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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
 - [1. DPRK Missile Program](#)
 - [2. DPRK-US Relations](#)
 - [3. Inter-Korean Relations](#)
 - [4. DPRK Human Rights](#)
 - [5. ROK Economy](#)
 - [6. ROK-US Free Trade](#)
 - [7. ROK-Australia Relations](#)
 - [8. Korean Diaspora](#)
 - [9. Japanese Export Controls](#)
 - [10. Japanese Politics](#)
 - [11. Japan-PRC Relations](#)
 - [12. PRC-Sudan Relations](#)
 - [13. Cross Strait Relations](#)
 - [14. PRC Government](#)
 - [15. PRC Economic Stimulus](#)
 - [16. PRC Economy](#)

- [17. PRC Military Spending](#)
- [18. PRC Food Safety](#)
- [19. PRC Tibet Issue](#)
- II. PRC Report
 - [20. PRC Employment](#)
 - [21. PRC Government](#)
 - [22. PRC Civil Society](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Missile Program

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREAN MISSILE LAUNCH NOT IMMINENT: UNIFICATION MINISTER", Seoul, 2009/03/04) reported that while the DPRK continues preparations to launch what it claims is a satellite, an actual launch does not seem imminent, Seoul's unification minister said Wednesday. Hyun In-taek also said the ROK is closely working with Washington to deter what appears to be a DPRK tactic to isolate the ROK while trying to talk with the United States. Hyun also suggested there will be no immediate resumption of government-level rice and fertilizer aid, which was suspended last year for the first time in a decade.

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

2. DPRK-US Relations

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "UN COMMAND, N. KOREA LIKELY TO HOLD MORE TALKS", 2009/03/03) reported that the U.S.-led United Nations Command (UNC) here in the ROK and DPRK are expected to hold follow-up talks this week to Monday's high-level military talks at the truce village of Panmunjeom, a report said Tuesday. During Monday's talks, the first of their kind in nearly seven years, the DPRK filed a complaint against the forthcoming joint military exercises by ROK and U.S. troops, according to ministry and UNC officials. The UNC said talks with the DPRK can be useful in building trust and preventing misunderstanding, as well as introducing transparency regarding the intentions of both sides.

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

3. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News (Byun Duk-kun, "LEE WISHES N. KOREAN LEADER "WELL," SAYS HE IS NEEDED FOR PEACE", Sydney, 2009/03/04) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak Wednesday wished DPRK leader Kim Jong-il well, saying his control of the nation is vital to maintaining peace on the Korean Peninsula for the time being. "It appears from Chairman Kim's recent activities that there are not any serious problems for him to continue ruling North Korea, and I think it is better to have a stabilized North Korean regime at this point in time for inter-Korean dialogue and cooperation," Lee said, referring to the DPRK leader by his formal title as chairman of Pyongyang's National Defense Commission.

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "NORTH KOREA ESCALATES RHETORIC AGAINST SOUTH KOREA", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that the DPRK on Thursday warned of "powerful" retaliation if Seoul goes ahead with joint military drills with the US next week. "The Lee group's increased war hysteria for aggression against the DPRK will only invite merciless and powerful retaliatory actions of the army and people of the DPRK," the Minju Joson newspaper said.

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

4. DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA CALLS U.S. 'CHAMPION OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS'", Seoul, 2009/03/04) reported that the DPRK slammed a recent U.S. human rights report that criticized abuses by the state, saying the United States is "the champion of human rights violations." The latest Human Rights Record published by the U.S. government described the DPRK as a "dictatorship" where prison conditions are harsh, torture occurs and pregnant female prisoners undergo forced abortions. Rodong Sinmun said the U.S. is not in a position to admonish other countries.

Korea Times (Kim Sue-young , "NK FIRES BACK OVER SEOUL'S HUMAN RIGHTS REMARKS", 2009/03/04) reported that the DPRK fired back at ROK's concerns over the human rights conditions in the state, calling them "impertinent," Wednesday. Choe Myong-nam, councilor at the DPRK's UN mission in Geneva, Switzerland, claimed the remarks made by Shin Kak-soo, the ROK's 2nd vice foreign minister, Tuesday, clearly violated inter-Korean agreements. The DPRK "rejects all stereotypical allegations and will continue to reject the mandate of the special rapporteur on the human rights situation," he said, "as it was motivated by purposes other than genuine concern for human rights."

