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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. Napsnet

1. Sinking of ROK Naval Vessel

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "SKOREA MOURNS VICTIMS OF SHIP BLAST", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that ROK Defense Minister Kim Tae-young said Sunday that an underwater explosion appeared to have ripped apart the Cheonan, and that a torpedo blast seemed the most likely cause. Investigators who examined salvaged wreckage separately announced Sunday that a close-range, external explosion likely sank it. "Basically, I think the bubble jet effect caused by a heavy torpedo is the most likely" cause, Kim said. However, Kim did not speculate on who may have fired the weapon and said an investigation was continuing and that it's still too early to determine the cause.

Chosun Ilbo ("CHEONAN PROBE FOCUSES ON TORPEDO DEBRIS ", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that a civilian-military team investigating the sinking of the Cheonan on Sunday inspected the ripped-off part of the ship's bow and released findings of a second probe attributing the wreck to a "non-contact underwater explosion" or bubble jet. It said there were no signs of an internal explosion, metal fatigue or the ship striking a reef. The military has collected about 330 pieces of debris from the scene of the shipwreck and has since been analyzing them but has reportedly failed to find any parts of a torpedo or a mine so far.

Joongang Ilbo ("3 PRESIDENTS MULL NATIONAL SECURITY", Seoul, 2010/04/24) reported that former ROK presidents Kim Young-sam and Chun Doo Hwan talked to President Lee Myung-bak about their experience of armed provocations from Pyongyang. The former leaders urged Lee to take stern countermeasures if the DPRK is proved to be behind the disaster, and to seek Beijing’s cooperation, the Blue House reported. "North Korea is a country where the military controls everything,” Kim said. “My mother was also killed by an agent when I was a lawmaker.”

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2. PRC on ROK Naval Ship Sinking

Joongang Ilbo ("AFTER DELAY, CHINA CALLS CHEONAN A 'TRAGEDY'", Seoul, 2010/04/23) reported that on Tuesday, PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu called the Cheonan incident “a tragedy” and said the PRC had already sent condolences through bilateral channels. “We take note that [the ROK] plans to carry out scientific and objective investigation and believe the issue will be properly handled,” Jiang said, according to the English-language transcript posted on the ministry’s Web site. Zhang Xinsen, PRC ambassador to Seoul, said Thursday, “I understand South Korea is cooperating with other countries in carrying out the probe. It’s China’s hope that this matter will be handled properly. The stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula also corresponds to the interests of other [neighboring] countries.”

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "LEE TO DISCUSS CHEONAN TRAGEDY WITH CHINA", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak is expected to talk about the progress of Seoul’s ongoing investigation into what caused the Navy corvette Cheonan to sink last month, and possibly request cooperation from the PRC when he meets his PRC counterpart Hu Jintao on Friday, diplomatic sources said Sunday. "We believe that the two leaders may discuss the issue while they talk over bilateral relations and regional issues at the summit,” said Kim Young-sun, the Foreign Ministry spokesman. “In particular, the issue may arise when the two discuss the latest developments in the North Korean nuclear issue.” “It seems unlikely for China to take that leap to take part in the probe itself,” said one Foreign Ministry official. The most likely form of “cooperation,” he said, would be Seoul’s explaining the progress of the investigation to China and also the results once it is over.

