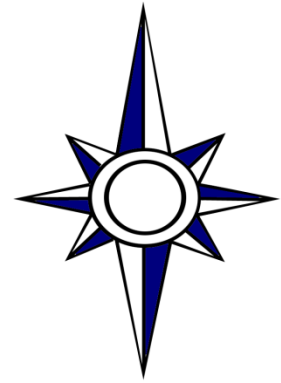


# Comparative Connections

A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



## Japan-Korea Relations: Same As It Ever Was

David Kang, University of Southern California  
Ji-Young Lee, Oberlin College

Korea-Japan relations have foundered over territorial and historical disputes for quite some time. Indeed, much of this quarter's report could have been written in 2004, or perhaps even earlier. Yet, we dutifully report the Japanese government's latest claim, the South Korean government's latest protest against that claim, and so on, while also reporting the increasing trade, travel, and institutional relations between the two countries. Which leads to a question: how consequential are these territorial disputes? The mere fact that Japanese and Koreans think they are important enough to alter textbooks and put claims on the Foreign Ministry website makes them consequential. However, do these claims have an impact on the other military, diplomatic, or economic affairs in the region? One could make an argument that despite the *sturm und drang* over who owns Dokdo/Takeshima, those affairs have not yet led to different policies in other areas, and certainly nobody thinks the territorial disputes might lead to actual war. This is not the place to discuss that question in depth, but it is one of the more intriguing questions that occurs to us as we, yet again, write about the same issues.

### Japan-North Korea relations

In the midst of media reports on North Korea's deepening internal problems from a severe food crisis, human rights violations, uncertainty over succession, and Kim Jong-il's failing health, Japan-North Korea relations during the first quarter of 2010 continued the same old pattern of making no progress. Inside Japan, it was noticeable that anti-North Korean sentiments have grown stronger over the years, especially since Pyongyang's admission in 2002 that it had abducted Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s to train its spies with Japanese language skills. Reflecting this general trend in Japanese society, the highlight of the quarter was the Hatoyama administration's wavering stance on the question of excluding children of pro-Pyongyang schools (*Chongryon*, the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan) from its new tuition waiver program. North Korea reacted angrily, accusing Tokyo of failing to treat "innocent children" with "impartiality." Pyongyang also revealed its lack of political will for better relations by refusing to send the North Korean women's soccer team to Japan for the East Asian Championship despite Tokyo's decision to issue visas to those players.

### No Kids left out? Maybe...

In his New Year's message greeting, Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of Supreme People's Assembly of DPRK, urged the *Chongryon* to make a "tangible contribution to bring an early day of the country's unification." This came at a time when the *Chongryon*, an organization

that has functioned as *de facto* North Korean embassy in Japan, is going through a serious weakening of its organization and losing membership. Its headquarters is located in Tokyo and it has regional as well as prefectural head offices and branches throughout Japan. Since Pyongyang admitted in 2002 that it had abducted Japanese nationals, the number of *Chongryon* members who retain their nationality registration as *Joseon* (North Korea) has significantly decreased from about 100,000 in the late 1990s to 30,000 or 40,000 today; some 10,895 *Chongryon* members are known to have switched their nationality to South Korea in 2003 alone following the admission.

On Feb. 10, the South Korean daily *Chosun Ilbo* reported that Kim Jong-il himself ordered *Chongryon* to focus on the task of rebuilding the organization this year. Since *Chongryon* members' remittances to North Korea have been an important source of hard currency to Pyongyang, Tokyo's financial sanctions not only blocked such remittance activities – which was a blow to the North Korean regime – but also affected the daily economic activities of *Chongryon* members living in Japan. In addition to the members' disillusionment with the North Korean regime and its legitimacy, behind the weakening of the *Chongryon* organization lies a series of Japanese economic sanctions that make it very difficult for people with the *Joseon* nationality to freely travel, do business, get bank loans, and invest in North Korea. According to the *Chosun Ilbo*, approximately 3,000 *Chongryon* members switch their nationality to South Korea every year and it is an open secret that the vice chairman of the *Chongryon* decided to have his daughter attend South Korea's Yonsei University, taking advantage of the university's offer of a special admission program designed to encourage *Chongryon* students' enrollment.

