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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Missile Tests

Associated Press (Burt Herman, "NORTH KOREA TESTS SHORT-RANGE MISSILES", Seoul, 2008/03/28) wrote that the DPRK on Thursday night conducted a test-firing of short-range missiles. The missile tests were part of routine training, ROK presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said, declining to give further details on the type of rockets fired. He told reporters that Seoul was "closely monitoring the situation." Yonhap reported that the DPRK launched three ship-to-ship missiles at around 9:30 p.m. EDT on Thursday, citing unidentified government officials. "I believe North Korea would also not want a strain in inter-Korean relations," Lee said.

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2. DPRK on Nuclear Program

Associated Press ("NKOREA BLASTS US DELAYS IN NUKE DISPUTE", Seoul, 2008/03/28) wrote that the DPRK blamed the United States for the deadlock in their nuclear negotiations, warning Friday that the Americans' attitude could "gravely" affect ongoing disablement of its atomic facilities. The DPRK Foreign Ministry said the nation had done its best to clear U.S. suspicions that it pursued a uranium-based program and also transferred nuclear technology to Syria, but Washington was sticking to its "wrong" claims. "The United States is clinging to shabby magic to make us a criminal in order to save face," the ministry said in a statement. "If the United States keeps delaying the resolution of the nuclear issue ... it could gravely affect disablement of nuclear facilities," it said.

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3. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap ("FM SAYS AUGUST VIRTUAL DEADLINE ON N.K. NUKES", Washington, 2008/03/27) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said that the DPRK's nuclear issue must be resolved by August in order for the U.S. to be able to implement the six-party denuclearization agreement. "Given the political schedule in the U.S., after August, it becomes difficult for Washington to implement any significant agreements," he told reporters, referring to the upcoming presidential election.

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4. US, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "WASHINGTON AND SEOUL PUSH NORTH ON NUKES",) reported that Washington and Seoul's top diplomats have warned Pyongyang that the clock is ticking and their patience is running out regarding the DPRK's delay in fully and accurately disclosing all its nuclear programs. Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan met with his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, in Washington. "Regarding the North Korean nuclear issue and the declaration, I think time and patience are running out," Yu said. "I'm not one to say that exact deadlines are that important," Rice said. "To get it right is more important. But I completely agree that we've been at this for quite a long time and we are prepared, the United States is prepared, to meet its obligations when North Korea has met its obligations."

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5. US, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France-Presse ("BUSH, HU PRESS NKOREA OVER NUCLEAR ARMS DECLARATION", Washington, 2008/03/27) reported that US President George W. Bush and his PRC counterpart Hu Jintao pressed the DPRK to come clean over its nuclear arms program. In a day of intensive diplomacy, the White House said Bush telephoned Hu to help get the DPRK to make a full declaration of its nuclear arms program. "The two presidents pledged to continue to work closely with the other six-party partners in urging North Korea to deliver a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear weapons programs, and nuclear proliferation activities and to complete the agreed disablement," a statement said.

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6. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "LEE'S OFFICE VOWS TO DEAL STERNLY WITH KAESONG CRISIS ", Seoul, 2008/03/27) reported that the office of President Lee Myung-bak expressed regrets at the DPRK's expulsion of ROK officials from an inter-Korean industrial park in Kaesong and vowed to deal sternly with the DPRK's provocation. "North Korea's abrupt act is regrettable and may pose an obstacle to sustained development of inter-Korean relations," presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwang said. "A stable legal and systematic environment is needed for the normal operations of the Kaesong industrial park and other inter-Korean economic cooperation projects. In this regard, the

North has to change its perception of such projects," said the spokesman.

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7. DPRK Energy Aid Working Group Meeting

Yonhap ("KOREAS OPEN WORKING-GROUP MEETING ON ENERGY AID", Seoul, 2008/03/27) reported that the ROK and the DPRK began talks on ways of providing the DPRK with energy and other economic aid Thursday as scheduled, officials said, despite reports of strained inter-Korean ties after the ROK's conservative government took office a month ago. The two-day working-level meeting at the truce village of Panmunjom is aimed at discussing technical issues on how to provide the DPRK with fuel and related facilities under a multilateral nuclear deal signed last year.