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3. Sino-DPRK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPANESE PRESS SEES IMMINENT KIM JONG-IL VIIST TO CHINA ", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that the Kyodo news agency on Friday said that the DPRK and PRC governments are in the "final stages" of adjusting the schedule for Kim Jong-il's two-day visit to the PRC this coming Friday. It said a delegation from the DPRK Workers' Party arrived in Beijing welcomed by officials of the Chinese Communist Party last Thursday. "Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas plans to hold talks with Kim in China when Abbas visits the country on Friday and Saturday next week," Kyodo quoted sources as saying. "Abbas plans to attend the opening ceremony of the World Expo in Shanghai on Friday. If Abbas were to be able to meet Kim in Beijing, Kim's visit to China would have to be around this time." The Mainichi Shimbun also reported Saturday that the delegation from DPRK Workers' Party arrived in Beijing. "Given that the delegation was greeted by the International Department of the Communist Party of China, the official diplomatic channel between China and North Korea, there is a possibility that the two sides are in the final stages of negotiating Kim's schedule," it said. According to the Tokyo Shimbun, eight officials including Kim Song-nam, a senior official in the international affairs division of the Workers' Party who serves as Chinese interpreter for Kim Jong-il, arrived in Beijing. But diplomatic sources in Beijing say the visit is unlikely. One diplomat in Beijing said, "The tension between the two Koreas has escalated, and China cannot afford to pay attention to the Korean matter as it is preoccupied with aftermath of the Qinghai earthquake and the opening of the Shanghai Expo. Although Kim's visit to Beijing is not impossible, I believe the possibility is low."

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4. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

Dong-A Ilbo ("`N. KOREA TO DIRECTLY TAKE OVER MT. KUMGANG TOUR`", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that the DPRK seeks to directly handle tours to the Mount Kumgang area after forcing the ROK out of the venture, said a source on DPRK affairs Sunday. Korea Taepung International Investment Group, an agency under the National Defense Commission, has reportedly recruited PRC companies to help operate the tour since January this year. The source said, “Negotiations have significantly progressed in certain aspects,” adding, “I understand the North Korean leadership is considering directly operating the Mount Kumgang tour by getting Taepung or an agency under the National Defense Commission to hire multiple Chinese companies as agencies after forcing the Hyundai Group out of Mount Kumgang and Kaesong.” Another informed source said, “Since Taepung is an agency that holds overall authority over attracting investment for the North’s national development, the group is believed to be advising and supervising efforts to resume the Mount Kumgang tour as well.” An ROK government source said, “Even if the North severs ties with Hyundai Asan Corp., complicated legal action will continue over the North’s violation of the contract,” adding, “No Chinese company will seek to serve as a comprehensive business operator, so the new plan appears to be the most practical alternative for North Korea.”

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "SOUTH KOREANS TO VISIT N.K. TO WITNESS ASSET FREEZE", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that ROK business officials plan to visit the DPRK this week to comply with Pyongyang’s demand that they be present when the state freezes their assets at Mt. Kumgang, the Unification Ministry said Sunday. Chun Hae-sung, a spokesperson for the Unification Ministry, said Seoul will allow the business executives to visit the DPRK if they ask. “It is our basic stance that we respect the decisions of the companies,” he said.

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "SEOUL MAY CUT TRADE WITH N. KOREA", Seoul, 2010/04/25) reported that Seoul is weighing its options of how to respond to the DPRK's planned seizure of ROK facilities within the Mt. Kumgang resort. Among them is restricting inter-Korean trade of agricultural and marine products such as garlic, mushrooms, prawns and clams. ROK Unification Ministry spokesperson Lee Jong-joo said Seoul will take firm measures against the DPRK's infringement on property rights. “The decision on what kind of measures to be taken will be made shortly,” Lee said.

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5. Inter-Korea Relations

Asahi Shimbun (Yoshihiro Makino, "BELEAGUERED PYONGYANG TURNS UP THE HEAT ON SEOUL", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that the DPRK appears to be turning increasingly to the PRC as it intensifies its confrontational stance against the ROK. According to DPRK sources, Pyongyang has shifted its diplomatic stance in recent months. "North Korea has switched to a tactic of strengthening ties with China and moving away from the strategy taken last year of using a meeting of the leaders of the two Koreas to serve as a catalyst to end the impasse between the two nations," a source said.

