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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France-Presse (P. Parameswaran, "US WARNS NORTH KOREAN POLITICS COULD SCUTTLE NUCLEAR DEAL", Washington, 2008/03/25) reported that the US warned that internal politics in the DPRK could scuttle a deal in which the DPRK would have to end its nuclear weapons drive. "North Korea is a country that has a very vertically oriented governing structure to be sure... but at the same time it is place for politics," Christopher Hill said. "And so I think it is fair to say that there are people in North Korea who really are not with the program here, really rather continue to be producing this plutonium for whatever reason," he said. Hill did not elaborate, but there have been unconfirmed reports in the past about hardline military factions in Pyongyang not keen on reaching a nuclear deal even though the PRC-led six-party talks were endorsed by DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il. Noting that the clock was ticking away, Hill said "there is a lot of questions" about whether the three-phase nuclear deal with the DPRK could be completed before Bush left office.

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "LEE STEPS UP ANTI-NUCLEAR PRESSURE ON N. KOREA ", Seoul, 2008/03/26) reported that President Lee Myung-bak urged the DPRK to completely abandon its nuclear weapons program to pave the ground for inter-Korean peace and closer economic cooperation. "North Korea's leadership has to realize that the settlement of its nuclear problem would be truly helpful to inter-Korean economic cooperation and unification. The North will only be able to stabilize its regime, maintain peace and achieve economic prosperity when it gives up its nuclear program," said the president. But Lee vowed that his government will continue the existing inter-Korean economic cooperation projects and the provision of humanitarian aid to DPRK, even before the dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear program.

JoongAng Ilbo (Kim Min-seok and Jung Ha-won, "NORTH'S NUKES ON ATTACK RADAR",

2008/03/26) reported that the ROK military is prepared to launch a pre-emptive attack on the DPRK's nuclear installations if they become a military threat, Gen. Kim Tae-young, the newly designated chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in a hearing. It was the first time the military has confirmed contingency plans for a pre-emptive attack on Pyongyang's nuclear facilities and comes as Seoul's new conservative government is being closely watched for signs of how it will approach the DPRK. Kim also expressed his determination to resist any changes in the so-called Northern Limit Line, the Yellow Sea border between the ROK and DPRK.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

JoongAng Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, "MORE TOUGH TALK ON NORTH KOREA FROM LEE GOV'T.", 2008/03/26) reported that in a sign of the new administration's revamped policy on the DPRK, the Unification Ministry yesterday announced a plan to synchronize its work on inter-Korean relations with the country's diplomatic efforts on various fronts. The ministry's workplan, outlined in a press briefing yesterday and in an earlier progress report given to President Lee Myung-bak, revolves around several key principles: working with other countries to get DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons program, helping the DPRK achieve a $3,000 per capita gross domestic product through expanded economic cooperation, repatriation of ROK prisoners of war and people kidnapped to the DPRK, and transparency on aid sent for North Koreans. Unification Vice Minister Hong Yang-ho also said inter-Korean talks should have "tangible results," and the government would no longer hold "talks for the sake of talks."

Chosun Ilbo ("TOURS TO HIGHEST PEAK IN MT. KUMGANG TO OPEN IN APRIL ", 2008/03/26) reported that beginning in April, Birobong, the highest peak in the DPRK's Mount Kumgang range, will be opened to visitors. ROK tour operator Hyundai Asan will start tours to "inner" Kumgang early next month, while tours to the mountaintop will begin later in mid-April, owing to inclement weather conditions at the summit. Last year, some 350,000 tourists visited Mount Kumgang, but Hyundai Asan says it is expecting that number to grow by nearly 25 percent this year.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Associated Press (Jack Kim, "NORTH KOREA EXPELS SOUTH'S OFFICIALS FROM FACTORY ZONE", Seoul, 2008/03/27) wrote that on the DPRK Thursday expelled ROK citizens from Kaesong industrial site in retaliation for the new government's tough tone towards Pyongyang. A Unification Ministry official said the DPRK had told 11 ROK officials on Monday they would have to leave the site, finally forcing them out before dawn on Thursday."The North cited Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong's comments that without the resolution of the nuclear problem, there won't be any expansion of the Kaesong project," the official said. Presidential Blue House Spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said after an emergency meeting that the DPRK's measure "was a very regrettable incident that could damage progress of economic cooperation between the South and the North."