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8. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK PROMOTES MULTIFACETED TRADE TO BOOST EXPORTS", 2008/03/27) reported that the latest issue of the DPRK publication “Economic Research” (2008, issue no. 1) highlights the need to restructure the DPRK’s trade system in order to meet the demands of the capitalist market. The journal stresses, “As the socialist market crumbles, and given the demands of the capitalist market as [our] focus shifts to overseas economic relations, what is currently needed for the development of overseas trade is improvement of our own style to the trade system that can ensure large profits." It states that raw materials should not be sold as-is, but rather should be turned into processed goods and then sold, that goods popular on the international market should be manufactured for export, and that niches should be chosen in which DPRK goods can dominate the international market.

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9. DPRK Human Rights

Reuters (Stephanie Nebehay, "U.N. RENEWS NORTH KOREA RIGHTS INVESTIGATOR'S MANDATE", Geneva, 2008/03/27) reported that the U.N. Human Rights Council renewed the one-year mandate of its investigator for the DPRK, overcoming objections from countries including the PRC and Russia which wanted the post abolished. The 47 member-state body adopted a resolution presented by Japan and the European Union in a vote of 22 countries in favor and seven against, with 18 abstentions. The ROK, which had abstained in previous years, voted in favor. Vitit Muntarbhorn, a Thai law professor who has served as the independent investigator since 2004, told the Council two weeks ago that the post provided a "voice for the voiceless."

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10. ROK on DPRK Defectors

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREAN DEFECTORS RISE, FACILITIES OVERFLOW ", 2008/03/27) reported that three thousand DPRK defectors now call the ROK home. But it won't remain at 3,000 for long. Month

by month, week by week, that number is increasing. And there are just not enough facilities to handle them all. In the past the weekly arrival of defectors has numbered around 30. These days that number has more than doubled to 75 per week. The government has begun renovating a temporary shelter to make room for more defectors, but human rights groups in the country criticize the effort saying they should have prepared for the onslaught way ahead of time.

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11. ROK-US Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA DIFFERENCES THREATEN S.KOREA-U.S. TIES - POLL", 2008/03/27) reported that some 30 percent of Korean Americans think that different views held by the ROK and the US on the DPRK are the biggest problem threatening the ROK-US alliance, a poll has found. As threats to the ROK-US alliance, respondents cited former liberal president Roh Moo-hyun and his government's political leadership, the US' disregard for the ROK, and the US political leadership. About half of respondents (47 percent) said that the alliance is only moderately strong, while 28 percent said the alliance is weak and 27 percent said it is strong enough. More than half of respondents (58 percent) said that the DPRK poses a major or fatal threat to the ROK. But 75 percent said that the DPRK is not a threat to the US.

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12. Japan Defense

Xinhua ("FIRST STANDING JOINT FORCE OF JAPAN'S SDF OFFICIALLY SET UP", 2008/03/27) reported that the first standing joint force of Japan's Ground, Marine and Air Self-Defense Forces (SDF) was officially established on Wednesday, with a flag-conferring ceremony being held at the Defense Ministry headquarters in central Tokyo. The establishment of the SDF Command and Communication System Force was aimed at promoting and supporting combined military action, a format first proposed in March 2006. According to the Defense Ministry, the new force consists of about 600 officers and soldiers from all the three categories of the SDF. Their major tasks include maintenance of communication networks covering SDF bases and fast-reaction to Internet attacks from enemies.

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13. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun (Kyohei Matsuda, "OZAWA LOOKS PAST FUKUDA TO ATTAIN HIS CHERISHED GOAL", 2008/03/27) reported that Machiavellian to the core, opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa has apparently decided that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda is too weak to be considered a worthy opponent. Not only that, the Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) leader is shifting gear in his plotting to take control of the government. Ozawa, 65, is now convinced that Fukuda will not dissolve the Lower House and call a snap election while he is in office. While that remains Ozawa's ultimate goal, associates of the wily politician say he is now placing his bets on Fukuda's successor to realize his long-cherished dream of a change in government.