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

5. ROK Economy

JoongAng Daily (Lee Ho-jeong, "FORECASTS SEE NEGATIVE 1ST QUARTER GROWTH OF -4 TO -8%", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that ROK think tanks including the ROK Development Institute forecast yesterday that economic growth in the first quarter will plunge between negative 4 percent and negative 8 percent year-on-year. This is a sharper drop than the 3.4 percent decline in the fourth quarter of last year, and it could be the largest since the fourth quarter of 1998 when the economy slumped 6 percent as the nation was consumed by the Asian financial crisis. Experts are also revising predictions on when things might turn around. Instead of the second half of this year, they now say the bottom won't be reached until next year or even until 2011.

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

6. ROK-US Free Trade

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "NEW ENVOY TO U.S. SAYS MORE TIME, EFFORT NEEDED FOR FTA", 2009/03/04) reported that the new ROK envoy to the U.S. welcomed on Wednesday Washington's reaffirmed commitment to advance the ratification of a hard-won bilateral trade pact, but admitted that a bumpy road lies ahead. "I think more time and effort than initially expected will be needed to get the free trade agreement (FTA) ratified in both countries," Han Duck-soo told reporters here. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said Tuesday in Washington his government will "work carefully" with Congress toward the ratification of pending FTAs with the ROK, Colombia and Panama. Geithner's comments and the report show that the ROK and the U.S. agree on the need and usefulness of the FTA, Han said.

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

7. ROK-Australia Relations

Yonhap (Byun Duk-kun, "SEOUL, CANBERRA ANNOUNCE NEW SECURITY TIES, START OF FTA TALKS", Canberra, 2009/03/05) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd agreed to enhance bilateral security cooperation at their summit Thursday. The ROK and Australia will "continue to expand cooperation on global disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery," a joint statement said. The leaders agreed to boost military and defense industry ties. They also called for cooperation in international peacekeeping operations, joint military drills and the exploration of Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft. More specifically, the leaders pledged efforts to sign a "treaty-status bilateral agreement" on the protection of classified military information to provide a framework for exchanges between their armed forces, including the trade of defense goods.

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

8. Korean Diaspora

Yonhap News ("JIM KIM BECOMES FIRST KOREAN-AMERICAN TO LEAD IVY LEAGUE UNIVERSITY", 2009/03/03) reported that Korean-American Jim Yong Kim has been elected the president of Dartmouth College, the school announced Tuesday, becoming the first person of Asian descent to lead an Ivy League university in the United States. Kim, whose title includes M.D., Ph.D., and chair of the Department of Global Health and Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School, will take office on July 1, succeeding James Wright, who will step down after 11 years as president of the college. Kim was elected from among nearly 400 candidates as the 17th Dartmouth president.

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

9. Japanese Export Controls

Bloomberg (Shigeru Sato and Yuji Okada, "JAPANESE COMPANY ACCUSED OF EXPORTING NUCLEAR ENRICHMENT PARTS", 2009/03/04) reported that Horkos Corp., a Japanese machinery

maker, is accused of violating national security laws for exporting devices that can be used for nuclear fuel enrichment plants to the PRC and the ROK, Japan's trade ministry said. Police arrested four Horkos employees, a Hiroshima police spokesman said, on condition of anonymity.

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

10. Japanese Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("OZAWA WON'T RESIGN, BLASTS PROSECUTORS OVER AIDE'S ARREST", 2009/03/04) reported that Japanese opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa on Wednesday said he will not resign for the arrest of a key aide over alleged illegal donations, describing the prosecutors' investigation as an abuse of state power. "I have done nothing I'm ashamed of. The donations were dealt with appropriately under the law, reported (to authorities) and made public," Ozawa said in a news conference at party headquarters in Tokyo on Wednesday morning. Ozawa, at his news conference not only said his aide was innocent, but he also criticized prosecutors' investigative tactics.

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

11. Japan-PRC Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("CHINA SOUGHT TO OPEN MISSION IN OKINAWA", 2009/03/04) reported that the PRC government unofficially approached the Japanese government last year about opening a consulate general in Okinawa Prefecture, government sources said Tuesday. However, the government was reluctant to accept the request for security reasons since most of the facilities of the U.S. forces stationed in Japan are concentrated in the prefecture.

