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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
 - [1. DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [3. Kaesong Industrial Zone](#)
 - [4. Inter-Korean Relations](#)
 - [5. DPRK on US-ROK Joint Military Drill](#)
 - [6. DPRK-UK Relations](#)
 - [7. DPRK Human Rights](#)
 - [8. Alleged DPRK Executions](#)
 - [9. DPRK Defectors](#)
 - [10. DPRK Tourism](#)
 - [11. US-ROK Alliance](#)
 - [12. PRC-ROK Relations](#)
 - [13. US-Japan Security Alliance](#)
 - [14. US-Japan Relations](#)

- [15. Japanese Whaling](#)
- [16. PRC Environment](#)
- [17. PRC Party Congress](#)
- [18. PRC Energy Supply](#)
- [19. PRC Space Program](#)
- II. ROK Report
 - [20. Inter-Korean Relations](#)
 - [21. ROK Policy Toward DPRK](#)
 - [22. ROK Policy Toward DPRK Human Rights](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yomiuri Shimbun (Takeo Miyazaki, "PAPER ON DPRK N-DECLARATION FLOATED", Washington, 2008/03/06) reported that the top US negotiator in the six-nation talks over the DPRK's nuclear programs said that the idea has been floated of issuing a document stating the opinions of both Washington and Pyongyang concerning the current impasse over Pyongyang's refusal to fully disclose its nuclear projects. Speaking to reporters at Dulles Airport, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said, "There are lots of ideas about how to bridge [the gap between Washington and Pyongyang]... The Shanghai Communique is one model people talk about. But it's premature to say [such a document will be drawn up]," Hill added. The possible statement by both sides, which is said to have been discussed, would be modeled on the Shanghai Communique and would state the differing opinions of Washington and Pyongyang.

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

2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters (Emily Chasan, "U.S. NEGOTIATOR WANTS NORTH KOREAN DECLARATION IN MARCH", New York, 2008/03/06) reported that the top US negotiator with the DPRK said that he wants Pyongyang to submit a complete declaration of its nuclear activities by the end of March because further delays could slow the denuclearization process. "It's important that we try to get through this in March, because we're kind of running out of time in calendar year '08," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said. "Everything we've asked them to do, they can certainly do. Moreover, everything we've asked them to do, they've already agreed to do," Hill told reporters after his speech.

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

3. Kaesong Industrial Zone

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK DEMANDING 100 USD RESIDENCE FEE AT KAESONG INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that the DPRK has demanded a 100 USD per person registration fee for ROK workers residing in the Kaesong Industrial Complex's (KIC) dormitories. An unnamed source close to the South Korean government stated, "At the end of January, the North unilaterally decided on the KIC visiting and residing fees, and when they were not complied with notified [the ROK] that they would ban entrance" to the complex. However, "despite this, currently entrance into the complex is freely obtainable." The DPRK set a 35 USD fee for registering a short-term stay of up to 90 days, and a 100 USD fee for registering a one-year residency, according to the source. A Unification Ministry official acknowledged, "The fee demanded by the North is not exorbitant, but from the perspective of the businesses in the complex, negotiations on reasonable measures were in progress."

Yonhap ("GERMAN AUTO PART MAKER TO OPERATE IN KAESONG COMPLEX ", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that a German auto part maker will become the first foreign company to operate in the ROK-funded industrial complex in the DPRK border city of Kaesong, the inter-Korean joint office managing the complex said. The Stuttgart-based Prettl, which has 16 branch offices worldwide, had a ceremony to mark the start of construction of its factory in Kaesong in the morning, the office said. Two other foreign manufacturers, both from the PRC, finished contracts last year to start business in the complex, according to Kim Min-gyeong of the office.

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

4. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("PYONGYANG DENOUNCES SEOUL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS", 2008/03/06) reported that a councilor at the DPRK's diplomatic mission to Geneva said the ROK will have to be held responsible for "irresponsible remarks" about the DPRK's human rights record which will have "negative repercussions" on inter-Korean relations. Choe Myong-nam made the remarks at a session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, in response to a speech in which a ROK government representative urged Pyongyang to take measures to improve its human rights situation. Choe said, "We have strong doubts about whether the South Korean government is aware of the spirit of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and international cooperation of the inter-Korean summit agreements of 2000 and 2007."

