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MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK Naval Ship Sinking

Associated Press (Young-joon Ahn and Kwang-tae Kim, "SKOREA SUSPENDS UNDERWATER RESCUE OPERATION", Baengnyeong Island, 2010/03/31) reported that stormy conditions forced the ROK military to suspend the search for 46 missing sailors, officials said Wednesday, a day after a diver died during the rescue mission. An unidentified DPRK economic official in the PRC town of Dandong denied the DPRK's involvement in the blast, Yonhap news agency reported. A DPRK diplomat in Beijing who was contacted by The Associated Press said he had no information about the sinking. The Chosun Ilbo said a DPRK submersible or semi-submersible vessel disappeared around the time of the ship's sinking and has since returned to its base, citing an unidentified government source with access to satellite pictures. But the source said the disappearance wasn't unusual and that it would be difficult to connect it to Friday's explosion. YTN cable network reported that the Cheonan and another ROK navy ship were sailing to the area where the vessel sank in response to the appearance of a DPRK semi-submersible vessel, citing an unidentified military official. The Joint Chiefs of Staff declined to comment, saying the matter pertained to military operations .

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2. Japan on DPRK Sanctions

Reuters ("JAPAN TO EXTEND SANCTIONS AGAINST NORTH KOREA", 2010/03/30) reported that Japan will extend sanctions against the DPRK first imposed after the reclusive country tested a nuclear device and ballistic missiles in 2006, a senior official said. The sanctions, previously set to expire on April 13, ban imports from the DPRK and prohibit DPRK ships from calling at Japanese ports. "Basically, I don't see any reason for not extending (the sanctions)," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano told a news conference.

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3. Russia on DPRK Sanctions

Associated Press ("RUSSIA IMPLEMENTS NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS", Moscow, 2010/03/30) reports that Russia 's president has signed an order formally implementing U.N. Security Council-approved sanctions against the DPRK. The sanctions were passed in June by the Security Council, which includes Russia, after the country conducted a nuclear test. The sanctions are aimed at pushing the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons program. To conform with the sanctions, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Tuesday ordered that all sales or imports of DPRK weapons and materials connected to them are forbidden. It also bans weapons exports to the reclusive Communist country and bars transport of DPRK weapons through Russian territory, including its waters and airspace.

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4. Sino-DPRK Military Relations

Xinhua News ("CHINA, DPRK ARMED FORCES VOW TO FURTHER CO-OP", Beijing, 2010/03/30) reports that the PRC is ready to work with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to deepen bilateral exchanges and cooperation, so as to bolster the development of the relations between the two countries and militaries. Xu Caihou, vice chairman of the PRC's Central Military Commission, made the remarks when meeting with An Yonggi, director of the foreign affairs department of the DPRK's Ministry of the People's Armed Forces. Xu said the Communist Party of the PRC, the Chinese government and armed forces attach great importance to developing the exchanges and cooperation with the DPRK.

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5. Sino-DPRK Economic Relations

Xinhua News ("CHINA WELCOMES DPRK IN ATTENDING SHANGHAI WORLD EXPO: FM SPOKESMAN", 2010/03/30) reported that the PRC welcomes countries including the DPRK to participate in the 2010 Shanghai World Expo, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said. Spokesman Qin Gang made the remarks at a routine news briefing in Beijing in response to a question on the PRC's expectation of the DPRK's participation in the global event. "Shanghai World Expo is an event for countries to enhance communication and cooperation as well as increase mutual understanding," Qin said. "China offers support and services for their participation."

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6. ROK on Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE SAYS HIGH POSSIBILITY THAT N. KOREAN LEADER WILL VISIT CHINA", Seoul, 2010/03/31) reported that the ROK presidential office said Wednesday it believes chances are high that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il will visit the PRC in the near future. "There is a high possibility of it and we are keeping a close watch," Cheong Wa Dae spokeswoman Kim Eun-hye said at a press briefing. Another senior official also said that, "We have received some intelligence (about it), albeit not decisive. There are indications."

