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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
  - 1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program
  - 2. US on DPRK Terror List Status
  - 3. US-DPRK Relations
  - 4. DPRK on Relations with the US
  - 5. ROK on Six Party Talks
  - 6. ROK Aid to DPRK
  - 7. DPRK Food Supply
  - 8. DPRK Parliament
  - 9. DPRK-Namibia Relations
  - 10. Landmine Removal in ROK
  - 11. ROK-PRC Relations
  - 12. Japan Defense
  - 13. US Military in Japan
  - 14. Japanese Nuclear Power

- 15. Tibet Unrest
- 16. Cross Strait Relations
- 17. PRC Activist Arrest
- 18. PRC Internet Censorship

- II. Republic of Korea
  - 19. Inter-Korean Relations
  - 20. ROK Policy Toward DPRK
  - 21. DPRK Human Rights

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("U.S., N.K. SEE NO PROBLEM ON DECLARATION", Washington, 2008/03/20) reported that the U.S. and DPRK reached an understanding on how Pyongyang will disclose its nuclear stockpile, but Pyongyang is still uncommitted to providing full and honest declaration, Washington's top nuclear envoy said. "We have discussed format, and we anticipate we will not have a problem on format," Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said. "I think the really problematic element is, we don't have a commitment from the DPRK to provide a complete and correct declaration," he said. "The problem is, we don't have all the elements of their nuclear program," said Hill, and not getting a complete declaration is "not politically sustainable."

Joongang Ilbo (Kang Chan-ho, "NORTH REJECTS U.S. OFFER AS HOPES FOR TALKS FADE", Washington, 2008/03/21) reported that the DPRK continued to insist during talks in Geneva last week that it doesn't have any highly enriched uranium and that it didn't export any nuclear materials to Syria, according to several sources in Washington who declined to be named. Christopher Hill, Washington's special envoy to the nuclear talks, suggested to his DPRK counterpart, Kim Gye-gwan, that the DPRK confidentially declare its highly enriched uranium program, the sources said, while openly declaring less controversial issues such as its level of plutonium. But Kim refused to do so, the sources said.

(return to top)

2. US on DPRK Terror List Status

Kyodo ("U.S. NUCLEAR ENVOY INDICATES EARLY N. KOREA REMOVAL FROM TERROR LIST", Washington, 2008/03/21) reported that chief U.S. nuclear negotiator Christopher Hill indicated US

readiness to cross the DPRK off its list of terror-sponsoring countries once Pyongyang gives a full account of its nuclear activity. The assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs also renewed a call on the DPRK to submit a ''full and complete'' list of its nuclear programs by the end of this month. ''I don't see sequencing and timing as a problem. I think that can be worked out,'' Hill said at a news briefing when asked about Pyongyang's nuclear declaration and its demand to be removed from the blacklist.

(return to top)

3. US-DPRK Relations

Korea Times ("US SENATORS' AIDES IN NK AMID NUKE IMPASSE: REPORT", 2008/03/21) reported that a group of aides to US senators are in the DPRK to arrange for Korean residents in the United States to visit their separated family members in the DPRK, a news report said. The visit was arranged by the U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, the Washington-based Voice of America reported. During their three-day trip that began Tuesday, the officials were also expected to discuss security issues with Pyongyang officials and the resumption of the excavation of remains believed to belong to U.S. soldiers killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, the radio said.

(return to top)

4. DPRK on Relations with the US

Xinhua ("DPRK URGES U.S. TO DROP HOSTILE POLICY", Pyongyang, 2008/03/20) reported that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) urged the US to drop its hostile policy against Pyongyang and set up peacekeeping mechanism on the Korean Peninsula, the country's official newspaper said Thursday. A spirit of reconciliation was prevailing between both sides of the Korean Peninsula and the six-party talks had made a great progress, which would help ease tensions, lessen confrontation and achieve sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula, the newspaper Rodong Sinmun said. "There is no ground whatsoever for the United States to stick to its hostile policy toward the DPRK at a time when the general situation on the peninsula requires dialog, peace and reunification," it added.

(return to top)

5. ROK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("YU IN DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS ON NUKE, ECONOMY", Beijing, 2008/03/21) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan sought ways to advance the stalled six-way talks on the DPRK nuclear program, as he launched a barrage of meetings with top PRC officials in his first trip abroad as Seoul's top diplomat. Yu paid a courtesy call on PRC Premier Wen Jiabao, who appreciated the minister's choice of Beijing as his first destination, according to Yu's aides. Earlier in the day, Yu met with Wang Jiarui, head of the Chinese Communist Party's international liaison department, who had in January met with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il during his trip to Pyongyang as PRC President Hu Jintao's special envoy.