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14. Russo-Japanese Nuclear Cooperation

RIA Novosti (Tatyana Sinitsyna, "RUSSIA AND JAPAN FORM NUCLEAR ALLIANCE", Moscow, 2008/03/27) reported that nuclear giants Atomenergoprom and Toshiba have decided to form an alliance in civilian nuclear power operations, including power plant construction and fuel production. The two companies signed a framework agreement last week, under which the Russian company will enrich uranium produced in Kazakhstan, while Toshiba will produce nuclear fuel and undertake the designing and engineering of nuclear power plants. The firms may establish a strategic partnership in the future, Toshiba said. By securing a stable supply of nuclear fuel through the alliance with Atomenergoprom, Toshiba hopes to sharpen its competitive edge.

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15. Sino-Japanese Military Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, JAPAN TO HOLD EIGHTH DEFENSE, SECURITY CONSULTATION", 2008/03/27) reported that the PRC and Japan will hold the eighth consultation on defense and security later this month, during which they will discuss bilateral defense relations, regional security and other issues. The consultation will be held during the visit to the PRC by Japanese Vice Minister of Defense Kohei Masuda from March 30 to 31. Masuda and Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), will co-chair the consultation, according to the PRC Ministry of National Defense.

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16. Sino-Japanese Environmental Cooperation

Kyodo ("JAPAN SEEKS CLIMATE CHANGE STATEMENT WITH CHINA AT HU'S VISIT", Tokyo, 2008/03/27) reported that Japan is negotiating with the PRC a special statement on climate change for adoption when PRC President Hu Jintao visits in May, in hopes of securing cooperation from the major emitter to underscore Tokyo's leadership ahead of July's Group of Eight summit, government sources said. Senior officials of the Japanese Foreign Ministry arrived in Beijing earlier the same day and began talks with their PRC counterparts on the draft, but the sources said negotiations are expected to face high hurdles given the PRC's cautious stance toward setting national emissions cut targets. One of the challenges will be for Japan to gain the PRC's support for the ''sectoral approach'' proposed by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, which is to calculate reduction potentials on sector-b--sector basis to compile a national target.

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17. US Arms Sales to Taiwan

BBC ("PENTAGON ORDERS NUCLEAR INVENTORY", Washington, 2008/03/28) reported that US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has ordered a full inventory of US nuclear arms after parts of ballistic missiles were mistakenly sent to Taiwan. The US sent nuclear fuse triggers to Taiwan instead of helicopter batteries in 2006. The mistake was only discovered last week.

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18. Tibet Unrest

Agence France-Presse (Karl Malakunas, "MONKS DEFY CHINA CRACKDOWN TO PROTEST IN LHASA ", Beijing, 2008/03/27) reported that monks from one of Tibetan Buddhism's most sacred temples defied the PRC's crackdown to protest in front of visiting foreign reporters in Lhasa on Thursday, voicing their support for the Dalai Lama. The protest, embarrassing for the PRC, came as it again refused to hold talks with the exiled spiritual leader, after US President George W. Bush added his voice to calls for dialogue in an effort to solve the Tibetan crisis. However the protest by several dozen monks at the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, indicated resentment over the PRC rule had not been extinguished.

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA MINISTER'S CHINA VISIT CANCELLED OVER TIBET ROW: REPORT", New Delhi, 2008/03/27) reported that New Delhi has canceled a proposed visit to Beijing by Trade Minister Kamal Nath after the PRC's early morning summons of the Indian envoy over Tibetan protests here, a report said Thursday. Nath was due to travel to Beijing on April 1 to take part in discussions on a trade agreement between the two Asian giants, The Times of India reported. But the Indian government called off Nath's trip to protest the PRC foreign ministry's summoning of India's ambassador to Beijing early Saturday over Tibetan protests in India, the newspaper reported.

