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MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. US-DPRK Relations

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA ACCUSES U.S. OF CAUSING NUCLEAR DISPUTE ", Seoul, 2009/01/29) reported that the DPRK insisted the US is responsible for the nuclear dispute on the Korean Peninsula, saying its atomic weapons development was triggered by Washington's own nuclear deployment in the ROK over 50 years ago. The accusation was published by the DPRK's official website Uriminzokkiri. Pyongyang claims that Washington forced it to develop nuclear weapons by raising nuclear threats during the Korean War and deploying nuclear weapons to US military forces in the ROK after the war.

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2. US Policy Toward the DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. 'LOOKING FOR N.KOREA SPECIAL ENVOY' ", 2009/01/29) reported that the new US administration is reportedly considering New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and former US ambassador to Seoul Stephen Bosworth for the post of special envoy to the DPRK. Radio Free Asia cited a former senior official in the US State Department as saying Richardson has a deep interest in the DPRK and has been to Pyongyang several times.

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3. US-DPRK Joint Recovery Operations

Yonhap News (Sam Kim, "IDENTIFICATION OF KOREAN WAR SOLDIERS HUMANITARIAN ISSUE: U.S. OFFICIAL", 2009/01/29) reported that the top US official overseeing the identification of wartime military casualties indicated that political tensions between Pyongyang and Washington should be set aside to allow her laboratory to resume its work in the DPRK. Describing her mission

as "humanitarian," Rear Adm. Donna Crisp said Pyongyang and Washington have yet to agree to restart the exhumation of US soldiers killed in the DPRK during the Korean War, but added that her government will fund the project if it resumes.

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4. Inter-Korean Maritime Border

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA: WON'T RECOGNIZE SEA BORDER WITH SOUTH KOREA", Seoul, 2009/01/29) reported that the DPRK will no longer recognize its disputed sea border with the ROK, state media said. The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea, a body handling cross- border relations, said in a statement it was scrapping all political and military agreements with the ROK.

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5. Inter-Korea Relations

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "N. KOREA DITCHES NONAGGRESSION PACT WITH S. KOREA", Seoul, 2009/01/30) reported that the DPRK said Friday it is ditching all peace agreements with the ROK. The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Korea said in a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency, "The group of traitors has already reduced all the agreements reached between the North and the South in the past to dead documents." The statement specifically mentioned the 1991 Basic Agreement. It also said the maritime boundary off the divided peninsula's west coast will be "nullified."

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREA EXPRESSES REGRET OVER N. KOREAN BORDER THREAT, OFFERS DIALOGUE", Seoul, 2009/01/30) reported that the ROK expressed regret over the DPRK's threat on Friday to scrap reconciliatory accords. Kim Ho-nyoun, spokesman for the Unification Ministry, said in a press conference, "We urge North Korea to accept our call for dialgue as soon as possible."

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6. ROK, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "S. KOREA, JAPAN DISCUSS WAYS TO ADVANCE TALKS ON N. KOREA NUKE", Seoul, 2009/01/29) reported that top ROK nuclear negotiator Kim Sook and his counterpart Akitaka Saiki discussed ways to advance the six-party talks during a 90-minute luncheon meeting in Seoul. "The two sides also shared the view that it is important to have close consultation on the direction of the talks as early as possible after the US names officials to take charge of the nuclear issue," an official said during a background briefing on condition of anonymity.

Kyodo News ("S. KOREA, JAPAN AGREE TO STRENGTHEN CONSULTATION WITH CHINA, RUSSIA", 2009/01/29) reported that the ROK and Japan agreed to strengthen consultation with the PRC and Russia to advance the stalled six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear programs. Kim and Saiki also exchanged views on the results of a DPRK trip by a ROK delegation, made to survey the DPRK's unused nuclear fuel rods.

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7. DPRK Food Supply

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK STEPS UP CALLS TO RESOLVE FOOD SHORTAGES UNASSISTED IN THE NEW YEAR", 2009/01/29) reported that while the international community has expressed concerns that it does not appear that the DPRK food crisis will be resolved this year, on January 22, the Korean Workers' Party newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, carried an article emphasizing "the way to overcome the food problem is through our own labor," and stressing that the DPRK needed to "work out our salvation by our own efforts." The article explained, "Experts are saying that there is a possibility that food prices will continue to rise as food stocks around the world come up short, and many people will be hit hard," blaming global warming for desertification of agricultural land and typhoons for the destruction of crops.

