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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
 - [1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [2. DPRK on Nuclear Program](#)
 - [3. Six Party Talks Energy Working Group](#)
 - [4. DPRK Military Exercises](#)
 - [5. DPRK on Japan Missile Defense Program](#)
 - [6. DPRK Human Rights](#)
 - [7. DPRK Corruption](#)
 - [8. ROK POWs in DPRK](#)
 - [9. US-DPRK Cultural Exchanges](#)
 - [10. ROK Military Procurements](#)
 - [11. ROK Politics](#)
 - [12. ROK-Japan FTA](#)
 - [13. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission](#)
 - [14. US-Japan Relations](#)

- [15. Japanese Defense Ministry](#)
- [16. Sino-Japanese Relations](#)
- [17. Russia, India, PRC Relations](#)
- [18. Sino-US Military Relations](#)
- [19. PRC on US Satellite Shootdown](#)
- [20. PRC Rural Economy](#)
- [21. PRC Bird Flu Outbreak](#)
- [22. PRC Energy Supply](#)
- II. ROK Report
 - [23. ROK Policy Toward DPRK](#)
 - [24. ROK Foreign Policy](#)
 - [25. ROK-PRC Relations](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. NUKE ENVOY: DENUCLEARIZATION SHORT OF TIME", 2008/02/21) reported that top US nuclear envoy Christopher Hill is in Seoul to meet with his ROK counterpart as well as members of president-elect Lee Myung-bak's administration amid a halt in the multilateral process to persuade the DPRK to renounce its nuclear activities. The U.S. says time is running out in fulfilling a six-party nuclear deal to dismantle the DPRK's nuclear programs. "Time is an important factor because if we're going to try to get this thing done in '08, we really do need to pick up the pace," Hill said. "We cannot get on to the Phase Three elements until we complete Phase Two. And obviously it's going to be difficult because we still don't have a declaration."

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

2. DPRK on Nuclear Program

RIA Novosti ("N. KOREA REASSURES U.S. OF HALT IN URANIUM ENRICHMENT PROGRAM", Moscow, 2008/02/21) reported that the DPRK has reassured the US that it will not develop its uranium enrichment program or cooperate with other countries in the nuclear sector, a high-ranking U.S. official said. The DPRK also assured the US that it has no intentions of engaging in nuclear cooperation with other countries in the future, the ROK's Yonhap news agency said quoting US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill.

Yonhap ("N.K. LINKS SCIENTISTS' JOBS TO LWR: U.S. SCHOLAR", Washington, 2008/02/21) reported that is thinking about finding jobs for its nuclear scientists on light-water reactors to be provided under a multilateral nuclear deal, Joel Wit, a former US nuclear negotiator and now a senior research fellow at Columbia University, said Thursday. He was describing a two-and-a-half-hour meeting with the scientists when visiting Yongbyon. "The discussion was very serious...extremely interesting," he said at an evening forum sponsored by the U.S.-Korea Institute. "Believe me, the North Koreans are starting to think about this. Scientists are starting to think about it, and other people are starting to think about it," Wit said. "I don't think it's a ruse."

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

3. Six Party Talks Energy Working Group

Kyodo ("TALKS ON ENERGY EQUIPMENT FOR N. KOREA STUCK OVER QUALITY, PRICE", Beijing, 2008/02/21) reported that working-level talks over energy-linked equipment to be given to the DPRK in exchange for denuclearization steps have hit a snag due to differences between the PRC and DPRK over whether priority should be on their quality or price, sources knowledgeable about the talks said Thursday. While the PRC Commerce Ministry wants to buy the equipment from a company it designated, the DPRK wants shipment from another company, whose products are believed to be cheaper than the PRC-designated firm, according to the sources. "China wants to ensure the quality of the equipment, but North Korea seems to want more pieces within the same budget," one PRC source said.

