

Korea Chair Monitor

February 12 - February 25, 2015

The Korea Chair team takes a biweekly look at events of interest in Washington, Seoul, and the region.

U.S.-ROK RELATIONS

U.S.-ROK Tabletop Exercise Concludes in Korea

U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and missile defense policy Elaine Bunn and deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia David Helvey participated in the fourth annual U.S.-ROK tabletop exercise (TTX), held at the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA) in Seoul from February 11 to 13. The ROK was represented by the deputy minister for national defense policy Ryu Je-seung. The TTX exercise, which started in 2011, is a joint U.S.-ROK cooperation mechanism to enhance extended deterrence.

TRADE AND ECONOMICS

South Korea and China Initial Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

On February 25, the ROK and PRC initialed an update to the bilateral FTA and released the full English text of the document. In November 2014 President Park and President Xi announced, on the sidelines of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings, the conclusion of the agreement. However, negotiations continued for an additional three months to finalize the text which includes 22 chapters. The FTA is pending an official signing. Following an official signing, the FTA will need to be ratified by the ROK and PRC legislatures before it can go into effect.

DOMESTIC POLITICS

President Park Geun-hye Appoints Four New Cabinet Ministers

President Park announced four new cabinet ministers on February 17 at the Blue House. President Park appointed Hong Yong-pyo as the new minister of unification, Yoo Ki-june as minister of oceans and fisheries, Yoo Il-ho as minister of land, infrastructure, and transport, and Yim Jong-yong as chairman of the Financial Services Commission. The dates of the new ministers' confirmation hearings have not been set.

REGIONAL RELATIONS

ROK and Japan Meet on Development Cooperation Policy

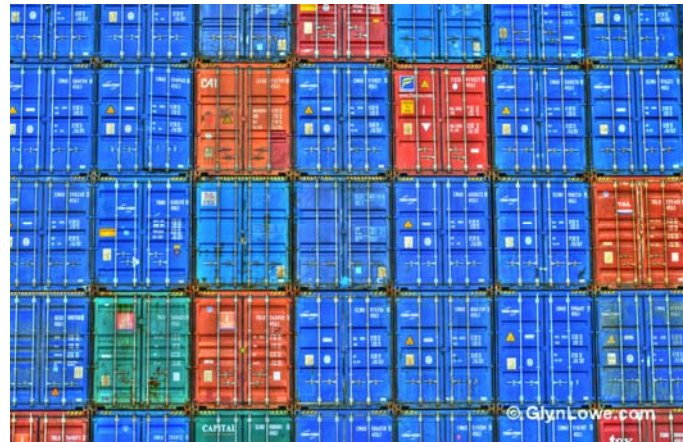
The 16th Republic of Korea-Japan Consultation on Development Cooperation Policy took place February 16 in Tokyo. Oh Young-ju, the Korean director-general for development cooperation, and Japanese counterpart Kimihiro Ishikane, the director-general of the International Cooperation Bureau, led the delegations. This is the first consultation between the two countries since 2012. Discussed were post-2015 development objectives, the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation, and the G20 development agenda among other international development concerns.



Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Visits Korea

At the invitation of President Park, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic Bohuslav Sobotka visited South Korea on February 24 for three days to commemorate 25 years of diplomatic relations between Korea and the Czech Republic. The two leaders held an official summit and attend a luncheon on February 26. Sobotka's visit marks the first visit to Korea by a prime minister of the Czech Republic in 14 years.

Photo credit: Miroslav Petrasko's Flickr Photostream.



Bank of Korea Releases January Trade Indices

On February 26, The Bank of Korea released preliminary estimates for January 2015 trade indices. The volume of exports increased 6.0% from the previous year while imports increased 6.3% from the previous year. Manufacturing products were the primary drivers of the uptick in both numbers. Despite the increase in trade volume, trade value of both imports and exports declined by 11.3% and 4.1%, respectively, in January 2015 as compared to January 2014.

Photo credit: www.GlynLowe.com Flickr photostream.

REGIONAL RELATIONS (continued)***South Korea's Nuclear Envoy Visits Russia***

On February 24, Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Hwang Joon-kook met with Igor Morgulov, the deputy foreign minister in charge of Asia-Pacific affairs and head delegate of the Six-Party Talks for Russia, to discuss denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. During the meeting, Hwang Joon-kook and Igor Morgulov shared their views on the possibility of resuming the Six-Party Talks.

Kim Jang-su Nominated as Next ROK Ambassador to China

On February 15, the Park Geun-hye administration nominated former Blue House Office of National Security chief Kim Jang-su to replace Kwon Young-se as the South Korean ambassador to China. This is the first time an official with a military background has been nominated for the post since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992. Previously, only diplomats have assumed the position. The main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy has requested the nomination be reconsidered due to Kim's controversial remarks regarding the April 2014 *Sewol* ferry accident. Kim Jang-su must first be confirmed by the National Assembly.

DEFENSE ISSUES***ROK Will Draw Submarine Operation Plan***

Admiral Choi Yoon-hee, the chairman of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, visited the new submarine command headquarters in Jinhae on February 12, where he said the ROK military will create a submarine operational plan to bolster its deterrence capabilities against the North Korean threat. The submarine command, the first of its kind in Korea, was inaugurated on February 1, 2015.

NORTH KOREA***North Korea and Russia Discuss Economic Cooperation***

On February 23, Ri Ryong Nam, the foreign trade minister of North Korea, began a weeklong trip to Vladivostok and Moscow to discuss economic cooperation between the two countries. Minister Ri will attend the inaugural meeting of the Russia-DPRK Business Council. Formed on February 4, the council was created to increase Russian business investment in North Korea and facilitate new initiatives that will improve business interactions between the two countries.

***New Prime Minister Lee Wan-koo***

On February 17, President Park Geun-hye officially appointed the nominee Lee Wan-koo as a new prime minister at Chung Wa Dae. Prime Minister Lee passed the confirmation by 148–128 at the National Assembly plenary session on February 16.

***North Korean Human Rights: The Road Ahead***

On February 17, CSIS hosted a historic conference together with the George W. Bush Institute, the Yonsei Center for Human Liberty, and HRNK. Pictured above U.S. special envoy Robert King, Justice Michael Kirby, and ROK ambassador for human rights Jung-Hoon Lee.

Photo credit: HRNK.

Looking Ahead

Our Friday morning preview of events to watch in the weeks ahead.

- **February 27** | The first senior officials' meeting of a consultative mechanism among five middle power countries, including Mexico, Indonesia, South Korea, Turkey, and Australia (MIKTA) will take place in Seoul.
- **March 1-9** | President Park Geun-hye will visit Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar.
- **March 2-13** | Annual U.S.-ROK military exercise Key Resolve will take place in South Korea.
- **March 2-27** | The UN Human Rights Council will convene for its 28th regular session in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **March 2 -April 24** | Annual U.S.-ROK military exercise Foal Eagle will take place in South Korea.

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