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Contents in this Issue:

1. [I. Napsnet](#)
2. [US, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
3. [Sino-DPRK Relations](#)
4. [US-DPRK Relations](#)
5. [Inter-Korea Relations](#)
6. [DPRK Internal Situation](#)
7. [ROK Naval Ship Sinking](#)
8. [ROK Anti-Piracy Activities](#)
9. [US-ROK Relations](#)
10. [ROK on Nuclear Safety](#)
11. [Japanese Abduction Issue](#)
12. [Sino-Japanese Relations](#)
13. [US, PRC on Iran Nuclear Program](#)
14. [Sino-US Relations](#)

1. I. Napsnet

[\(return to top\)](#)

2. US, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

JoongAng Ilbo ("U.S. ENVOY FLIES IN FOR TALKS", Seoul, 2010/04/03) reported that US Assistant Secretary of State Kurt Campbell met with Wi Sung-lac, the ROK's top nuclear negotiator, and other security and foreign policy officials Friday. "It was important, given the developments, to come for a chance to talk" with officials in Seoul, Campbell said. Campbell also met with ROK Vice Foreign Minister Shin Kak-soo and top presidential adviser for security issues Kim Sung-hwan.

[\(return to top\)](#)

3. Sino-DPRK Relations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "KIM JONG-IL'S CHINA VISIT STILL UNCERTAIN", Seoul, 2010/04/04) reported that the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said Sunday that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il threw a banquet for Liu Hongcai, the new ambassador. Several party and military officials in the DPRK also attended the dinner. KCNA didn't elaborate on when and where the welcoming dinner took place, but Xinhua News Agency reported it was in Pyongyang. The reports verified that Kim was still in the DPRK Saturday, debunking some media speculation that he left Pyongyang for the PRC by train over the weekend.

Korea Times ("KIM JONG-IL'S CHINA VISIT UNCERTAIN", Seoul, 2010/04/03) reported that a special train that was thought to be carrying Kim Jong-il, which passed through the PRC-DPRK border early Saturday morning, was an ordinary cargo train. Kim Jong-il attended an art troupe performance, Yonhap news agency said Saturday, citing the Korean Central Broadcasting Station (KCBS). The report said Kim attended the performance by Pyongyang's Mansudae Art Troupe, without giving details of when the event took place. But Yonhap said the performance was believed to have been held on Friday, saying that the DPRK's news media have the habit of covering its leader's public activities a day later.

JoongAng Ilbo (Chang Se-jung, Ser Myo-ja, "KIM'S VISIT MAY SIGNAL AID FOR SIX-PARTY TALKS", Seoul, 2010/04/02) reported that an advance team of the DPRK Workers' Party is currently in Beijing, possibly discussing the agenda for a summit with Kim Jong-il, a well-informed PRC source told the JoongAng Ilbo Thursday. "Kim also holds the title of general secretary of the Workers' Party of North Korea, and whenever he goes overseas, the secretariat's officials are dispatched as an advance team to coordinate arrangements," the source said. "About 10 officials are currently in Beijing."

[\(return to top\)](#)

6. US-DPRK Relations

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "NKOREA THREATENS TO STOP RETURNING US WAR REMAINS", Seoul, 2010/04/05) reported that the DPRK accused the United States on Monday of ignoring its efforts to return remains of American soldiers who were killed in the Korean War and threatened to stop collecting and returning the bodies. The DPRK military said it informed the U.S. twice this year of "a number of" remains of U.S. troops found during land realignment and farming preparations in 10 different locations. But the U.S. Defense Department has not offered a concrete response and asked the DPRK to wait, it said. "Though lots of U.S. remains are being dug out and scattered here and there in our country, our side will no longer be concerned about it," said a military statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

[\(return to top\)](#)

7. Inter-Korea Relations

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA CLAIMS SOUTH FIRES TOWARD ITS BORDER", Seoul, 2010/04/04) reported that the Korean Central News Agency said late Sunday that ROK forces committed a "grave armed provocation" during the afternoon by firing toward a civil police post on the northern side of the demilitarized zone. The ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff denied the DPRK's claim.