(return to top)

6. ROK Aid to DPRK

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, Bae Ji-sook, "SOUTH READY TO HELP NORTH'S FORESTATION", Seoul, 2008/03/22) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak said Friday that the ROK should launch efforts to help the forestation of the DPRK to prepare for the reunification of the two Koreas. "Such cooperation would not only help prepare for reunification, but also help conserve our land. In addition, it would also help us create a national value of environmental protection," said Lee. He instructed his Cabinet to consider sending young plants and seedlings to the DPRK ahead of Arbor Day, which falls on April 5, to help the country's forestation efforts.

(return to top)

7. DPRK Food Supply

The Associated Press ("AID GROUP: NKOREA'S FOOD SHORTAGE WORSE", Seoul, 2008/03/21) reported that the DPRK's chronic food shortage has worsened to affect even some of the country's elite citizens in the capital, a ROK aid group said. The DPRK has not given rice rations to medium- and lower-level officials living in Pyongyang this month after cutting the rations by 60 percent in February, the Good Friends aid agency said in its regular newsletter. The food situation is more serious in rural areas, with residents in many regions in the country's South Hwanghae province living without food rations since November, the aid group said. Some collective farm workers in those regions have not come to work citing the lack of food, and their absence is causing problems with farming preparations in the spring planting season, it said.

Korea Herald ("U.S. OFFICIAL VISITS S. KOREA TO DISCUSS N.K. FOOD SHORTAGE", 2008/03/21) reported that a US State Department official visited the ROK to assess the DPRK's food situation amid reports of a worsening food shortage in the DPRK, a government source here was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. Mark Phelan, an analyst in food security at the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, spent two days in Seoul from Monday for talks with related Unification Ministry officials and aid activists, the source said. Washington reportedly intends to send 500,000 tons of food aid to the impoverished DPRK in line with a six-party agreement on denuclearizing the DPRK signed in February last year.

(return to top)

8. DPRK Parliament

Korea Herald ("N. KOREA TO CONVENE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION", 2008/03/21) reported that the DPRK will convene an annual session of the Supreme People's Assembly, its rubber-stamp legislature, next month, the DPRK's official news media was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. "The 6th session of the 11th Supreme People's Assembly will be convened in Pyongyang on April 9," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said, quoting a decision by the SPA Presidium. The KCNA did not unveil the agenda of the meeting, but the country's budget is expected to be the main topic.

(return to top)

9. DPRK-Namibia Relations

Agence France-Presse (Windhoek, "NAMIBIA, NORTH KOREA TO STRENGTHEN ECONOMIC TIES", 2008/03/20) reported that Namibia and the DPRK said they hoped to strengthen their economic ties, as the DPRK's head of state warned against countries plundering resources from poor African countries. Kim Yong-Nam, the DPRK's de facto head of state, arrived in Namibia Thursday as part of a goodwill visit to three African nations, including Angola and Uganda. Namibian President Hifikepunye Pohamba told Kim his country hoped to explore cooperation in trade and commerce, transport and communication, defence, agriculture and energy, healthcare, education and the environment.

(return to top)

10. Landmine Removal in ROK

Korea Times (Park Si-soo, "PRIVATE COMPANIES TO REMOVE LANDMINES", Seoul, 2008/03/21) reported that Private contractors will be hired to assist the military in the removal of landmines following the passage of a bill in September this year. According to the Ministry of National Defense, eligible private contractors will be commissioned to clear landmines across the country. "The demand for removing landmines is increasing due to the changing security environment on the Korean peninsula. But with the current military manpower, it is difficult to meet the growing demand," a military official who refused to be named told The Korea Times. "Private firms will clear the life-threatening weapons faster and more efficiently."

(return to top)

11. ROK-PRC Relations

Korea Herald ("KOREA, CHINA HOLD TALKS OVER SUMMIT, TIBET", Seoul, 2008/03/21) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and his PRC counterpart, Yang Jiechi, held talks yesterday on a broad range of bilateral issues, in discussions aimed to put to rest concerns that the new Seoul administration would be placing less importance on relations with the PRC in favor of the United States. They also discussed upcoming summit talks between ROK President Lee Myung-bak and PRC President Hu Jintao. On his first day in the PRC on Thursday, Yu met Premier Wen Jiabao and shared views on economic and commercial cooperation, cultural and youth exchanges, DPRK policies, Taiwan and the controversy in Tibet.

