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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US-DPRK Relations

The Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "U.S. RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA POSSIBLE, DIPLOMAT SAYS", Beijing, 2008/03/05) reported that the success of last week's concert in Pyongyang by the New York Philharmonic raises the prospect that the US might start normalizing relations with the DPRK, possibly taking the first formal steps before the end of the Bush presidency. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher R. Hill says that the US could establish diplomatic relations before the end of Bush's term if the DPRK completely dismantled its nuclear program. "They would like the establishment of diplomatic relations," Hill said. "We've told them we are not prepared to do that until they give up their nuclear materials. . . . We can begin the process of discussing what we are going to do, whether we are going to open embassies, that sort of thing. . . . But we will not have diplomatic relations with a nuclear North Korea."

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA ASSAILS U.S. 'TERRORISM'", 2008/03/05) reported that the DPRK yesterday called the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq typical examples of "state-sponsored terrorism" and called for extra efforts from the United Nations to combat it. "The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and the Israeli occupation of Arab territories have caused a vicious cycle of terrorism and horrible bloodshed as they are typical state-sponsored terrorism," the state-run Korean Central News Agency said, citing an unnamed DPRK delegate's comments to a UN-sponsored anti-terrorism meeting last month.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("US HOPEFUL NKOREA WILL HAND OVER NUCLEAR DECLARATION SOON", Washington, 2008/03/05) reported that the US is hopeful that the DPRK will hand over a complete declaration on its nuclear activities in "the not too distant future," a US official said. The State Department's deputy spokesman Tom Casey told reporters that US negotiator Christopher Hill

had some "good meetings" recently with his Chinese partners in the negotiations to scrap the DPRK's nuclear weapons. "We intend to keep working this. I think we're hopeful that we will be able to get a declaration and get the full implementation of the agreement in the not too distant future," Casey said.

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3. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap (Shim Sun-ah, "NK CLAIMS 'NO HURRY' TO BREAK DEADLOCK, BLAMES U.S.", Seoul, 2008/03/05) reported that the DPRK said Wednesday it is "in no hurry" to resolve the dispute over its nuclear programs while the current U.S. administration is in office. Rodong Shinmun said in a commentary, "The U.S. implemented zero percent its commitment in six-party agreements to remove the DPRK from its list of terrorism-sponsoring countries and sanctions imposed under the Trading with the Enemy Acts." "Reality is like this. For what reason should we hurry up while the 'action-fo--action' principle is not kept?" asked the commentary.

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4. US, ROK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("S. KOREA, U.S. NUCLEAR ENVOYS DISCUSS WAYS OF RESUMING TALKS", Seoul, 2008/03/05) reported that Chief ROK and US negotiators on the DPRK nuclear issue met here Tuesday to exchange views on how to resume the six-party talks, the Foreign Ministry said. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill made a brief stop-over on his way back home after a regional tour and had a breakfast meeting with his South Korean counterpart Chun Yung-woo, according to ministry spokesman Cho Hee-yong. "If we can resolve these matters in the next few weeks, which I think is possible, I think we could perhaps, depending on the views of the Chinese hosts, get together for a six-party meeting to plan out the third phase," Hill said. "Time is short and I would hope that we can get on with that this month."

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5. DPRK Missile Program

Donga Ilbo ("N.KOREA DEVELOPS MISSILES INDEPENDENTLY, CIA SAYS", Washington, 2008/03/05) reported that the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency CIA said in an unclassified document Monday that the DPRK has independently developed and made ballistic missiles. The document said the DPRK uses different channels to import commodities and parts for missile production, but that it can almost produce and develop the weapons on its own.

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6. DPRK on US Elections

Associated Press ("NKOREA VOICES INDIFFERENCE TO US POLL", Seoul, 2008/03/05) reported that the DPRK on Wednesday denied claims it was delaying its nuclear disarmament until the next

US president takes office. A commentary in the main Rodong Sinmun newspaper asserted the DPRK does not have any expectations for the next U.S. president, but said progress on ending its nuclear programs would "go up in smoke" if Washington opts for a hard-line policy. "We have nothing to do with who becomes the president in the United States," the newspaper said.

