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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
 - [1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [2. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation](#)
 - [3. DPRK Economy](#)
 - [4. Inter-Korean Environmental Cooperation](#)
 - [5. US-ROK Security Alliance](#)
 - [6. Japan SDF Peace-Keeping Operations](#)
 - [7. Cross Strait Relations](#)
 - [8. Sino-Japanese Relations](#)
 - [9. Sino-Indian Military Exercise](#)
 - [10. Tibet Unrest](#)
 - [11. PRC Migration](#)
 - [12. PRC Unrest](#)
 - [13. Arms Sales in Asia](#)
 - II. CanKor
-

- [14. Report #303 & 304](#)
- III. ROK Report
 - [15. Korean Peninsula Security](#)
 - [16. ROK-PRC Relations](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA URGED TO BREAK NUKE IMPASSE", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that the ROK's top diplomat warned the DPRK that with the US presidential election on the horizon time was running short for the DPRK to make progress on stalled negotiations over its nuclear programs. Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said the DPRK should address the stalemate over its requirement to fully declare its nuclear programs quickly because the US government does not have much time to focus on the issue. "We have to start negotiations anew from scratch if a new administration comes in the United States. Therefore, we have to make progress in the declaration issue so as to prepare momentum" for further negotiations, Yu said.

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

2. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap ("LOCAL FIRM TO USE N.K. SHIP REPAIR YARD", Pyongyang, 2008/03/24) reported that a ROK company has obtained the exclusive right to use a ship repair yard in the DPRK, company officials said. The right to use Ryongnam Ship Repair Factory in the western port city of Nampo will enable Acheon Global Corp. to gain domestic and overseas investment in its ship repair and steel-structure manufacturing businesses in the DPRK, Acheon officials said. Acheon also aims to persuade Pyongyang to designate part of Nampo as a special economic zone if the business thrives.

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

3. DPRK Economy

Yonhap ("N.K. NEWS MEDIA CALL FOR AGGRESSIVE OUTREACH TO CAPITALIST WORLD ", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that the DPRK needs to aggressively open trade with the capitalist world in a measure to end "the U.S. imperialists' scheme to oppress" the DPRK, a DPRK news magazine claimed in a recent edition. "We must aggressively advance to the capitalist market in a way to shatter the ever-increasing scheme by the imperialists, including those in the United States,

to suppress us," the quarterly economic magazine said in the January issue. Stressing that expanding trade with capitalist nations does not necessarily mean undermining the fundamental basis for the socialist economy, the magazine said the DPRK can effectively use economic deals with capitalist countries in consolidating its "self-reliant economy" as much as it can.

Agence France-Presse ("CASH-STRAPPED NKOREA CUTS DOWN ON LAVISH FESTIVITIES: REPORTS", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that cash-strapped DPRK has cut down on its main festivities to mark founding leader Kim Il-Sung's birthday to help save money, news reports said. Choson Sinbo, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper for ethnic Koreans in Japan, reported on its online edition that the DPRK had turned its annual "April Spring Friendship Art Festival" into an biennial event instead. Seoul's Yonhap news agency, citing an unnamed DPRK defector who formerly worked for the foreign and cultural sectors, said worsening economic hardships had led Pyongyang to curtail the usually lavish celebration and most likely mean no international performers this year.

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

4. Inter-Korean Environmental Cooperation

Joongang Ilbo (Kang Chan-su and Han Eun-hwa, "TREE PLANTERS TO BATTLE DEFORESTATION IN NORTH", 2008/03/25) reported that more than 1,000 South Koreans will visit the DPRK to plant trees to help stop deforestation. The visits will start this weekend and continue through next month. The Onnuri Community Church in Yongsan, Seoul said yesterday that it has reached an agreement with the DPRK to allow 500 South Koreans, including church members, celebrities, students and business-people, to visit Kaesong on April 5 to plant 16,000 fruit trees. "If North Korea is deforested, it will impact South Korea because the two countries' ecosystems are connected," said Ra Joon-seok, a minister at the church.

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

5. US-ROK Security Alliance

Stars and Stripes (Ashley Rowland, "USFK COMMANDER BELL SAYS SOUTH KOREA MAY WANT TO HALT REDUCTION OF U.S. TROOPS ", Seoul, 2008/03/24) reported that U.S. Forces Korea commander Gen. B.B. Bell said he expects the ROK's new president to ask for a pause in the reduction of U.S. troops stationed here while the countries study the future of the drawdown. During congressional testimony March 12 in Washington, Bell said President Lee Myung-bak could make the request as early as April, when Lee is scheduled to meet with President Bush at Camp David. "If he does ask for that pause, I think it would be prudent for the United States to agree to sit down and discuss the issue and then potentially execute a pause based on those discussions," he said.

