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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. Napsnet

1. Six-Party Talks

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "NK STILL MUM ON PRELIMINARY TALKS", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that the DPRK was not responding to the PRC's proposal to hold a preliminary six-nation meeting before resuming the actual multilateral nuclear talks, a senior Seoul official said Monday. "As chair of the six-nation talks, China is trying to bring the six parties together by all means and we are not against a six-nation meeting of any form or title," the official said. "All five nations are on the same page on this, but the North isn't."

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2. US on Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("U.S. WELCOMES N. KOREAN ENVOY REMARKS ON 6-WAY TALKS REOPENING", Washington, 2010/03/20) reported that the United States Friday welcomed remarks by a DPRK envoy that Pyongyang will return to the six-party talks on its denuclearization before June. "A statement that they have no preconditions for arriving at those talks -- while on the face of it being positive, it is the actions that speak the loudest in this particular context," US State Department spokesman Gordon Duguid said. "We've been consistent on what we would like to see from North Korea," Duguid said. "We would like to see them come back to the six-party talks. So rather than making statements about them, if they do wish to re-engage, they can make that known to the chair of the six-party group, and we can begin from there."

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3. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "SEOUL LOOKS ON AS N.K. THREATENS TO CONFISCATE ASSETS", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that the ROK government chose not to speak about what it plans to do should the DPRK confiscate ROK real estate within the Mount Geumgang resort. "There must be government-level talks on the North's further measures after the real estate survey," Unification Ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung said in a press briefing. "But we have no plans to propose talks with the North." "It is our knowledge that the companies are still discussing the issue," he said.

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN TOURISM EXECS TO VISIT N. KOREA ON ASSET FREEZE THREAT", Seoul,

2010/03/22) reported that executives from the ROK's state-run Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) and inter-Korean tour operator Hyundai Asan Corp., will visit DPRK this week to survey their properties at the Mount Kumgang resort, the companies said Monday. "The head of the KTO and two to three employees will visit North Korea Wednesday," said an official at the KTO, adding they will apply for the visit via Hyundai Asan. The state-run tourism company has assets worth 90 billion won (US$79.2 million) at the resort. Hyundai Asan also plans to send a delegation to the resort, as well as representatives of its subcontractors, for talks with DPRK officials Thursday.

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4. Inter-Korea Relations

Yonhap ("INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE HEAD NAMED VICE UNICATION MINISTER", Seoul, 2010/03/21) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak appointed Um Jong-sik, head of Seoul's inter-Korean dialogue office, as vice unification minister Sunday, the presidential office Cheong Wa Dae said. Um's expected appointment may reflect Seoul's willingness to improve ties with the DPRK, especially amid reports of a possible third inter-Korean summit.

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5. Sino-DPRK Relations

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "CHINA TO INVEST IN N.K. ROAD: EXPERT", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that the PRC's Jilin provincial government has agreed to invest 300 million yuan ($44 million) in modernizing a road to the DPRK's northeastern port of Rajin. "I heard from a senior official of the Chinese local government that the Jilin governor signed an agreement to invest 300 million yuan in expanding and paving the road to Rajin port during his visit to North Korea," said Ahn Byung-min, an expert on DPRK infrastructure at the Korea Transport Institute. A Dalian-based company named Chuang Li had agreed in 2008 to revamp the road from the DPRK border town of Wonjong-ri, just across the Tumen River from the PRC's Hunchun, to Rajin in exchange for leasing a pier at the Rajin port. "Chuang Li isn't a company big enough to afford the road construction, so the Jilin government took on the direct investment instead."

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6. DPRK Internal Situation

Donga Ilbo ("'2004 EXPLOSION WAS AN ATTEMPT ON KIM JONG-IL'S LIFE'", Beijing, 2010/03/22) reported that a 2004 explosion at a railway station in the DPRK was an attempt to assassinate leader Kim Jong Il, Xinhua News Agency quoted an analysis as saying Sunday. “The train explosion at Ryongchon Station in North Pyongan Province on April 22 that year killed nearly 200 people, injured more than 1,500, and destroyed more than 8,000 homes. The explosion is believed to have been an attempt to assassinate Kim,” Xinhua said.

