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I. NAPSNet

1. US on Six Party Talks

New York Times ("U.S. SQUEEZES NORTH KOREA'S MONEY FLOW ", 2006-03-10) reported that six months after the Bush administration blacklisted a bank in Macao accused of laundering money for the DPRK government, senior administration officials say the action has proved to be far more effective than anyone had dreamed. Banks around the world are limiting their dealings with the DPRK. "It really struck a nerve," a senior administration official said with a smile. It also has given new energy to those in the administration who have argued for years that the six-nation nuclear disarmament talks were a waste of time and that direct action was the only tactic that might force the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons program. The strategy now, said a senior official who watches the issue closely, is, "Squeeze them, but keep the negotiations going." The talks would then serve as little more than a vehicle for accepting the DPRK's capitulation, if the pressure from other actions leaves it no choice.

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2. DPRK Asked to Join Money Laundering Body

Korea Times ("NK ASKED TO JOIN MONEY LAUNDERING FIGHT ", 2006-03-12) reported that the US has suggested that the DPRK join the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering, a body aimed at enforcing measures against money laundering and terrorist financing, reports said. Ri Gun, director-general of the DPRK Foreign Ministry’s North American affairs, who led the delegation to New York, told an interview with Seoul-based Hankyoreh newspaper that the US advised the DPRK to join international financial organizations. Not immediately responding to the DPRK’s offer of opening accounts at US banks to prove their transparent financial transactions, the US delegates said it would be more important for the DPRK to join international financial organizations to recover credibility, Ri said.

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3. ROK on DPRK Counterfeiting

Korea Times ("US NOT TRYING TO PUNISH N. KOREA", 2006-03-10) reported that Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok said in Seoul on Friday that the US is trying to ``prevent'' the DPRK from counterfeiting US bills in the future, rather than trying to ``punish'' Pyongyang for its financial illegalities. ``I personally think that Washington's policies are focused on prevention and interception rather than punishment,'' he told lawmakers at a breakfast meeting at the National Assembly.

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4. Inter-Korean Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("TWO KOREAS SWAP LISTS FOR FAMILY REUNIONS", 2006-03-11) reported that ROK and DPRK Red Cross officials exchanged the names of 200 people for the 13th round of cross-border family reunions at the DPRK Mount Kumgang resort. Seoul's National Red Cross officials say 100 people from the ROK will be reunited with their relatives in the DPRK from March 20 to 22 while the same number of people from the DPRK will be reunited with their families in the ROK from March 23 to 25.

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5. ROK on Unification

Korea Times ("TALKS ON CONFEDERATION OF KOREAS PREMATURE ", 2006-03-10) reported that Lee Byung-wan, presidential chief of staff, on Friday denied an allegation that former President Kim Dae-jung will discuss ways to establish a confederation of the two Koreas when he visits Pyongyang in June. During a question-and-answer session at a seminar in Seoul, Lee said that ``there is no process on the issue regarding the form of unification. It will be possible to talk about it only when the two Koreas achieve the establishment of a peace regime, perfect security framework and an economic system that is fully intertwined.''

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6. Kim Jong-il to Visit Indonesia

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL TO MAKE GROUND-BREAKING INDONESIA TRIP ", 2006-03-10) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il will visit Indonesia in the near future after accepting an invitation from a special envoy for the Indonesian president, Hong Kong's Yazhou Zhoukan reported Friday. Pyongyang has also asked Jakarta to act as a mediator in six-nation talks aimed at dismantling the DPRK's nuclear program. Presidential envoy Nana Sutresna, who visited both Pyongyang and Seoul recently, invited Kim to visit Indonesia "at an appropriate time," and Indonesian officials said Kim was "willing to accept" the invitation, the weekly reported.

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7. DPRK on US-ROK Exercises

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA: U.S. IS PREPARING INVASION", 2006-03-12) reported that the DPRK accused the US on Sunday of stepping up preparations to attack and said that justified the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. The DPRK's Minju Joson newspaper cited planned drills with the ROK and other US military activity in the Asia-Pacific region as evidence Washington was preparing to invade. A day earlier, the DPRK put off Cabinet-level talks with the ROK to protest the joint military exercises. "The U.S. strengthening military moves on and around the Korean Peninsula is nothing but a premeditated maneuver to realize its hostile policy aimed at militarily stifling our republic," the DPRK newspaper said in a commentary carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. "Under the current tense situation, the nuclear deterrent force of our republic effectively contributes to guaranteeing peace and safety of our republic ... (We) will make every effort to solidify our self-defense force."

