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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. ROK POWs in DPRK

Associated Press ("SKOREA WANTS ITS POWS IN EXCHANGE FOR AID", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak has asked the DPRK to consider sending home prisoners of war and captured civilians in return for receiving humanitarian aid. Lee said in an interview published Monday in the Maeil Business Newspaper that he would not seek to link food and fertilizer aid to the six-party talks. "Still, since we are sending humanitarian aid, the North should consider humanitarian measures, without any condition, on the pending issue of South Korean POWs and 400 kidnapped fishermen," Lee said.

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2. DPRK Energy Situation

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK CITIZENS TURN TO BATTERIES, BICYCLES TO SOLVE ENERGY SHORTAGES", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that the Daily NK, an ROK-based human rights organization, has learned from interviews with DPRK residents that these days, even in farming villages, families with regular incomes are relying on batteries to light their houses and power their televisions. Many batteries are being imported from the PRC, and there are also many households using bicycle-mounted generators to produce electricity to overcome energy shortages.

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3. DPRK-African Relations

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG'S NO. 2 LEADER IN ANGOLA", Johannesburg, 2008/03/24) reported that Kim Yong-nam, president of the Presidium of the DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly, is visiting Angola as part of his four-nation Africa tour, foreign wire services said Monday. Kim was welcomed upon his arrival at Luanda airport by Angolan Foreign Minister Joao Miranda on Sunday, according to the reports. Kim was scheduled to hold talks with Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos on Monday, they said.

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4. US-ROK Relations

Korea Herald (Lee Joo-hee, "YU TO DISCUSS STRONGER TIES WITH U.S.", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan will leave for the United States Tuesday to prepare for the summit talks next month. Upon arrival in Washington, Yu will meet U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and adjust the agenda for the slated April 15 summit talks between presidents Lee Myung-bak and George W. Bush. Discussion will also be held on the deadlocked negotiation on the DPRK nuclear program.

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5. US Arms Sales to ROK

Korea Herald ("U.S. REPORTS SIX COMMERCIAL ARMS SALES TO KOREA IN 2007", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that the U.S. State Department notified Congress of six cases of commercial arms and defense services exports, each amounting to $50 million or more, to the ROK last year, according to its website.

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6. ROK Textbook Controversy

Korea Times (Bae Ji-sook, "DISPUTE ERUPTS OVER RIGHT-WING TEXTBOOK", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that a high school history textbook by the New Rights' Textforum is igniting a fresh round of ideological conflicts as it acknowledges Japanese colonial rule's (1910-1945) contribution to the modernization of Korea. Prof. Lee Young-hoon, one of the 12 politically conservative professors who authored the book, "these days, textbooks are written by leftists. But we wanted to paint a bigger picture of history," adding that colonial rule should not be judged in black and white.

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7. ROK-PRC Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("KOREA-CHINA SUMMITS EYED FOR COMING YEAR", Beijing, 2008/03/24) reported that the presidents of the ROK and the PRC plan to exchange visits to each other's capital in the coming months for a series of summits on ways to improve ties and to discuss the DPRK nuclear issue, ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said Saturday. "China has agreed in principle on the visit to South Korea by President Hu Jintao," Yu said at the end of a three-day stay in Beijing during which he met with senior PRC officials, including Premier Wen Jiabao and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi. Hu's visit, the date of which has yet to be set, is to reciprocate for a trip by Lee planned for early May, Yu added.

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8. Tibetan Unrest

Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "WITNESSES TO TIBETAN VIOLENCE DESCRIBE SCENES OF HORROR", Beijing, 2008/03/22) reported that interviews with foreign witnesses and Chinese residents in Tibet, as well as blog postings by Tibetans too frightened to be interviewed, show that during three hours on March 14, police fled, allowing rioters to burn and smash much of Lhasa's commercial center. Tibetans randomly beat and killed Chinese solely on the basis of their ethnicity. When authorities did regroup, paramilitary troops fired live ammunition into the crowds. Witnesses did not see protesters armed with anything other than stones, bottles of gasoline or a few traditional Tibetan knives.

Washington Post (Jill Drew, "PROTESTS MAY ONLY HARDEN CHINESE LINE", Beijing, 2008/03/23) reported that a dialogue to cool the passions that sparked the Tibetan demonstrations "seems less and less likely," said Rebecca MacKinnon, a media studies professor at the University of Hong Kong. Protests will not "spark more subtle policy debates in China," MacKinnon said. "The regime will go more and more on the offensive." "Sovereignty and control is more important to them than international image," a Western academic who looks closely at PRC politics said on condition of anonymity. The Tibet crackdown is a "sign to other opposition groups that this is what happens if you make problems."

