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MARKTWO

I. Napsnet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "'PYONGYANG REMOVED 75% OF SPENT FUEL RODS'", Seoul, 2009/03/15) reported that the DPRK has removed about 6,100 of its 8,000 spent fuel rods from the Yongbyon reactor, the U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS) reported Saturday. However, the DPRK has apparently slowed down the removal process, the report said.

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2. ROK on DPRK Missile Program

Yonhap ("S. KOREA WARNS N. KOREA NOT TO FIRE MISSILE", Seoul, 2009/03/13) reported that the ROK urged the DPRK Friday to stop its move to fire a rocket. "Since North Korea's act is in violation of U.N. Resolution 1718, it should be halted," foreign ministry spokesman Moon Tae-yong said in a statement. "If North Korea presses ahead with a launch, there will be Security Council-level consultation and countermeasures."

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3. Japan on DPRK Missile Program

New York Times (Choe Sang-hun, "JAPAN WARNS NORTH KOREA OVER ROCKET LAUNCH", Seoul, 2009/03/13) reported that Japn on Friday condemned the DPRK's plan to launch a rocket next month. "They can call it a satellite or whatever, but it would be a violation" of a United Nations resolution, said Prime Minister Taro Aso. "Under our law, we can intercept any object if it is falling

towards Japan, including any attacks on Japan, for our safety," said the Japanese government's top spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura.

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4. UN on DPRK Missile Program

Korea Times (Na Jeong-ju, "UN TO DISCUSS SANCTIONS ON N. KOREA", Seoul, 2009/03/13) reported that the U.N. Security Council will discuss possible sanctions on the DPRK if the country launches a rocket. ``That's what Security Council members will discuss when and after anything happens,'' U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said. ``I'm concerned about North Korea's recent move to launch a satellite or long-range missile. This will threaten the peace and stability in the region,'' he said. ROK Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Yu Myung-hwan said, "If the North launches either a missile or a satellite, it will be referred to the council for possible sanctions. The United States, China, Japan, Russia and many other countries have already told the North to give up its missile ambitions. We will act with them, too.''

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "SKOREA: NKOREA'S BORDER-CROSSING BAN 'REGRETTABLE'", Seoul, 2009/03/15) reported that the ROK's ruling Grand National Party and several of the nation's companies urged the DPRK on Sunday to end its ban on border crossings by workers at the Kaesong industrial park. The DPRK's move is "very regrettable," Unification Minister Hyun In-taek said at a meeting with ROK business owners who run factories in the complex.
The DPRK allowed an ROK construction worker suffering from spinal cord disease to cross the border on Sunday evening, Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Ho-nyeon said.

Donga Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA BANS BORDER CROSSINGS AGAIN", Seoul, 2009/03/14) reported that the DPRK Friday blocked 275 ROK workers seeking to return from the inter-Korean industrial complex in Kaesong. The Unification Ministry said the number of ROK citizens in the DPRK was 769, including 733 in the complex, 35 on Mount Kumgang, and one in Pyongyang. One official said, "We sought to grasp Pyongyang's intent through the Gaeseong Industrial District Management Committee, but the committee repeatedly told us to wait without giving an explanation."

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN PRESIDENT SAYS N. KOREA MUST STOP THREATENING CIVILIANS", Seoul, 2009/03/13) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak said Friday that the DPRK should stop threatening his country's civilians. "North Korea is threatening us in all areas, including land, sea and air," he said, calling on Pyongyang to "abide by the mutual promise to uphold the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."

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6. Sino-DPRK Trade Relations

North Korean Econony Watch (Michael Rank, "CHINA EXPORTS BEEF, FLOUR TO NORTH KOREA,

TRADE GROWS 41% IN 2008", 2009/03/07) reported that the PRC has exported 5.014 tonnes of beef, worth $77,174, to the DPRK via the northern port of Dalian and has also agreed to ship 60,000 tonnes of flour, according to brief reports on PRC websites. The export of beef, in 485 containers via the border city of Dongdan in February, was the first of its kind from Dalian, the report said. Another reportsaid PRC-DPRK trade grew by 41.3% last year to $2.793 billion. PRC exports grew 30.2% to $2.032 billion while DPRK exports to the PRC were up 30.2% at $760.07 million, the report said, quoting PRC customs statistics.