Against this backdrop, the Hatoyama administration's proposal to waive tuition for public high schools brought this tension to the fore. Some within the Japanese government attempted to link this program with the abduction issue, sparking a controversy inside Japan. According to the Feb. 22 *Kyodo News*, 73 pro-Pyongyang schools in Japan are authorized by prefectural governments, 10 of which are equivalent to Japanese high schools, and all of them operate in collaboration with the *Chongryon*. In principle, the Cabinet decided on Jan. 29 that schools for foreign students are eligible for the benefits of this program, provided that they are considered equivalent to Japanese high schools.

In the case of pro-Pyongyang schools, Prime Minister Hatoayama wavered between allowing these schools to be included in the waiver and excluding them, switching his position literally overnight. Nakai Hiroshi a conservative state minister in charge of the abduction issue, lobbied for the exclusion of pro-Pyongyang schools on the ground that such a subsidy would be tantamount to providing economic aid to North Korea. Those in favor of including pro-Pyongyang schools criticized the politicization of education, arguing that economic sanctions against North Korea and educating students in Japan who are descendents of North Korean residents are two different matters. For example, Fukushima Mizuho, state minister in charge of the declining birthrate, argued that political issues among adults should not affect children. Similarly, Japan's daily *Mainichi Shimbun* claimed in its editorial on March 11 that excluding pro-Pyongyang schools from the tuition exemption program is “irrational,” arguing that there would be no benefit to alienating and isolating children in those schools.

By mid-March, the controversy came to a temporary halt, driven by Hatoyama's governing style of let's-hesitate-for-a-moment. On March 13, the Japanese government decided to provisionally

exclude pro-Pyongyang schools from the tuition waiver program, leaving the ultimate decision to a third-party body in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology that would review the schools' curricula. In response to Hatoyama's "clarification" that the issue is separate from the abduction issue, Nakai Hiroshi, minister of state in charge of the abduction issue, criticized him as being "super easygoing and too good-natured." On March 16, a UN committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressed concern over Japan's possible exclusion of students of pro-Pyongyang schools from the program, warning against "the differential treatment of schools for foreigners and descendents of Koreans and Chinese residing in (Japan), with regard to public assistance, subsidies, and tax exemptions."

Pyongyang's official *Central News Agency of DPRK* heavily criticized Japan for applying its anti-North Korea sanctions against innocent Korean students. Apparently monitoring discussions within Japan carefully, Pyongyang blamed Osaka Governor Hashimoto Toru's "Nazi comment" as "inciting racial discrimination," whose way of thinking "cannot be regarded as normal." With reference to the tuition waiver controversy, Hashimoto had said on March 10 that he "does not think the Korean people are illegal, but that North Korea's state system is illegal. This is the same as for the German people and the Nazis."

With regard to Japan's investigation over a "secret pact" with the US about nuclear deployments in Japan, Pyongyang's *Central News Agency of DPRK* on Jan. 9 argued that Tokyo was stepping up "nuclear weaponization," while deceiving the world "behind the smoke screen of the three non-nuclear principles."

### **Japan-South Korea relations: back to "been-there-done-that"?**

Japan-South Korea relations during the quarter were in the mode of "trying new things to see if they work," as exemplified by Seoul's push for local-level suffrage for foreigners in Japan. In February, the overall tone of the meeting between Foreign Ministers Okada Katsuya and Yu Myung-hwan was encouraging. Okada offered an apology that said, "The people of South Korea were deprived of their country, and their ethnic pride was deeply hurt. We must never forget the feelings of the victims." On South Korea's part, breaking a long-held tradition of successive presidents, President Lee Myung-bak refrained from criticizing Japan for its colonial rule during his March 1 Independence Day speech. (Reportedly, he decided to only use the phrase "forceful annexation" once in his speech, instead of three times, as was written in the first draft.)

But in late March, South Korea's guarded hopes that the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)-led Hatoyama administration would face historical issues in a fresh manner were put to the test over the perennial issues of the Dokdo/Takeshima islets and history textbooks. Despite some positive developments between the two countries this quarter, Tokyo's approval of history textbooks for elementary schools on March 30, which describe the islets as Japanese and describe Korean occupation of them as "illegal," ruined whatever rapport Seoul had with Tokyo. With criticism of President Lee's mild approach to "the same old Japan" growing stronger, it remains to be seen whether South Korea's Japan policy may take a tougher turn in the coming months.