(return to top)

12. Japan Defense

The Asahi Shimbun ("MSDF CHIEF TO BE GIVEN BOOT AFTER SPATE OF WORRYING INCIDENTS", 2008/03/21) reported that Adm. Eiji Yoshikawa, chief of staff of the Maritime Self-Defense Force, is to be replaced following a string of scandals culminating in last month's sinking of a fishing boat by the MSDF Aegis destroyer Atago, sources said. Yoshikawa's job will be taken over by his deputy, Vice Adm. Tamotsu Kato, the sources said. The Cabinet of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda is expected to approve the personnel change as early as Friday.

Asahi Shimbun ("DEFENSE MINISTRY ADMITS MSDF AT FAULT FOR DESTROYER'S COLLISION WITH FISHING BOAT", Tokyo, 2008/03/21) reported that he Defense Ministry on Friday admitted the Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer Atago was at fault for its collision with a fishing boat on Feb. 19 off the Boso Peninsula in Chiba Prefecture. In an interim report, the ministry cited the high possibility that the destroyer failed to properly watch for other vessels or take measures to avoid the accident.

(return to top)

13. US Military in Japan

Associated Press (Tomoko A. Hosaka, "US SAILOR SOUGHT IN JAPAN KILLING", Tokyo, 2008/03/21) reported that U.S. and Japanese authorities searched for a U.S. sailor for questioning Friday in the killing of a Japanese taxi driver near an American naval base, a US military official said. The 61-year-old victim, Masaaki Takahashi of Tokyo, was found fatally stabbed in his cab Wednesday night in Yokosuka, about a half-mile from the U.S. naval base, police said. "Since the incident happened close to the base, both US Navy and Japanese authorities are interested in talking to a number of persons, including a U.S. sailor, who may have information pertinent to the case," said Cmdr. David Waterman, spokesman for Commander U.S. Naval Forces Japan.

(return to top)

14. Japanese Nuclear Power

Kyodo ("GOV'T PAPER SEEKS TO PROMOTE NUCLEAR ENERGY TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE", Tokyo, 2008/03/21) reported that Japan's Atomic Energy Commission concluded in its annual report submitted to the Cabinet Friday that it is imperative to increase the use of nuclear energy worldwide to fight global warming. The commission noted that Japanese power companies must do more to improve the earthquake resistance of their nuclear facilities considering public anxiety has heightened due to serious damage caused by last year's powerful temblor to Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s nuclear power plant in Niigata Prefecture.

(return to top)

15. Tibet Unrest

The Associated Press (Greg Baker, "CHINA BLANKETS TIBETAN AREAS WITH TROOPS", Zhongdian, 2008/03/21) reported that the PRC blanketed restive Tibetan areas Thursday with a huge buildup of troops, turning small towns across a wide swath of western PRC into armed encampments. Beijing acknowledged that last week's anti-government protests had spread far beyond Tibet's borders and that police opened fire on protesters. It warned foreign tourists and journalists to stay away from a huge expanse of territory across four provinces. The troop mobilization was helping authorities reassert control after the broadest, most sustained protests by Tibetans against PRC rule in decades.

Associated Press (Greg Baker, "CHINESE TROOPS CONVERGE IN TIBETAN AREAS", Zhongdian, 2008/03/21) reported that the PRC government stepped up its manhunt Friday for protesters in last week's riots in Lhasa, as thousands of troops converged on foot, in trucks and helicopters in Tibetan

areas of western PRC. On Friday, US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi met with the Dalai Lama in India and called on the world to denounce the PRC's crackdown in Tibet.

The New York Times (Howard W. French, "IN TIBETAN AREAS, PARALLEL WORLDS NOW COLLIDE", Gabu Village, 2008/03/20) reported that for farmers whose lives in this traditionally Tibetan area revolve around its Buddhist temple, an aluminum smelter that belches gray smoke in the distance is less a symbol of material progress than a daily reminder of PRC disregard. “Look at the walls of our temple, they have all gone grimy with the smoke that pollutes our air,” said a 40-year-old Buddhist peasant named Caidan. The big factory, said a man sitting next to him, benefits only members of the Han Chinese majority. In Tibet and the neighboring provinces of Qinghai, Gansu and Sichuan, Tibetans live in closer proximity than ever with the Han, who have flooded in with a wave of state-driven investment. But they occupy separate worlds. Relations between the two groups are typically marked by stark disdain or distrust, by stereotyping and prejudice and, among Tibetans, by deep feelings of subjugation, repression and fear.