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7. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA SET TO END SURVEY OF S. KOREAN ASSETS AT KUMGANG", Seoul, 2010/03/30) reports that a DPRK inspection of ROK facilities at its Mount Kumgang resort continued for the sixth day Tuesday amid concern Pyongyang might announce tough measures on the stalled tour program after the inspection. Since Thursday last week, the DPRK has surveyed a hotel, a duty-free shop and other facilities built and run by ROK companies at the mountain resort. The move is believed to be aimed at pressuring ROK to agree to resume the long-stalled lucrative tours.

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8. DPRK-EU Relations

Yonhap News ("EU EXPECTED TO RELAX BAN ON N. KOREAN CARRIER AIR KORYO", 2010/03/30) reported that the European Union is expected to relax its four-year ban on the DPRK state carrier, Air Koryo, from all operations in its member states, a source at the European Commission said. Air Koryo has been on the EU's blacklist of airlines failing to meet international safety standards since the list was first put together in 2006. The EU's Air Safety Commission met last week to review the list and recommended that the restrictions on the DPRK airline be relaxed to "Annex B," which means that the carrier can operate in the region under "specific conditions," the source said.

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9. DPRK Economy

Slate (Sebastian Strangio, "KINGDOM KIM'S CULINARY OUTPOSTS", 2010/03/30) reported that the Pyongyang restaurant in the heart of Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh, is no ordinary Korean mess hall. The operation is run by the DPRK government, part of a chain of dozens of eateries—stretching from northern PRC to Thailand—that funnels much-needed foreign exchange into the state coffers in Pyongyang. DPRK government-run restaurants have existed for years in the regions of the PRC adjacent to the DPRK's northern border, but the 21st century has seen an expansion of the business into other parts of Asia. Little is known of how the restaurants operate, but experts say they are closely linked with other overseas operations run by the reclusive regime in Pyongyang.

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10. ROK-Jordan Nuclear Cooperation

Yonhap News ("S. KOREAN CONSORTIUM WINS DEAL TO BUILD RESEARCH REACTOR FOR JORDAN", Seoul, 2010/03/30) reports that an ROK consortium led by the state-run Korean Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI) signed a formal contract Tuesday to build Jordan's first nuclear research reactor by 2015, the government said. The deal for the 5 megawatt Jordan Research and Training Reactor (JRTR) marks the first time that the ROK has secured an export order to build a complete atomic research facility, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said. The

KAERI-Daewoo Engineering and Construction Co. consortium had been chosen as priority negotiating partners after sidestepping challenges from Argentina, the PRC and Russia in an open bid last December.

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11. ROK Nuclear Energy

The Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA DEVELOPS NUCLEAR REACTOR SOFTWARE", 2010/03/30) reports that the ROK has developed a home-grown version of nuclear reactor core software for the construction of nuclear power plants. Korea Hydro and Nuclear Power Company on Monday said that research institutes led by Korea Nuclear Fuel have succeeded in developing the reactor core software using only their own expertise. The reactor software is designed to predict the status of nuclear fuel inside the reactor, as well as the life cycle of the fuel rods and the time when they should be replaced. The ROK plans to create a home-grown version of three core nuclear power technologies by 2012 -- reactor core software, a reactor coolant pump, and a man-machine interface to control it.

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12. ROK-Japanese Territorial Dispute

JoongAng Daily (Lee Min-yong, "JAPANESE TEXTBOOKS REINFLAME DOKDO FEUD", 2010/03/31) reports that Seoul and Tokyo are set for another round in their decades-long territorial dispute over a set of rocky islets in the East Sea after the Japanese government yesterday approved five elementary school social studies textbooks that describe Dokdo as Japanese territory. ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan summoned Japan's top envoy to Seoul, Toshinori Shigeie, to file an official complaint over Tokyo's claim to the islets, known as Takeshima in Japan. One of the five textbooks approved Tuesday for use in 2010 by Japanese fifth graders says the ROK "illegally occupies" the islets.

