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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on Six Party Talks

Washington Times (Nicholas Kralev, "U.S. URGES EYEING FLOW OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS", Seoul, 2008/02/26) reported that the US wants six-nation talks aimed at ending the DPRK's nuclear programs to begin monitoring transfers of nuclear materials and technology from the DPRK to other countries, US officials said yesterday. The anti-proliferation focus, for which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is trying to gather support during an East Asian tour this week, is a response to mounting evidence that the DPRK gave nuclear assistance to Syria. "The North Koreans promised not to engage in nuclear proliferation," said Christopher R. Hill, the chief U.S. envoy to the six-nation talks. "We want to make sure they follow through on their pledge."

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Kyodo ("EX-OFFICIALS CONVEY U.S. MESSAGE URGING N. KOREA ACT ON 6-WAY DEAL", Pyongyang, 2008/02/26) reported that former US government officials visiting the DPRK for a concert by the N.Y. Philharmonic in Pyongyang said they met with the DPRK's top nuclear negotiator and conveyed a US message that Pyongyang act swiftly on the six-party denuclearization deal. Donald Gregg, former U.S. ambassador to the ROK, said four Americans including him conveyed the message to Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan, after discussing the issue with current US administration officials.

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3. US-DPRK Cultural Exchange

The Associated Press (Burt Herman, "MUSICAL DIPLOMACY, AND TEARS, IN NKOREA ", Pyongyang, 2008/02/26) reported that the New York Philharmonic's unprecedented concert could herald warmer ties between the DPRK and the West. After three encores, some musicians left the stage in tears as the audience waved fondly. And more musical diplomacy could be in the works for the DPRK: rock guitarist Eric Clapton has been invited to Pyongyang. Between horn fanfares and the flourishes of a conductor's baton, the U.S. and DPRK found common ground in a concert that spanned American and Korean musical traditions. Whether the feeling lingers after the music will

depend on the DPRK's compliance with an international push to rid it of nuclear weapons.

Reuters (Tabassum Zakaria and Arshad Mohammed, "WHITE HOUSE PLAYS DOWN SIGNIFICANCE OF NORTH KOREA CONCERT", Washington, 2008/02/26) reported that the White House played down the significance of a performance on Tuesday by the New York Philharmonic in Pyongyang, and focused instead on the DPRK's nuclear program. "I think at the end of the day we consider this concert to be a concert, and it's not a diplomatic coup," White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said. The DPRK must fully declare its nuclear programs and provide an accounting of proliferation activities, she said. "They have a ways to go in order to meet those obligations. Once we get to those we might then be able to see normalized relations begin, and part of normalized relations would include possible cultural exchanges, like the one you saw today," Perino told reporters.

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4. US, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France-Presse (Lachlan Carmichael, "RICE URGES CHINA TO USE MAXIMUM INFLUENCE ON NORTH KOREA", Beijing, 2008/02/26) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Tuesday urged the PRC to use all its influence with the DPRK to ensure the DPRK moved ahead quickly with nuclear disarmament. "I'm expecting from China what I'm expecting from others -- that we will use all influence possible with the North Koreans to convince them that it's time to move forward," Rice told a joint press conference with Yang. Yang sought to highlight "important progress" that had already been made in the six-party process, despite the current delays, while saying that the PRC was in close talks with the DPRK government.

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5. Japan, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL, TOKYO SHARE SAME STANCE ON N.KOREA: JAPANESE FM", 2008/02/26) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura on Sunday stressed that there is no difference between President Lee Myung-bak's DPRK policy and that of Japan. "Japan and South Korea have sent the same message" to the DPRK, Komura said, which is that if the DPRK "does what it should do, both Japan and South Korea will render economic cooperation." Komura said, "Japan will liquidate the past and normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea if it resolves the abductions, nuclear and missile issues. 'Liquidation of the past' means implementing a massive economic cooperation project."

