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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Rhetoric

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA SHOULD END SELF-ISOLATING RHETORIC: U.S. ", 2006-04-14) reported that the US says the DPRK "should not focus on rhetoric and actions that only serve to further isolate it from the rest of the international community." Instead, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Thursday, Pyongyang should "concentrate on being constructive with respect to the six-party talks" on its nuclear program. McCormack reiterated that the other five countries are ready to discuss denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula. He stressed the responsibility to return to the six-party talks and halt its illegal activities rests with Pyongyang.

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2. Inter-Korean Ministerial Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TO OFFER N.KOREA AID FOR RETURN OF ABDUCTEES ", 2006-04-17) reported that Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok on Monday said Seoul would offer “bold” economic support to the DPRK in the next inter-Korean ministerial talks to resolve the plight of RO Koreans abducted by the DPRK. “Our goal is to confirm whether South Koreans abducted by the North are alive and bring them back,” Lee told the National Assembly. Lee rejected recent DPRK criticism of opposition GNP chairwoman Park Geun-hye. “When I arrive in the North for the meeting, I will clearly convey our concerns over such remarks in any shape or form,” he said. Lee said Seoul’s offer of 2 million kw of electricity to the DPRK provided it gives up its nuclear program will be “adapted to changing reality to make the most of it.” He said the offer was unlikely to remain the same, and the government will seek to achieve “visible results at the lowest cost.”

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3. Inter-Korean Agricultural Cooperation

JoongAng Ilbo ("SOUTH'S RICE TO SEED LAND IN TOWN NEAR PYONGYANG ", 2006-04-17) reported that farmers in a DPRK village are to start growing ROK rice, at the request of the ROK’s Gyeonggi province. Last week, the ROK completed the delivery of cultivators, fertilizers and agricultural chemicals to the DPRK village of Danggok, south of Pyongyang, where vinyl greenhouses for rice have also been constructed. The project was the result of a proposal by Sohn Hak-kyu, the governor of Gyeonggi province, who in January last year advocated an inter-Korean joint farming project. The joint efforts led to a good harvest last October, reaping 494 kilograms of rice per 990 square meters of land. The harvest is about double the average for the DPRK’s harvest, according to a Gyeonggi province official.

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4. ROK POW Repatriation

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL INTENSIFIES EFFORTS TO BRING POWS BACK HOME ", 2006-04-14) reported that the Defense Ministry is trying to determine the exact number of ROK soldiers taken to the DPRK as prisoners of war right before the armistice on July 27, 1953, as part of efforts to bring survivors home. Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok told a Uri Party policy meeting that POWs can be classified into two groups those who were captured during the Korean War in 1950 and forced to serve in the DPRK Army and those captured right before the truce. He said the ministry is working to bring the latter group back first.

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5. Kim Il-sung Birthday Celebrations

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA CELEBRATES LATE FOUNDER'S BIRTHDAY WITH CALLS TO SUPPORT SON'S RULE ", 2006-04-15) reported that the DPRK celebrated the birthday of late national founder Kim Il Sung on Saturday, urging its people to rally around his son and current leader and reject US attempts at “ideological and cultural infiltration.” In a lengthy editorial marking the holiday, the country's main newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, called on DPR Koreans to rally around Kim Jong Il, saying it was the “most lofty will” of the late founder. Russian President Vladimir Putin sent a congratulatory message to Kim Jong Il. “The friendly relations between the two countries, which developed under the deep care of President Kim Il Sung, have made progress with fresh energy in recent years,” Putin said in a message carried by KCNA.

(return to top) Reuters ("N.KOREA MARKS FOUNDER'S BIRTHDAY WITH NUCLEAR BOAST", 2006-04-17) reported that the DPRK marked Saturday's birthday of its late founder and eternal president with acrobats, street dancing and boasts of building a bigger nuclear arsenal. At an event to mark the anniversary, the man considered to be the DPRK’s current number two leader said the US would try at all costs to bring down the DPRK. "It is the legitimate right of the DPRK to self-defence to bolster up its military deterrent in every way to cope with the prevailing grave situation," Kim Yong-nam said in a report carried on the KCNA news agency. Kim Yong-nam also told the gathering the country was still trying to find its way out of a food shortage that plagued the final years of Kim Il-sung's reign. "In this year, too, we should regard agriculture as the main front of the economic construction and mobilise and concentrate all forces on farming once again and thus bring a bumper harvest to the land of socialist Korea to fully solve the food problem." (return to top)