Chosun Ilbo ("WILL N. KOREAN PARLIAMENT CONFIRM SUCCESSION?", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that the DPRK will convene the second session of the 12th Supreme People's Assembly in Pyongyang on April 9, the Korean Central News Agency reported on Saturday. The upcoming session is expected to be told how to overcome the disastrous currency reform and approve various

economic policies. Delegates may also confirm Kim's son and heir apparent Kim Jong-un in some nominal senior post to pave the way for the succession.

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7. ROK on DPRK Internal Situation

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "NATION DIVIDED OVER POSSIBLE N.K. COLLAPSE", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that Park Jie-won, a key liberal lawmaker, denounced speculation predicting a regime meltdown in Pyongyang. "Speculation about North Korea is simply that -- speculation," Park said on a radio program. He stressed that excessive debate over DPRK emergency situations serve "only to add to North Korea's regime cohesiveness." "Issues about how and when we should cope with North Korean unrest should be dealt with under the surface," said Yang Moo-jin, a professor at the University of North Korean Studies here. "We need to be prepared, but publicly debating over the issue in the North's face is not a smart policy since it's basically saying, we are waiting for you to collapse."

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8. DPRK Mobile Phone Usage

Chosun Ilbo ("120,000 AFFLUENT N.KOREANS HAVE MOBILE PHONES", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that the Chongqing Evening News on Saturday reported most mobile phones sold in the DPRK are made in the PRC according to DPRK specifications. Buying and activating a mobile phone costs US$1,300, which translates into more than 600 months worth of savings of the average factory worker. But the number of mobile phone subscribers has grown to 120,000, or 0.5 percent of the country's population.

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9. ROK, Japan on DPRK

Yonhap ("SEOUL, TOKYO IN TALKS OVER N.K. DEFECTOR'S APRIL VISIT TO JAPAN", Seoul, 2010/03/21) reported that the ROK and Japan are in talks over a plan to invite Hwang Jang-yop, a former high-ranking DPRK official, to Japan next month to speak at a Diet session. The Japanese government is mulling the plan to ask Hwang, a former secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea, to give information on the DPRK's regime.

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10. DPRK Defectors

VOA News ("S.KOREANS RALLY IN SUPPORT OF N.KOREAN LOGGER HELD IN RUSSIA", Seoul, 2010/03/20) reported that protesters gathered near the Russian Embassy in Seoul Friday, pleading Moscow to give United Nations refugee officials access to a DPRK logger in custody there. Peter Chung, head of a Seoul human rights group, says he thinks Russia plans to turn Yoo over to the DPRK consulate there. If that happens, he says, Yoo will be returned home and faces serious danger.

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11. USFK Base Relocation

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "USFK CHIEF SEES BASE RELOCATION TO END IN 2015", Seoul, 2010/03/21) reported that General Walter Sharp, commander of the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), indicated that it could take five or six years before U.S. troops move to a consolidated military base south of the Han River. "We're progressing well," Sharp said, adding there are still difficulties coordinating construction and moving troops and their families. The move to Humphreys will roughly halve the number of U.S. military installations in the ROK from about 105 to 45, said the commander.

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "US OFFERS TO SELL COMMAND BUNKER TO S. KOREA", Seoul, 2010/03/21) reported that General Walter Sharp has proposed that the ROK buy a key U.S. underground command bunker on the outskirts of Seoul, a source at the Combined Forces Command (CFC) said Sunday. The bunker, known as CP Tango (Command Post Theater, Air, Naval, Ground Operations), is the main command and control center from which U.S. military leaders would direct any combat against the DPRK. The Ministry of National Defense is reviewing the offer but has yet to make a final decision, a ministry official said. Sharp's proposal reflects the firm U.S. intent to shift its roles and missions to air- and naval-centric support after the ROK military takes over operational control of its troops during wartime in 2012 as scheduled, the CFC source said.