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7. DPRK Leadership

Korea Herald ("KIM JONG-IL CALLS REGIME 'INVULNERABLE'", Seoul, 2009/03/16) reported that the Korean Central News Agency said DPRK leader Kim Jong-il watched an artillery units perform a live-fire exercise, without giving a date or location. "Our socialist fortress is invulnerable and our revolutionary cause is sure to win one victory after another as we have these steel-like elite ranks," Kim said. The report said the exercise demonstrated the fighting spirit and resolute determination of the DPRK to wipe out aggression in a single blow.

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8. DPRK Economy

Associated Press ("REPORT: NKOREA OPENS ITALIAN RESTAURANT IN CAPITAL", Seoul, 2009/03/15) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il has ordered the opening of the isolated country's first Italian restaurant, Choson Shinbo said Saturday. Kim — a reputed gourmand — sent DPRK cooks to Naples and Rome last year to learn how to reproduce authentic Italian pizza and pasta after "repeated trial and error ," the newspaper said. "Our people should be also allowed to enjoy the world-famous food," the manager of the Pyongyang eatery quoted Kim as saying.

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9. DPRK Smuggling

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "N.KOREA SHIPS SMUGGLE GOODS, BUT NOT WMDS: REPORT", 2009/03/06) reported that cash-strapped DPRK shippers smuggle narcotics and other contraband, but there's little evidence that the DPRK's rusty merchant fleet transports illicit weapons, a report said. British DPRK expert Hazel Smith said her detailed study of DPRK merchant shipping showed a fleet of only 242 aging vessels faces too much scrutiny in the world's ports to be a significant conduit for weapons of mass destruction. "We can't really find very much hard evidence of North Korean ships involved in smuggling WMD or components of WMD," Smith, of Cranfield University, told a Washington meeting of think tank East-West Center.

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10. ROK Participation in PSI

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "'MISSILE LAUNCH MAY OPEN DOOR TO PSI'", Seoul, 2009/03/16) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan said if the DPRK goes through with a rocket launch, it may open the door for Seoul to consider full-fledged membership in the Proliferation Security Initiative. "That is a possibility because the Proliferation Security Initiative is aimed to contain weapons of mass destruction, and if North Korea develops and attains such capabilities, there will be a need to prevent proliferation. So from this point of view, the launch may raise the need to review full membership," Yu said. Yu said that the government would have to exercise prudence due to the "unique peninsular circumstances."

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11. US-ROK FTA

Donga Ilbo ("USTR NOMINEE BACKS OFF FROM HARD-LINE STANCE ON FTA", Seoul, 2009/03/14) reported that Ron Kirk, U.S. Trade Representative, said in a written statement in his Senate confirmation hearing on Friday that he is generally supportive of the US-ROK Free Trade Agreement despite issues that might need addressing. Kirk said he is fully aware of disputed auto provisions and will cooperate with senators to resolve their concerns. He also said he will work with stakeholders in the United States and ROK counterparts to deal with issues related to the accord.

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12. ROK Nuclear Power

Joongang Ilbo ("TWO NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS PLANNED", Seoul, 2009/03/14) reported that the ROK plans to place an order for two nuclear power plants that will cost 6.3 trillion won ($4.2 billion) to cut its dependence on oil, said a government official and an executive at a unit of Korea Electric Power Corp. The government will allocate 4.8 trillion won for land fees and other charges and 1.5 trillion won for the construction of the two 1,400-megawatt plants, said the official at the Ministry of Knowledge Economy.

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13. ROK Anti-Piracy Mission

Korea Herald ("KOREA SENDS NAVAL VESSEL TO SOMALIA", Seoul, 2009/03/14) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak on Friday pledged a greater role in global security as he formally sent off a naval unit to patrol Somali waters. "Korean military's responsibility is to secure international peace and well-being through peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism and the prevention of disasters," he said. "The Gulf of Aden is a vital route for international energy transport. Especially for Korea because we import 70 percent of our crude oil from the Middle East," he said. "We can no longer leave the lives and wealth of our people in danger."