(return to top)

16. Cross Strait Relations

The New York Times (Keith Bradsher, "CHINA TENSIONS COULD SWAY VOTE IN TAIWAN", Taipei, 2008/03/20) reported that the PRC’s suppression of protests in Tibet and missteps by the opposition Nationalist Party have made the Taiwanese presidential election on Saturday an unexpectedly close race. What once seemed to be an insuperable lead for the Nationalist candidate, Ma Ying-jeou, has narrowed considerably, politicians and political analysts said. “What has happened in Tibet in the past three decades, and what is going on now, is a warning to us,” said Shieh Jhy-wey, the minister of information. “We don’t want to have the same fate as Tibet.”

(return to top)

17. PRC Activist Arrest

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "CHINA TRIES ONLINE HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST ON CHARGES OF INCITING SUBVERSION", Beijing, 2008/03/20) reported that Hu Jia, a human rights activist and commentator, was tried in a Beijing court Tuesday on charges of inciting subversion against the PRC government through his writings on the Internet. Hu's lawyer, Li Fangping, said the Beijing No. 1 Intermediate Court would likely hand down its sentence in about a week. Hu, 34, who faces up to five years in prison, pleaded not guilty. Hu was detained Dec. 27 in what was seen as part of a crackdown by PRC censors and security services to rid the Internet of dissidents in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing this August.

(return to top)

18. PRC Internet Censorship

Reuters ("CHINA PUBLISHES 'BLACKLIST' OF VIDEO WEB SITES", Shanghai, 2008/03/20) reported that PRC authorities ordered 25 video-sharing Web sites to halt operations and issued warnings to dozens of others today, tightening their grip on online content in a move which could scare away future investment in the sector. Among the Web sites to be warned was Tudou.com,

which is backed by a unit of venture capital heavyweight IDG and received an official warning under new rules to curb pornographic, violent and political content. The PRC's government, keen to avoid stoking social discontent, keeps a tight watch over the media and often blocks or censors popular Web sites and forums where dissent may brew.

(return to top)

II. Republic of Korea

19. Inter-Korean Relations

Seoul Newspaper ("DPRK DESPERATE FOR HUMANISTIC AID", 2008/03/21) wrote that the food shortage in the DPRK this spring is said to be worse than expected. The face-to-face talk between ROK and DPRK on humanitarian aid, beyond the problem of properness, is a desperate task. Considering that this can be a stepping stone for inter-Korean relations, which are now in stationary situation, the new administration should enthusiastically work for protection of DPRK human rights on the level of DPRK people's right to live. The DPRK, from now on, will have to positively cooperate in monitoring the distribution of aid resources.

(return to top)

20. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Asia Today ("LIASON WITH DPRK IN INTER-KOREAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION IS A MATTER OF COURSE", 2008/03/21) wrote that the measure of linking the solution to the DPRK nuclear problem with improvement in inter-Korean relations such as the expansion of economic cooperation is a matter of course. There is a necessity to show the DPRK that economic benefits from the ROK will come as a result of sincerity in solution to nuclear problem. Obviously, proposing different conditions to humanitarian aid is not appropriate. However, economic cooperation should be made according to the reciprocity principle. For the sake of trust in inter-Korean relations, the DPRK will have to show an enthusiastic attitude of correspondent sincerity.

Hankyoreh (Kang Tae-Ho, "WORDS TO TELL, AND WORDS NOT WORTH TELLING", 2008/03/21) wrote that Kim Ha-joong, the Minister of Unification, regarding inter-Korean problems said "we will wait until all the given conditions mature and ripe without being anxious." Considering the bad economic situation, possible insecurity in inter-Korean relations is a big concern. Also, although Minister Kim said the denuclearization-opening-3000 model is a key strategy that will open a whole new horizon for inter-Korean relations, it is an overstatement. Possibly for that reason, former president Kim Dae-jung's comment "there is no need to worsen inter-Korean relation in denuclearization process" gains attention. Balance between solution to nuclear problem and improvement of inter-Korean relations is an old stock argument of former president Kim. Non-nuclear-opening-3000 plan is nuclear disposal-first theory or liaison theory.

(return to top)

21. DPRK Human Rights

Good Friends ("SERIOUS WHIPPING TO CHILD-THIEVES", 2008/03/20) reported that on March 10 a group of DPRK child thieves were killed. A group of approximately 20 kids were whipped by freight men while stealing from a train bound for Pyongyang. Some of the children beaten with clubs fell down and immediately died. The freight men left the dead bodies outside the station and just neglected them. Among the child-thieves were two girls of age around 10.

(return to top)

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