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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Elections

Agence France Presse ("N KOREA ENDS REGISTRATION FOR UPCOMING ELECTION", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that DPRK has completed candidate registration for upcoming parliamentary elections, which are seen by some analysts as laying the groundwork for an eventual power transition. "Servicepersons, workers, farmers and intellectuals" who have devotedly worked for the party, country, people and leader Kim Jong Il were nominated, the official Korean Central News Agency said early Thursday. The agency said "the entire electorate" expressed conviction that the nominees "would devote themselves to the sacred struggle to strengthen the government of the Republic, firmly defend the socialist system and build a great prosperous and powerful nation." Candidates are picked by the government or the ruling communist party, and only one runs in each seat.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News (Hwang Doo-hyong, "N. KOREA MAY CONDUCT SECOND NUKE TEST: THINK TANK", Washington, 2009/03/04) reported that DPRK may conduct a second nuclear test in the near future to increase its bargaining power in negotiating with the US, a private think tank said Wednesday. "The new administration and Congress should not be surprised if Pyongyang precipitates a crisis, perhaps in the near term, to elevate its importance in a crowded U.S. foreign policy agenda," the Seattle-based National Bureau of Asian Research said in a report titled "Shock of the New: Congress and Asia in 2009." "Such a crisis could include a second nuclear test or escalation of military tension with South Korea or Japan," the report said.

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3. Inter-Korea Relations

Reuters (Jon Herskovitz and Yoo Choonsik, "NORTH KOREA WARNS SOUTH'S AIRLINERS DURING DRILLS", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that DPRK made threats on Thursday against ROK commercial airliners that fly near its territory during U.S.-ROK military drills next week. "Security cannot be guaranteed for South Korean civil airplanes flying through the territorial air of our side and its vicinity ... above the East Sea of Korea (Sea of Japan) in particular, while the military exercises are under way," the DPRK's KCNA news agency quoted a statement from a government official as saying. Officials from ROK's two major airlines, Korean Air and Asiana Airlines, said they would alter certain routes to move planes further away from DPRK.

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "SKOREA URGES NKOREA TO RETRACT ITS THREAT", Seoul, 2009/03/06) reported that the ROK on Friday urged the DPRK to retract its threat against ROK passenger planes flying near its airspace. "The military threat against civil airplanes' normal flights is a violation of international norms and an inhumane act that cannot be justified under any circumstances," Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Ho-nyeon told reporters. The ROK's two major airlines — Korean Air and Asiana Airlines — have already rerouted their flights to stay clear of DPRK airspace.

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4. DPRK Proselytization

Reuters (Jon Herskovitz and Kim Junghyun, "SOUTH KOREA CHURCH TRAINS NEW PRIESTS FOR NORTH", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that the Roman Catholic Church of ROK has started training priests to serve in DPRK for the first time in about 40 years. "It's not something North Korea wants us to do. We are doing this with an eye toward the future when the two Koreas unify," Monsignor Matthew Hwang In-kuk, the Episcopal vicar of the Pyongyang Diocese said.

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5. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA SANCTIONS S. KOREAN FIRM AT JOINT COMPLEX FOR POLLUTION", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that the DPRK government has penalized an ROK firm at a joint industrial complex in the DPRK by banning local employees from working there, citing pollution at the site, Seoul officials said Thursday. It marked the first time for the DPRK to punish an ROK company since the Kaesong industrial complex opened in 2005.

Agence France Presse ("N KOREA TIGHTENS RULES FOR SOUTH AT INDUSTRIAL PARK - OFFICIAL", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that the DPRK introduced new regulations for companies in the Kaesong Industrial Complex last month, said an official of the ROK's unification ministry. "The North has unilaterally imposed new rules, ignoring our protest that South Korean firms cannot accept them," the official said on condition of anonymity. It now threatens to suspend operations of some ROK companies or impose fines of up to $2,000 if they fail to pay their DPRK workers on time.

Operations of companies delaying payment for two months can be suspended for 10 days. The DPRK also demanded an increase in severance payments and allowances for extra work.

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6. ROK Aid for DPRK

Agence France Presse ("S KOREA AID GROUP TO BUILD CENTER FOR DISABLED IN N KOREA", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that DPRK is allowing an ROK aid group to build a rehabilitation center for the disabled in the DPRK's capital despite inter-Korean tensions, the group leader said Thursday. The Lighthouse Foundation said it would break ground for the center in May, and hopes to open the facility in 2011. "For the project, which requires some KRW5 billion ($3.2 million), we have launched a fundraising campaign," said Sue Kinsler, who heads the foundation. She urged the Seoul government to join the campaign, saying the center would promote reconciliation at a time when relations are poor.