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14. Japanese SDF Anti-Piracy Mission

Asahi Shimbun ("MSDF GETS ORDER FOR ANTI-PIRACY MISSION", Tokyo, 2009/03/14) reported that two Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyers will leave Japan today to help fight pirates off Somalia. The Security Council of Japan, headed by Prime Minister Taro Aso, formally decided Friday to dispatch the MSDF. Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada later gave the order to start the mission. On Friday, the Cabinet approved a bill "concerning punishment and measures against piracy." The new law would enable MSDF personnel to protect foreign vessels. It would also give MSDF members authority to fire at pirate ships to force them to stop even when neither self-defense purposes nor "acts of necessity" are involved.

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15. Japanese Politics

New York Times (Martin Fackler, "JAPAN'S POLITICAL DYNASTIES COME UNDER FIRE BUT PROVE RESILIENT", Yokosuka, 2009/03/14) reported that Japan's practice of politicians passing down their parliamentary seats to their children has fallen under increasing attack by voters and many political scientists. They say the practice has helped create an inbred version of politics that has contributed to the leadership paralysis gripping this nation, slowing its response to the current financial crisis and Japan’s longer economic decline. This has fed a fear of rising social inequalities, and the feeling that unseen barriers are preventing new talent, new ideas from entering politics, and from helping Japan find a way out of its morass.

Kyodo ("ASO INDICATES LOWER HOUSE DISSOLUTION THIS SPRING UNLIKELY", Tokyo, 2009/03/15) reported that Prime Minister Taro Aso indicated Sunday that he is unlikely to dissolve the House of Representatives for an election this spring. ''I believe public hopes of (improvements in) economic and employment conditions are very high...and calls for fiscal stimulus measures worth 2 percent of GDP (gross domestic product) are also mounting around the world,'' Aso said. ''So, at this point, I cannot say that I will dissolve (the lower house) in May or June,'' he said.

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16. US Nuclear Policy

Kyodo ("NONPROLIFERATION PANEL URGES U.S. TO ADOPT NO FIRST USE OF NUKE ARMS", Tokyo, 2009/03/15) reported that the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament will urge the United States to take a leadership role in nuclear disarmament by developing a nuclear policy of ''no first use,'' according to a draft of policy recommendations made available on Sunday. The panel will also urge the United States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and restore the U.S.-Russia strategic nuclear arms control process as part of its five-point proposals, according to the draft.

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17. PRC-Philippines Territorial Dispute

Agence France Press ("BEIJING SENDS PATROL SHIP TO SOUTH CHINA SEA", Beijing, 2009/03/15) reported that the PRC has dispatched its most modern patrol ship to the South China Sea, state press said Sunday, after an incident with a US naval vessel and a fresh claim by the

Philippines to the disputed territory. The Beijing News said the vessel would conduct patrols of what it called the PRC's exclusive maritime zone in the disputed waters surrounding the Paracel and Spratly Islands. It said the converted naval rescue ship would aid PRC fishing boats and transport vessels.

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18. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

The Economic Times ("INDIA, CHINA TO HOLD TALKS TO NORMALISE TRADE RELATIONS", New Delhi, 2009/03/15) reported that India and the PRC are to discuss ways to defuse rising trade tensions between them next week, after a series of recent government actions to impose restrictions on PRC imports risks upsetting relations with the country's largest trading partner. The PRC's vice-minister of commerce, Zhong Shan, is to meet commerce secretary GK Pillai next Thursday to explore ways in which such trade restrictive actions could be minimised. New Delhi has also initiated 14 anti-dumping cases—instances where imports take place at prices lower than those applied in the domestic market causing injury to domestic industry—against the PRC this fiscal year, of which preliminary duties have been imposed on two items.

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19. Sino-US Trade Relations

Reuters ("OBAMA REASSURES CHINA ON BONDS", Washington, 2009/03/15) reported that President Barack Obama denied there was any rift among the world's 20 leading economies on how to deal with the global financial crisis and assured the PRC its U.S. investments were safe. Obama sought to reassure China, which expressed concern on Friday that massive U.S. deficit spending and near-zero interest rates would erode the value of the PRC's huge U.S. bond holdings. "Not just the Chinese government but every investor can have absolute confidence in the soundness of investments in the United States," Obama said, noting that his comments applied to U.S. Treasuries as well as investments in the private sector.