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

4. DPRK Military Exercises

Yonhap ("N. KOREA BOOSTS AIR FORCE DRILL TO 13-YEAR HIGH", Seoul, 2008/02/21) reported that the DPRK's Air Force launched its fighter jets on over 100 missions on a single day last month, breaking its 1995 record of sorties per day, a military official here said. The official refused to reveal the exact number of sorties flown or when they were flown, but noted the DPRK had restrained itself from any major military drills since late 1990s, perhaps due to a chronic shortage of energy. "Despite its shortage of fuel, the North Korean military has significantly increased the size and quality of the winter exercise of its ground and air forces since late last year," the official told reporters, asking not to be identified.

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

5. DPRK on Japan Missile Defense Program

Kyodo ("N. KOREA CALLS JAPAN'S MISSILE SHIELDS 'DANGEROUS'", Seoul, 2008/02/21) reported that Japan's moves to build missile shields reveal a dangerous plan for reinvasion, which should not be overlooked, the DPRK's newspaper said in a commentary carried by the official Korean Central News Agency on Thursday. The Rodong Sinmun reportedly said, "It is the scenario of the Japanese reactionaries to cover their islands with a dense network of missiles and use them for making preemptive strikes at the DPRK any time."

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

6. DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap ("N. KOREA DENIES EXECUTIONS OF CITIZENS WHO CROSSED BORDER", Seoul, 2008/02/21) reported that the DPRK blasted rumors that its citizens who crossed the sea border into the ROK and who were returned by ROK authorities earlier this month have been executed, claiming that the people are currently living normal lives, and that the rumor is an "anti-North Korea plot" by the ROK's extreme conservatives. "Our people, who drifted due to high seas, flatly rejected an enticement (by the ROK) that they would be guaranteed a wealthy livelihood if they defected to the South, and now live normal lives in their homes after returning," said a spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, a mouthpiece for the DPRK's ruling Workers' Party that is monitored here.

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

7. DPRK Corruption

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "NK OFFICIAL SUSPECTED OF EMBEZZLING FUNDS FROM SEOUL", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that DPRK authorities have been investigating the chief of a committee in charge of inter-Korean economic cooperation for months after seizing \$20 million from his house, a report said Friday. Quoting an unidentified PRC source on DPRK affairs, the Dong-A Ilbo newspaper said Pyongyang authorities are intensifying their investigation into Jung Woon-eop and 80 other officials of the committee over where the money came from. "It could be the usual thing that those in power in North Korea, having poor banking agencies, keep cash in their house," an ROK expert on the DPRK was quoted as saying. But he did not rule out the possibility of Jung and other officials in charge of cross-border business projects embezzling or diverting money from ROK firms.

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

8. ROK POWs in DPRK

Korea Herald ("SEOUL CONSIDERING TASK FORCE ON POWS", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that the ROK Unification Ministry is considering forming an independent task force responsible for handling the issue of ROK prisoners of war and civilian abductees held in the DPRK, government sources said Friday. The new team is likely to be placed under the humanitarian support bureau, which will also be newly established at the Unification Ministry headquarters, sources said. The new task force will be expected to draw up concrete policies to confirm the fate of the abductees and POWs and repatriate them to the South, they said.

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

9. US-DPRK Cultural Exchanges

Associated Press (Burt Herman, "US ORCHESTRA TO PLAY IN NKOREA", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that the New York Philharmonic will depart Monday for the DPRK following a tour of the greater China region, and will perform Tuesday evening at the East Pyongyang Grand Theater in a concert to be televised internationally and live inside the country. "Our hope is to bring this great

music to as many people living there as possible, people who may not otherwise be exposed to such a performance, and touch their lives in the way that this music so often touches ours," Philharmonic President Zarin Mehta said in a statement. Kim Cheol-woong, a DPRK pianist who defected to the ROK in 2002 because of the lack of musical freedom, said regular citizens in the the DPRK were prohibited from listening to or playing foreign music produced after 1900. "I think the concert will change ordinary North Koreans' view of Americans to some extent," Kim said of the Philharmonic's trip. "It could soften their negative views of the United States, who they have been taught to view as imperialist forces."