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

12. PRC-Sudan Relations

Agence France-Presse (Peter Harmsen, "CHINA WANTS CASE AGAINST SUDAN LEADER SUSPENDED", Beijing, 2009/03/05) reported that the PRC called Thursday for an International Criminal Court case against Sudanese President Omar al-Beshir to be suspended. "China expresses its regretfulness and worry over the arrest warrant for the Sudan president issued by the International Criminal Court," foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gang said. Qin called on the UN Security Council to "urge the International Criminal Court not to hear this case for the time being." "We do not wish to see our previous achievements on the settlement of the Darfur issue compromised by (the arrest warrant)," he said. "China has really done a lot and put in a lot of effort so we have good reason to feel regret."

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

13. Cross Strait Relations

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA SAYS READY TO TALK TO TAIWAN, END HOSTILITY", Beijing, 2009/03/05) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao said Thursday that Beijing

is ready to hold talks with Taiwan on political and military issues. Positive changes occurred in the situation in Taiwan, and major breakthroughs were made in cross-strait relations," Wen said. Beijing was ready to hold talks to "create conditions for ending the state of hostility and concluding a peace agreement" between the sides, he said.

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

14. PRC Government

Xinhua News ("CHINESE LEADERS JOIN POLITICAL ADVISORY DISCUSSIONS, CALLING FOR CONCERTED EFFORTS TO COMBAT CRISIS", Beijing, 2009/03/04) reported that PRC leaders joined in panel discussions with the country's political advisors Wednesday, calling for concerted efforts to pull through the global financial crisis which is unfolding its impact on the country's economy. All parties, all organizations, all social strata and all ethnic groups should unite under the central authorities' decisions and strategy to overcome difficulties, President Hu Jintao said in a discussion with members of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). He called on all PRC citizens to stand together and "bravely move forward" though difficulties are in sight. In the discussion with advisors from the circles of economy and agriculture, Premier Wen Jiabao said the country need to make large-scale government investment and bring in more social and private funds as well.

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

15. PRC Economic Stimulus

Bloomberg (Yidi Zhao and Kevin Hamlin, "CHINA CONSIDERING NEW STIMULUS MEASURES; STOCKS GAIN", 2009/03/04) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao is considering new stimulus measures, adding to a 4 trillion yuan (\$585 billion) spending plan as the government tries to revive growth in the world's third-biggest economy. Wen will announce "a new stimulus package" in his annual address to the nation's legislature tomorrow, former statistics bureau head Li Deshui told reporters in Beijing today. He didn't say whether spending would increase or give further details. "The existing stimulus package may not be adequate considering the total collapse of global trade," said Isaac Meng, a senior economist at BNP Paribas SA in Beijing. "There should be more spending, especially on the social side to cushion unemployment. This is quite urgent."

New York Times (Jonathan Ansfield, "PARTY ELDERS PRESS FOR CHECKS ON CHINA'S STIMULUS PLAN", 2009/03/04) reported that critics inside and outside the PRC's Communist Party have pressed for details about the murky spending plan and demanded the right to follow the money. A cluster of liberal Communist Party elders recently wrote to President Hu Jintao and the rest of the party leadership, seizing on the economic troubles and the need for more accountability to promote democratic reforms. One of the elders, 80-year-old Du Guang, said the call for democracy had become even more relevant during the economic downturn. He said he was skeptical of the party's measures to supervise the stimulus spending. Mr. Du also criticized the focus on public works projects instead of the country's weak social services network. "Social spending is more important than building railways, expressways and other basic infrastructure."

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

16. PRC Economy

Washington Post (Ariana Eunjung Cha, "IN CHINA, DESPAIR MOUNTING AMONG MIGRANT WORKERS", Yiwu, China, 2009/03/04) reported that six months into what economists and labor experts say is the PRC's worst job crisis since it began market reforms 30 years ago, many among the most vulnerable -- an estimated 20 million workers who lost their jobs after migrating from the countryside to cities -- are becoming desperate. As tens of thousands of manufacturing companies have collapsed amid slowing demand due to the global economic crisis, the laid-off workers can no longer find jobs in the cities. For many, returning to their rural roots is not a possibility because their families' farmland has been sold off to make room for shopping malls, office high-rises and apartment complexes -- leaving them with no safety net. Even those lucky enough to have kept their farming plots have been hit hard by a drought -- the country's worst in 50 years, according to the government -- which has affected up to 80 percent of the land for winter crops.