Kyodo ("N. KOREA SOUNDS OUT ATTENDING LEE'S INAUGURATION: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/03/06) reported that the DPRK had sent out feelers whether its senior officials could attend ROK President Lee Myung Bak's inaugural ceremony, a Seoul daily reported Thursday. "In around January, the North's side asked if its major officials could attend President Lee's inaugural ceremony, and also proposed a governmental meeting be held between the South and the North," the Dong-a Ilbo quoted a ruling camp source as saying.

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

5. DPRK on US-ROK Joint Military Drill

Yonhap ("N.K. CRITICISM OF DRILLS NOT AIMED AT SEOUL: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that the DPRK's strong criticism of ROK-U.S. military drills is targeted at ROK "warmongers," not their government, and Pyongyang does not want to damage ties with Seoul, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper in Japan claimed. "The arrows of condemnation in DPRK's rhetoric on joint military drills were targeted at the U.S. troops and South Korean warmongers, not the South Korean government," said the Joson Sinbo, the newspaper of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Pyongyang. "It is clear that the DPRK's intent to carry out the Oct. 4 summit declaration is firm," the daily said.

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

6. DPRK-UK Relations

Yonhap ("N.K. WANTS MORE CULTURAL EXCHANGES WITH UK: ENVOY ", London, 2008/03/06) reported that the DPRK is exploring ways to expand cultural exchange with Britain following the New York Philharmonic's unprecedented performance in Pyongyang, the DPRK's envoy to Britain said. Amb. Ja Song-nam delivered an address in a joint session of the British House of Lords and House of Commons for the first time as a DPRK diplomat.

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

7. DPRK Human Rights

Washington Post (Al Kamen, "'REGIME' CHANGED", Washington, 2008/03/05) reported that last Friday, Glyn Davies, the principal deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. State Department's East Asia bureau, sent an e-mail to Erica Barks-Ruggles, a deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), requesting some changes in the introductory language of a human rights report on the DPRK due to the priority on the Six-Party Talks. The changes eliminated words like "repressive" and "isolated country" and changed "regime" to "government."

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

8. Alleged DPRK Executions

Associated Press ("NKOREA'S ALLEGED EXECUTION CONDEMNED", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that the human rights group Amnesty International on Friday condemned the DPRK's alleged public execution last month of 15 people accused of attempting to flee or of helping others escape. "Due to chronic food shortages, many North Koreans have little choice but to risk the dangerous journey to China," Amnesty said in a statement, calling the executions "yet another injustice for the beleaguered population."

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

9. DPRK Defectors

Korea Herald ("FORMER N.K. SOLDIERS FORM ANTI-PYONGYANG GROUP", Tokyo, 2008/03/07) reported that former DPRK soldiers who defected to South Korea on Thursday announced the creation of a new group aimed at toppling the Kim Jong-il regime, AFP reported. The group, called the North Korean Veterans Association, led by former Lieutenant Colonel Sim Sin-bok, was being launched on Friday at a ceremony in Seoul. "The association is supported by about 1,300 former North Korean soldiers including 300 officers who have defected to South Korea in the past decade," an organizer told AFP on condition of anonymity.

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

10. DPRK Tourism

Korea Times (Ryu Jin, "DRIVE YOUR WAY TO MT. GEUMGANG FROM MARCH 17", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that visitors will be allowed to cross the de-militarized zone (DMZ) in their own cars to visit Mt. Geumgang starting March 17. Hyundai Asan, the operator of package tours to the scenic resort on the East Coast, said Friday that it has reached an agreement with the DPRK authorities for the overland tour program. Company officials said that the private-car tour came in response to complaints by some customers about the limitations they faced in group tours, which use chartered buses.