(return to top) Itar-Tass ("PYONGYANG REFUSES TO HOLD TALKS WITH SEOUL IN MARCH", 2006-03-11) reported that Pyongyang has refused to hold summit talks with Seoul scheduled for the

second half of March because of the holding of a major joint ROK-US military exercise. “Our stance is based on the fact that hostile military exercises cannot be held simultaneously with a peace dialogue,” a spokesman for the DPRK government told the official news agency TSTAK on Saturday. According to the spokesman, Seoul’s wrong doings don’t allow to hold the 18th round of talks this month, as was planned before. (return to top)

8. DPRK on Smuggling Allegations

Associated Press ("N KOREA BLASTS US FOR CLAIM IT'S LINKED TO DRUG SMUGGLING", 2006-03-13) reported that the DPRK accused the US on Monday of trying to discredit Pyongyang by tying it to international drug smuggling, after Australian authorities discovered 125 kilograms of heroin on a vessel with a DPRK crew in 2003. The DPRK’s official Korean Central News Agency, in a commentary Monday, noted the US State Department in an annual international narcotics control and strategy report described Australia's capture of the Pong Su as a "state-sponsored drug trafficking case." The allegation was "a political plot hatched by the U.S. and its allies in a premeditated and deliberate manner to do harm to the DPRK and stifle it over its nuclear issue," the KCNA report said. "The DPRK remains unfazed at the U.S. base smear campaign."

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9. Bush on DPRK, Iran

Chosun Ilbo ("BUSH SEES 'EQUAL THREAT' FROM IRAN, N.KOREA ", 2006-03-12) reported that US President George W. Bush has repositioned Iran and the DPRK as regimes posing the same security threat to the US. Speaking to members of the National Newspaper Association in Washington on Friday, Bush said he was concerned about the two countries' nuclear pursuits. “I would say they are equal, Iran and North Korea, as for a security threat. Because anytime there's a non-transparent regime, without a free press to hold them to account, it creates an unpredictability in the world.”

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("BUSH 'HAS NOT RULED OUT' ANY ACTION ON N.KOREA, IRAN ", 2006-03-10) reported that the US under secretary of state for Arms Control and International Security, Robert Joseph, on Thursday said President George W. Bush had not ruled out any action on the DPRK and Iran, from sanctions to even tougher measures. The remarks came in response to a question whether the government could consider an Iraq-style military option. President Bush has been making it very clear that “all options are on the table to deal with this threat,” Joseph said.
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10. Russia on DPRK-US Relations

Reuters ("RUSSIA ENVOY URGES US-N.KOREA FLEXIBILITY", 2006-03-13) reported that a top Russian diplomat urged the US and the DPRK on Monday to show flexibility to resolve their row over US suspicions of the DPRK copying its currency, and get talks on its nuclear programs back on track. Gleb Ivashentsov, Russia's ambassador to Seoul, said it was a good sign that US Treasury officials had briefed DPRK officials last week in New York about the financial measures. "I think finally the issue will be resolved because, as you know, last week a North Korean delegation was in New York to discuss the issue, and we view some positive signs may come up," Ivashentsov told foreign reporters. "I think it will be good if there is more flexibility on both sides," he said.

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11. ROK on UN Command Strengthening

Chosun Ilbo ("STRONGER UN COMMAND 'NO DANGER' TO INTER-KOREAN TIES ", 2006-03-10) reported that a high-ranking ROK government official on Friday responded to an apparent surprise announcement by the US military that it wants to strengthen UN Command -- the US-led international forces guaranteeing the Demilitarized Zone -- with reassurances that it will create no obstacles to inter-Korean cooperation. Asked by a reporter about fears that a bigger role for the UNC could hurt inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation, the Korean official said, "It's possible to say so, but the South Korean government does not think the UNC will become an obstacle to inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation." Far from it, the official said. "Inter-Korean reconciliation, exchanges and cooperation are improving, and the UNC will help this to happen within its legal and institutional framework." He said it was "impossible to imagine" that the UNC will work against such improvements.

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12. Japan on Remittances to DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPAN TO TIGHTEN CHECKS ON REMITTANCES TO N.KOREA ", 2006-03-13) reported that the Japanese government has decided to step up checks of insured mail containing cash posted to the DPRK, the Mainichi Shimbun reported Monday. While still avoiding economic sanctions, Tokyo is looking at ways of enforcing existing laws to strangle cash flow to the DPRK. One such measure under the postal law is increasing spot checks and random inspections of insured mail. By applying foreign currency and trade laws more strictly, Tokyo decided to carry out unannounced inspections of around 100 Japanese export firms to check for hardware that could be diverted for military use in the DPRK.

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13. USFJ Realignment

The Japan Times ("IWAKUNI VOTERS REJECT REALIGNMENT PLAN", 2006-03-13) reported that a majority of Iwakuni residents voted "no" in a plebiscite Sunday, rejecting the central government's plan to move 57 US carrier-based jets and 1,600 additional marines to Iwakuni Marine Corps Air Station from Atsugi Naval Air base. According to Iwakuni City Hall, 21,000 residents had voted "no" and 3,000 "yes" as of 10:30 p.m. Sunday, with 48.31 percent of the votes counted.