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7. DPRK-US Relations

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "U.S. AMBASSADOR URGES N. KOREA NOT TO LAUNCH MISSILE", Seoul, 2009/03/05) reported that the top U.S. envoy here called Thursday for DPRK not to fire a ballistic missile, saying the "avenue of negotiation is still open." "Our hope and our continued urging from the United States and also from other members of the international community to the leadership of Pyongyang is to avoid that kind of provocative act and return to the process of negotiation in the six-way talks," Ambassador Kathleen Stephens said.

Real Time Traders News ("UNC, N. KOREA HOLD MORE TALKS", 2009/03/05) reported that Thursday, the United Nations Command and DPRK held more talks on easing tensions, as Pyongyang reiterated its apprehensions that an upcoming ROK-U.S. joint military exercise was a prelude to starting a war, and renewed its call for the cancellation of the manoeuvers, media reports say. The Colonel-level meeting, held at the DPRK's request, set the agenda for a second round of talks at the general officer-level Friday at Panmunjom, inside the Demilitarized Zone.

Agence France Presse ("US: NORTH KOREAN THREATS TO SOUTH KOREAN FLIGHTS `UNHELPFUL'", Washington, 2009/04/05) reported that the U.S. said Thursday that DPRK threats to ROK flights are "distinctly unhelpful," urging Pyongyong to instead revive negotiations for its nuclear disarmament. "They are distinctly unhelpful. The North Koreans should be working on their commitments to the six-party talks," State Department acting deputy spokesman Gordon Duguid told reporters.

Yonhap (Sam Kim, "N.KOREA, U.N. COMMAND END BORDER TALKS WITHOUT PROGRESS", Seoul, 2009/03/06) reported that the DPRK and the United Nations Command (UNC) ended their military talks Friday without progress. At talks that lasted 45 minutes at Panmunjom, the UNC "urged North Korea to refrain from taking any provocative actions that would further increase tensions," its press release said. The UNC also called on the DPRK to withdraw its intention to stop ensuring the safety of ROK plans flying near its airspace, reiterating that the upcoming drill is

"purely defensive," it said.

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8. DPRK-Japan Relations

Xinhua News Agency ("DPRK URGES JAPAN TO SETTLE ITS PAST BEFORE NORMALIZING RELATIONS", 2009/03/05) reported that Japan should redress its war crimes committed against the Koreans before the DPRK and Japan can normalize their relations, said a commentary carried by the Rodong Sinmun on Thursday. "Japanese imperialists committed unprecedented crimes against the Koreans during its occupation and rule over Korea in the first half of the last century," it said. The Japanese government misled public opinion by exaggerating what it calls "threat from the DPRK," aiming to "stir up bitterness toward the DPRK in the Japanese society, revive militarism, and convert Japan into a military power," the article said.

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9. ROK-US Military Exercises

Chosun Ilbo ("STEALTH BOMBERS COULD FORM PART OF JOINT EXERCISE", 2009/03/05) reported that B-2 stealth bombers and F-22 stealth fighters of the U.S. could be deployed in a joint exercise with ROK troops amid signs that DPRK is preparing to launch a long-range missile. The Key Resolve/Foal Eagle exercise will be staged from March 9 to 20. On Feb. 25, the U.S. deployed four B-2 stealth bombers at Andersen Air Force Base, the U.S.'s key strategic base in the Asian and Pacific region. B-2s and F-22s are stealth aircraft that cannot be detected by radar. They would be tasked to attack major strategic targets in DPRK or intercept DPRK fighters in case of war on the Korean Peninsula.

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10. ROK-Australia Relations

Agence France Presse ("AUS, SKOREA AGREE ON SECURITY PACT, FREE TRADE", Canberra, 2009/03/05) reported that Australia and ROK agreed during a summit between Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and President Lee Myung-bak Thursday to deepen security ties and launch formal talks on a free trade agreement. The security agreement calls for close consultations on issues of common strategic interest in the Asia-Pacific region, counter-terrorism strategies and transnational crime, a joint statement said. The two countries will also sign a pact allowing for the secure exchange of classified military information between defence organisations and related industry contractors.

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11. ROK-PRC Relations

Reuters (Rob Taylor, "CHINA ARMS SPEND PROMPTS SOUTH KOREA ARMS RACE WARNING", Canberra, 2009/03/05) reported that ROK's President Lee Myung-bak warned on Thursday of the danger of a North Asia arms race after PRC announced another double-digit rise in annual military

spending. "In Northeast Asia it is not desirable to have countries engaged in a race for military buildup, or increasing their military spending," Lee told reporters at the Australian parliament through a translator. "The Northeast Asia region in particular is a very, very dynamic and volatile region, with North and South Korea (issues) still remaining, and also we have the issue of China building military spending," he said.

