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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. UN on DPRK Threat

Voices of America News ("UN URGES NORTH KOREA TO RETRACT PLANE THREAT", 2009/03/10) reported that the United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization met Monday and urged the DPRK to retract its threat against passenger planes flying near its airspace.

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2. Japan on DPRK Missile Program

Kyodo News ("DEFENSE CHIEF URGES N. KOREA TO SHOW RESTRAINT OVER MISSILE LAUNCH", Tokyo, 2009/03/10) reported that Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada urged DPRK on Tuesday to refrain from launching what it says is a satellite, warning the test-firing of what other countries see as a ballistic missile would destabilize East Asia. ''I believe it's important for the government to call on North Korea to refrain from an action that would damage peace and stability in the region,'' the minister said.

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3. Six-Party Talks

Associated Press ("BOSWORTH OPTIMISTIC ABOUT EARLY RESUMPTION OF 6-WAY TALKS", Washington, 2009/03/10) reported that Stephen Bosworth, the new U.S. special representative for policy on DPRK, expressed confidence Tuesday about an early resumption of six-party talks on denuclearizing DPRK. "I'm optimistic we can resume the six-party process very soon," Bosworth told reporters upon arriving in Washington after his three-nation tour of Asia.

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4. DPRK Arms Trade

Reuters ("NORTH KOREAN SHIPS LIKELY NOT SMUGGLING WMD, REPORT SAYS", 2009/03/06) reported that a report issued Thursday says DPRK merchant ships are not likely to be involved in smuggling of weapons of mass destruction. Port authorities keep too close a watch over Pyongyang's 242 shipping vessels for them to be a viable WMD smuggling resource, according to Hazel Smith, a DPRK expert at Cranfield University in the United Kingdom. "We can't really find very much hard evidence of North Korean ships involved in smuggling WMD or components of WMD," Smith said. The report says that DPRK is likely to transport missiles or other weaponry via airplanes or by ships not flagged to the country.

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5. US on DPRK

Korea Times ("US ENVOY CALLS FOR CALM RESPONSE TO NK PROVOCATION", 2009/03/10) reported that U.S. special envoy on DPRK Stephen Bosworth said Tuesday that ROK should not "overreact'' to the DPRK's campaign of threats, according to an aide to former President Kim Dae-jung. Kim and Bosworth had a telephone conversation before the envoy departed for Washington, ending his regional tour that also took him to PRC and Japan, he said.

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6. US-DPRK Relations

Associated Press (Jae-Soon Chang, "NKOREA ACCUSES OBAMA'S GOVERNMENT OF INTERFERENCE", Seoul, 2009/03/11) reported that the DPRK's Foreign Ministry accused the US government of meddling in its internal affairs Wednesday. "The new administration of the U.S. is now working hard to infringe upon the sovereignty of the DPRK by force of arms," the statement said. It accused Obama's government of "letting loose a whole string of words and deeds little short of getting on the nerves of the DPRK and seriously interfering in its internal affairs." The statement also called the annual military drills in the ROK "war exercises designed to mount a pre-emptive attack." It said the country "will take every necessary measure to protect its sovereignty."

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7. Russia, PRC on Korean Peninsula

Reuters ("RUSSIA, CHINA CALL FOR RESTRAINT ON KOREAN PENINSULA", Moscow, 2009/03/11) reported that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke to his PRC counterpart Yang Jiechi on Tuesday. "Both sides expressed concern about the worsening situation on the Korean peninsula," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. "The ministers called on the corresponding states to show restraint and composure, and to refrain from any actions that could undermine security and stability in this region," the ministry said.

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8. DPRK-Japan Relations

Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREA SLAMS JAPAN OVER KIDNAP ISSUE", Seoul, 2009/03/10) reported that DPRK accused Japan on Tuesday of raising an outcry over the abduction of its civilians in an attempt to find a pretext for recolonising the peninsula. The DPRK said its military would launch a "merciless" strike on Japan if the former colonial power "dare pre-empt an attack" on it. "Japan's noisy and disturbing trumpeting about 'the abduction issue' is nothing but a prelude to its operation to stage a comeback to Korea," the DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency said.