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7. Alleged DPRK Executions

Associated Press ("NKOREA EXECUTES 15 PEOPLE TRYING TO FLEE", Seoul, 2008/03/05) publicly executed 15 people who attempted to flee the country or helped others escape, Good Friends private aid organization said in its regular newsletter Wednesday. The two men and 13 women were executed Feb. 20 by firing squad on a bridge in Onseong, a northeastern town on the border with the PRC and Russia. The DPRK carried out the recent executions as a warning against illegal border crossings to the PRC, Good Friends said, citing an unnamed DPRK official.

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8. ROK on DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap ("S. KOREA TO DRAW LINE BETWEEN NUKE ISSUE, HUMAN RIGHTS", Seoul, 2008/03/05) reported that the ROK will not place nuclear or geopolitical issues ahead of human rights concerns when dealing with the DPRK, the Foreign Ministry said. Lee, who was sworn in last week, said he would "say what he has to say" about the issue in the belief that it is more helpful for the development of DPRK in a long-term view. "The Government of the Republic of Korea, underscoring human rights as a universal value, calls upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to take appropriate measures to address the international community's concern that the human rights situation in the DPRK has not improved," Park In-kook, deputy foreign minister for international organizations and global issues, said.

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "N. KOREA REBUFFS CALLS FOR RIGHTS IMPROVEMENTS", Seoul, 2008/03/05) reported that the DPRK Wednesday denounced calls by the ROK to improve its human rights situation. Pyongyang warned that such a demand would severely harm inter-Korean relations, calling it an intervention in its domestic affairs. Responding to statements by Park In-kook, ROK deputy foreign minister for international organizations and global issues, in a keynote speech to the seventh session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland Choe Myong-nam, a councilor at the DPRK's diplomatic mission to Geneva, said during Tuesday's session, "South Korea will have to be responsible for the irresponsible remarks which will have negative repercussions."

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9. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA BANS CIVILIAN AID WORKERS FROM SOUTH", 2008/03/05) reported that the DPRK has halted visits by ROK civilian aid workers to Mt. Kumgang and Kaesong. A ROK Unification Ministry official said a DPRK bureau for central guidance in tourism projects to the scenic Mt. Kumgang and historic Kaesong areas faxed a request that ROK civilian aid workers

immediately but temporarily halt visits to the two regions. The DPRK, however, will continue to allow in relief supplies. A senior Unification Ministry official said his office will be watching the situation, presuming that the DPRK made the request for “internal reasons.”

Associated Press ("SKOREA SPURNED NKOREAN OFFER FOR TALKS", Seoul,) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak rejected a DPRK offer to hold talks ahead of his recent inauguration, a news report said Wednesday. The DPRK made the approach through the ROK's spy agency in January, proposing that "responsible officials" from the sides meet before Lee assumed office in February. Lee demanded that the DPRK specify the purpose of the proposed meeting, prompting the DPRK to later suspend its attempts to make contact, according to the report.

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10. ROK Aid to DPRK

Korea Times (Kim Yon-se, "S. KOREA TO HELP N. KOREA TO PLANT MORE TREES", Seoul, 2008/03/05) reported that Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said Wednesday that the ROK will initiate a campaign to help the DPRK plant more trees on the occasion of Arbor Day, which falls on April 5. He said the ROK will send seedlings to the DPRK but no details were given as to whether or when the two Koreas will meet for the forestry project. The spokesman said when the Kyoto Protocol takes effect, the ROK can buy the right to emit CO2 from the DPRK.

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11. Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("CHINESE COURT GIVES SUSPENDED DEATH SENTENCE TO N. KOREAN: SOURCES", Shenyang, 2008/03/05) reported that a PRC district court has recently given a suspended death sentence to a DPRK resident in the PRC for narcotics trade, sources well informed on the DPRK said. "A local people's court in Harbin sentenced a North Korean resident identified only by the initial 'K' to death for trading 2.4 kilograms of methamphetamine and suspended the execution for two years," one of the sources said. It is unknown when the sentence was made and if the convict is a defector. "The Chinese court identified him as a North Korean national," the source added.