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13. US-Japan Security Alliance

Mainichi Shimbun ("THINK TANK SKEPTICAL ABOUT U.S. TROOP DEPLOYMENT ONLY IN EMERGENCIES", 2010/03/30) reported that the think tank of the Defense Ministry has expressed skepticism about an idea of maintaining the Japan-US security alliance without US forces being permanently stationed in Japan, saying in its annual report set for release that the role of the US military in a "gray area" between peacetime and contingencies has become vital. Such a view conflicts with the concept held by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama of maintaining military facilities in Japan that would accommodate occasional drills by US forces in peacetime and deploying American troops only in emergencies.

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14. USFJ Base Relocation

Mainichi Shimbun ("OKADA, CLINTON TO CONTINUE FUTEMMA TALKS, NO CHANGE IN U.S. STANCE", 2010/03/30) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada agreed with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on Monday to continue discussions on where to relocate a US Marine base in Okinawa, but said that he did not sense a change in Washington's stance over the thorny issue. "I told them there are various difficulties in realizing the (existing Japan-U.S.) accord, considering the current situation. So I told them that I want them to study what we are considering," Okada told reporters.

Bloomberg News ("MARINE PRESENCE ON OKINAWA ESSENTIAL TO SECURITY, MORRELL SAYS", 2010/03/30) reported that Defense Secretary Robert Gates told Japan's top diplomat that the presence of U.S. Marines on Okinawa is "essential" to providing security for the country and the region and that any solution must be "sustainable," a Pentagon spokesman said. "It needs to be politically and operationally sustainable for the Marines to remain in Okinawa so that they can meet the treaty commitments that we have to the government of Japan," Defense Department spokesman Geoff Morrell told reporters. The Marines' presence is "essential," he said, "so that we can provide, by their presence, for the security of Japan as well as for regional peace and security."

Kyodo ("HATOYAMA SAYS HE HAS OWN RELOCATION PLAN IN MIND", Tokyo, 2010/03/31) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said in parliament Wednesday he has his "own plan in mind" for where to transfer a U.S. base in Okinawa Prefecture and that he is "confident" that it is "effective" in removing the danger, maintaining U.S. deterrence and easing the base-hosting burden on local people. The premier told reporters at his office afterward that the idea he had referred to in a Diet debate has already been shared with other Cabinet ministers concerned and the government is now in the process of negotiating with the United States.

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15. US-Japan Nuclear Pact

Kyodo News ("NAKASONE ADMITS TO SECRET PACT ON NUKE PASSAGE", 2010/03/30) reported that Former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone said he was briefed by the Foreign Ministry while he was in office in the 1980s that Tokyo had given approval for the passage of nuclear-armed US vessels through Japanese waters, public broadcaster NHK reported. He told the NHK program he was briefed by the ministry that "while no documents (on the tacit permission) exist, US nuclear arms have been brought into Japan in practice and mutual trust, and Tokyo has tacitly approved it as common sense." "It was politically wise," he said. "We could not maintain security if we said 'No' to it."

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16. Japan Nuclear Safety

Kyodo News ("SHIMANE NUCLEAR PLANT SUSPENDED OVER FAULTY PAST INSPECTIONS", 2010/03/30) reported that faulty past inspections at the Shimane nuclear power plant has led Chugoku Electric Power Co. to announce a suspension of the plant in Matsue, Shimane Prefecture. But the power utility serving the Chugoku region in western Japan said it has not found any flaws in the plant's two reactors, or any radiation leakage or other adverse effects during quick checks it conducted after becoming aware of the situation.