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8. DPRK Abductee Issue

JoongAng Ilbo ("SPY COULD SHED LIGHT ON FATE OF ABDUCTED JAPANESE", 2009/01/29) reported that t he Japanese government has asked the Blue House to facilitate a meeting between a former DPRK spy and the family of an abducted Japanese national who taught the spy Japanese. Kim Hyun-hee, who was sentenced to death for her role in the 1987 bombing of Korean Air flight 858, has expressed a wish to meet the family of Yaeko Taguchi, a Japanese woman allegedly kidnapped by the DPRK in 1978. Kim claims that Taguchi is still alive, but Pyongyang said the kidnapped woman died in a car accident in 1986.

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9. US, Japan on Abductee Issue

Agence France-Presse ("OBAMA, ASO AGREE TO WORK ON NORTH KOREA - JAPAN", Tokyo, 2009/01/29) reported that US President Barack Obama and Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso agreed to cooperate on the DPRK's abductions of Japanese, Tokyo said. Obama and Aso held a 10-minute telephone conversation, their first since the U.S. president took office last week, and discussed a range of matters including the global economic crisis, the Japanese foreign ministry said. The leaders agreed to address "North Korean issues including the abduction issue and to further strengthen the Japan-U.S. alliance," it said.

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10. DPRK Leadership

Agence France-Presse ("N KOREA'S KIM AT VOLLEYBALL GAME, CONCERT - STATE MEDIA", Seoul, 2009/01/29) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il has attended a Lunar New Year volleyball match and an artistic performance by the military, state media said. Kim was "enthusiastically welcomed" by spectators at the game between an army team and another team. Kim also attended a song-and-dance performance by members of the navy and air force, the agency said without giving a

date .

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA'S KIM IN COMMAND AFTER HEALTH SCARE: U.S.", Washington, 2009/01/29) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il appears to have rebounded politically from a recent health scare and is making major decisions, a U.S. national security official said. "Kim appears to be in the saddle right now, making key decisions for his government," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. "He suffered some health setbacks several months ago, but, at least for now, those problems don't seem to be affecting his political position in North Korea ."

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11. ROK Food Aid

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "SEOUL TO BOOST AID TO DEVELOPING NATIONS", 2009/01/29) reported that the ROK will provide $25 million in aid to developing countries around the world through the World Food Program over the next three years, officials said. Oh Joon, deputy foreign minister for international organization, global issues and treaties, made the pledge during a conference on global food security from Jan. 26 to 27 in Madrid, Spain, an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said. Seoul's aid to the DPRK will not be included in the promised amount, according to the official.

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12. ROK Politics

JoongAng Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "NEW BATTLEGROUNDS FORM AS PARTY TALKS BREAK APART", 2009/01/29) reported that talks between the ruling and opposition parties broke down almost as soon as they started yesterday as lawmakers squabbled over how to address last week’s deadly standoff between the police and protesters in Yongsan. The meeting had been called to set the schedule for the new National Assembly session after the last one ended with key legislation unresolved. Deputy floor leaders of the Grand National Party, Democratic Party and the alliance of the Liberty Forward and Creative Korea parties began meeting in the afternoon after agreeing earlier to delay votes on the most contentious bills in the February session, slated to open on Tuesday.

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13. ROK Energy Supply

Reuters (Miyoung Kim, "NIGERIA CANCELS SOUTH KOREA'S EXPLORATION RIGHTS", 2009/01/29) reported that Nigeria has canceled exploration rights at two major offshore oilfields awarded to a ROK consortium in 2005, members of the group said, dealing a blow to Seoul's efforts to raise its reserves. "Nigeria informed our consortium that it will cancel the rights because the consortium failed to fully pay the investment that the group had agreed to honour in 2005 when the rights were awarded," consortium members Daewoo Shipbuilding and Korea Electric Power Corp said in a statement. "The Korean consortium believes the decision is unfair and is seeking countermeasures including refunds," the members said.

The Korea Times (Kim Hyun-cheol, "FREQUENT PROBLEMS CLOUD NUCLEAR POWER PLAN", 2009/01/29) reported that t he government has decided to build more nuclear power plants in order to secure a greater percentage of the country's electricity needs from this energy source. But a recent series of "incidents'' reported at current facilities has cast doubts on the industry's credibility, and the efficacy of the administration's energy plans. In light of the latest reported incidents, three in less than two months, concerned onlookers fear that nuclear energy planning is using a "bulldozer approach'' ? without a public review over safety and efficiency.

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14. Japan Politics

Kyodo News ("ASO SAYS HE WILL CALL ELECTION AT 'APPROPRIATE TIME' ", Tokyo, 2009/01/29) reported that Prime Minister Taro Aso indicated that he intends to call an election ''at an appropriate time''. ''I have put all my efforts into compiling economic measures and budgets to finance steps to shield the public's lives and employment from an unprecedented global financial crisis,'' Aso told a House of Representatives plenary session. ''Therefore, I would like to test the public mandate at an appropriate time after clarifying what the issues would be,'' the Japanese leader said.