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

6. Japan SDF Peace-Keeping Operations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("BIGGER SDF ROLE IN PKO TRAINING EYED", 2008/03/23) reported that the government is considering sending Self-Defense Forces members to U.N. peacekeeping training facilities in Africa and other Asian countries as instructors for the first time, it was learned Saturday. The government hopes to make the first dispatch this year. The government currently is considering

sending SDF members to U.N. international peacekeeping training facilities in six countries--Egypt, Rwanda, Kenya, Mali, Ghana and Malaysia. Several SDF members likely will be dispatched as instructors and each member will be in charge of several facilities in turn.

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

7. Cross Strait Relations

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "TAIWAN'S MA SETS PLAN TO RECAST TIES TO CHINA", Taipei, 2008/03/24) reported that Taiwan's president-elect, Ma Ying-jeou, outlined ambitious plans Sunday to revolutionize economic and security relations with the PRC, aiming ultimately for a peace accord ending 59 years of hostility across the Taiwan Strait. Ebullient after a decisive victory in Saturday's election, Ma predicted he could reach agreement with Beijing on a wide range of delicate issues because, unlike President Chen Shui-bian, he is willing to put aside the question of whether this self-ruled island should be considered an independent nation or a part of the PRC. "The idea is to shelve the issue," he said in an interview.

Xinhua ("CHINA URGES U.S. TO KEEP ITS WORD ON TAIWAN ISSUE ", Beijing, 2008/03/24) reported that the PRC called on the United States to keep its promise on the Taiwan issue and to safeguard peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits and the sound development of the PRC-US ties. "There's only one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang. "We urge the United States to adhere to the one-China policy and the three Sino-U.S. joint communiques, oppose 'Taiwan independence', oppose Taiwan's joining the United Nations and other international organizations which only open to sovereign nations," Qin said.

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

8. Sino-Japanese Relations

Xinhua ("SENIOR CPC LEADER CALLS FOR EFFORTS FROM CHINA, JAPAN TO ENSURE SUCCESS OF PRESIDENT HU'S JAPAN TOUR", Beijing, 2008/03/25) reported that a senior leader of the Communist Party of China (CPC) said here the PRC and Japan should make joint efforts for President Hu Jintao's coming visit to Japan. Li Yuanchao, head of the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks when he met with Hidenao Nakagawa, former secretary-general of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party. He said the PRC and Japan are facing important opportunities at the moment, calling for both sides to seize the chances and jointly advance the sound growth of bilateral ties on the basis of peaceful coexistence, mutually beneficial cooperation and common development.

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

9. Sino-Indian Military Exercise

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA PLANS WARGAMES WITH CHINA", New Delhi, 2008/03/25) reported that India plans to go ahead with fresh military manoeuvres with the PRC despite global condemnation of Beijing for a crackdown this month on protestors in Tibet, officials said. Indian defence ministry officials, who did not want to be named, confirmed that negotiations with the PRC

were on “to engage the two airforces in a joint drill” in Indian skies. “Our policy is that Tibet is an autonomous region of China and the protests that are going on do not (get) in the way of our improving ties,” a ministry official said.

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

10. Tibet Unrest

The New York Times (Howard W. French, "INTELLECTUALS IN CHINA CONDEMN CRACKDOWN", Shanghai, 2008/03/25) reported that a group of prominent PRC intellectuals has circulated a petition urging the government to stop what it calls a “one sided” propaganda campaign about Tibet and initiate direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama. The petition, which was signed by more than two dozen writers, journalists and scholars, contains 12 recommendations. Taken together, they represent a sharp break from the government’s response to the wave of demonstrations that swept Tibetan areas of the country in recent weeks. Most of the signers are Han Chinese, the PRC’s dominant ethnic group. Their petition accused the government of “fanning racial hatred” in the PRC by blaming ethnic Tibetans for the violence and seeking to inflame passions among the Han to support the crackdown.

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

11. PRC Migration

The Financial Times (Geoff Dyer, "CHINA BRACED FOR WAVE OF URBAN MIGRANTS", Beijing, 2008/03/25) reported that more than 40 per cent of the population of PRC cities will be made up of migrants within two decades, putting huge pressure on the ability of local governments to provide services to citizens, according to a study by the McKinsey Global Institute. On top of the existing 103m urban migrants, PRC cities will face an influx of another 243m migrants by 2025, taking the urban population up to nearly 1bn people. In the medium and large cities, about half the population will be migrants, which is almost three times the current level. The forecasts, contained in a study on urbanisation in the PRC, underline the enormous challenge facing Beijing if it is to meet pledges to include the vast army of migrant workers in urban social welfare programmes, to which they are mostly denied access at the moment.