## Complex politics of local suffrage issue in Japan

The Lee administration's interest and efforts in working with the DPJ toward the granting of local-level suffrage to permanent residents in Japan, a majority of them Korean descendents, began before the inauguration of Hatoyama's Cabinet in September 2009. After the 1995 declaration by the Supreme Court of Japan that the constitution does not prohibit granting permanent residents the right to vote in local elections, the DPJ, the New *Komeito* and the Japanese Communist Party submitted bills to address the issue, but to no avail. Now, with the DPJ in power for the first time in decades, the issue of local suffrage for foreign permanent residents was being taken seriously in Japan. By the quarter's end, however, divided politics in Japan, and a tug-of-war between advocates and opponents of the legislation, indicated that granting suffrage for permanent residents would not be an easy task.

When Prime Minister Hatoyama and DPJ Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro agreed on Jan. 11 to submit a bill on foreign suffrage to the regular Diet session that month, the news not only drew great attention from South Korea but also a strong backlash from conservative lawmakers from within the DPJ and the opposition party. For those who support the granting of foreign local suffrage, the legislation is critical in forging a future-oriented relationship based on trust with South Korea. Hatoyama, for example, noted this year's significance as the centenary of Japan's annexation of Korea in expressing his desire to push for the legislation.

But the legislation appears to be facing strong domestic opposition, based on two basic arguments. First, and the most interesting, is the fear that Korean voters could possibly moderate or even change the Japanese stance toward territorial disputes such the Dokdo/Takeshima islets and Tsushima in South Korea's favor. Some even argue that if Koreans living permanently in Japan gain voting rights, they could move to Japan-controlled Tsushima and elect local assembly members who would then claim that the island is South Korean territory. More broadly, a concern has been expressed that foreign residents' voting behavior would bring about conflicts of interest that may not necessarily serve Japan's national interest.

The second argument made is that the DPJ's Ozawa is merely trying to get votes from members of a pro-South Korean group *Mindan* (the Korean Residents Union in Japan, a counterpart to a pro-North Korean group *Chongryon*) in preparation for the upcoming House of Councilors election this summer. According to the March 17 *Mainichi Shimbun*, there are over 910,000 permanent foreign residents in Japan as of 2008. Of them, 420,000 are special permanent residents from the Korean Peninsula or Taiwan, who have lived in Japan since before the World War II. Of those special permanent residents, 99 percent are Koreans who had been conscripted to Japan for forced labor and other reasons during Japan's colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula.

This historical root of Korean special permanent residents in Japan in part explains different approaches between the South Korean government and opponents of the legislation within Japan toward the legislation. While Seoul takes this issue primarily as a question of historical reconciliation and nationalism and therefore an important step for a future-oriented relationship between the two countries, for those within Japan who oppose to the bill, this is about domestic elections and the protection of Japan's national interest. According to a poll released by Japanese daily *Asahi Shimbun* on Jan. 19, 60 percent of Japanese respondents support the legislation

granting local suffrage to foreign permanent residents, while 29 percent oppose to it. Among the DPJ supporters, 70 percent support the bill, and of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) supporters, 45 percent said they support it.

By March 17, Prime Minister Hatoyama acknowledged the difficulty of building a consensus within the ruling coalition to submit the bill during the current Diet session, but said that he had not given up. The same day, the South Korean government told the Japanese government that it wanted to postpone President Lee's visit, originally scheduled for April 10. Although South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade cited a scheduling difficulty as the reason for the postponement, media reports speculated that Lee did not want to waste his official visit to Japan when it became apparent that the issue of local suffrage to permanent residents would not be achieved in time for the visit, and especially given the historical weight of this year being the centenary of Japan's annexation of the Korean Peninsula.

### **Dokdo/Takeshima and history textbooks: wavering Tokyo vs. angry Seoul**

By the quarter's end, the Japanese government's approval of guidelines for elementary school textbooks that describe the Dokdo/Takeshima islets as Japanese territory reignited an old fight between Tokyo and Seoul. Apparently, Seoul was taken aback and seemed to find Tokyo's move quite unexpected – at least compared to last year's release of high school curriculum guidelines on Dec. 25 that describe the islets as Japanese territory but avoiding the direct mention of them by name. South Korean Foreign Minister Yu immediately summoned Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Toshinori Shigeie and filed a formal protest against the Japanese government with a warning that it could put a serious strain on Japan-South Korea relations. Amid a South Korean media barrage against Japan's "insensitive" move at a time when South Korea was going through a national crisis over the sinking of a navy ship, Prime Minister Chung Un-chan criticized Japan, saying, "How can a country have a future when it is not honest about history, and unable to teach its children the truth?"