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15. US-Japan Relations

Kyodo News ("STATE DEPT. EYES KEVIN MAHER AS NEW JAPAN DESK CHIEF", Washington, 2009/01/29) reported that the State Department is considering Kevin Maher, consul general in Naha in Japan's Okinawa Prefecture, as new director of its Office of Japanese Affairs, diplomatic sources said. Maher, who has been in his current position since July 2006, had previously been director for political military affairs at the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo and in charge of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, including the planned relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Futemma Air Station in Ginowan, Okinawa.

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16. SDF Golan Heights Dispatch

Kyodo News ("SDF PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN GOLAN HEIGHTS EXTENDED THROUGH SEPT.", Tokyo, 2009/01/29) reported that Japan decided to extend a Self-Defense Force mission participating in U.N. peacekeeping operations in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights in southern Syria for another six months until Sept. 30, 2009. The decision, made during a Cabinet meeting, came in response to a U.N. Security Council decision in December to extend the mission of the U.N. Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights, Japanese officials said.

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17. Japan Development Aid

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO FOCUS FOREIGN AID ON CLIMATE CHANGE, AFRICA: WHITE PAPER", Tokyo, 2009/01/29) reported that Japan underscored in a government report its priority on strengthening foreign assistance for African development and helping developing nations fight global warming, in fulfilling its pledges as host of two key conferences last year. The White Paper on Official Development Assistance 2008, compiled by the Foreign Ministry for submission to the Cabinet next Tuesday, also noted the growing presence of emerging donors such as the PRC and stressed the need for Japan and other major donors to coordinate and share experiences with the countries.

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18. Japan Emergency Preparedness Drill

Kyodo News ("MAJOR QUAKE DRILL CONDUCTED AT TOKYO GOV'T CITY HALL, 1ST SINCE 1992", Tokyo , 2009/01/29) reported that the Tokyo metropolitan government held a large-scale earthquake and fire disaster drill Thursday at its city hall in Shinjuku Ward for the first time in 17 years. The drill was based on the scenario of a quake measuring upper 5 on the Japanese seismic intensity scale of 7 occurring at around 9:30 a.m., with its focus in southern Ibaraki Prefecture. In the drill, some 6,000 people working in the main metropolitan government building huddled under their desks to protect themselves from the possible effects of the temblor.

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19. Sino-US Trade Relations

Reuters ("U.S. WON'T UNILATERALLY BLOCK CHINA EXPORTS: BIDEN", Washington, 2009/01/29) reported that the US will insist the PRC play by international trade rules , but will not move unilaterally to keep out the PRC's exports, Vice President Joe Biden said. "The policy of this administration is to say to China -- which occasionally the last administration was reluctant to do -- 'you're a major player on the world scene economically and you've got to play by the rules that everybody else plays by,'" Biden said in an interview on CNBC. "'Not more stringent. We're not going to impose on you, or attempt to impose on you, restraints that benefit our economy inconsistent with international trade agreements that exist,'" Biden said.

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20. PRC African Trade

United Press International (Andrei Chang, "CHINA SELLS AFRICA ARMS FOR MINERALS AND FOOD", Hong Kong, 2009/01/29) reported that i ncreasing quantities of PRC-made military equipment have been finding their way to Africa, traded for oil, mineral resources and even fishing rights. Zambia has used its copper resources to pay the PRC in a number of military deals, for instance, and Kenya has been negotiating with the PRC to trade fishing rights for arms.

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21. PRC Human Rights

Washington Post (Ariana Eunjung Cha, "IN CHINA, A GRASS-ROOTS REBELLION", Shanghai, 2009/01/29) reported that the human rights manifesto, known as Charter 08, is a significant marker in the demands for democracy in the PRC, one of the few sustained campaigns since the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. Those who sign the charter risk arrest and punishment. When the document first appeared online in mid-December, its impact was limited. Then something unusual happened. Ordinary people with no history of challenging the government began to circulate the document and declare themselves supporters. The list now includes scholars, journalists, computer technicians, businessmen, teachers and students whose names had not been associated with such movements before, as well as some on the lower rungs of the PRC's social hierarchy -- factory and construction workers and farmers.

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22. PRC Internet Control

Time Magazine (Austin Ramzy, "CHINA'S 'NETIZENS' TAKE ON THE GOVERNMENT", Beijing, 2009/01/29) reported that a growing trend on the PRC Internet could make life unpleasant for a handful of government bureaucrats who offend the cybercitizenry. For years, the PRC Internet has pulsated with so-called human-flesh search engines, online mobs that track down, name and shame people whose behavior has sparked public outrage. In recent months, at least three government bureaucrats have been targeted. But the post's rapid spread on the Internet shows how difficult it can be to control freelance online investigations of officials, even by the very officials tasked with controlling the Internet.

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