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12. ROK-Japan Historical Disputes

Yonhap ("SEOUL DEMANDS JAPAN'S COOPERATION", Seoul, 2010/03/22) reported that ROK Patriots and Veterans Affair Minister Kim Yang said his agency has found new Japanese records on the imprisonment of An Jung-geun and other independence fighters. "The remains of An Jung-geun have been unable to make it back home for the last 100 years," Kim said in a news conference Monday. "Our attempts (to find An's remains) were discouraged several times by Japan's lackluster response." "These newly found documents prove how insincere the Japanese government has been to our repeated requests for cooperation in finding records related to martyr An," he added. "In order to open up a brand new century between Korea and Japan, the Japanese government must give some earnest answers."

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13. USFJ Base Relocation

Kyodo ("U.S. NOT TO NEGOTIATE FUTENMA RELOCATION PLAN WITHOUT LOCAL CONSENT ", Washington, 2010/03/21) reported that the United States has told Japan it will not negotiate any alterative relocation plan for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futemma Air Station in Okinawa Prefecture if the host local community does not accept it, sources close to bilateral ties said Sunday. Two ideas being considered by Tokyo as possible alternatives to the original Futemma relocation plan have met opposition from the local communities. There is a growing view in Washington that the U.S. Marines will have to continue to use the Futemma base in the current site in Ginowan, the sources said. If

Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada formally proposes such a Futemma relocation alternative plan to the United States later this month, Washington is expected to stress the importance of local consent and decline to enter negotiations, they said.

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14. US-Japan Security Alliance

Kyodo ("HATOYAMA VOWS CONTINUED EMPHASIS ON U.S. ALLIANCE IN ADDRESS TO CADETS", Tokyo, 2010/03/22) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said Monday in an address to Self-Defense Force cadets his government has ''unshakably'' inherited Japan's traditional security policy centered on its alliance with the United States. ''Japan has prepared for its defense on the axis of its alliance with the United States, and this policy will unshakably continue under the Hatoyama Cabinet,'' the premier said at a graduation ceremony for the National Defense Academy in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture. At the same time, Hatoyama stressed the importance of building ''confidence, a network of mutual dependence and common rules'' between Japan and its neighboring countries, calling such efforts ''indispensable in Japan's security strategy.''

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15. Sino-Australian Relations

New York Times (David Barboza, "RIO TINTO EMPLOYEES SAY THEY TOOK BRIBES IN CHINA", Shanghai, 2010/03/22) reported that a senior executive and at least one other employee at Rio Tinto, the British-Australian mining giant, admitted on Monday to accepting huge bribes while working for the company in the PRC on the opening day of their three-day trial here. The executive, Stern Hu, a Chinese born Australian citizen, has admitted to receiving some of the $1 million in bribes prosecutors accused him of taking while at Rio Tinto, according to an Australian consular official.

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16. PRC Democracy

New York Times (Edward Wong, "OFFICIAL IN CHINA SAYS WESTERN-STYLE DEMOCRACY WON'T TAKE ROOT THERE", Beijing, 2010/03/20) reported that Li Fei, deputy director of the legislative affairs commission of the standing committee of the PRC National People’s Congress, said Saturday that the PRC will not adopt Western-style democracy. Li said, “different countries have different election rules and a socialist China won’t follow Western election campaigns.” Li told China Daily that while some people wanted to expand direct elections, he believed that the priority was to improve on the election system now in place.

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17. PRC Internet Control

BBC News ("CHINA DENOUNCES GOOGLE 'US TIES'", Beijing, 2010/03/21) reported that Google provides US intelligence agencies with a record of its search engine results, Xinhua News Agency

said. It also accused Google of trying to change PRC society by imposing American values on it. Google denied that it was influenced by the US government, a spokesperson for the company was quoted as saying by AP. "Google's high-level officials have intricate ties with the US government. It is also an open secret that some security experts in the Pentagon are from Google", reporters from Xinhua wrote in a commentary.

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