Korea Times ("N.K. MEDIA REPORTS ON NY PHIL CONCERT", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that the DPRK's state-controlled media reported on next Tuesday's concert by the New York Philharmonic for the first time Friday. "The New York Philharmonic will soon visit Pyongyang at the invitation of the DPRK Ministry of Culture and the Korean Association for Art Exchange," the Korea Central News Agency reported. "It will give its performance at the East Pyongyang Grand Theatre during the visit," the report said without giving any other details, including the date of the orchestra's arrival and performance.

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

10. ROK Military Procurements

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA IN TALKS TO BUY F-35 FIGHTERS", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that Lockheed Martin, a leading multinational aerospace manufacturer, announced Wednesday it is in talks with governments in the Asia-Pacific region to sell F-35 fighter jets. According to the Wall Street Journal, George Standridge, Lockheed Martin's vice president for F-35s, said at the Singapore Air Show that the company aims to sell some 500 F-35 aircrafts to four likely buyers -- Japan, the ROK, Australia and Singapore -- that are positioned to upgrade their models.

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

11. ROK Politics

Korea Herald (Song Sang-ho, "LEE CLEARED OF ALL ALLEGATIONS", 2008/02/21) reported that the independent counsel yesterday cleared President-elect Lee Myung-bak of all allegations, thereby paving the way for the smooth launch of his presidency. The special inquiry, which kicked off on Jan. 15 and had a 40-day mandate, was initiated by Lee's political rivals who denounced the conclusions of the state prosecutors' investigation last year as "politically biased." "We believe we have produced a satisfactory outcome that serves our objective of ascertaining the truth and unraveling the suspicions," said special prosecutor Chung Ho-young during a press conference in his office in southern Seoul.

Yomiuri (Masahiko Takekoshi, "NEW ROK GOVT SET FOR ROUGH TIMES", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that the ROK's ruling and opposition parties have failed to agree on realigning the central government structure. This increases the possibility that the new administration of President-elect Lee Myung-bak will have to begin its tenure unable to change the Cabinet lineup of outgoing President Roh Moo-hyun. Due to the failure to hammer out an agreement, the current ministry and agency names are to remain unchanged, while no appointments will be made to five ministries subject to abolition or consolidation.

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

12. ROK-Japan FTA

Korea Times (Kim Yon-se, "SEOUL, TOKYO TO RESUME TRADE TALKS", Seoul, 2008/02/22) reported that ROK President-elect Lee Myung-bak and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will hold a summit at Cheong Wa Dae in Seoul Monday after Lee is sworn in, a source said Friday. The two leaders are expected to agree on the need to resume negotiating an economic partnership agreement (EPA) between the two countries, he said. Bilateral talks for the EPA, a preliminary step for a free trade agreement (FTA), have been suspended for three years.

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

13. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo ("JAPAN RESTARTS REFUELING MISSION FOR ANTITERRORISM OPERATIONS", 2008/02/21) reported that Japan resumed its refueling mission in the Indian Ocean in support of US-led antiterrorism operations following a nearly four-month hiatus, with a Maritime Self-Defense Force ship providing fuel to a Pakistani destroyer. The resumption of the maritime mission, which the government has described as "a promise to the international community," came as the MSDF is under fire at home over a collision between an MSDF high-tech Aegis destroyer and a fishing boat, which has left two fishermen missing. In Tokyo, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura stressed that the mission is in line with Japan's national interests and is welcomed by the international community.

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

14. US-Japan Relations

Agence France-Presse (Harumi Ozawa, "US MILITARY SAYS PROBING NEW RAPE CASE IN JAPAN", Tokyo, 2008/02/21) reported that the US military and Japanese police said they were investigating new allegations of rape by a US serviceman in Okinawa amid uproar after a string of criminal cases. The case was revealed one day after the US military imposed a sweeping curfew on troops and their families in a bid to stem public anger in Japan, a close US ally. A Filipina woman reported to police that she was raped by a member of the US Army in Okinawa. "We are investigating the case carefully," the police officer said, adding that the soldier was in US military custody.