6. DPRK-Japan Visit Proposal

Chosun Ilbo ("KOIZUMI PLANS THIRD N. KOREA VISIT IN JUNE", 2006-04-17) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi plans a third visit to the DPRK just before he heads to the US in late June, the Japanese weekly Shukangendai reported Monday. The weekly quoted a Japanese government official as saying that there are ongoing discussions between Japan and the DPRK on the extradition of the four hijackers of Japan Airlines flight 351 from Tokyo to Fukuoka in 1970, as well as kidnappers wanted by the Japanese police including Shin Gwang-su. In addition, Japan is seeking the extradition of Kim Hye-gyong, who Pyongyang says is the daughter of Megumi Yokota and RO Korean Kim Young-nam, who were kidnapped by the DPRK in the late 1970s.

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7. DPRK Abduction Issue

Chosun Ilbo ("ABDUCTED S.KOREAN UNDER HOUSE ARREST ", 2006-04-14) reported that the ROK abductee believed to be the husband of Megumi Yokota, the Japanese woman kidnapped by DPRK agents in 1977, is reportedly under house arrest near Pyongyang. Kim Young-nam, who was also abducted by the North in the late 1970s, reportedly married Yokota in the DPRK and fathered a daughter with her. A ROK advocacy group for families of abductees said the DPRK informant who first revealed the identity of Kim in 2004 recently called from the PRC to say that Kim and his family have been under house arrest near the DPRK capital for several months and are prohibited from making any outside contact.

(return to top) JoongAng Ilbo ("AT BANK, CLERK IDENTIFIED AS BOY'S ABDUCTOR ", 2006-04-17) reported that Kim Gwang-hyeon, 68, a former DPRK agent who helped kidnap a ROK teenager, Kim Yong-nam, in 1978 is now working at the headquarters of Standard Chartered First Bank Korea in Seoul. An official there said yesterday they hired the man "several years ago" at the government's request. He defected to the ROK 26 years ago, and was thrust into the limelight again when Japanese authorities announced last week that the kidnapped teenager was the husband of a Japanese abductee who died in the DPRK. Kim Yong-nam's mother and sister reportedly plan to go to the bank tomorrow to see Mr. Kim, although without much hope that he would be there. Kim Young-ja, the abductee's sister, complained, "It is very unfair that my brother is under house arrest in North Korea but the kidnapper is free to live here in Seoul." (return to top) Kyodo News ("YOKOTA TO VISIT S. KOREA POSSIBLY IN EARLY MAY ", 2006-04-15) reported that the father of Japanese abductee Megumi Yokota said Saturday he will visit the ROK possibly in early May to meet with the family of a RO Korean man, also believed abducted to the DPRK and who may be Megumi's husband. Shigeru Yokota, 73, said in a speech in Chikuma, Nagano Prefecture, that the trip could take place as early as just after the Golden Week holidays from late April to early May. (return to top)

8. ROK-PRC Meeting on DPRK

Korea Times ("CHINA'S DEFENSE CHIEF TO BRIEF OFFICIALS ON HIS NK TRIP ", 2006-04-16) reported that PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan arrived in Seoul Saturday for a five-day visit that officials said includes mutual discussions on the DPRK's nuclear program. Cao's trip here followed his three-day visit to the DPRK earlier this month. In the DPRK, the PRC military leader met Kim Yong-nam, president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, Jo Myong-rok, chief of the General Staff of the People's Army, and Kim Il-chol, Minister of the People's Armed Forces.

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9. DPRK Asylum Seekers

Korea Times ("20 FORMER N. KOREANS SEEKING ASYLUM IN US ", 2006-04-16) reported that up to 20 DPR Korean defectors are seeking asylum in the US after settlement in the ROK, a US broadcaster reported Friday. In an interview with Radio Free Asia, Judy Wood, head of the US civic activist group Human Right Project, said the DPR Koreans smuggled themselves into the US after leaving the ROK where they had already settled. Reasons given by the DPR Koreans for their asylum bid were unknown but some have openly criticized the ROK government for oppressing them under its "sunshine" policy of engaging with the DPRK government.