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5. ROK on DPRK Human Rights

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TO BACK UN RESOLUTION ON N.KOREA", 2008/03/26) reported that the ROK government has decided to vote for a resolution on human rights in the DPRK to be adopted by the UN Human Rights Council this week, it emerged on Tuesday. The ROK has so far boycotted or abstained from all UN votes on the DPRK including the General Assembly, except for 2006, when the DPRK conducted a nuclear test. A government official, speaking on the customary condition of anonymity, said, "Previous administrations treated the human rights issue of North Korea from a nationalist standpoint. But the new government's basic policy is to regard human rights as a universal value. The government will show the first example of concrete action in the upcoming UNHRC vote."

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6. DPRK Energy Aid Working Group Meeting

Yonhap ("KOREAS TO HOLD WORKING-GROUP MEETING ON ENERGY AID", Seoul, 2008/03/26) reported that the ROK and DPRK will hold working-level talks later this week on ways of providing the DPRK with energy and other economic aid in accordance with a multilateral nuclear deal signed last year, the Foreign Ministry said. The two-day meeting at the truce village of Panmunjom from Thursday is aimed at discussing technical issues pertinent to the agreed-upon assistance, in the run-up to next month's trilateral talks also involving the PRC, it added. "Details of facility-related equipment to be delivered to North Korea, including items and scales, will be the main topics in this round of meetings," Foreign Ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said. "Trilateral consultations (on the matter) among the two Koreas and China will be held in Beijing next month."

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7. DPRK Food Supply

Yonhap ("N.K. SHORT OF 1.66 MLN TONS OF GRAIN THIS YEAR: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/03/26) reported that the DPRK has produced 3 million tons of grain last year, which means the impoverished country will be short of about 2 million tons by this year's fall harvest season, a recent U.N. report said. "North Korea's grain production for last year was far below the 4 million tons of crop produced in 2006 and the average 3.7 million tons for the past five years," the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said. The DPRK's harvests of winter wheat and spring barley expected for June would be no help in easing the food shortage since they represent only 10 percent of the country's annual crops, the FAO said.

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8. DPRK-Japan Relations

Xinhua ("PYONGYANG SLAMS TOKYO'S ATTEMPT TO PROLONG SANCTIONS AGAINST DPRK ", Pyongyang, 2008/03/26) reported that the DPRK blasted Japan for planning to prolong sanctions against the DPRK, saying it would worsen the antagonizing DPRK-Japan relations, a DPRK newspaper reported. The solution to the nuclear issue requires confidence building among relevant

countries. But Japan's attempt to protract the sanctions against the DPRK was to deliberately make impediments on the nuclear issue and such provocation against the DPRK would hinder the denuclearization progress on the Korean Peninsula, said a commentary carried by the official Rodong Sinmun.

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9. DPRK-Angola Relations

Itar-Tass ("ANGOLA, NORTH KOREA SIGN PROTOCOL OF BILATERAL COOPERATION", Pretoria, 2008/03/26) reported that Angola and the DPRK signed a protocol of broadening bilateral cooperation in the Angolan capital Luanda. The document was signed by Foreign Ministers Joao Bernardo di Miranda of Angola and Pak Ui Chun of the DPRK. They voiced satisfaction with the current level of friendship and cooperation and stressed the importance of expanding relations in the economy, research and technologies. Angolan and DPRK officials taking part in the talks singled out a number of priority areas including public health, construction, agriculture, high technologies, trade, and industries.

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10. DPRK Education

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN CHILDREN TO LEARN ENGLISH, COMPUTER SKILLS AT SCHOOL: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/03/26) reported that the DPRK will begin teaching English and computer skills at elementary schools across the nation this fall, a pro-Pyongyang daily in Japan reported Wednesday. The measure, which will first affect the third-year students at elementary schools from the second semester, is aimed at cultivating familiarity with the English language and computers, the daily said. The DPRK students currently begin learning the two subjects at middle schools after a four-year spell at elementary school.

