political instability worsened in 2013: World Bank**

North Korea's political instability took a turn for the worse in 2013 from a year earlier, the World Bank said on Sept. 30, apparently due to the execution of its leader's uncle.

The bank's annual World Governance Indicators (WGI) data showed the aggregate indicator of "political stability and absence of violence (PV)" for the communist nation dropped to minus 0.53 in 2013 from minus 0.11 a year earlier.

It marks the lowest PV figure for North Korea since the bank launched the WGI program in 1996. The WGI is a set of composite governance indicators based on 32 underlying data sources, with scores ranging from minus 2.5 to plus 2.5, according to the bank.

It is designed to assess the level of their governance in six fields -- voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption.

The World Bank didn't give reasons for the drop, but it is viewed as attributable to the surprise purging of Jang Song-thaek, the once powerful uncle of the North's young leader Kim Jong-un, in late 2012.

North Korea's PV index started with minus 0.51 in 1996, two years after the death of its founding leader Kim Il-sung. But it improved to plus 0.54 in 2008. It dropped to minus 0.38 in 2010 amid reports of then North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's health problem.

It improved again in 2011 and 2012 after the current leader Kim Jong-un took power following his father's death. (Yonhap)

## **N. Korea seizes Chinese ship over alleged illegal fishing**

North Korea has seized a Chinese ship that was allegedly fishing illegally in the Yellow Sea and imposed a heavy fine on its operator after releasing six Chinese crew members, a diplomatic source and a Chinese state media report said on Sept. 23.

The Chinese ship named "Liaowayu 55090" and its crew were seized by North Korean authorities on Sept. 12, Beijing News reported on its verified microblog account. The crew were released and returned home on Sept. 17.

The Dalian-based Chinese ship operator was ordered to pay a fine of 250,000 yuan (US\$40,685), the report said.

A diplomatic source in Beijing also confirmed the news, saying, "The Chinese Foreign Ministry has been in consultations with the North Korean Embassy in Beijing over the issue." (Yonhap)

## PEOPLE

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

- September 23 sends a letter to those attending the fourth conference of primary organization cadres of the Kim Il-sung Socialist Youth League.
- 30 sends a message of greeting to Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang.
- October 14 gives field guidance at the newly built Wisong Scientists Residential District, the KCNA says.

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

- September 21 sends a message of greeting to Malta's President Marie Louise Coleiro Preca on the occasion of the European nation's independence day.
- 22 sends a message of greeting to Mali President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on the occasion of the 54th anniversary of the proclamation of the republic.
- 29 meets with the delegation of the State Great Hural of Mongolia led by Vice-Chairman R. Gonchigdorj at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
- 30 receives credentials from Vietnamese Ambassador to Pyongyang Pham Viet Hung at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
- October 3 sends a message of greeting to German President Joachim Gauck on the occasion of its national day.
- 7 receives credentials from Polish ambassador to Pyongyang Krzysztof Ciebien at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
- 12 sends a message of greeting to Felipe VI, king of Spain, on the occasion of its national day.

**Pak Pong-ju**: Premier

- September 22 makes a field survey of the Pukchang Thermal Power Complex.
- 6 makes a field survey of farming at the Oguk Cooperative Farm in Anak County and the Chujong Cooperative Farm in Paechon County, South Hwanghae Province.
- October 13 meets with Naguib Sawiris, executive chairman of the Orascom Telecom Media and Technology Holdings SAE of Egypt, at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.

## CHRONOLOGICAL REVIEW

### (Local Events)

- September 16 The 9th Pyongyang International Science and Technology Book Fair opens at the Grand People's Study House.
- 17 The 14th Pyongyang International Film Festival opens at the Ponghwa Art Theatre in Pyongyang.
- 17 Journalists and other people in the media begin a study tour of the revolutionary battle sites in the area of Mt. Paektu.
- 21 The young vanguard holds a meeting at the plaza of the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun to take a pledge to remain loyal to the party's revolutionary cause of "songun" (military-first policy).
- 22 The 10th Pyongyang Autumn International Trade Fair opens at the Three-Revolution Exhibition House.
- 23 The International Scientific Symposium of Kim Il-sung University opens on the theme of "Korean linguistics, literature and history."
- 25 The 2nd Session of the 13th SPA is held at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
- 25 An event takes place at the Taedonggang Diplomatic Club to mark 2014 International Maritime Day.
- 26 The 30th founding anniversary of the Yun I Sang Music Institute is marked.
- 27 A concert marking the 30th founding anniversary of the Yun I Sang Music Institute opens at the Yun I Sang Concert.
- 27 A national contest for sports announcing takes place at a sports village on Chongchun Street in Pyongyang on Sept. 23-27.
- 29 A social science symposium is held in Pyongyang to mark the 1,600th anniversary of the erection of the Monument to King Kwanggaeto of Koguryo.
- 29 A symposium takes place at the People's Palace of Culture to mark the 30th anniversary of the foundation of the Yun I Sang Music Institute.
- October 1 A revolutionary museum for three Mt. Paektu commanders -- the late North Korea founder Kim Il-sung, his wife Kim Jong-suk and his son Kim Jong-il -- opens in Taehongdan County, Ryanggang Province.
- 1 The 2014 provincial mass sports contest opens on the occasion of the founding anniversary of the WPK.
- 3 A 2014 event for celebrating the Foundation Day of Korea takes place in front of the Mausoleum of King Tangun on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of its reconstruction.
- 4 The Rodong Sinmun carries intensive coverage of the country's better-than-expected performance at the recent Asiad in South Korea.
- 6 The WPK Central Committee and the NDC throw a banquet at the Mokran House in honor of the participants in the Asian Games.