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

11. US-ROK Alliance

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "KOREA, US TO DISCUSS DEFENSE COST SHARING", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that the defense chiefs of the ROK and the United States are expected to discuss cost sharing for the presence of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) as a priority item in the coming months, a defense ministry official said Friday. Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee talked with his U.S. counterpart Robert M. Gates in the morning by phone, he said. Earlier in the day, U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Alexander Vershbow visited the ministry and discussed the alliance with Lee. "I think it is not a new position on the part of the U.S. The whole issue of burden sharing is a longstanding issue with many of our allies," Vershbow said. "We have always sought to achieve an equitable sharing of responsibility through negotiations, and that will remain our goal."

Korea Herald ("S.KOREA, US DEFENSE CHIEFS TO MEET AFTER LEADERS' SUMMIT", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that ROK Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee will likely accompany President Lee Myung-bak to the United States for President Lee's first summit with U.S. President George W. Bush in mid April, ministry officials said, and his meeting with U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates will be possible soon after the summit. The two are expected to meet again in the Asia Security Conference in Singapore in early June, when defense ministers from about 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region will discuss security issues.

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

12. PRC-ROK Relations

Korea Times (Kim Tae-jong, Park Si-soo, "VISA-FREE VISIT PLANNED FOR CHINESE", Seoul, 2008/03/07) reported that beginning this summer, the government plans to allow visa-free entrance for PRC nationals. Justice Minister Kim Kyung-han said Friday, "The ministry will continue to ease visa restrictions on Chinese nationals so that we can get more Chinese tourists and hopefully help boost the economy." Visa-free entrance for PRC nationals will be possible from July to September on a temporary basis and will be extended depending on its effectiveness, Kim said.

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

13. US-Japan Security Alliance

Yomiuri Shimbun (Shin Nagahara, "ASO: WIDEN JAPAN-U.S. SEA ALLIANCE", 2008/03/06) reported that former Foreign Minister Taro Aso said Wednesday that Japan and the United States should redefine their alliance to better deal with a host of maritime issues that can affect the two nations. Aso, also a former secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party, pointed out that the world is entering an era of growing controversy over the use of the oceans, such as disputes over natural resources. He said Japan and the United States should seek "joint sea power." Aso said the two countries should share knowledge and experience in fields such as oceanic science, maritime resource development and environmental conservation, as well as the usual field of military cooperation. Aso stressed that cooperation should also be fostered in the private sector.

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

14. US-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("U.S. READY TO IMPROVE BILATERAL ACCORD FOR JOINT PATROLS: U.S. ENVOY ", Naha, 2008/03/06) reported that the U.S. consul general in Okinawa said Thursday that the United States intends to improve the function of the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement to clarify which country holds the authority to arrest U.S. military personnel during planned joint police patrols. But Kevin Maher ruled out a revision of the agreement, a demand growing again in Okinawa following the alleged rape of a local junior high school student by a U.S. Marine.

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

15. Japanese Whaling

BBC News ("PROTESTER SAYS WHALERS SHOT HIM", Tokyo, 2008/03/07) reported that Paul Watson, of the Sea Shepherd group says he has been shot by Japanese sailors while protesting over their hunting activities in the Antarctic. Watson said his colleagues had been throwing stink bombs, but the Japanese responded with "flash grenades" and gunfire. He said he felt a thud in his chest and found a bullet in his Kevlar vest. But Tokyo denied any bullets had been fired, saying "warning devices" were thrown after their ship was attacked.

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

16. PRC Environment

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO DIVERT MORE YELLOW RIVER WATER FOR OLYMPICS: OFFICIAL MEDIA ", Beijing, 2008/03/06) reported that the PRC has begun diverting water from the Yellow River towards Beijing for the second time this year as part of a major effort to supply the capital ahead of the Olympics, state press said. The diversion of up to 156 million cubic metres (41 billion gallons) of water from the already parched Yellow River to Lake Baiyangdian near Beijing began on March 1 and would continue for 20 days, the China News Service reported. The project was being carried out to "safeguard the environmental security of the region surrounding the Olympic Games and the ecological balance of north China," the report said.