Xinhua ("FM: CHINA OPPOSES INTERFERENCE IN TIBET ISSUE ", Beijing, 2008/03/27) reported that Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang on Thursday reiterated that the PRC bitterly opposes any country's interference in the Tibet issue. The matter is an internal affair. Qin made the remarks at a regular press conference here when asked by a journalist to respond to a report saying French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner may raise the issue at a European Union (EU) foreign ministers' meeting. He said the Tibet issue was completely the PRC's internal affairs and does not allow any foreign country's interference.

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19. Sino-US Economic Relations

Agence France-Presse ("PAULSON TO VISIT CHINA NEXT WEEK FOR ECONOMIC TALKS", Washington, 2008/03/27) reported that US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson will travel to the PRC next week for high-level economic talks, the Treasury Department said Thursday. Paulson will visit the PRC "to meet with the newly appointed leadership and discuss a broad range of economic issues," the department said in a statement. The Treasury chief will be in Beijing next Wednesday and Thursday, where he also will deliver remarks on US and PRC cooperation on issues surrounding energy and the environment.

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20. PRC Transparency

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO CLAMP DOWN ON MAPPING WEBSITES: STATE MEDIA ", Shanghai, 2008/03/27) reported that the PRC government will clamp down on mapping websites and

other online geographical information that it fears might undermine national security, state media reported Thursday. Eight government agencies, including the foreign ministry, are to tighten supervision of geographical information available online, the official China Daily reported. There are nearly 10,000 online map websites in the PRC and authorities will close down most of them as they show maps without approval, said Min Yiren, deputy director with the State Bureau of Surveying and Mapping. The campaign will also target websites labelling Taiwan as a separate country, according to Min.

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II. ROK Report

21. Inter-Korea Relations

Yonhap News ("SPECIALIST RESPONSE TO WITHDRAWAL OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION OFFICE AGENTS", 2008/03/27) reported that a majority of specialists interpret the DPRK's demand for withdrawal of ROK agents from the economic cooperation office at Kaesong complex as an intention to take the initiative in inter-Korean relations. They also proposed that it is intended to affect the general election. There were also analyses that as shown in the ROK government's decision to withdraw all the agents without objection, the ROK government is clearly sending signals that it will not be taken advantage of, and that a blockade in inter-Korean relations will be inevitable.

Kyunghyang Newspaper ("KAESONG COMPLEX MUST NOT STOP", 2008/03/28) wrote that while feeling sorry about the DPRK's one-way measures, it is difficult not to criticize the current administration's policy toward DPRK that let this happen. Unlike in the past, the fact that it was the current government that actually triggered the occurrence makes people concerned. The government has to make sure the conversation with DPRK does not stop by quickly selecting items to be promoted from agreed items at last year's inter-Korean summit talks.

("'OLD TRICKS' OF DPRK HAS NO BENEFIT", 2008/03/28) wrote that the DPRK's provocation seems to be an outspoken symbol of dissatisfaction toward the Lee Myung-bak administration. It can also be interpreted as an intention to take the initiative before the administration's pragmatic policies toward the DPRK materialize. Emphasizing the possible deadlock of inter-Korean relation before April 9 general election can be an intention to strengthen the ROK left. The government should be resolute in coping with the situation.

Hankyoreh ("'WITHDRAWAL OF GOVERNMENT AGENTS FROM KAESONG' CAUSED BY REGRESSIVE POLICIES TOWARD DPRK", 2008/03/28) wrote that first, the DPRK's measure goes against the spirit of economic cooperation based on good will and mutual respect. However, the discontent of the DPRK in response to the Minister Kim Ha-joong's words makes sense. The bigger problem is the fact that this has happened in the middle of materialization of a hard line for policies toward DPRK. The government should approve of more balanced and effectual policies toward DPRK from now on.

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22. DPRK Human Rights

Pressian ("VOTE FOR TERM EXTENSION OF DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR", 2008/03/28) wrote that the ROK has voted in favor of a term extension for the DPRK human rights special rapporteur in the UN Human Rights Council on 27th. There are apprehensions suggested about a possible deadlock in inter-Korean relations due to continued debate on DPRK human rights since the inauguration of Lee Myung-bak administration, and possible weakening of the ROK's position on solution to the DPRK nuclear problem and six-party talks.

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