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9. Chinese Language Expansion

Associated Press (Tini Tran, "CHINA MAY BE NEW LAND OF OPPORTUNITY", Taipei, 2008/03/24) reported that worldwide, about 40 million people are learning Mandarin, the PRC's official spoken language and its most common dialect. Nearly 100,000 foreigners went to the PRC to study Mandarin in 2006, more than twice the number five years earlier. James McGregor, author of the best-selling book, "One Billion Customers: Lessons from the Front Lines of Doing Business in China," stated, "Everyone used to go to America because it was the global happening place. Now this is the global happening place."

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10. Taiwan Politics

Associated Press (Debby Wu, "OPPOSITION WINS TAIWAN PRESIDENTIAL VOTE", Taipei, 2008/03/23) reported that Taiwan opposition candidate Ma Ying-jeou won the presidential election by 17 percentage points Saturday. Taiwan's Central Election Commission also said two referendums calling on the government to work for the island's entry into the United Nations failed. Ma promised he will try to negotiate a peace treaty with Beijing and deepen Taiwan's economic relationship with the mainland. But he pledged that he wouldn't negotiate unification because the vast majority of Taiwanese didn't want to become part of the PRC. "I will make it crystal clear that Taiwan will be a stakeholder and will not rock the boat in the region. By stakeholder, I mean peacemaker," he said.

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11. Japan-Taiwan Relations

Yomiuri Shimbun (Toshinao Ishii, "JAPAN-TAIWAN TIES SEEN STABLE AFTER MA WIN", Taipei,

2008/03/24) reported that the victory of opposition candidate Ma Ying-jeou in Taiwan's presidential election on Saturday is unlikely to change the current relationship between Japan and the island, observers say. But the incoming administration is expected to build a more business-oriented, pragmatic relationship with Japan than that pursued by the current administration led by President Chen Shui-ban of the Democratic Progressive Party, according to sources familiar with Japan-Taiwan relations.

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12. US Military in Japan

Asahi Shimbun ("THOUSANDS PROTEST U.S. ARMY PRESENCE", Chatan, 2008/03/24) reported that thousands of Okinawans protested Sunday following a spate of crimes and accidents by U.S. servicemen stationed in the southernmost prefecture. Organizers said that about 6,000 people turned out for the rally despite occasional heavy rain to call on both Tokyo and Washington to conduct a wholesale review of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement. Protesters also called for a consolidation and reduction of U.S. bases as well as a cut in the U.S. troop presence.

Asahi Shimbun ("U.S. SAILOR HELD, SAYS HE DIDN'T KILL DRIVER", Yokosuka, 2008/03/24) reported that a U.S. sailor sought in connection with the slaying of a taxi driver was taken into U.S. Navy custody early Saturday. The serviceman, who had gone on unauthorized leave before the crime, denied involvement in the crime last Wednesday night, sources said. Police sought the 22-year-old serviceman for questioning because a credit card bearing his name was found in the cab.

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II. ROK Report

13. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

DPRK Channel (Kim Keun-Sik , "LEE MYUNG-BAK'S 'ABR (ANYTHING BUT ROH)' POLICY TRIGGERS REGRESSION IN HISTORY", 2008/03/24) wrote that although the political situation in the Korean Peninsula must head toward peace, reconciliation, and unification in 2012, the current ROK administration's ABR policy is in danger of making year 2012 the period of historical regression of tension, competition, and conflict. We must not repeat the historical fallacy of the affirmative result of the 2000 Inter-Korean summit talk leading to the result of US presidential election by reversing the favorable results of the 2007 inter-Korean summit talk. In that case, the future of 2012 would be dark.

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14. ROK-US Policy Toward DPRK

Munhwa Ilbo (Hur Man, "THE ASSIGNMENT OF CAMP DAVID PRAGMATIC DIPLOMACY", 2008/03/24) carried an article by an an emeritus professor of Busan University International Politics,

and representative of the ROK-EU Center, who wrote that more than anything, we hope a breakthrough that will put an end to the DPRK nuclear problem will be found from the US-ROK summit talk. There is a necessity for the ROK and others to share the burden of aid toward the DPRK once the DPRK completely abandons its nuclear to the satisfaction of global society and improves the human rights situation by releasing war prisoners and fishermen, and aims for reform and opening; otherwise, due to the characteristic of DPRK, it will all end as an ineffectual plan.

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15. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("AUGUST DEADLINE THEORY HAS BEEN RAISED FOR DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUE, COMPLETION OF LEVEL 2 BY MAY, NEGOTIATION ON THE SCHEDULE FOR NUCLEAR ABANDONMENT BY AUGUST", 2008/03/24) wrote that from inside and outside the Korean Peninsula, theories of deadlines for the DPRK nuclear issue that ends level 2 by May and make agreement on the dismantlement schedule by early August are being proposed. More than any other thing, the deadlines theory is based on the US presidential election schedule. The dismantlement schedule must be agreed on by early August before the presidential candidates are officially nominated in order to keep the DPRK nuclear issue on progress even if the Bush Administration becomes a lame duck.

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