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6. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("PYONGYANG MEDIA STRESSES NATIONAL UNITY", 2008/02/26) reported that on the day of ROK President Lee Myung-bak’s inauguration, the organ of the Central Committee of the DPRK Workers’ Party offered only a veiled reference to the event. "We can advance independent unification and peaceful prosperity only when we achieve grand unity of the entire nation based on the principle of national self-reliance,” the Rodong Shinmun wrote. In an editorial headed "Our own nation should uphold the banner of independent unification," the daily said, “Our nation is a spiritual

weapon to achieve self-reliant unification and peaceful prosperity." Ryu Dong-ryeol, a researcher at the Police Science Institute, said, "I think North Korea was criticizing President Lee, who has stressed the Seoul-Washington alliance and cooperation between Seoul, Washington and Tokyo, in a roundabout way."

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7. Religion in the DPRK

Yonhap ("RELIGIOUS BELIEVERS DO EXIST IN N. KOREA: SURVEY", Seoul, 2008/02/26) reported that despite the draconian restrictions on religion in the DPRK, believers, even if very few, do exist and practice behind closed doors, a survey of DPRK defectors in ROK suggested. According to the survey of 755 North Koreans by the non-governmental Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, 10 people said they have secretly participated in religious activities in the DPRK.

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8. US-ROK Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, "NO DEAL ON FTA IF BAN ON U.S. BEEF NOT LIFTED", 2008/02/26) reported that the chief U.S. negotiator for the ROK-US free trade agreement is repeating the same message: the ROK has to open its market to U.S. beef imports if it wants the U.S. to ratify the deal. In an interview with the JoongAng Daily yesterday, Wendy Cutler said U.S. legislators are refusing to approve the deal because the ROK has not yet lifted its ban on U.S. beef.

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9. Sino-Indian Relations

Telegraph (Rahul Bedi and Richard Spencer, "US-INDIA DEFENCE DEAL 'TO COUNTER CHINA'", 2008/02/26) reported that the US is attempting to forge a strategic alliance with India with a series of arms deals as the South Asian nation bolsters its defences against the PRC. Robert Gates, the US defence secretary, will arrive in New Delhi to strike a common position on Beijing with the Indian government. "Washington views Delhi as representing a strategic asset in the Asian region," senior Indian military official said.

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10. Sino-US Relations

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "CHINA SAYS IT IS WILLING TO RESUME RIGHTS", Beijing, 2008/02/26) reported that the PRC declared it is willing to resume a long-stalled human rights dialogue with the US, seeking to improve its image before this summer's Olympic Games in Beijing. The announcement was made by Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi at the close of talks with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who passed through Beijing. Reading from notes, Yang said: "We are willing to resume the human rights dialogue. We are willing to have exchanges and discussions on human rights with the United States and other countries on the basis of mutual respect, equality and non-

interference."

The Associated Press (Matthew W. Lee, "US SEES MORE POSITIVE CHINA GLOBAL ROLE", Beijing, 2008/02/26) reported that the PRC is reaching out for a greater role in global affairs and opening up at home, too — at least a little — as the once-reclusive Communist giant gets ready for this summer's Olympic Games. That's good news, says Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "I can't get into their motivations, but ... China is opening up to the world in a lot of ways," Rice said after talks with President Hu Jintao. "I do believe that there is more of an effort to reconcile China's size and influence in international politics, which is a relatively new thing, with China's foreign policy behavior," she told reporters.

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11. Cross Strait Relations

Xinhua ("RICE: US OPPOSES UN MEMBERSHIP FOR TAIWAN", 2008/02/26) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice reiterated in Beijing today that the US would adhere to the one-China policy and opposes the proposed referendum on Taiwan's UN membership. Rice made the remarks in talks with PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, a press release from the PRC Ministry said, stressing that the US opposes any unilateral changes across the Taiwan Strait and that the US believes that the referendum would not be constructive to any side and should not be taken. Yang said the Taiwan question is a matter of the PRC's sovereignty and territorial integrity and constitutes the central government's utmost concern.

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12. PRC Energy

The Financial Times (Richard McGregor, "HOPES FOR NEW CHINA ENERGY MINISTRY FADE", Beijing, 2008/02/26) reported that hopes for the speedy establishment of a new energy ministry in the PRC are fading in the face of opposition arising from powerful bureaucratic and state corporate interests across the sector. The opposition to the initiative, seen as vital to managing huge challenges in securing energy supplies while cutting pollution and greenhouse gases, could ensure any body is relatively powerless even if it is set up. Xiao Guoxing, an adviser helping to draft the law, said that most of the opposition was from “some ministries and big state enterprises, which are afraid of losing their powers and benefits”.