Asahi Shimbun ("U.S. FORCES TO PROVIDE FIGURES ON PERSONNEL TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS", Tokyo, 2008/02/22) reported that Japan and the U.S. military agreed Friday on a set of countermeasures aimed at preventing crimes by U.S. personnel in Japan, including providing information on troop levels to local governments, officials said. U.S. Forces Japan will be obliged to report the overall number of personnel, as well as those who live off-base, every year to local authorities through the Japanese government. It is the first time the U.S. military will be releasing such information on a regional basis.

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

15. Japanese Defense Ministry

Kyodo ("FUKUDA ORDERS DRASTIC DEFENSE MINISTRY REFORM", Tokyo, 2008/02/22) reported that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda ordered Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba on Friday to fundamentally reform the ministry as criticism grows over its handling of a collision between a high-tech Aegis destroyer and a fishing boat, Ishiba said. "I think organizational problems were behind" the accident and the handling of it and "we must review the organization fundamentally," Fukuda was quoted as telling Cabinet members.

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

16. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN, CHINA OFFICIALS DISCUSS 'GYOZA' SCARE", Tokyo, 2008/02/22) reported that a two-day meeting began Thursday in Tokyo between the National Police Agency and PRC authorities to discuss the recent cases of a banned pesticide detected in frozen gyoza dumplings from the PRC, police said. The two parties are expected to exchange information on the state of investigations in each country as well as ways to cooperate in the future.

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

17. Russia, India, PRC Relations

UNI ("RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA TRILATERAL MEET IN YEKATERINBURG IN MAY", Moscow, 2008/02/21) reported that the Foreign Ministers of Russia, India and the PRC will hold their trilateral meet in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg, in May. "The meeting's agenda is still being developed, but the event will no doubt focus on our economic relations, globalisation and regional security issues," Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Asian Department, Alexander Maryasov, told Russian news agencies today.

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

18. Sino-US Military Relations

The Financial Times (Victor Mallet and Demetri Sevastopulo, "US AND CHINA TO MEET IN BID TO CUT TENSIONS", 2008/02/21) reported that nine retired senior military commanders from the US and PRC will meet behind closed doors on the PRC island of Hainan in a drive to reduce tensions between the two powers, the Financial Times has learned. Organisers of the three-day meeting - approved by government ministers in Washington and Beijing and financed largely by businesspeople trying to improve US-China relations - believe it is the highest such informal encounter between military experts of the two countries. Participants say the experienced military commanders, some of whom retired only in the past two years and have stayed in frequent contact with their successors, will be able to discuss problems more frankly and productively than their active service counterparts.

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

19. PRC on US Satellite Shootdown

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA WANTS US SATELLITE DOWNING DATA", Beijing, 2008/02/21) reported that the PRC asked the US to release data on the shootdown of an ailing spy satellite, while the Communist Party's newspaper blasted what it called Washington's callous attitude toward the weaponization of space. "China is continuously following closely the possible harm caused by the US action to outer space security and relevant countries," spokesman Liu Jianchao said. "China requests the U.S. ... provide to the international community necessary information and relevant data in a timely and prompt way," Liu said.

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

20. PRC Rural Economy

Reuters (Jason Subler, "CHINA FARMERS TO GET FRIDGES, TVS TO BOOST CONSUMPTION", Zhangqiu County, 2008/02/21) reported that Yuan Shanchun became the PRC's first farmer to receive a government subsidy to buy a refrigerator. Yuan was the beneficiary of a pilot scheme entitling each rural family in Shandong and two other provinces to a 13 percent government rebate on the purchase of up to two television sets, two refrigerators and two mobile handsets. The subsidies are part of a battery of policies by Beijing aimed at spurring domestic consumption and improving the lot of the country's roughly 740 million rural residents, who make up 56 percent of the population but have not benefited nearly as much from the economy's roaring growth as people in cities. The concept is enticingly simple: give farmers the same tax rebates long given to exporters of home appliances, removing a policy bias towards exports and helping manufacturers tap a potentially huge pool of consumers in rural PRC.