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

12. PRC Unrest

The Associated Press ("CHINA RIOT LEAVES 1 DEAD, OTHERS INJURED ", 2008/03/25) reported that the PRC's state media says one policeman has been killed and several others injured in riots Monday in western Sichuan province. The official Xinhua News Agency gave no other details regarding the riot. Xinhua also said that 381 people involved in protests in another Sichuan county, Aba, had surrendered to police, according to local authorities.

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

13. Arms Sales in Asia

Agence France-Presse (P. Parameswaran, "US, RUSSIA, CHINA IN FIERCE BATTLE TO SELL FIGHTER JETS IN ASIA ", Washington, 2008/03/25) reported that the US is bracing for tough competition from Russia and the PRC as cash-flush Asian economies look up to the trio for a new breed of fighter jets to beef up their air forces, experts say. Japan, India, Australia and the ROK are keen to have the most modern, fifth generation, jet fighters while Southeast Asian nations such as Malaysia and Indonesia are reportedly eyeing fourth generation fighters from the PRC. With Asia powering ahead with military modernization and capability growth, the United States wants to maintain leadership in defense sales in the region attracted by low cost offerings from Russia and China, experts said.

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

II. CanKor

14. Report #303 & 304

CanKor ("FOCUS: SYMBOLIC SYMPHONIC SYMPATHY", 2008/03/24)

It is always dangerous to designate a current event as "historic", yet few of the hundreds of articles describing the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's performance in Pyongyang refrain from using that word. This double-edition CanKor FOCUS: Symbolic Symphonic Sympathy brings to you some of the best commentaries on the event, including articles by such faithful CanKor readers as Karin J. Lee (Executive Director of the US National Committee on North Korea), Edward Reed (Korea Representative of The Asia Foundation), Financial Times correspondent Anna Fifield, Los Angeles Times correspondent Barbara Demick, Human Rights Watch researcher Kay Seok and CanKor's own father-daughter team Erich & Miranda Weingartner.

CanKor ("FICTION: CONVERSATION WITH THE PATRIOT -- PART 5", 2008/03/24)

Concluding this edition is Mr. Pak Kim Li's reluctant take on the event, from the keyboard of CanKor editor Erich Weingartner, who continues his fictional conversation with the DPR Korean "patriot", based on 25 years of close contact with Koreans north of the 38th parallel. In this issue: episode 5.

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

III. ROK Report

15. Korean Peninsula Security

Financial News ("'NATIONAL SECURITY SITUATION IN ANXIETY WITH INAUGURATION OF LEE MYUNG-BAK ADMINISTRATION' ", 2008/03/25) carried an article by a researcher at Samsung Economic Research Institute who wrote that while expectations for improvement in US-ROK relations have risen with the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration, it was observed that compared to three months ago, people have become more anxious about the security situation in the

Korea Peninsula due to apprehension for the cooling down of inter-Korean relations. According to the Korean Peninsula economic security situation survey SERI conducted with 50 Korea Peninsula specialists from the ROK, US, the PRC, Japan, and Russia, the KPSI (the Korean Peninsula Security Index) has fallen quite a bit since the last quarter. The DPRK variable, which had had the most positive influence, has become the most unstable variable. Also, Chinese and Japanese response to improvement in ROK-US relation and the fact that the DPRK nuclear issue has re-appeared need attention.

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

16. ROK-PRC Relations

Korea Institute for Future Strategies (Han Suk-Hee, "LEE MYUNG-BAK ADMINISTRATION'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA", 2008/03/24) carried an article by a Yonsei Univ Professor who wrote that the Lee Myung-bak administration's diplomacy has become a starting point that prepares a new balanced motivation through reinforcement of relations with the US, free from the Roh Mu-hyun's biased policy toward the PRC. To the PRC government, the policy that reinforces US-ROK relations might be understood as weakening or fissure of ROK-PRC relations. Therefore, Lee Myung-bak has no other choice but to go for a hedging strategy in order to maintain good relations with both the US and PRC; to do so, the ROK government should reinforce US-ROK relations in a framework that adheres to principles while persuading the PRC that a hedging strategy is not a policy that damages its security.

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

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