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13. PRC Environment

Agence France-Presse ("RIVER FILTH CUTS NORMAL WATER SUPPLIES FOR 200,000 IN CHINA: REPORT ", Beijing, 2008/02/26) reported that normal water supplies to more than 200,000 people in central PRC have been cut due to pollution in a local river, state media reported Tuesday. The water supply to more than 60,000 residents of Jianli county in Hubei province was cut Sunday after water in a branch of Hanjiang River turned red and foamy, the Chutian Metropolis Daily said. Authorities in nearby Qianjiang county also ordered the suspension of water supplies from the river to local water processing plants, forcing nearly 200,000 residents to opt for underground and bottled water,

it said. The cause of the pollution was being investigated.

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II. ROK Report

14. ROK-DPRK Relations

Pressian (Jung Chang-hyun, "NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC MELODY, MELT THE HEART OF PRESIDENT LEE MYUNG-BAK FIRST", 2008/02/27) carried an article by a Professor of Kookmin University and 'minjok21' weekly editor who said that the plan that the Lee Myung-bak administration has proposed is not a policy toward the DPRK that contains methods for its fulfillment but a mere declaration. Specific fulfillment is possible if the administration, in any form, comes up with an effectual method of fulfillment through dialogue with the DPRK. The administration must insightfully see that separating the six-party talks and inter-Korean relations and driving them forward in a parallel structure is the only way to denuclearize in Korea Peninsular and promote prosperity of the ROK and DPRK. It must maintain and reinforce the circulatory structure of ROK-DPRK relations and US-DPRK relations that has been carefully settled for last 10 years. Quickly dispatching a special envoy to the DPRK and holding the second ROK-DPRK Prime Minister talks can be a plan. It can be a point for re-opening the six-party talks.

Munhwa Ilbo ("[editorial] THE HARMONY OF NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC IN PYONGYANG SPREADING OVER THE KOREAN PENINSULA", 2008/02/27) wrote that there are obviously analysts looking for political expansion of the meaning of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra's performance in Pyongyang. However, this does not scatter the hope for a big change in the relationship of the two countries that, for half a century, since the Korean War, have been enemies, for this is the first time an American flag was hung and the US national anthem was played in the DPRK. The forward-looking attitude change of DPRK is noteworthy. The DPRK accepted all the conditions that the New York Philharmonic proposed and showed an open attitude toward the foreign press. On that train of thought, we hope that this harmony from Pyongyang not only carries over to the March 26 World Cup DPRK-ROK preliminary match but also to a response from president Lee Myung-bak stimulating the abandoning of nuclear weapon, reform, and opening of the society.

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15. US-DPRK Relations

Hankyure ("[editorial] NEW YORK PHIL'S MELODY OF INTER-KOREAN RECONCILIATION", 2008/02/27) wrote that the Philharmonic performance will definitely be a great help to progress in US-DPRK relations. However the six-party talks have reached a deadlock over the issue of the DPRK's nuclear report and the US removing the DPRK from the terrorist-supporting nations list. The most important thing is simultaneous action of the DPRK and US based on mutual confidence. Obviously, the new administration of ROK must have a leading function in this process.

Asia Today ("[editorial] TOO MUCH EXPECTATION ON PYONGYANG PERFORMANCE OF NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA SHOULD BE AVOIDED", 2008/02/27) wrote that much

attention given to the Pyongyang performance of New York Philharmonic orchestra stems from the possibility that this would be a critical turning point of US-DPRK diplomacy. This makes people doubt that this has a hidden intention for domestic solidarity rather than that there has been a change in the DPRK's attitude toward the outer world. In order for DPRK to prove its veracity in inviting New York Philharmonic Orchestra, it must understand that positive fulfillment of the six-party talk agreement and unquestionable report on the disablement of the DPRK nuclear program are indispensable.

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