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

21. PRC Bird Flu Outbreak

Xinhua ("CHINA CONFIRMS 2ND HUMAN BIRD FLU FATALITY IN FEBRUARY", Beijing, 2008/02/21) reported that H5N1 bird flu claimed its second human fatality in the PRC this month when the Ministry of Health confirmed the death of a Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region man on Thursday. The 41-year-old surnamed Liang in Nanning City developed fever and headache symptoms on Feb. 12 and died at 5 a.m. on Feb. 20 after all rescue measures proved ineffectual. Tests of the man were H5N1 positive, said the PRC's Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

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

22. PRC Energy Supply

Reuters ("CHINA EXPECTS TO FUND 90 PCT OF RENEWABLES TARGET", Monaco, 2008/02/21) reported that the PRC expected local capital to fund 90 percent of the infrastructure and other investment needed to meet its goal to get 15 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, a senior official said. Gao Guangsheng, director general of climate change at Beijing's National Development and Reform Commission, was speaking on Wednesday to a conference of environment ministers and other delegates at 154-nation climate talks in Monaco. The PRC looked forward to

international cooperation said Gao, but he commented that, for example, foreign capital deployed through the U.N.-led clean development mechanism (CDM) was making only a small difference to the attractiveness of wind power in the PRC.

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

II. ROK Report

23. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Kyunghyang Daily ("STEERING WHEEL THEORY' OF SONG MIN-SOON DIPLOMACY AND DPRK NUCLEAR POLICIES OF NEXT REGIME", 2008/02/20) reported that Song Min-soon, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, said "If the ROK looks out after the situation holding the 'steering wheel,' both the areas that the ROK takes charge of and the one that the ROK should cooperate on with other countries in the six-party talks should be taken care of." He means the ROK should put its focus on reinforcing cooperation with 6-party talk member nations, on the premise that the ROK should be the one in control. He insists that not only the denuclearization of the DPRK but also peace in the Korean Peninsula should be the objective of ROK diplomacy. He seems to be concerned about the diplomacy of the Lee Myung-bak regime that focuses on denuclearization of the DPRK and reinforcement of the ROK-US alliance.

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

24. ROK Foreign Policy

Seoul Newspaper (Kim Mi-kyung, "MINISTER SONG MIN-SOON AND MINISTER LEE JAE-JUNG ", 2008/02/22) reported that Minister Song Min-soon maintained that the DPRK nuclear problem cannot be separated from the Korean Peninsula problem, and that the environment in which the ROK and DPRK directly communicate politically and militarily on a DPRK nuclear compromise. Minister Lee Jae-jung emphasized the importance of a certain framework of conversation made through summit talks and prime minister talks rather than physical exchanges. The diplomatic security line of the new regime, which is predicted to put more weight to external relations such as the ROK-US relations than to ROK-DPRK relations, could pay attention to the evaluation of two ministers, for ROK-DPRK relations and DPRK nuclear problems should be dealt in parallel in order to make progress in accomplishing a Korean Peninsula peace structure as well.

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

25. ROK-PRC Relations

Pressian (Lee Nam-joo, professor of Sungkonghoe University, "CHINA SILENTLY OBSERVING LEE MYUNG-BAK REGIME", 2008/02/21) wrote that after the inauguration of the new regime, ROK-US relation and ROK-DPRK relations will act as important variables on the future of ROK-PRC relations. The PRC hopes for a positive role from ROK-US relations for the Korean Peninsula, maintenance of the status quo in Northeast Asia, and development of a peace structure. However, there lie two important premises. The first premise is that ROK-US alliance should not have the character of a

military alliance aimed at the PRC. The second is the attitude of the ROK government toward ROK-DPRK relations and solution of the DPRK nuclear problem. The driving force that made six-party talk produce an outcome is mutual agreement on the principle of "action for action." However the new regime has no clear position on this principle. Much anxiety stems from the fact that the new regime is failing to propose feasible programs for a peaceful Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, except reinforcement of the ROK-US alliance.

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

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