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6. US on Six-Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. TELLS N.KOREA TO STOP PROVOCATIONS ", 2010/04/26) reported that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Friday called on the DPRK to refrain from provocations and return to the six-party talks table to solve problems within the multilateral dialogue framework. Clinton said she hoped that "there is no talk of war, there is no action or miscalculation that could provoke a response that might lead to conflict. That's not in anyone's interest. The way to resolve the outstanding differences among not only the North and South Koreans but the neighbors, including ourselves, is to return to the six-party talk framework as soon as possible."

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7. DPRK Internal Situation

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL PROBES N.KOREAN GENERAL'S PROMOTION", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that the ROK is investigating whether a demoted DPRK general has won back his former rank as a reward for the sinking of an ROK warship, an official said Monday. TV footage and a still photo released over the weekend showed Kim Myong-Guk wearing a uniform with four stars on the collar. Kim, who heads the general staff 's operations bureau, had been demoted to a three-star general in January, earlier photos showed. "We are trying to check what's behind his promotion," a Seoul intelligence official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "We are trying to see if the promotion was related to the sinking of the Cheonan but have reached no conclusions yet."

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8. DPRK Leadership

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL WATCHES MASSIVE MILITARY DRILL", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il on Saturday visited the 115th Army Unit, where he watched a massive drill marking the 78th anniversary of the DPRK military. "As soon as an order was given to begin the exercise, various kinds of artillery pieces discharged shells. Their powerful gunfire razed an enemy camp to the ground and turned it into a sea of fire in an instant. A river-crossing unit led by tanks rained fire on the enemy and seized the river area immediately," Korean Central Broadcasting reported. KCNA on Sunday quoted Kim as saying after the drill, "The People's Army has grown into a strong army fortified with an unchangeable determination to guard the leader and to become bombs and blow themselves up. Now the soldiers are ready to defeat and thwart any invasion by the enemy at the right moment."

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9. DPRK Defectors

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREAN DEFECTORS 'DISAPPEARING IN CHINA' ", Seoul, 2010/04/24) reported that the DPRK has apparently intensified a crackdown by picking up defectors who work along the border to help others escape. Lee Jo-won, a professor at Chungang University, said, "There is a likelihood that U Dong-chuk, the senior deputy director of the State Security Department, and Ju Sang-song, the minister of Public Security, had discussions with Chinese officials over the defector

issue when they visited China late last year. Defectors should be very careful when they go to China." Three or four defectors who settled in the ROK have been out of contact recently after they went to the PRC. A defector who supplied information on the DPRK to a radio station has been out of contact for two months since he went to meet his DPRK source there.

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "DEFECTORS-TURNED-FREEDOM FIGHTERS IRK N. KOREA", Seoul, 2010/04/23) reported that Radio Free North Korea reported this week that security guards in Hoeryeong, North Hamgyeong Province, directed its residents to turn in photos of their family members who have been missing from 2005. If the families say that these photos have been lost, security guards pay an unannounced visit to their homes to find out whether they are lying to them or not. It also reported Wednesday that the authorities had stepped up efforts to find cell phone users.

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10. DPRK Food Security

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA DISTRIBUTES RICE FROM MILITARY STORAGE", Seoul, 2010/04/23) reported that food prices in DPRK have stabilized because the regime took the emergency measure of distributing rice stored for the military, a high-ranking ROK government official said Thursday. "It seems Kim Jong-il is starting to show some consideration for his people considering that the regime distributed rice buried deep in storage for the military," the official said.

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11. Alleged DPRK Counterfeiting

Chosun Ilbo ("FAKE DOLLARS FLOOD N.KOREA-CHINA BORDER AREA", Seoul, 2010/04/23) reported that counterfeit US$100 notes printed in the DPRK are widely circulated in the DPRK-PRC border area, Radio Free Asia reported Thursday. The so-called "supernotes" have been spotted in large quantity in border towns such as Sinuiju in North Pyongan Province. Amid rumors in mid-January that the U.S. will print new $100 bills, a department charged with operations against the ROK in the DPRK Workers' Party and the Army's Reconnaissance Bureau apparently released their stockpiles of the fakes to get rid of inventory, RFA quoted DPRK sources as saying.