[\(return to top\)](#)

8. DPRK Internal Situation

Agence France-Presse ("N.KOREA 'EXECUTES TWO OVER BUNGLED CURRENCY REFORM'", Seoul, 2010/04/05) reported that the DPRK has executed two officials over a bungled currency revaluation, The Daily NK reported Monday. Pak Nam-Ki -- whose execution had been reported earlier -- was shot dead along with an unidentified deputy head of the National Planning Commission. The paper, citing a source in Pyongyang, said the pair were shot on March 12 at the Seosan Stadium in the capital's Athletes' Village in front of a group of economic officials and communist party Central Committee members.

[\(return to top\)](#)

9. ROK Naval Ship Sinking

BBC News ("S. KOREA CALLS OFF RESCUE FOR MISSING SAILORS", Seoul, 2010/04/03) reported that the ROK has called off a rescue operation for more than 40 sailors missing since a the naval

ship Cheonan sank last week. A navy spokesman said the operation will now focus on salvaging the wreck, Yonhap news agency reported. Earlier, the ROK military said that it had recovered the body of one of the crew.

Korea Times (Na Jeong-ju, "NO UNUSUAL SITUATION ON CHEONAN BEFORE 9:19 PM", Seoul, 2010/04/04) reported that on Saturday, MBC reported citing a military source that the 2nd Navy Fleet, to which the Cheonan belonged, reported an unusual situation on the ship to Navy headquarters at 9:15 p.m. Minutes later, the ship disappeared from radar and the Navy couldn't get a radio signal anymore, it said. The military announced last week that the ship sank at 9:22 p.m. following an unexplained explosion, saying it would detail the exact cause of the disaster after inspecting the wreckage of the sunken vessel. During a press conference, Lt. Gen. Park Jung-i, the chief investigator into the incident, denied the report, saying radio traffic between the Cheonan and naval command was normal. ``This means nothing unusual had taken place before 9:19 p.m.," Park said. ``The report was based on erroneous information."

Korea Times (Lee Tae-hoon, "SHIP RECOVERY MAY TAKE ONE MONTH", Seoul, 2010/04/04) reported that the salvaging of the Cheonan may take a month or possibly longer as considerable time will be needed to attach chains and cable to the two parts of the ship prior to lifting operations, ROK military officials said Sunday. Two massive floating cranes from private companies have been mobilized for the recovery of the Cheonan that sank last week near the sea border, military officials said.

Chosun Ilbo ("RESCUE DIVERS BELIEVE THE CHEONAN WAS HIT FROM BELOW", Seoul, 2010/04/04) reported that divers said structures at the rear of the Cheonan were bent as if they had received a strong blow from beneath. The comments also give weight to theories that a "bubble jet effect" had caused the Cheonan to sink, referring to an intense shock wave and high-pressure bubbles that may have caused the vessel to split in half. But visibility on the sea floor was extremely poor, allowing divers to see barely 30 centimeters.

[\(return to top\)](#)

13. ROK Anti-Piracy Activities

BBC News ("SOUTH KOREA TANKER HIJACKED BY SOMALI PIRATES", Seoul, 2010/04/05) reported that an ROK-operated, Singapore-owned oil tanker has been hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian Ocean. The 300,000-tonne Samho Dream - loaded with crude oil - was on its way from Iraq to the United States with 24 crew when it was seized on Sunday. The ROK has sent a destroyer

already in the area to intercept the tanker before it reaches any port.