According to the March 31 *Mainichi Shimbun*, it was also understood in Japan as "unprecedented" that textbook inspectors at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry demanded that a national border line be drawn between South Korea and the islets for elementary school textbooks. *Mainichi* reported a quote by a Mitsumura Tosho Publishing spokesperson that the ministry's demand came as a "surprise," when they did "not even think about the matter until it was pointed out." One of the five textbooks used the expression that South Korea "illegally occupies" the islets. With these approvals, five Japanese textbooks for elementary school children now describe the Dokdo/Takeshima islets as Japanese territory. This means that all available textbooks for elementary school children make the claim, compared to 4 out of 21 social studies textbooks in Japanese middle schools, and 12 out of 112 textbooks for high schools.

The intertwined issues of the Dokdo/Takeshima islets and Japanese history textbooks have sparked several diplomatic disputes between Seoul and Tokyo. But given the Hatoyama administration's gestures toward an Asia-friendly strategy and the unusually undiplomatic manner in which the guidelines were approved, this flap seemed to indicate a lack of consistent foreign policy vision by Prime Minister Hatoyama and his Cabinet. One possible explanation is

that the administration cannot give sufficient attention to South Korea policy due to more pressing issues with the US over the realignment of the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa and revelations of the “secret nuclear pact.” The other scenario is that despite the best intentions of the administration, Japanese foreign policy has already begun to implement the revised Fundamental Law of Education that put more emphasis on patriotism.

Immediate angry reactions from South Korea seem to indicate that Koreans are inclined to believe the second explanation. That is, the Hatoyama administration may rhetorically distance itself from the previous LDP governments, but in practice may be little different, at least in its approach on historical issues. The Dokdo/Takeshima islets issues might be seen by South Koreans as a litmus test of the Hatoyama administration’s commitment to a future-oriented relationship, resulting in a possible chilling effect on the thus-far nurtured diplomatic relations between Lee and Hatoyama. Within the South Korean government, discussions on how to deal with the issue are under way. To some senior lawmakers within the ruling GNP (Grand National Party) such as Kim Seong-jo, chief policymaker, Seoul must rethink President Lee’s quiet diplomacy, because it has proved to be “ineffective.”

### **Yet some signs for optimism**

Although it seems nearly impossible for the Japanese emperor to accept President Lee’s invitation to visit Seoul any time soon to put an end to hard feelings and mark a new beginning, there were also important signs of goodwill between Tokyo and Seoul. During Japanese Foreign Minister Okada’s visit to Seoul in February, Okada and South Korea’s Unification Minister Hyun In-taek agreed to strengthen intelligence sharing on North Korea. In March, police chiefs of Japan and South Korea also agreed to share information by establishing a hot-line to better prepare for large-scale international summits planned for their countries, the G20 in South Korea and APEC in Japan. According to the Feb. 16 *Choson Ilbo*, discussions to set up a tripartite security dialogue body between Seoul, Beijing and Tokyo are underway among officials from the defense ministries, which will be the first such body if it is realized.

One encouraging sign of improving South Korean perceptions of Japan was reported in the South Korean daily *Donga Ilbo* on Jan. 1. According to a poll by the Korea Research Center, 35.9 percent of South Korean respondents said that they hate Japan, while 10.8 percent said they like Japan. Fifty-two percent said they neither hate nor like Japan. Somewhat surprisingly, this actually indicates that anti-Japanese sentiments in South Korea have been easing. A few years ago in 2005, a joint *Asahi-Donga* survey showed that 63.4 percent of South Korean respondents said that they hated Japan.

### **Toyota vs. Hyundai**

As Japan began this year in its worst economic recession in the postwar period, Toyota Motor’s massive recalls and repairs in the US deepened a sense of crisis in Japanese economy. Toyota is one of the leading Japanese companies, but also has come to symbolize “perfection in craftsmanship” or “continued improvement” – something considered to be the very source of Japanese economic strength. The media coverage on the US congressional hearings on Toyota and on the limits of Japan’s mass production style was contrasted with the relatively good

performance and growth of Hyundai Motor of South Korea. The Oct. 3 *Washington Post* reported that Hyundai is “the biggest threat to Japanese automakers,” quoting Nissan Motor senior vice president Nakamura Shiro. Hyundai, along with General Motors and Ford Motors, have attempted to take advantage of Toyota’s troubles by offering US customers incentives if they changed their car from Toyota. Hyundai recorded an 11 percent sales increase in the month of February. Toyota, meanwhile, embarked on a large sales campaign including interest-free car loans for five years. The strategy was evidently a success, as the *Daily Yomiuri* reported on April 2 that Toyota’s sales in the US had surged 40.7 percent compared to the same month last year, and regained a 17.5 percent market share, just 0.1 percent less than GM’s, the market leader.