International Herald Tribune (Bettina Wassener, "A SIGN OF HOPE FOR CHINA'S ECONOMY", Beijing, 2009/03/04) reported that a closely watched index of manufacturing activity in the PRC edged up in February, an early sign that the economy may have seen the worst of the downturn. The official purchasing managers' index released by the PRC authorities Wednesday rose to 49 in February, from 45.3 the previous month and continuing its improvement from a low of 38.8 in November. A reading below 50 indicates contraction, so the February outcome does not yet represent recovery. On Wednesday, a senior planning official said the PRC would increase spending above the 4 trillion yuan by an unspecified amount, Reuters reported. The official also said the PRC would spend more on welfare to strengthen the country's social safety net. This is something that analysts believe is key to ultimately getting ordinary PRC citizens to spend more, thus strengthening the domestic market and lowering the PRC's reliance on exports.

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

17. PRC Military Spending

BBC News ("CHINA TO BOOST MILITARY SPENDING", 2009/03/04) reported that the PRC says it will increase military spending by a "modest" 14.9% this year to 480.6bn yuan (\$70.2bn). The money will pay for better salaries, modernisation, and "capacity building programmes" including counter-terrorism and disaster relief, a spokesman said. The PRC's military is for self-protection and does not pose a threat to any country, said official Li Zhaoxing. Analysts say the increase marks the 19th double-digit boost in defence spending by the PRC in the last 20 years.

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

18. PRC Food Safety

Associated Press ("CHINESE FAMILIES PLAN LAWSUIT IN MILK SCANDAL", Beijing, 2009/03/04) reported that in recent months, courts across the PRC refused to accept the lawsuits from families whose children were killed or sickened by tainted milk. Now, in a turnaround, hundreds of families are planning to file suit after the country's highest court said this week that cases would be accepted. The move signals a change in the way Beijing is handling fallout from the scandal. A government-sanctioned compensation plan had been expected to ease public anger, but instead it

gave embittered, outspoken parents across the PRC a common cause.

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

19. PRC Tibet Issue

Reuters ("CHINA SAYS TIBETAN "PROTEST" WAS CELEBRATION", Beijing, 2009/03/03) reported that monks who gathered outside a Tibetan monastery on Sunday were celebrating their new administrator, not protesting, a top official was quoted saying on Tuesday, rejecting foreign reports of the incident. Shi Jun, Communist Party boss in an ethnically Tibetan part of western Sichuan province, said there is complete religious freedom in his area and foreign news reports had misrepresented a simple celebration, the official Xinhua news agency reported. "This was a normal religious activity but had been distorted as 'Tibetan lamas protest' by some foreign media with ulterior motives, we are indignant toward the distorted news reports based on hearsays and are disappointed at those western media," Xinhua quoted him saying.

Associated Press ("TIBET INSTABILITY A RUMOR, GOVERNOR SAYS", Beijing, 2009/03/05) reported that Qiangba Puncog, governor of Tibet, was quoted as saying by the Xinhua News Agency that reports of recent instability in the region were "pure rumor." Puncog said that this year Tibet will have no "big problems" of stability and that the Tibetan people "have confidence in the (Communist) Party and the government."

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

II. PRC Report

20. PRC Employment

Xinhua Net (Jiang Min, "SHENYANG HOLDS EMPLOYMENT PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING FOR GRADUATES", 2009/03/03) reported that in view of the anxiety and psychological pressure of graduates for finding jobs, Shenyang city of Liaoning province launched employment psychological counseling for university graduates in the municipal human resource market on March 3rd. A telephone hotline was open at the same time, welcomed greatly by graduates. This activity is organized by Shenyang Civil Office and the municipal Psychological Volunteer Association. The sponsors said this kind of activity will continue to help more people.

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

21. PRC Government

Xinhua Net (Wei Minli, "MAY 12TH TO BE NATIONAL "DISASTER PREVENTION AND MITIGATION DAY"", 2009/03/03) reported that according to National Committee of Disaster Mitigation and Ministry of Civil Affairs, approved by the State Council, May 12th was designated national "Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Day" from 2009. The event was created to arouse awareness of the public about disaster prevention and mitigation, to publicize relevant knowledge, and thus to mitigate the

damage of disasters to the maximum degree.

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

22. PRC Civil Society

Shenzhen Business News (Zheng Ying, "SOCIAL WORKER GROUP GOES TO DISABLED PERSON'S EMPLOYMENT BASE", 2009/03/04) reported that 5 professional social workers from Shenzhen Charity and Public Welfare Network organized a Social Worker Group yesterday afternoon. The Group will go to disabled people's place of employment and live with them together, to provide help with emotional adjustment, physical and psychological care, resource coordination and so on. It is understood that such groups will be launched in succession in various cities.

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

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