[\(return to top\)](#)

14. US-ROK Relations

Korea Times ("US DIPLOMAT ALLEGEDLY RECEIVED TIPS BEFORE FLEEING", Seoul, 2010/04/03) reported that a US diplomat in the ROK who fled to the Philippines, two days before U.S. authorities were to strip him of diplomatic immunity, might have benefited from advance tips, Chosun Ilbo said on Saturday. Dario Thomas, a 50-year-old official with the Department of Homeland Security, is accused of swindling 220 million won from a local widow, identified only by her last name, Lim. The police suspect that the American government "tipped" the accused in advance about the U.S. imminent decision on invalidating his diplomatic privilege, which would lead him to subject to the ROK judicial investigation. The U.S. embassy flatly rejected the allegation, saying it "didn't know he already left the country before his diplomatic immunity was scrapped," the newspaper said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

15. ROK on Nuclear Safety

Chosun Ilbo ("LEE TO ATTEND NUCLEAR SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK", Seoul, 2010/04/05) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak will attend a nuclear summit chaired by U.S. President Barack Obama in Washington for two days from April 12. The summit will gather leaders from about 40 countries, including PRC President Hu Jintao, and heads of international organizations such as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

[\(return to top\)](#)

16. Japanese Abduction Issue

Kyodo ("HIGH-RANKING N. KOREAN DEFECTOR MEETS JAPAN'S ABDUCTION MINISTER", Tokyo, 2010/04/05) reported that Hwang Jang-yop, a former high-ranking DPRK official who defected to the ROK in 1997, exchanged views with Hiroshi Nakai, minister in charge of abduction issues, Monday in Tokyo, Nakai said without elaborating. "We exchanged views on North Korean situations and the abduction issue," Nakai told reporters after his talks with Hwang, adding that he asked the former secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea to tell what he knows about Pyongyang's abductions of Japanese nationals to family members of victims when he meets them later in the day.

Yomiuri Shimbun ("MANGA RELATES ABDUCTION OF MEGUMI YOKOTA", Niigata, 2010/04/04) reported that a local Junior Chamber International branch has produced a manga (comic book) telling the story of the abduction of Megumi Yokota by DPRK agents, hoping to make the 1977 incident better known among younger-generation parents. The Junior Chamber International branch in Niigata--where Megumi was abducted by DPRK agents--plans to distribute 5,000 copies of the manga to local public facilities.

[\(return to top\)](#)

18. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("KAN MEETS CHINESE PREMIER", Beijing, 2010/04/05) reported that Naoto Kan, Japanese deputy prime minister and finance minister, told PRC Premier Wen Jiabao over the weekend that the death sentences handed out to four Japanese drug smugglers in the PRC are too harsh. Kan said that by "Japanese standards" many Japanese feel executing the men for attempting to smuggle stimulants out of the PRC would be extreme. Wen asked for understanding, telling Kan: "The decisions are based on Chinese law. Illegal drugs endanger thousands of lives."

Asahi Shimbun ("CHINA TO EXECUTE THREE MORE JAPANESE", Tokyo, 2010/04/03) reported that according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry, the Foreign Affairs Office of the Liaoning Provincial People's Government sent a document to the Japanese Consulate General in Shenyang on Thursday afternoon stating that three Japanese convicted of drug smuggling would soon be executed. Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada summoned PRC Ambassador Cheng Yonghua on Friday to demand an explanation.

[\(return to top\)](#)

20. US, PRC on Iran Nuclear Program

BBC News ("OBAMA AND CHINA'S HU DISCUSS NUCLEAR IRAN IN PHONE CALL", Washington, 2010/04/02) reported that US President Barack Obama has made a direct appeal to PRC President Hu Jintao for the two countries to cooperate on the Iranian nuclear issue. In an hour-long phone call Obama stressed "the importance of working together to ensure that Iran lives up to its... obligations," the US said. Their talks came as Iran's top nuclear official, Saeed Jalili, was in the PRC for talks. "In our talks with China it was agreed that tools such as sanctions have lost their effectiveness," Jalili said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

21. Sino-US Relations

Associated Press ("U.S. DELAYING CURRENCIES REPORT AMID CHINA DISPUTES", Washington, 2010/04/03) reported that Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said Saturday that he will delay publication of a report to Congress on currency policies amid calls from some lawmakers that it should cite the PRC as a currency manipulator harmful to the U.S. economy. Geithner said several high-level international meetings in the coming months will be a better way to advance the United States' position. Still, Geithner said in a statement that the PRC should adopt "a more market-oriented exchange rate" to balance the U.S. trade deficit with China.

[\(return to top\)](#)

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