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10. ROK-PRC Military Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREAN, CHINESE DEFENSE MINISTERS MEET ", 2006-04-17) reported that ROK Defense Minister Yoon Kwang-ung on Monday met with his PRC counterpart Cao Gangchuan, opening a series of meetings between the two countries, to discuss ways of safeguarding against inadvertent skirmishes in the West Sea and further cooperation between the two militaries.

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11. Japan-ROK Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("OSHIMA REJECTS SOUTH KOREAN REQUEST TO CANCEL SURVEY NEAR DISPUTED ISLETS", 2006-04-15) reported that Japanese Ambassador Shotaro Oshima rejected a request by the ROK on Friday to cancel plans for a maritime survey near disputed islets controlled by the ROK, the Japanese Embassy in Seoul said. The Japanese government announced earlier Friday that it planned to send a Japan Coast Guard vessel to conduct maritime surveys in the Sea of Japan near the islets, which are called Dokdo in the ROK and Takeshima in Japan.

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12. Japan Base Workers' Strike

The Associated Press ("U.S. NAVY BASE FACES LABOR STRIKE", 2006-04-13) reported that workers at the US Navy base in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, on Wednesday threatened to strike unless their labor demands were met, possibly affecting operations of a US aircraft carrier, a Japanese labor official said. The largest Japanese labor union at Yokosuka naval base will stage a strike involving some 600 workers if it fails to reach an agreement with the Defense Facilities Administration Agency over retirement conditions.

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13. Japan on PRC Military Budget

The Japan Times ("REPORT HITS CHINA'S OPAQUE DEFENSE BUDGET", 2006-04-15) reported that the Diplomatic Blue Book 2006 released Friday urges the PRC to be more transparent in its defense spending, citing the opaque nature of Beijing's military expenditures. The annual report has mentioned the PRC's defense spending in past editions, but it is the first time the report has gone further in calling for the PRC to improve its transparency in military expenditures.

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14. US on PRC Military Budget

Reuters ("CHINA FEARS DRIVE BIG US ARMS PROJECTS ", 2006-04-17) reported that US fears of a rising PRC are spurring billions of dollars worth of weapons projects, from nuclear-fueled attack submarines to fighter jets to destroyers. Among PRC-related moves, the Pentagon said it would build a "long-range strike capability" to be ready by 2018 while modernizing the US bomber force of B-1s, B-2s and B-52s. Another big-ticket item that might be built in lesser numbers if not for the perceived PRC threat is the Virginia-class nuclear submarine.

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15. USFJ Base Realignment

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN, U.S. SEE PROGRESS IN TALKS OVER RELOCATION", 2006-04-17) reported that Japanese and US defense and foreign ministry officials made progress in talks Friday on issues surrounding the realignment of US forces in Japan. The officials basically agreed to move KC-130 midair refueling planes--currently based at the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station--to Iwakuni Air Base in Yamaguchi Prefecture and to use a US base in Guam or the Maritime Self - Defense Force's Kanoya Naval Base in Kagoshima Prefecture during prolonged training maneuvers involving the planes.

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16. Japan-PRC East Sea Gas Dispute

The Japan Times ("CHINA BANS VESSELS NEAR GAS FIELD: REPORT", 2006-04-17) reported that Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Tsutomu Takebe criticized Beijing on Sunday over a news report that PRC maritime authorities have banned ship traffic in the East China Sea near the median line with Japan while it expands the Pinghu gas field.

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17. PRC Abandoned Chemical Weapons

The Japan Times ("JAPAN, CHINA TO SEEK MORE TIME TO HANDLE LEFTOVER ARMS", 2006-0--17) reported that Japan and the PRC will request the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to extend the deadline to spring 2012 to complete a Japan-led project to collect and dispose of abandoned wartime chemical weapons in the PRC. There are an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 shells still in Dunhua, Jilin Province, left by the Imperial Japanese Army at the end of World War II, they said.

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18. Japan Iraq Pullout

Kyodo ("JAPAN MAY POSTPONE GSDF PULLOUT FROM IRAQ UNTIL END OF JULY", 2006-04-17) reported that the Japanese government is considering completing its withdrawal of ground troops from Iraq at the end of July, giving up its earlier plan to end the aid mission at the end of May, government sources said Monday. The expected rescheduling is in response to a delay by Iraq in establishing its formal government, the sources said.