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12. Japan Nuclear Energy

United Press International ("JAPANESE NUKE FIRE SLIGHTLY HURTS 1", Kashiwazaki, Japan, 2009/03/05) reported that a fire at an underground cooling pump of a Japanese nuclear plant caused minor burns to a worker but no radioactive leakage, officials said. The incident occurred in the No. 1 reactor of the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Kashiwazaki, Niigata Prefecture, the Kyodo news agency reported. Work has been suspended at the reactor and six others since a 2007 earthquake, Tokyo Electric Power Co said. The fire, the eighth during the checkups since the suspension, was extinguished in about 30 minutes. Firefighters suspect an organic solvent caused it.

Agence France Presse ("RECYCLED JAPANESE NUCLEAR FUEL LOADED IN FRANCE", Cherbourgh, France, 2009/03/05) reported that French nuclear group Areva early Thursday started loading a major shipment of recycled fuel onto a ship that was then to head for Japan, despite fears it could be hijacked and used in bombs. Environmental group Greenpeace said it was "the biggest cargo of fissile material ever transported. The convoy of recycled nuclear fuel had moved under police escort Wednesday to Cherbourg to be shipped half way round the world to Japan. A second convoy arrived early Thursday.

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13. Japan Whaling Issue

Reuters ("JAPAN MAY CUT BACK ON FUTURE WHALE HUNTS: REPORTS", 2009/03/05) reported that Japan is considering reducing the number of whales it catches each year, the Asahi newspaper has reported. Japan could cut its annual catch by several hundred whales and is considering submitting such a plan to the IWC meeting after seeing the moves of anti-whaling nations. A Japanese fisheries ministry official declined to comment on the report.

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14. PRC on Terrorism

Asia News International ("CHINA WILL SUPPORT ANY TERROR VICTIM COUNTRY, SAYS ZHANG YAN", New Delhi, 2009/03/06) reported that PRC Ambassador to India Zhang Yan on Thursday said that PRC would support any country to fight terrorism, as it has become a common enemy to many countries. "We are against all forms of terror. We support any country that is fighting against terrorism. Terrorism is a common enemy of any country whether it is Taliban or any other form. We should join our efforts to fight against terrorism," Yan said.

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15. PRC Defense

Associated Press (Chris Bodeen, "CHINA TO BOOST DEFENSE SPENDING BY 15 PCT IN 2009", Beijing, 2009/03/04) reported that PRC announced plans Wednesday to boost spending on its increasingly potent military 14.9 percent this year. In announcing the spending increase, a spokesman for the national legislature, Li Zhaoxing, played down worries about PRC's military might, saying the boost was "modest" and suitable for world's third largest economy. Much of the additional funding would go toward salaries and benefits for servicemen, he said.

Agence France Presse ("CHINA TO MODERNIZE MILITARY ACROSS THE BOARD - WEN", Beijing, 2009/03/05) reported that Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said Thursday that PRC's military needed to be modernized "across the board" as a 15.3% increase in defense spending was placed before parliament. "We need to make our army more revolutionary, modern and standardized, focusing on enabling it to fully carry out its historic missions," Wen said in his annual address to the National People's Congress. "We will...continue to enhance the army's ability to respond to multiple security threats and accomplish a diverse array of military tasks...we will modernize weapons, equipment and logistics support across the board." During the coming year, PRC's military would transform its training focus toward warfare tactics using more information technology applications, he said.

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA NAVY PLANNING MAJOR CELEBRATION FOR APRIL", Beijing, 2009/03/06) reported that the PRC navy is planning major celebrations for its 60th anniversary next month, the Global Times newspaper reported Friday. A sail-past featuring some of the navy's most modern craft and ships from other nations is being planned, according to the commander of the east China fleet , Adm. Xu Hongmeng. The article quoted Xu as saying that the PRC was in need of an aircraft carrier. "Both technologically and economically, China already has the capacity to build a carrier," Xu said.

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16. PRC Climate Change

Asia News International ("MUDSLIDES FOLLOWING CHINESE QUAKE MAY CAUSE CO2 RELEASE IN UPCOMING DECADES", Washington, 2009/03/05) reported that a new study has shown that mudslides that followed the earthquake that struck PRC on May 12 last year, may cause a carbon-dioxide release in upcoming decades equivalent to two percent of current annual global carbon emissions from fossil fuel combustion. Mudslides wipe away plants and topsoil, depleting terrain of nutrients for plant regrowth and burying swaths of vegetation. Buried vegetable matter decomposes and releases carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

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17. PRC Environment

Xinhua News Agency ("GOV'T REPORT: CHINA VOWS TO REDUCE EMISSIONS", 2009/03/05) reported that PRC will continue its drive of energy saving, emissions reduction, ecosystems preservation, and environment protection in 2009, Premier Wen Jiabao said in Beijing Thursday. The government will emphasize energy conservation in the three key areas of industry, transportation

and construction, Wen said in a report at the annual session of the National People's Congress. "We will implement energy-conserving measures for power generators, boilers, automobiles, air-conditioners and lighting products," said Wen, adding that the government will strictly enforce the monitoring system for energy conservation and emissions reduction.