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12. ROK Military

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "AUDITORS TO PROBE MILITARY OVER CHEONAN", Seoul, 2010/04/26) reported that the ROK Board of Audit and Inspection is scheduled to launch a major inspection of the government’s handling of the Cheonan disaster next week after the funeral of the sailors. A BAI official said, “We are already collecting and studying relevant documents from the Defense Ministry and the Joint Chiefs of Staff.” The inspection, which was requested by Defense Minister Kim Tae-young, will be focused on how the Navy ship’s sinking was initially reported through the chain of command and the government’s crisis management system.

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13. USFJ Base Relocation

Washington Post (John Pomfret, "JAPAN MOVES TO SETTLE DISPUTE WITH U.S. OVER OKINAWA BASE RELOCATION", Washington, 2010/04/24) reported that the Japanese government indicated Friday that it would broadly accept a plan to relocate a U.S. Marine Corps base on Okinawa, U.S. and Japanese officials said. Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada presented U.S. Ambassador John V. Roos with a proposal to settle the dispute, telling him that Japan was moving toward accepting significant parts of a 2006 deal to move the Futenma air station from the center of a city of 92,000 to a less populated part of Okinawa, the sources said. Okada, however, suggested some changes, including altering the design of the runway at the new air station, planned for the town of Henoko, and moving parts of the Marine Corps facility to an island about 100 miles from Okinawa, the sources said. U.S. officials said they were pleased by the proposal but stressed that it was a first step and that Japanese officials would be providing more details next week.

Asahi Shimbun ("FEW FUTENMA CHOICES LEFT FOR HATOYAMA", Tokyo, 2010/04/26) reported that on Sunday, a massive rally was held on the main Okinawa island demanding that the Futenma base functions be moved out of the prefecture. Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima called on the Hatoyama government to stick to its campaign manifesto of moving Futenma out of Okinawa. He told the Hatoyama government to "never give up and handle the issue appropriately." Rally organizers estimated that 90,000 people gathered at a park in Yomitan to express their opposition to any plan that would keep Futenma's functions in some other part of the island prefecture. Hatoyama on Saturday indicated that minor revisions to the 2006 agreement between Japan and the United States to move Futenma to an area off the coast of Henoko in Nago, Okinawa Prefecture, was unacceptable. Hatoyama told reporters, "When I stood by the waters of Henoko, I felt very strongly that creating a landfill over those waters would defile nature. The current agreement should not be accepted."

Kyodo ("HATOYAMA PROMISES AGAIN TO EASE BASE BURDEN ON OKINAWA AFTER RALLY", Tokyo, 2010/04/26) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama promised again Monday to try to alleviate the burden of hosting U.S. military facilities on people in Okinawa Prefecture and remove safety risks posed by a U.S. Marine base there. Hatoyama told reporters, ''We certainly understand that it (the protest) is one form of public will.'' Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano, meanwhile, on Monday denied the possibility that the government will end up accepting an existing plan to transfer the U.S. Marine Corps' Futemma Air Station in Ginowan to another city in the prefecture. ''If that happens, what have we been studying for all these six or seven months? And it wouldn't help reduce their burden,'' Hirano said.

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14. US-Japan Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("STATE APPEALS RULING ON SECRET PACT", Tokyo, 2010/04/24) reported that the Japanese government filed an appeal Thursday with the Tokyo High Court over a lower court ruling earlier this month in which it was ordered to disclose documents on a secret Japan-U.S. pact on the 1972 return of Okinawa to Japanese sovereignty. In a statement explaining its position, the Foreign Ministry argued that the district court ruling was handed down without due consideration to the ministry's "thorough investigation" into internal documents at the instruction of Foreign Minister

Katsuya Okada.