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12. US-Japan Relations

Agence France-Presse (Harumi Ozawa, "OKINAWA LEADER SAYS US TROOP CURFEW LIFTED TOO SOON ", Tokyo, 2008/03/05) reported that the governor of Okinawa, home to more than half the US troops in Japan, said Tuesday the US military acted too early in easing a sweeping curfew imposed after an alleged rape of a teenager. US forces in Japan late relaxed the round-the-clock curfew slapped nearly two weeks ago on the southern island in a bid to calm public anger after a US Marine allegedly raped a 14-year-old girl. "I feel it was a bit too early," Hirokazu Nakaima, governor of the southern island chain. "The priority is to thoroughly implement preventive measures," said Nakaima, "I want the military to show clear effects" of the measures.

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13. Sino-Japanese Relations

Reuters (Isabel Reynolds, "POISON DUMPLINGS WON'T AFFECT HU VISIT: JAPAN PM", Tokyo, 2008/03/05) reported that a row over PRC-made dumplings that sickened 10 people in Japan will not affect a planned visit to Tokyo by PRC President Hu Jintao, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda said. "President Hu's visit has not been fixed yet," Fukuda told reporters. "We are still arranging it, but it has nothing to do with the dumpling incident," he added.

China Daily (Li Xing, "'NEW BEGINNING' FOR CHINA-JAPAN RELATIONS", 2008/03/05) reported that relations between the PRC and Japan are experiencing "a new beginning" and will continue to improve and develop, Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei said Tuesday. Wu made his remarks during a panel discussion at the ongoing First Session of the 11th National Committee of the PRC People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), ahead of President Hu Jintao's anticipated Spring visit. "The visit will have a positive and deep impact on the long-term development of bilateral relations. Both sides are working on details of the visit."

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14. Cross Strait Relations

BBC News (Michael Bristow, "TAIWAN WARNED OVER INDEPENDENCE ", Beijing, 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC has warned that Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's government will pay a "dear price" if he continues moves towards independence for the island. Jiang Enzhu, a parliament spokesman, said Beijing would "repulse" any pro-independence activities. "The attempts by the Chen Shui-bian authorities to push for a referendum on joining the UN under the name Taiwan is a... move towards 'de jure' independence for Taiwan," he said. "If the Chen Shui-bian authorities should stubbornly continue down the path, they will surely pay a dear price."

Reuters (Chris Buckley, "CHINA OFFERS TALKS WITH TAIWAN ON EQUAL FOOTING", Beijing, 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC President Hu Jintao offered broad peace talks with self-ruled Taiwan under its "one China" policy on Tuesday, weeks before the island elects a new president, but Taiwan rejected Beijing's conditions. Hu also reached out to pro-independence politicians, saying the PRC would welcome them if they shifted their stance. "Status in negotiations would be equal and the topics would be open, any issue can be discussed," Hu told a group of advisers to parliament who came from Taiwan or have ancestral links there.

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15. Sino-US Relations

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "CHINA CONDEMNS PENTAGON'S "COLD WAR THINKING" ", Beijing, 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC condemned the annual Pentagon report to the U.S. Congress on PRC military power, saying it was a distortion of the facts, interfered in the country's internal affairs and showed "Cold War thinking." PRC Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang added that Beijing had made "solemn representations" to Washington about the report and also denied Beijing was engaged in cyberwarfare. "This U.S. report advocates the China threat theory and is seriously not in accordance with the facts and interferes in China's internal affairs," Qin told a news conference.