On a monetary front, South Korea marked a record-high in foreign currency reserves of \$273.7 billion in late January. As of December 2009, the country held the world’s sixth largest currency reserves after China, Japan, Russia, Taiwan, and India.

### **Society and culture**

Japan-South Korea competition this quarter was nowhere more visible than in the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, with the competition between two 19-year-old figure skating queens, Asada Mao of Japan and Kim Yu-na of South Korea. Asada and Kim, hugely popular in their countries have been competing against each other ever since their junior years, and turned in two of the greatest performances in Olympic history, with Kim earning the gold and Asada the silver medal. This rivalry did not end in the Olympics and spilled over into the internet. On March 1, a popular Japanese website for posting messages reportedly attempted to tarnish Kim Yu-na’s reputation by saying that she had bribed judges to win the gold medal, prompting more than 10,000 South Korean internet users to launch a concerted attack on the site. The rivalry was reignited at the end of March, when Asada beat Kim to win her second title at the World Figure Skating Championships in Italy.

Japanese and South Korean historians produced a joint research report on March 23, which presented both challenges and achievements in realizing a deeper shared understanding of their shared history. The group’s first report in 2005 contained different views about issues such as the 1910 treaty of Japan’s annexation of the Korean Peninsula. The second report added a subsection on the history textbooks used in both Japan and South Korea. Overall, the report further highlighted the perception gaps between Japan and South Korea on issues such as “comfort women” and the status of the Dokdo/Takeshima islets. While frustrations over such gaps were expressed in media outlets, a joint agreement to reject the “*Imnailbonbu*” thesis, which says that Japan had occupied the Korean Peninsula from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> century, was considered a big achievement on the part of South Korea. The theory has already been recognized as incorrect in academic circles for some time.

There was also a growing trend toward tripartite cooperation between South Korea, Japan, and China in the field of education. According to the March 1 *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan’s Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry decided to work with Seoul and Beijing to integrate their evaluation systems and certify academic credits in their universities to encourage their students’ study abroad.

## The coming quarter

The coming quarter promises to be eventful. Not only has the dispute over the textbooks just begun (again), but North Korean leader Kim Jong-il is reportedly planning to visit China and there may be some movement toward restarting the Six-Party Talks. If this occurs, we expect to see Japanese calls for attention to the abduction issue and a fair amount of diplomatic jockeying by all parties to the talks. The spring quarter will also see an increase in media and scholarly attention to the question of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Japan's annexation of Korea, which could either fan flames of nationalism on both sides (more likely) or lead to efforts at reconciliation (less likely).

## Chronology of Japan-Korea Relations January - March 2010

**Jan. 1, 2010:** *Donga Ilbo* reports that a poll by the Korea Research Center shows that anti-Japanese feelings are easing among South Koreans.

**Jan. 1, 2010:** *Central News Agency of DPRK* reports that Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of Supreme People's Assembly of DPRK encouraged the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (*Chongryon*) in a New Year's message to make a "tangible contribution to bringing an earlier day of the country's reunification."

**Jan. 5, 2010:** Japan announces its decision to allow North Korea's women's soccer team to visit Tokyo for the East Asian Championships despite the sanctions in place. North Korea later announces its decision not to send its women's team.

**Jan. 9, 2010:** *Central News Agency of DPRK* criticizes Japan for "nuclear weaponization" under the cover of its three non-nuclear principles after Japan admits to having made a "secret pact" with the US government to introduce nuclear weapons into Japan in the past.

**Jan. 11, 2010:** Prime Minister (PM) Hatoyama Yukio and DPJ Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro agree to submit a bill to the regular Diet session in January to grant local-level suffrage to permanent residents in Japan.

**Jan. 13, 2010:** Japan's civic groups protest in front of a parliamentary committee in conjunction with the 900<sup>th</sup> weekly rally by former South Korean "comfort women."