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19. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN SAYS BEIJING OFFER 'POISON,' SNUBS 'ONE CHINA PRINCIPLE'", 2006-04-17) reported that Taiwan's ruling party has rejected a new peace overture from the PRC as "poison" aimed at undermining the island's government and leading to eventual reunification with the mainland. The island's Mainland Affairs Council also rebuffed the call by PRC President Hu Jintao for a resumption of talks on the basis of the "One China principle".

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20. PRC Currency Reform

Washington Post ("CHINA REAFFIRMS PLANS FOR CURRENCY REFORM ", 2006-04-17) reported that the PRC will push ahead with foreign-exchange reforms and allow the market to have more influence over its currency, the country's top foreign exchange regulator said in remarks published Monday. The PRC "will take steps to perfect the (yuan) exchange rate mechanism, raising the exchange rate's ability to reflect market supply and demand," Hu Xiaolian, director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange, wrote in the latest edition of the bimonthly Qiushi Magazine, a mouthpiece of the Communist Party.

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21. PRC Rural-Urban Income Disparity

China Daily ("RURAL-URBAN INCOME GAP CONTINUES TO WIDEN", 2006-04-17) reported that as an important income source for rural families, the wages of migrant workers have been slow to increase compared with the rapid rise in urban wages over the past few years. As a result, it is expected that China will continue to suffer a large income disparity between rural and urban areas this year, according to a blueprint by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

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22. PRC Media Control

Reuters ("CHINA ISSUES SLEW OF REGULATIONS TO CURB MEDIA", 2006-04-17) reported that the PRC has issued a series of notices in the past week aimed at regulating media content in an attempt to control an increasingly free-wheeling news environment. But media watchers said that rather than signaling a new tightening, the rules simply follow a trend toward regulating a business whose myriad blogs, tabloids and television dramas present a challenge to the ruling Communist Party's desire the control the flow of information.

(return to top) Reuters ("NYT RESEARCHER IN CHINA MAY STILL BE TRIED: LAWYER", 2006-0--17) reported that one day before PRC President Hu Jintao's US trip, lawyers for a detained Chinese employee of the New York Times said they were told on Monday prosecutors were again considering whether to seek his trial. Zhao Yan was detained in September 2004 on charges of revealing state secrets abroad after the Times reported that former PRC President Jiang Zemin planned to abandon his military posts -- a report that turned out to be accurate. (return to top)

II. CanKor

23. Report #245

CanKor ("CURRENT EVENTS", 2006-04-14) Although both US and DPRK chief delegates to Six Party Talks attend a security conference in Tokyo, no bilateral contact is made between them, as many were hoping. DPRK chief negotiator Kim Gye Gwan calls on the USA to unfreeze financial assets in order to allow the resumption of the talks, but expresses no urgency. In the meantime, the DPRK would continue to "make more deterrent". An eight-member bipartisan and bicameral US congressional aide delegation visits the Kaesong Industrial Complex to research the nature of the

economic relationship between the two Koreas. At stake are the ROK's wish to join the Visa Waiver Program, and the US-Korea free trade agreement. The fourth session of the 11th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) takes place in Pyongyang on 11 April. The annual meeting reviews the Cabinet's work, the status of the economy, plans for the coming year, and the most significant issues of interest to DPRK leaders. Although the urgent need to "build a nationwide information network and develop programming technology rapidly" figures high on the agenda this year, agriculture, coal and metals are seen as the most important tasks. The DPRK appears on the verge of announcing dramatic new reforms dealing with real estate, such as leasing out state-owned mountains to individuals on a long-term basis, imposing taxes on state-owned land used by factories and businesses, and leasing out plots of collective farms to families.

(return to top) CanKor ("FOCUS", 2006-04-14) The Research Institute for the North Korean Society, published by Good Friends: Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Refugees reports that the DPRK National Police has posted a decree on severe punishments to be meted out for slashing electric power or communication lines and illegal drug transactions. This week's FOCUS on crime and punishment in the DPRK reproduces an English translation of the decree, and reports on incidents that appear to be signs of its implementation. (return to top)

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