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18. PRC Energy

United Press International ("GE SIGNS POWER CONTRACT WITH CHINA", Ningbo, PRC, 2009/03/05) reported that U.S.-based GE Energy announced it has signed new agreements with PRC to service and maintain two power plants in Zhejiang province. The series of agreements are worth more than $128 million and are aimed at helping PRC meet its goals of increased energy efficiency and reduced emissions. GE Energy will provide inspections and service for two turbines at a power plant in the city of Ningbo.

China Daily ("PRC TO CONSOLIDATE REFINING SECTOR: ENERGY CHIEF", 2009/03/05) reported that PRC will consolidate its refining sector as small oil refineries will either be forced out of business or be taken over by majors, Zhang Guobao, head of the National Energy Administration (NEA), said on Thursday. "One scenario is that these small plants will not be able to survive with changing oil prices; or they may be acquired by big national oil companies," Zhang said.

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II. PRC Report

19. PRC Environment

Business Agency ("INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES PLASTIC FREE CAMPAIGN", 2009/03/05) reported that an environmental protection campaign named “Saving the Earth in Action” was launched in Dawang Street, Chaoyang District, Beijing recently. Many volunteers propagated environmental protection ideas by way of distributing free environmental bags and recycling one-off plastic bags. Over 1000 environmental protection bags were given out in 4 hours. The sponsor of this campaign is International Environmental Protection Association. Volunteers believe that after this campaign, many citizens will go shopping with the handy environmental protection bags.

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20. PRC Civil Society

Information Times (Xiong Jiayan, "GUANGDONG VOLUNTEER SERVICE ORDINANCE TO BE IMPLEMENTED TODAY", 2009/03/05) reported that according to Guangzhou municipal Youth League Committee, Guangdong Volunteer Service Ordinance is to be formally implemented today. The Ordinance encourages public institutions, state-owned enterprises, and colleges give priority to

employ people with volunteer experiences. Volunteers will also get accident insurance when engaged in emergency rescue or other voluntary services which may imperil their personal safety, according to the Ordinance.

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III. ROK Report

21. Inter-Korea Relations

PRESSian ("THREE REASONS WHY NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS HAVE TO CHANGE", 2009/03/04) wrote that a clear sign of a new turn to DPRK policies has been revealed. Those include change of perspectives to highly-enriched uranium (HEU) plans; appointing Stephen Bosworth who is well instructed in the sunshine policy and Perry process as a special envoy to the DPRK; and presenting goals to change the armistice agreement to a peace treaty, clearly confirmed in a phone call between US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and former ROK president Kim Daejung. The Lee Myung-bak administration seems to have a clear knowledge of this. His March 1 Independence Day Memorial Speech is one sign to walk in line with US policy changes.

Chosun Ilbo ("STOP CRITICIZING ROK AND COME OUT TO THE TABLES", 2009/03/06) wrote that President Lee Myung-bak said on March 4 in an interview with an Australian paper that “stabilizing the DPRK regime is helpful to talks between North and South.” This is interpreted as an urging to the DPRK to come to the table, which is a totally different stand compared to last November when Lee strictly followed the principles, saying that “sometimes waiting is a part of strategy.” If the DPRK keeps paying attention to relations with the US while constantly criticizing the ROK, more people in ROK would feel that “it is unnecessary to have a talk with DPRK, nor is it worth supplying them with rice and fertilizer.”

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22. ROK Energy Aid to DPRK

Yonhap News ("SOON TO STOP ENERGY SUPPORT IN DPRK… DPRK’S REACTION?”", 2009/03/06) wrote that economic and energy support, provided in exchange for denuclearization in the DPRK, will likely be stopped soon. According to diplomatic sources, “There is a possibility that the DPRK might react by stopping denuclearization once support is cut off, but for now there is no change of speed in DPRK’s denuclearization.” The source added that “DPRK’s reactions after the cut off are quite worrisome, but apart form the verification matter, with DPRK about to launch missiles, it is impossible to continue the support.”

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23. DPRK Human Rights

Kyunghyang Shinmun ("DPRK, NOT IN POSITION TO BE REPELLED BY CRITICISMS IN HUMAN

RIGHTS ISSUE", 2009/03/05) wrote that the DPRK's reaction to the UN Human Rights Council's report is inappropriate, failing to notice the universality of human rights issues. On the other side, the ROK government must approach this issue in a more careful and wise way, so human rights condition in DPRK could be improved substantially. President Lee Myung-bak has shown concerns on the DPRK's human rights issue from the beginning of his term, but his aggressive way has reached the limits. Also, it is notable that Hilary Clinton, the US Secretary of State, who has constantly stressed the importance of human rights, didn't mention the human rights issue in China when she recently visited.

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