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

17. PRC Party Congress

Agence France-Presse (Robert J. Saiget , "CHINESE PRIME MINISTER WEN PLEDGES MORE EQUAL SOCIETY ", Beijing, 2008/03/06) reported that Premier Wen Jiabao pledged Wednesday a more equal society and streamlined government for the PRC, as he vowed to address a vast array of problems tarnishing the nation's remarkable modernisation drive. Wen used his annual "state of the nation" speech to parliament to promise reforms that would make life more fair for the country's 1.3 billion people, who have experienced massive changes during three decades of historic reforms. Among the immediate measures to bring about a more equal society, Wen said education spending would this year rise 45 percent, the health budget would go up 25 percent and funding for social security would jump 19.8 percent.

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

18. PRC Energy Supply

Interfax ("CHINA TO BUILD NPPS WITH DOMESTIC TECHNOLOGIES BY 2017", Shanghai, 2008/03/06) reported that the PRC will be ready to build nuclear power plants with licensed domestic technologies by 2017, the business newspaper Zhongguo Jingying Bao said with the reference to State Nuclear Power Technology Corp. General Manager Wang Binghua. Wang singled out a high-temperature reactor with a gas cooling system, which is being developed by several PRC companies and universities.

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

19. PRC Space Program

Kyodo ("CHINA TO CARRY OUT SPACEWALK MISSION IN OCTOBER ", Beijing, 2008/03/06) reported that the PRC is planning to launch its next manned space mission in October, which will include an astronaut carrying out the country's first spacewalk, state-run media reported Thursday. Space program engineers told the China Daily the mission is due to be launched after the Beijing Olympics in August and the Paralympics Games in September, although no exact date has been set.

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

II. ROK Report

20. Inter-Korean Relations

Saegye Ilbo ("CONCERNED ABOUT PROVOKING DPRK,' SECURITY AWARENESS NEEDS RECONFIRMATION", 2008/03/07) reported that a series of analyses fearing restrictive provocation of DPRK is being repeated throughout the first half of this year. The attitude of DPRK mentioning even the nuclear threat cannot be treated lightly. What triggered change in the attitude of DPRK are Lee Myung-Bak administration's nuclear-abandonment-first-policy, inability of acknowledging the particularity of inter-Korean relation, and confirmation of the directions of policies toward DPRK being a part of policies toward the US. The ROK military should keep a sharp lookout for DPRK's provocation toward the ROK and the citizens should renew their security awareness.

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

21. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Korea Institute for future Strategies (Kim Keun-sik, "WE MUST NOT LET GO OF OUR KEYNOTE OF TOLERANCE TOWARD DPRK", 2008/03/05) carried a commentary by a professor of Kyungnam Univ. who wrote that regardless of the shift in administration, the policy toward DPRK must be guaranteed in its coherent continuance. However, the policies toward DPRK of the Lee Myung-bak administration imply the danger of having change in DPRK as the premise of resolution of DPRK nuclear problem. We should not reject the achievement of tolerance toward the DPRK to return to regressive policies, arrested in the political situation of change in political power. The value and inevitability of tolerance toward the DPRK must quickly be recognized.

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

22. ROK Policy Toward DPRK Human Rights

The Peace Foundation (Yoon Yeo-sang, "HOPING FOR SINCERITY AND DEVOTION TO IMPROVING DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS", 2008/03/06) carried an article by the chief of the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights, who wrote that the attitude to make use of the president's proposal and the public emotion to raise the budget for one's institution without sufficient research and contemplation on DPRK human rights issues must be avoided. A division in the Ministry of National Unification devoted to DPRK human rights should be revived and a guarantee for a stable administration is needed. Establishment of a DPRK human rights foundation and administration of the Database Center for North Korean Human Rights now run by civil organization should be shifted to a joint administration by the government and civilians to reinforce the capability of movement for improving DPRK human rights in the civilian level and intensification of cooperative ability of government and civilians.

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

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