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20. US on PRC Tibet Issue

Agence France-Presse ("OBAMA BRACES FOR CHINA'S TIBET 'OFFENSIVE'", Washington , 2009/03/15) reported that Barack Obama has started his presidency with aims to build a broader relationship with the PRC but he is already getting a taste of battles to come on one deeply divisive issue -- Tibet . PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi visited Washington last week and spoke of a "historic opportunity" for the Pacific powers to build lasting cooperation... but Yang vowed no compromise on PRC sovereignty over Tibet and Taiwan -- and did not mince words when he demanded his hosts stop "meddling" in Beijing's affairs over human rights. Obama said he told Yang that human rights were an "essential aspect" of US foreign policy and voiced hope for a resumption of talks between the PRC and the Dalai Lama's representatives.

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21. PRC Tibet Issue

Associated Press (Anita Chang, "CHINA DEFENDS TIBET POLICIES AHEAD OF RIOT DATE", Beijing, 2009/03/13) reported that PRC premier Wen Jiabao defended Beijing's policies in Tibet on Friday. Wen stated, "The situation in Tibet is on the whole peaceful and stable. The Tibetan people hope to work in peace and stability." "Tibet's continuous progress (has) proven the policies we have adopted are right," he said. The South China Morning Post said Friday that armed police were searching door-to-door for "suspicious characters," in Lhasa, targeting out-of-towners and journalists. "Not a single hotel, guesthouse or local home in the city was spared," said the newspaper. It cited hotel and restaurant owners as saying that those who did not have ID cards issued by the regional government were taken in by authorities for further interrogation.

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22. PRC Bird Flu

Agence France Press ("CHINA BIRD FLU EFFORT IN QUESTION AFTER NEW CASES", Hong Kong , 2009/03/15) reported that a probe into an outbreak of bird flu at a Hong Kong chicken farm and carcasses popping up in city waters have raised questions over whether the H5N1 virus is going undetected in southern PRC. The report came days after two dead chickens with H5N1 were found floating in the sea off Hong Kong , the latest of more than a dozen chickens, ducks and other birds to wash up along the city's coastline since the start of year. "From the various investigations we have done (the washed-up carcasses) are most likely drifting down from the Pearl River," Hong Kong's health secretary York Chow said in early February.

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II. PRC Report

23. PRC Civil Society

Beijing Daily (Wang Hao, "BEIJING DEVELOPS THREE KINDS OF VOLUNTEERS", 2009/03/13) reported that Beijing Volunteer’s Federation is to be found according to the general secretary of Municipal Association of Social Workers. The Foundation will divide the 2 million volunteers of Beijing into three kinds: one is for large evens, such as the Olympic Games; the second is for regular service, such as the community volunteers and public order volunteers; third is for emergency, such as the earthquake rescue.

People’s Daily online (Wang Min, "PROFESSOR SUGGESTS TO ESTABLISH OVERSEAS VOLUNTARY “YOUTH TEAM”", 2009/03/13) reported that Professor Wang Ming, Director of NGO Research Center, Tsinghua University suggested at the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference that the government should collect outstanding graduates to carry out voluntary service overseas. Like the U.S. Peace Corps and Japan Overseas Cooperation Team, our nation should make an attempt to establish a system for Youth International Voluntary Service, and this is also a friendship project which has far-reaching social value and lasting impact,

said Wang.

Finance (Zhang Yanling, "INDIVIDUAL DONATION FIRST EXCEED ENTERPRISES' IN 2008", 2009/03/13) reported that according to 2008 China Charity Donation Report issued by Ministry of Civil Affairs and so on recently, in 2008, the domestic individual donation is 45.8 billion RMB, exceeding the number of enterprises for the first time. The enterprises' donation in 2008 is 38.8 billion RMB. The individual donation per capita in 2008 is 34.66 RMB, while the number in 2007 is only 2.5 RMB.

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