- October
- 6 The 6th National IT Success Exhibition of University Students opens at the Three-Revolution Exhibition House.
  - 10 Senior party, state and army officials visit the Kumsusan Palace of the Sun on the 69th founding anniversary of the WPK.
  - 14 The military attaches corps in Pyongyang visit the Chonji Lubricant Factory on the occasion of the 69th founding anniversary of the WPK.
  - 15 The Cabinet gives a reception at Okryu Restaurant for Hong Un-jong and Ri Se-gwang, gold medalists at the 45th Artistic Gymnastics World Championships.

**(Foreign Events)**

- September
- 16 The delegation of the DPRK Olympic Committee and the DPRK players group leave Pyongyang to take part in the 17th Asian Games in the South Korean city of Incheon.
  - 17 The KCNA says Hassan Rouhani, president of Iran, met with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong on Sept. 16.
  - 18 The KCNA says Ri Su-yong made a speech at the 53rd Session of the Asian African Legal Consultative Organization (AALCO) on Sept. 15.
  - 18 The delegation of the WPK, led by Kang Sok-ju, a member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the WPK, visited Italy from Sept. 14-16, the KCNA says.
  - 18 The WPK delegation led by Kang Sok-ju holds talks with the Mongolian Democratic Party (MDP) at the state building of Mongolia.
  - 20 The KCNA condemns South Korean forces for soliciting a re-extension of the wartime operational control.
  - 20 A Rodong Sinmun article urges South Korean authorities to stop scattering anti-DPRK leaflets without delay as it is the most undisguised hostile act toward the DPRK.
  - 26 A delegation of the Lenin Young Communist League of the Russian Federation led by Anatoli Dolgachev, first secretary of the Central Committee of the league, arrives in Pyongyang.
  - 26 The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea (CPRK) denounces South Korean President Park Geun-hye for making “reckless remarks against the DPRK” in a recent address at the United Nations General Assembly.
  - 26 The Rodong Sinmun urges S. Korean authorities to implement the October 4 Joint Declaration between the two Koreas.
  - 27 A spokesman for the NDC’s Policy Department in a statement terms South Korean President Park Geun-hye the root cause of deteriorating North-South relations and mistrust and confrontation.
  - 27 Talks between a delegation of the SPA and a delegation of the State Great Hural of Mongolia are held at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.
  - 30 The Rodong Sinmun accuses the United States of abusing the human rights issue to realize its sinister aim of bringing down independent countries standing against it.

- October
- 1 North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Su-yong holds talks with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow.
  - 3 The ship with the first batch of 50,000 tons of free food aid provided by the Russian government to North Korea arrives in Nampho Port.
  - 4 North Korea sends the highest-ranking delegation led by Hwang Pyong-so, vice chairman of the NDC and director of the General Political Bureau of the KPA, to South Korea for the closing ceremony of the Asian Games.
  - 4 North Korea agrees to hold the second high-level talks with South Korea in late October or early November.
  - 9 Russian Ambassador to Pyongyang Alexandr Timonin gives a reception in celebration of the 66th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between North Korea and Russia Federation.
  - 10 The North Korean Embassy in Moscow gives a reception on the occasion of the 66th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between North Korea and Russia.
  - 11 The KCNA denounces the “Alliance for the Movement of Free North” in South Korea for scattering anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets on Oct. 10.
  - 12 Naguib Sawiris, executive chairman of Orascom Telecom Media and Technology Holdings SAE of Egypt, arrives in Pyongyang.
  - 13 A DPRK delegation of the Ministry of Railways led by Minister Jon Kil-su leaves Pyongyang to take part in an international seminar to be held in Sochi, Russia.

Publisher : Song Hyun-seung  
 Managing Editor : Yun Dong-young  
 Deputy Managing Editor : Lee Sang-in  
 Editor : Hwang Seok-joo  
 Staff Writers : Lee Kwang-ho, Kim Tae-shik  
 Contributor : Yoon Jung-min  
 Copyreaders : Adam Lipper, John Power, Deanne Nguyen

Subscription inquiries and address changes should be mailed to :  
**VANTAGE POINT YONHAP NEWS AGENCY**, 110 Susong-dong, Jongno-gu, Seoul, Korea  
 Telephone : 82-2-398-3542 Fax : 82-2-398-3463  
 Internet Address : <http://www.yna.co.kr>  
 E-mail Address : [vpnk@yna.co.kr](mailto:vpnk@yna.co.kr)

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