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9. Japanese Abductees Issue

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "EX-NKOREAN SPY MEETS RELATIVES OF JAPAN ABDUCTEE", Busan, 2009/03/11) reported that former DPRK agent Kim Hyon-hui met Wednesday with relatives ofYaeko Taguchi, a Japanese woman abducted to the DPRK. Kim claims her spy training included coaching on Japanese language and culture by Taguchi. Taguchi's relatives said they had new hope she was alive after Wednesday's meeting. Kim disputed the DPRK's claim of Taguchi's 1986 death, saying she had heard the following year that Taguchi had moved to another place.

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10. ROK-Australia Trade Relations

Voice of America (Phil Mercer, "AUSTRALIAN FARMERS SEEK SWIFT TRADE PACT WITH SOUTH KOREA", Sydney, 2009/03/10) reported that Australian farmers are urging their political leaders to secure a swift trade accord with ROK, ahead of free-trade negotiations that are scheduled to start in May. Australian beef producers are worried that their hopes for greater access to the lucrative ROK market will be derailed by an expected return of American beef exports, which have been affected by a case of mad cow disease.

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11. ROK-US Trade Relations

Yonhap News ("SEOUL SAYS KOREA-U.S. FTA MUST BE RATIFIED 'AS IS'", Seoul, 2009/03/10) reported that ROK's presidential office called on the National Assembly Tuesday to ratify the country's free trade agreement with the United States, hours after the nominee for top U.S. trade negotiator said the deal needs to be renegotiated. Cheong Wa Dae's (the president's spokeswoman) said the call for FTA ratification is meant in part to pressure the U.S. to reciprocate. "South Korea's legislative body will vote on the deal independent of developments in the U.S.," said Rep. Hong Joon-pyo, the GNP's floor leader.

Yonhap ("FOREIGN MINISTER URGES SWIFT APPROVAL OF FTA WITH U.S.", Seoul, 2009/03/11)

reported that ROK foreign minister Yu Myung-hwan said Wednesday that a pending free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States would ultimately serve both countries' interests. "I hope that the agreement will enter into effect as soon as possible and I am confident that will happen," said Yu. "We initially hoped that the FTA would be brought to closure prior to the U.S. elections last year, but as we all know due to the election there were certain political issues raised in regards to this issue."

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12. ROK-New Zealand Relations

Korea.net ("KOREA, NEW ZEALAND FORGE ENERGY, DIGITAL CONTENT PARTNERSHIPS", 2009/03/10) reported that Minister of Knowledge Economy Lee Youn Ho attended two MOU signing ceremonies in New Zealand recently, marking new partnerships between the two countries on renewable energy and digital content. Minister Lee was in New Zealand as part of an official visit by President Lee Myung Bak. The ROK Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources and GNS Science intend to cooperate on development of gas hydrates and geothermal energy. This “clean energy partnership” will enable ROK and New Zealand to advance promising technologies and move their respective societies a step closer to the goal of low-carbon, green growth.

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13. Japan Government

Bloomberg (Takashi Hirokawa and Sachiko Sakamaki, "OZAWA SET TO REMAIN AS JAPAN’S OPPOSITION LEADER, LAWMAKERS SAY", Tokyo, 2009/03/10) reported that Ichiro Ozawa, the leader of the opposition Democratic Party of Japan, indicated to party colleagues he has no plan to resign over an investigation into political donations made to his office. Ozawa apologized for the probe, Kenji Tamura, a DPJ lawmaker who attended a party meeting with Ozawa today, told reporters at parliament in Tokyo. “He gave us the impression that he’ll stay on,” Tamura said.