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11. Japan Politics

Reuters (Linda Sieg, "JAPAN POLITICS IN STALEMATE AS PM HITS 6-MONTH MARK ", Tokyo, 2008/03/26) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda marked his sixth month in office with his popularity in tatters and his future murky, as a political stalemate over tax steps set to expire next week dragged on. The deadlock born of a divided parliament has led to deep doubts about the 71-year-old premier's leadership but has done nothing to boost support for the main opposition Democratic Party. The political gridlock has already left the Bank of Japan in the hands of an acting governor, and is now threatening to block tax measures, including a controversial gasoline tax, needed to fund national and local budgets for the fiscal year from April 1.

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12. Japan-Australian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("AUSTRALIA PM PLEDGES TO RESOLVE WHALING ROW WITH JAPAN ", Tokyo, 2008/03/26) reported that Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has called Japan a "core" ally, despite skipping Tokyo on his first major foreign tour, and pledged to resolve peacefully a bitter row on whaling. Since taking over in December, Rudd has ramped up pressure on Japan over its whaling, sending a customs vessel to monitor the Antarctic hunt which is widely reviled by the Australian public. In an interview published Wednesday in the Japanese Asahi Shimbun newspaper, Rudd said that relations with Tokyo remained "absolutely the core relationship for Australia."

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13. Tibet Unrest

The Associated Press (Charles Hutzler, "FOREIGN JOURNALISTS ALLOWED IN TIBET", Lhasa, 2008/03/26) reported that the PRC announced the surrender of hundreds of people over anti-government riots among Tibetans and allowed the first group of foreign journalists to visit the regional capital since the violence. The moves appear calculated to bolster government claims that authorities are in control of the situation and that the protests that began peacefully were acts of destruction and murder. But the presence of police throughout Lhasa indicated the Tibetan capital remained under lockdown. It was unclear how much freedom to report the small group of foreign journalists would have during the PRC government-arranged two-day trip.

Reuters (Benjamin Kang Lim and Lindsay Beck, "CHINA SEEKS TO CONTAIN ONGOING TIBET UNREST ", Beijing, 2008/03/26) reported that the PRC sought to contain ongoing protests in its ethnic Tibetan regions, as it stepped up detentions in Tibet's capital Lhasa and vowed tighter control over monasteries. The western province of Qinghai was the latest area to report anti-government activities, with hundreds of civilians staging a sit-down protest after paramilitary police stopped them from marching, a Beijing-based source who spoke to residents said. A resident in the area confirmed the demonstration, saying that paramilitaries dispersed the 200 to 300 protesters after half and hour, that the area was crawling with armed security forces and that workers were kept inside their offices.

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14. Sino-US Relations

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "CHINA PROTESTS U.S. MISTAKEN ARMS PARTS SHIPMENT", Beijing, 2008/03/26) reported that the PRC issued a vehement protest Wednesday over a mistaken shipment of U.S. nuclear missile fuses to Taiwan, demanding a thorough investigation and saying the incident had "disastrous consequences." The strong language reflected the depth of PRC opposition to U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan, a self-ruled island that Beijing insists is a part of the PRC. The Pentagon revealed that its Defense Logistics Agency had in August 2006 accidentally shipped to Taiwan four nose-cone fuse assemblies designed to detonate nuclear warheads atop Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missiles. Bush administration officials said the fuses had been returned and that U.S. diplomats had been in touch with the PRC and Taiwan to explain the error since it was discovered last week. But the PRC Foreign Ministry, in a statement, said it expected to be told in more detail what happened and declared the shipment could have "negative effects" on relations between Washington and Beijing.

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15. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

PTI ("INDIA, CHINA TO MEET TRADE TARGET BY 2010", New Delhi, 2008/03/28) reported that India and the PRC, the two fastest growing economies in the world, are set to achieve a bilateral trade target of $60 billion by 2010 despite the Indian industry becoming wary of signing a free trade agreement with the neighbouring economic giant. The PRC's ambassador to India Zhang Yan said here on Monday that the PRC government would provide full support towards realising the target for bilateral trade, which is increasing by 50% per annum. He said, the bilateral trade between the two countries was in order of $38 billion last year.