**Jan. 16, 2010:** Foreign ministers of South Korea and Japan confirm that they oppose lifting of sanctions against the North and that North Korea's call for early talks on a peace treaty can be realized only after the North commits to denuclearization.

**Jan. 21, 2010:** The UN independent investigator on human rights in the DPRK affirms during his meeting with Foreign Minister Okada Katsuya that he will cooperate with Japan on the abduction issue.



**Jan. 26, 2010:** South Korea's Foreign Ministry renews its request that the Japanese government review its recent decision on pension refunds to Koreans who were forced into labor during the Pacific War.

**Jan. 30, 2010:** Japan's Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Haraguchi Kazahiro says that the Japanese government should not rush in submitting a bill to the ordinary Diet session to grant local voting rights to permanent foreign residents in Japan.

**Feb. 1, 2010:** South Korea's Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea says the government may formally request that Japan return about 660 books from the *Choson* era that are believed to have been taken by Japan's Governor-General of Korea during Japanese colonial rule.

**Feb. 5, 2010:** Prime Minister Chung Un-chan says that if Japanese Emperor Akihito visits South Korea, he should repent Japan's past wrongdoings during the colonial era and commit to a new relationship between the two countries.

**Feb. 11, 2010:** Foreign Minister Okada Katsuya visits Seoul and meets counterpart, Yu Myung-hwan. They agree to make joint efforts to mend ties as Okada offers an apology for Japan's colonial rule over Korea and to work closely on issues such as the climate change and the global economic crisis.

**Feb. 11, 2010:** South Korea's Unification Minister Hyun In-Taek and Foreign Minister Okada agree to enhance intelligence sharing on North Korea.

**March 1, 2010:** South Korean internet users stage a concerted attack on a Japanese website to protest anti-Korean posts by Japanese users.

**March 3, 2010:** Japan and North Korea clash over the abduction issue at a meeting of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

**March 3, 2010:** North Korea's *Rodong Sinmun* says that the Japan must use "impartiality" in its decision on the possible exclusion of Korean schools in Japan in its tuition waiver program.

**March 3, 2010:** The ROK-PRC-Japan Green Technology Forum is held on Korea's Jeju Island. The forum brings green-technology experts and government officials to share information on environmentally friendly technologies, policies and practices.

**March 10, 2010:** PM Hatoyama says the abduction issue is not linked to his administration's pending decision on the inclusion of pro-Pyongyang schools in the tuition waiver program, but expresses the need for solid criteria to compare the curricula of these schools.

**March 13, 2010:** Nakai Hiroshi, Japan's state minister in charge of the abduction issue, criticizes PM Hatoyama for failing to clearly state his view on the issue of pro-Pyongyang schools' exclusion from the tuition exemption program.

**March 15, 2010:** South Korea and Japan police chiefs agree to establish a hotline to share information in preparation for the G20 meeting in Seoul and APEC leaders meeting in Tokyo.

**March 16, 2010:** A UN Panel on racial equality and nondiscrimination expresses concern about Japan's possible exclusion of pro-Pyongyang schools from its new tuition waiver program.

**March 16, 2010:** Around 300 mothers of children who attend pro-DPRK schools rally in Tokyo demanding that the government not to exclude those high schools from tuition waiver program.

**March 17, 2010:** PM Hatoyama acknowledges difficulty in building a consensus within the ruling coalition to submit a bill on local foreign suffrage during the current Diet session.

**March 23, 2010:** Japan's Lower House unanimously approves a bill to extend financial support to five Japanese abductees who were repatriated from North Korea for five years.

**March 23, 2010:** The second Japan-South Korea joint history research panel issues a report.

**March 24, 2010:** The South Korean government formally asks China and Japan to help locate the remains of Ahn Jung-guen, South Korea's independence hero who was executed by Japan after assassinating Ito Hirobumi.

**March 26, 2010:** Japan provides a list of 175,000 Koreans who were forced into labor during the colonial period to South Korea.

**March 28, 2010:** North Korea's *Rodong Sinmun* claims that Japan must compensate for crimes it committed during the Korean War and its colonial rule over the Korean peninsula.

**March 30, 2010:** Japan's Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Ministry approves five elementary school textbooks that describe the Dokdo/Takeshima islets as Japanese territory. Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan summons Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Toshinori Shigeie to file an official protest over the claim.

**March 31, 2010:** *Kyodo* News reports that Japan is likely to extend sanctions against North Korea for another year after the April 13 deadline as the idea is approved at a meeting of senior vice ministers.