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14. Japan Climate Change

Mainichi ("JAPAN SOLAR POWER PLAN TAKES HEAT FROM CONSUMERS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS", 2009/03/10) reported that in order to expand Japan's solar power production, the government is planning a feed-in tariff system as early as spring 2010, though critics of the plan say government expectations are wildly out of line with what they're willing to spend. Some have been critical of the extra costs the new system would cause energy consumers, estimated up to 100 yen per month, while others raised questions about the plan' efficacy. Ruling and opposition parties pronounced the plan's system of subsidies completely inadequate, and pressed METI to adopt feed-in tariffs on models such as that in Germany. Angry consumers complain that only the rich can afford to buy solar panels and wonder why the rest of the people should be forced to bear the costs of solar power.

Bloomberg (Shigeru Sato and Yuji Okada, "JAPAN AIMS TO COMPLETE UKRAINE CARBON CREDIT ACCORD BY MARCH 31", 2009/03/09) reported that Japan, a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol, is in

the final phase of talks to buy greenhouse-gas emission credits from Ukraine and aims to complete the accord by March 31, a trade ministry official said. Japan plans to buy the right to emit about 30 million tons of the heat-trapping gases including carbon dioxide from Ukraine for 30 billion yen ($305 million).

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15. Japan Food Safety

Mainichi ("LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO CARRY ON BSE TESTING DESPITE SUBSIDY CUTS", 2009/03/10) reported that every local government across the country with meat inspection facilities will continue to test all beef cows for mad cow disease during the next fiscal year, a Mainichi survey has found. The finding comes despite the central government's abolition of about 200 million yen in annual subsidies to local governments for bovine spongiform encephalopathy tests.

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16. Japan Environment

Associated Press (Yuri Kageyama, "HONDA'S HYBRID INSIGHT SELLS BRISKLY JAPAN", Tokyo, 2009/03/10) reported that orders for the hybrid Insight have totaled 18,000 since it hit the Japanese auto market about a month ago, outpacing Honda's target and underlining the success of the new affordable and ecological vehicle, the company said Tuesday.

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17. PRC Anti-piracy Mission

Associated Press ("CHINA TO RENEW SOMALIA ANTI-PIRACY MISSION", Beijing, 2009/03/09) reported that PRC's navy will renew an anti-piracy mission to the Gulf of Aden when the current commitment expires in the coming months. New ships will be sent to take over in late April or in early May, the China Daily newspaper quoted the navy deputy chief of staff, Rear Adm. Zhang Deshun as saying. Zhang termed the mission thus far an unqualified success and said PRC was prepared for a lengthy commitment.

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18. PRC Economy

Asia News International ("CHINA MAY OVERTAKE JAPAN AS THE WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST ECONOMY IN 2010", Beijing, 2009/03/10) reported that a research paper issued by the PRC Policy Institute of the University of Nottingham (UK) has revealed that PRC is likely to overtake Japan to become the world's second largest economy, either this year or by 2010. Yao Shujie, the author of the research paper told China Daily, "Right now, we don't have figures for Japan's GDP in 2008, but I think China may have already overtaken Japan last year."

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19. PRC Environment

Associated Press ("A NEW MANTRA FOR CHINA'S BIG THIRST: LESS IS MORE", Zhangyigang Village, PRC, 2009/03/10) reported that three canals will bring water hundreds of miles to Beijing and other thirsty cities in the north. More than 350,000 people in the way will be forced to move. "It can only be a supplement to the water shortage in the short term," Zhang Jiyao, the minister in charge of the water project, told The Associated Press. "More important, we must depend on saving water."

Reuters (Chris Buckley, "CHINA GROUP URGES GOVERNMENT TO STICK TO GREEN GOALS", Beijing, 2009/03/09) reported that a PRC environmental group on Monday urged the government not to backtrack on cleaning air and water despite the economic slowdown, asking parliament to ensure stimulus spending does not prop up pollution. PRC's abrupt economic slowing has cut pollution, but environmental advocates worry the government's desire to bolster growth and jobs may encourage its 4 trillion yuan ($585 billion) stimulus plan into laxly regulated cement, steel and coke plants and deter effective environmental scrutiny of new projects. Friends of Nature, a PRC environmental group, issued a letter to the National People's Congress to ensure the stimulus spending goes to clean projects.