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16. PRC Energy Supply

Reuters ("CHINA SEEKS TO EASE FUEL-SUPPLY CONCERNS", Beijing, 2008/03/26) reported that the PRC has sufficient fuel supplies to avoid a recurrence of widespread diesel shortages in the near term, the government said as it sought to ease concerns about a new supply crisis. The PRC's major oil firms were reported to be rationing diesel in parts of the country during the past few weeks due to shortages at private stations, causing a repeat of the long lines seen several months ago. "Supply tightness, even queues and rationing, in southern China was partly due to rising needs in the spring season as well as more demand after the harsh winter weather," the National Development and Reform Commission said in a statement on its Web site. "But expectations and rumors of a hike in oil products prices also led to fuel hoarding for profiteering in some cases following continuous rises in international oil prices," it said.

Xinhua ("CHINA'S FIRST NUCLEAR POWER PLANT EMBARKS ON FURTHER EXPANSION", Hangzhou,) reported that workers have started to dig a hole for housing one of the two new generating units planned to add at the first phase of the Qinshan nuclear power plant, the first PRC facility of its kind. The excavation work, which began early this month, will be finished by late July, according to a source from China National Nuclear Corp. Two pressurized reactors -- the application of the most-sophisticated and widely-accepted nuclear power technology in the world -- would be installed at Fangjiashan, Haiyan, on the northern coast of Hangzhou Bay, Zhejiang Province, not far from Shanghai. Each generating unit would have an installed capacity of1 million kilowatts.

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II. ROK Report

17. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Kookmin Ilbo ("POLICIES TOWARD DPRK RETURNING TO ITS OWN PLACE AFTER 10 YEARS", 2008/03/27) wrote that Kim Ha-Joong, the Minister of National Unification has confessed the faults in past policies toward DPRK in his report to the president and has made intensive introspection. The hope that the policies toward the DPRK and inter-Korean relations, which seemed like a train off the rails, will someday be on its regular route has finally become visible. The Ministry of National

unification from now on should put its full effort into not only putting the DPRK policy on its route but also design elaborate plans for situations until the DPRK abandons its nuclear weapons or even for the situation in which the DPRK does not abandon them.

Hankyoreh ("REGRESSIVE AND UNREALISTIC UNIFICATION POLICIES OF LEE MYUNG-BAK", 2008/03/27) wrote that the report from the Ministry of National unification alludes to the future regression of inter-Korean relations, which have steadily progressed. The government has turned policies the DPRK's toward us into an independent variable. This approach can easily disgrace the ROK's position in pending issues of the Korea Peninsula including nuclear issues instead of reinforcing the basis for reunification or the voice toward DPRK. The nation's grand design which should not be flip-flopped according to a change in administration is the unification policy.

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18. ROK POWs in DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("MUST FIND A ROK METHOD TO BRING BACK WAR PRISONERS AND ABDUCTEES FROM DPRK", 2008/03/27) wrote that the Ministry of National Unification has manifested that it will make reference to case of West Germany's deal to free political offenders to solve the war prisoners and abductees problem. The West German method refers to how West Germany, in secret negotiations, paid money to East Germany to move the political offenders to West Germany in the past. It is difficult to invoke this exact method between the ROK and DPRK. The DPRK, compared to East Germany, greatly values its self-esteem and will not willingly respond to this West German method. The ROK has no choice but to figure out its own method to settle the problem.

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19. ROK Approach toward DPRK

Joongang Ilbo ("RETURN OF BASIC AGREEMENT IN INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS IS PROPER", 2008/03/27) wrote that President Lee Myung-bak said that the North-South Basic Agreement in 1992 is the most important inter-Korean statement. It is a properly chosen approach to DPRK. The future basis and framework for inter-Korean conversation should be the Basic Agreement. The contents of the June 15 and October 4 declaration must be fulfilled in an eclectic way. The problem is the resistance of the DPRK. Even if conflicts occur, the dialogue methods that have been ineffectual should be improved.

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