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17. Japan Climate Change

Bloomberg News ("JAPAN'S CO2 EMISSIONS EXCEED OECD AVERAGE, MAINICHI REPORTS", 2010/03/30) reported that Japan's emissions of carbon dioxide per unit of electricity generated in 2007 exceeded the average of OECD member countries for the first time, the Mainichi newspaper reported, citing the International Energy Agency. Japan ranked 20th among the 30 members of the Organization for Economic Development, while the PRC topped the ranking, the report said.

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18. Sino-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("OBAMA WANTS 'POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP' WITH CHINA", 2010/03/30) reported that US President Barack Obama is determined to further develop a "positive relationship" with the PRC, the White House said in comments welcomed by Beijing as the two powers seek to overcome deep strains in their ties. Obama made the remarks after receiving the PRC's new ambassador to the US, Zhang Yesui, according to a statement from White House spokesman Robert Gibbs. "During their meeting, the president stated his determination to further develop a positive relationship with China," Gibbs said.

Reuters ("CHINA WELCOMES OBAMA COMMENTS, SIGNALS TENSIONS EASE", 2010/03/30) reported that the PRC sought smoother ties with the United States and welcomed President Barack Obama's call for a positive relationship in a meeting with Beijing's new ambassador to Washington. "China appreciates President Obama's and Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg's positive stance on promoting China-U.S. relations," Qin told a regular news conference in Beijing. Qin did not give any details of Zhang's discussions with Obama and Steinberg. But Qin said his government "took seriously the U.S. side's reiteration of its principled commitments on the Taiwan and Tibet issues."

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19. PRC on Nuclear Security

Xinhua ("CHINA PLACES IMPORTANCE ON NUCLEAR SECURITY", 2010/03/30) reported that the PRC places importance on the issue of nuclear security and has actively participated in the preparation for the upcoming Nuclear Security Summit, PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said. China hoped the summit would strengthen international cooperation in the area of nuclear security, he told a regular press conference in Beijing. Qin did not specify who would head the PRC delegation to the summit, which will take place in Washington on April 12-13. Qin said the PRC had actively participated in the preparation for the summit because the PRC opposes nuclear proliferation and nuclear terrorism.

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20. PRC Energy Use

Financial Times (Carola Hoyos, "CHINA INVITED TO JOIN IEA AS OIL DEMAND SHIFTS", Cancun, Mexico, 2010/03/30) reports that the head of the International Energy Agency, the developed world's energy watchdog, has called for the PRC to join the agency and warned that the institution risked losing relevance as energy demand shifted eastward away from its current members. Nobuo Tanaka, executive director of the IEA, told the Financial Times: "Our relevance is under question because half of the energy consumption already is in non-Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development countries. And for oil it is soon coming that the majority of consumption is happening in non-OECD countries."

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21. PRC Economy

The Los Angeles Times ("PEOPLE, PEOPLE EVERYWHERE IN CHINA, AND NOT ENOUGH TO WORK", 2010/03/30) reported that once thought to be an endless resource, the PRC worker has suddenly become hard to find in some east coast cities, where factory bosses and real estate developers are scrambling for labor. The shortage became glaringly apparent last month at the end of the PRC New Year. Millions of workers headed to the countryside for the holidays, but they didn't return. "We may be coming to a point where China is tapped out of cheap labor," said Patrick Chovanec, an associate professor at Tsinghua University's School of Economics and Management in Beijing.

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II. PRC Report

22. PRC Environment

China Net ("400 CITIES SHORT OF WATER", 2010/03/30) reported that nearly 400 cities of the PRC's total 655 cities are short of water at present, among which 200 are seriously short of water, said Li Shouxin, director of Development Planning Division of National Development Committee at a press conference.

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23. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

qq.com ("2ND CHINA INTERNET TREE PLANTING DAY STARTED", 2010/03/30) reported that the launching ceremony of the 2nd China Internet Tree Planting Day was held Monday in Beijing. The activity appeals all the society to donate online for tree planting in west China's ecologically vulnerable areas.

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