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20. Sino-US Relations

Associated Press (Anne Gearan, "OFFICIALS: US SHIP IN CHINA SPAT WAS HUNTING SUBS", Washington, 2009/03/10) reported that the U.S. Navy ship that got into a scrape with five PRC vessels in the South China Sea was looking for threats such as submarines — presumably Chinese — in waters that PRC claims as its own, defense officials acknowledged Tuesday. Although they would not be specific about the Impeccable's mission when it was intercepted by PRC ships, two defense officials said the ship is designed and equipped for sub-hunting work and was part of a calculated U.S. surveillance operation in the disputed South China Sea and that the U.S. military will continue to patrol in the South China Sea despite PRC objections.

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21. PRC Tibet Issue

Asia World News ("TAIWAN-BASED TIBETANS PROTEST CHINA'S OCCUPATION OF TIBET", Taipei, 2009/03/10) reported that Tibetans in Taiwan held demonstrations and rallies on Tuesday to mark the 50th anniversary of PRC's 1959 occupation of Tibet. Two Taiwan cities and one county have declared March 10 as "Tibet Day" as a protest to commemorate the Dalai Lama's fleeing Tibet to seek exile in India, as the Tibet Day.

Real Time Traders News ("CHINA ASKS U.S. CONGRESS TO DROP RESOLUTION ON TIBET", 2009/03/10) reported that PRC requested the U.S. congress not to press ahead with a proposed resolution on Tibet. At a regular briefing in Beijing, PRC foreign ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said, "We request the related U.S. representatives follow the basic norms guiding international relations and stop pushing the bill on Tibet." A non-binding measure on Tibet, authored by

Democratic Representative Rush Holt, is to be voted upon in the U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday. On behalf of the PRC government, he expressed serious concern over "the interference in China's internal affairs on the pretext of the Tibet issue."

Agence France Presse ("CHINA SAYS DALAI LAMA TIBET COMMENTS ARE "LIES"", Beijing, 2009/03/10) reported that PRC on Tuesday described critical comments from the Dalai Lama, as "lies" and insisted the Himalayan region had enjoyed profound democratic reforms under PRC rule. "I will not respond to the Dalai Lama's lies," foreign ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu told reporters. "The Dalai Lama clique is confusing right and wrong. They are spreading rumors. The democratic reforms (under PRC rule) are the widest and most profound reforms in Tibetan history," Ma said. In a speech Tuesday on the 50th anniversary of the failed uprising that led to his exile, the Dalai Lama accused PRC of causing the deaths of "hundreds of thousands" in subsequent rounds of repression.

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II. PRC Report

22. PRC Environment

Xinhua Net ("BEIJING FAMILIES TO KEEP EARTHWORMS FOR KITCHEN GARBAGE RECYCLING", 2009/03/10) reported that twenty families in Chunshu Community in Beijing have volunteered to feed earthworms with organic kitchen garbage and trade earthworms waste for organic vegetables. “Under ideal conditions, one kilogram of earthworms can eat up to an equal weight of kitchen garbage per day and produce about half a kilogram of earthworm waste,” said Han Baixing at the training class for the participating households. The campaign to promote the biological method of decomposing garbage was introduced by Japanese teachers, who came to visit a neighborhood committee in Xicheng District of Beijing last April.

Dajing Net ("KEEP POLLUTERS FROM YANGTZ RIVER, SAYS CHINESE POLITICAL ADVISOR", 2009/03/10) reported that PRC should keep potential polluters away from the industry-heavy Yangtze river, the country's longest, by raising threshold and readjusting industrial layout, a political advisor said here Saturday. “We must set quotas on and raise threshold for potential polluting plants along the Yangtze River to wipe out pollution from the roots,” said Chen Qinghua, a member of the 11th National Committee of Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.The government was expanding domestic demand and increase investment amid the global financial crisis, and we should take the opportunity to improve sewage treatment facilities in cities, and move faster to readjust industrial layout and structure along the river, said Chen.

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