(return to top) The Japan Times ("U.S. TO RETURN PART OF YOKOTA AIRSPACE", 2006-03-13) reported that the US has basically agreed to return part of the airspace over Yokota Air Base in Tokyo as part of the realignment of US military forces in Japan. The basic agreement is expected to alleviate the overcrowding caused by the 470 commercial flights that must take detours around the so-called "Yokota RAPCON (Radar Approach Control)" area each day. (return to top) The Japan Times ("U.S. TO GIVE BACK OKINAWA FACILITIES", 2006-03-13) reported that the US has agreed to return three facilities in Okinawa Prefecture to Japan. The agreement, reached in Hawaii during bilateral talks on the realignment of US forces in Japan, named three facilities: the Makiminato Service Area in Urasoe, Naha military port, and Camp Kuwae (Camp Lester) in the town of Chatan. In addition, the US has agreed to return part of Camp Zukeran (Camp Foster). (return to top)

14. Japan-US Relations

The Japan Times ("TOP DIPLOMAT TO VISIT U.S. FOR TALKS", 2006-03-13) reported that Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi will pay a five-day trip to the US from Tuesday to hold talks with top officials there, the Foreign Ministry said. Issues Yachi is expected to discuss the planned realignment of the US forces in Japan, the ban on US beef, the Iraq situation, Iranian nuclear crisis and UN reforms.

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15. Cross Strait Relations

Washington Post ("TAIWAN'S PRESIDENT PLEDGES DEBATE ON NEW CONSTITUTION", 2006-0--13) reported that President Chen Shui-bian declared that he will soon open debate on a new constitution for Taiwan, including the explosive issues of sovereignty, territory and formal independence for the self-ruled island. But Chen added in an interview that political opposition to such controversial changes makes it unlikely they will be approved anytime soon by the opposition-controlled legislature.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN OPPOSITION STAGE ANTI-CHEN RALLY AMID TENSIONS WITH CHINA ", 2006-03-13) reported that thousands of supporters of Taiwan's main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) have taken to the streets to protest the hardline policy on the PRC adopted by the island's leader President Chen Shui-bian. Chanting slogans such as "Fighting for Livelihood!" and "Saving Taiwan!" the demonstrators said Chen's focus on tense cross-strait relations was ignoring day-to-day problems such as credit card debt faced by many Taiwanese families. (return to top)

16. Sino-Indian Territorial Dispute

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA HOPEFUL OF RESOLVING BORDER ROW WITH CHINA", 2006-0--13) reported that India is optimistic about settling a decades-old border dispute with the PRC, a top official has said as the two sides held talks on the issue for a second day. India's National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan and Dai Bingguo, the PRC's executive vice foreign minister, met in the southern state of Kerala on the dispute, which led to a brief war in 1962.

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17. PRC Military

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU SAYS NEXT FIVE YEARS 'IMPORTANT PERIOD' FOR MILITARY MODERNIZATION ", 2006-03-13) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao tells a group of senior officers the next five years will be a "an important period" for the nation's military modernization, state media reports. "The 11th five-year plan (from 2006 to 2010) ... is also an important period for defense and army modernization," Hu told the National People's Congress, or parliament.

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18. PRC Ideological Conflict

The New York Times ("A SHARP DEBATE ERUPTS IN CHINA OVER IDEOLOGIES", 2006-03-13) reported that for the first time in perhaps a decade, the National People's Congress is consumed with an ideological debate over socialism and capitalism that many assumed had been buried by the

PRC's long streak of fast economic growth. The controversy has forced the government to shelve a draft law to protect property rights that had been expected to win pro forma passage and highlighted the resurgent influence of a small but vocal group of socialist-leaning scholars and policy advisers.

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19. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("REGULATOR WARNS ON CHINA ENVIRONMENT WOES ", 2006-03-13) reported that the PRC must sharply improve environmental protection or it could face disaster following two decades of breakneck growth that have poisoned its air, water and soil, the country's top environmental official warned Saturday. The director of the State Environmental Protection Administration said that more than half of PRC's 21,000 chemical companies are near the Yangtze and Yellow rivers — drinking water for tens of millions of people — and accidents could lead to "disastrous consequences."

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II. CanKor

20. Report #240

CanKor ("CURRENT EVENTS", 2006-03-13) The DPRK is reported to have test-fired two short-range missiles within its borders this week. In a rare bilateral meeting between US and DPRK officials in New York this week, the DPRK asked for removal of US "financial sanctions" related to alleged money-related criminal activities, formation of a joint DPRK-USA task force to examine counterfeiting concerns, access to the US banking system, and technical help in identifying counterfeit bills. US officials clarified the meeting was only a briefing, not a negotiation, and rejected any link between Treasury Department actions and the six-party talks.

(return to top) CanKor ("FOCUS", 2006-03-13) After almost three years in custody, four crew members of a DPR Korean freighter used to transport smuggled heroin are acquitted by an Australian Supreme Court jury. This week's CanKor FOCUS on DPRK drug trafficking also features a new US State Department report which states that though the DPRK was "most likely" involved in drug production and trafficking in 2005, there are no reports or incidents with clear, demonstrable links to the DPRK government. (return to top) CanKor ("BOOK REVIEW", 2006-03-13) CanKor's BOOK REVIEW section presents two points of view on Tim Beal's "North Korea: The Struggle Against American Power," and an overview of "Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes on the World," by Gordon G. Chang. (return to top)

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