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15. Japanese Export Controls

Yomiuri Shimbun (Keiichi Honma, "JAPAN FIRMS MAY FACE U.S. SANCTIONS OVER IRAN", Washington, 2010/04/25) reported that two Japanese firms are on a list of 41 companies that could be subject to U.S. sanctions under new anti-Iran legislation. The U.S. Congress is moving toward passing a bill that would strengthen sanctions against Iran over that nation's nuclear activities by putting greater pressure on Iran's oil and gas sectors. If the bill passes Congress, it may impact Japan's oil imports from Iran, which account for about 12 percent of all the foreign oil bought by Japan.

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16. Japanese Whaling

Asahi Shimbun ("MIXED REACTION ON IWC PROPOSALS", Tokyo, 2010/04/24) reported that Japanese fisheries minister Hirotaka Akamatsu lashed out Friday at a proposal by the International Whaling Commission to slash annual catches for research. Akamatsu, meanwhile, said he "highly appreciates" another proposal to allow annual catches of 120 smaller common minke whales in Japan's coastal waters for a 10-year period.

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17. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun (Daisuke Nishimura and Atsushi Okudera, "CHINA EXPATS PARLAY AFFLUENCE EARNED IN JAPAN", Fangzheng County, 2010/04/26) reported that of the 220,000 people listed in the registry of Fangzheng county in Heilongjiang province, roughly 35,000 are currently residing in Japan. Another 68,000 residents have at one point or another lived in Japan. Combined, at least one half of the county's population has a strong connection with Japan. Among the PRC's roughly 2,900 counties, Fangzheng ranks 27th in terms of foreign currency exchange value, the result of a large amount of yen remittances from expatriates in Japan. Concurrently, living standards far exceed those in other rural villages. More than 650,000 registered PRC nationals currently live in Japan, with the number growing by about 50,000 each year.

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18. PRC Ethnic Unrest

New York Times (Edward Wong and Jonathan Ansfield, "CHINA REPLACES LEADER OF THE RESTIVE XINJIANG REGION", Beijing, 2010/04/24) reported that PRC leaders announced Saturday that they had replaced Wang Lequan, the ruling official in Xinjiang. Wang, who served 15 years as the party secretary of Xinjiang, has been replaced by Zhang Chunxian, 56, the party secretary of Hunan Province, according to Xinhua. Wang, 65, was given a new appointment as deputy secretary

of the political and legislative affairs committee of the Chinese Communist Party's central committee.

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19. PRC Environment

Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "CHINA DEBATES WHETHER HUMAN ACTIVITY OR NATURE IS TO BLAME FOR DROUGHT", Beijing, 2010/04/26) what the PRC's worst drought in nearly a century has left parched more than 16 million acres of farmland in more than four provinces, threatening the livelihood of more than 50 million farmers, according to government statistics. Up to 20 million people have been left without drinking water. Beyond the official explanation of "abnormal weather,'' Chinese environmentalists are pointing to deforestation, pollution, dams, overbuilding and other man-made factors. Scientists are searching for clues about why rain hasn't come in some parts of the country.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Environment

Xiaoxiang Morning News ("OVERDEVELOPMENT OF NORTH CHINA GROUNDWATER OVER 120 BILLION CUBIC METERS", 2010/04/23) reported that groundwater in north China is said to be overdeveloped over 120 billion cubic meters according to an official data, and the real situation may be more serious. The world's biggest groundwater depression zone has been formed.

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21. PRC Energy Use

People's Daily online ("WAL MART EARTH MONTH SAVES POWER NEARLY 1 MLN KWH", 2010/04/23) reported that Wal Mart China announced Thursday that during the Earth Month time which was from March 24 th to April 22 nd , Wal Mart China has saved electric power of nearly 1 million kWhs, and reduced carbon emission of 860 tons (the number is assisted with Innovation Center for Energy and Transportation).

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