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16. PRC Party Congress

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "CHINA'S MINORITIES SHOULD GET SELF DETERMINATION: GROUP", Beijing, 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC should grant its minority peoples the right to self determination at its annual meeting of parliament and also rename the far western region of Xinjiang as East Turkistan, an exiled group said on. "Self determination for ethnic groups is inextricably linked to human rights, and is the most democratic way to solve ethnic problems," said Dilxat Raxit, spokesman for the exiled World Uighur Congress, in an emailed statement. Raxit said the PRC's parliament, which begins its annual session this week, should legislate to ensure the right to self determination -- an act that seems unlikely, as parliament is mostly a rubber-stamp body that obeys the Communist Party.

The Financial Times (Richard McGregor, "CHINA TO CREATE 'SUPER-MINISTRIES'", Beijing, 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC will launch a large shake-up of government functions at the annual session of its top legislative body, which opens on Wednesday, with the formation of new "super-ministries" intended to streamline administration and reduce minor bureaucrats' meddling in state businesses. The long-term structural reform of government will be discussed alongside more urgent tasks facing the PRC's leadership, the most important being the battle against inflation, now at 11-year highs.

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17. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua ("CHINA'S NATURAL GAS OUTPUT TO DOUBLE IN 10 YEARS ", Beijing , 2008/03/05) reported that the PRC's natural gas output would at least double the present volume in the coming decade to reach 150 billion to 200 billion cubic meters, PetroChina Vice President Jia Chengzao said on Tuesday. PetroChina, the country's leading natural gas producer, alone has reported an annual output rise of 10 billion cubic meters for two consecutive years, he said. "We will strive to keep the same growth rate this year," said Jia, a member of the 11th National Committee of the PRC People's Political Consultative Conference, who is attending the annual political advisory session.

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II. ROK Report

18. Inter-Korean Relations

Kookmin Ilbo ("AID COMMODITIES IN, PEOPLE OUT?", 2008/03/05) reported that the DPRK has provisionally suspended entrance of DPRK-aid civil organizations from the ROK to Kaesong and Gumgang Mountain. There are conjectures that this is not totally independent from DPRK recently screening the people in ROK-related organizations and economic cooperation programs. However, there is speculation that this is to put pressure on the new administration that emphasizes more

strict adherence to principles and to alleviate the monitoring on aid to the DPRK. If so, this is no more than DPRK government taking a political gamble with he lives of DPRK citizens, who are the direct objects of aid to the DPRK. Under this circumstance, the ROK government should seriously reconsider the aid to the DPRK.

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19. DPRK Human Rights

Saegae Ilbo ("LEE MYUNG-BAK ADMINISTRATION SHOULD PAY ATTENTION TO DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS", 2008/03/05) wrote that on the international stage, the ROK government pointed out the DPRK human rights issues. There are obviously comments that it has failed to get past the level of theory, but the ROK government has definitely asked the DPRK for an effectual change along with the global society. We demand that the ROK government cope with the DPRK human rights issues, a universal interest of humanity, consistently.

Kyunghyang Newspaper ("DPRK MUST BE INDUCED TO TAKE CARE OF ITS OWN HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM", 2008/03/05) wrote that considering the gravity of the DPRK's human rights status and the universality of human rights issues, it is quite noteworthy for the Lee Myung-bak administration to shift its position toward DPRK human rights issues to a more positive one at the seventh council of UN Commission of Human Rights. The important part, however, is how this positive expression will actually contribute to the improvement of the human rights of DPRK citizens.

Chosun Ilbo ("[editorial] WE SHOULD STRENGTHEN THE DEMAND FOR IMPROVEMENT IN DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS", 2008/03/05) wrote that the ROK, only a week since the inauguration of a new administration, has clearly manifested its will for improvement in DPRK human rights. “How” the government will lead the way is the problem. The ultimate goal of policies toward the DPRK lies in how the ROK can help its brethren in the DPRK an environment to live like humans. That is the reason for aid to DPRK and inter-Korean exchanges. Although a new department dedicated only to the human rights is to be founded in the Ministry of National Unification, the problem cannot be solved by the Ministry of National Unification itself. Wisdom and resolution for the government, and patience and sacrifice from the citizens are required.

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