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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Counterfeiting

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. MAY SEEK CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST KIM JONG-IL ", 2006-03-26) reported that two US senior congressional researchers say Washington could bring criminal charges against DPRK leader Kim Jong-il over his country's alleged counterfeiting. The two authors of a Congressional Research Service report say the US's increasing keenness to back up its allegations with legal evidence is fueling speculation that it is considering going after Kim. The report says the US may try to press criminal charges against the DPRK leader in a similar way to how it overthrew Manuel Noriega, the former Panamanian leader.

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2. US on Six Party Talks

Yonhap News ("U.S. ALLOWS ROOM TO DISCUSS ILLICIT ACTIVITIES AT 6-PARTY TALKS ", 2006-03-27) reported that the US adhered Monday to separation of the DPRK's nuclear talks from its alleged illicit activities but left some wiggle room on how to discuss them. A State Department official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the focus of the six-party talks will stay on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

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3. UN on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("UN NUCLEAR CHIEF HOPES TO RETURN TO N.KOREA", 2006-03-25) reported that the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said on Saturday he hoped his inspectors would be able to return to the DPRK, but said there had been nothing but silence from Pyongyang. "I hope we will come. I hope I'll go," Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told reporters after accepting an award from a German dental institute. Since the IAEA'S departure, the DPRK appears to have acquired nuclear weapons, ElBaradei said in his speech.

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4. DPRK on US-ROK Military Exercises

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA ISSUES WARNING OVER DRILLS ", 2006-03-27) reported that the DPRK warned Washington of "grave consequences" Monday over a military exercise in the ROK, repeating a suggestion it has the ability to launch a pre-emptive attack on the US.

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5. DPRK on Trilateral Security Talks

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA CRITICIZES U.S.-JAPAN-AUSTRALIA SECURITY TALKS", 2006-03-27) reported that the KCNA said in a commentary that the trilateral security talks of the US, Japan and Australia was "a meeting to form the U.S.-led tripartite security consultative mechanism in the region and deter the DPRK and China." "U.S. attempted to establish a cooperation system against the DPRK with the dialogue as leverage. This compels the DPRK to heighten vigilance against them (U.S., Japan and Australia)," the KCNA said in an English-language commentary.

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6. Inter-Korean Cooperation

Itar-Tass ("S KOREAN NGOS TO SHIP FIRST-EVER BATCH OF FERTILIZERS TO N KOREA ", 2006-02-27) reported that the ROK will send the first-ever consignment of fertilizers to the DPRK in non-governmental aid, a spokesman for the Join Together Society public organization said on Monday. A ROK freighter will ship from the port of Busan 450 tonnes of chemical fertilizers 203,000 US dollars worth for the DPRK's agriculture this week.

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7. Inter-Korean Reunion Event

Chosun Ilbo ("S.KOREANS 'EXPRESSED REGRET' ON BEHALF OF PRESS CORPS ", 2006-03-24) reported that there was outrage on Friday following reports that the leader of a ROK delegation of divided families has expressed regret to the DPRK over a mass walkout by the ROK press corps after Pyongyang attempted to censor their dispatches. The KCNA on Thursday night said authorities "took into consideration that the head of the South Koreans admitted their wrongdoings and expressed regret for the South Korean journalists' provocative actions against us, and decided to let the second round of meeting of the families proceed as scheduled." The Unification Ministry on Friday explained it was decided after consultation with the ministry that the "unexpected setback" in the proceedings made it advisable for the official to express regret. But it added no such words as "wrongdoing" or "apologize" were included in the letter.

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8. Inter-Korean Athletic Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("NORTH KOREAN DELEGATES TO ATTEND AN OLYMPIC MEETING IN SEOUL", 2006-03-25) reported that four DPRK delegates will attend the upcoming international meeting of National Olympic Committees in Seoul to be held from March 31 to April 5. The Seoul-based ROK Olympic committee says the two Koreas will likely discuss forming a unified team for the Doha Asian

Games in December as well as the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

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9. DPRK Defectors

Korea Times ("MORE DEFECTORS RELY ON CRIMES FOR LIVING ", 2006-03-26) reported that a growing number of defectors from the DPRK have been involved in criminal activity, with many of them suffering acute financial difficulty after failing to adapt in the ROK. Crimes by defectors are also getting more pervasive and grave. Critics now call on the government to work out proper support measures for defectors in order to prevent them from being involved in crimes.

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10. Former ROK President on DPRK

Yonhap News ("EX-PRESIDENT DENOUNCES N. KOREA OVER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS", 2006-03-26) reported that former ROK President Kim Young-sam denounced the DPRK as the "most despotic country" in the world on Sunday. "As long as Kim Jong-il lives, there will be no true peace on the Korean Peninsula," Kim said after watching a musical in Seoul dealing with human rights violations at a concentration camp in the DPRK.

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11. DPRK-US Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA 'HIBERNATING TILL BUSH GOES' ", 2006-03-24) reported that experts say there are signs that Pyongyang is determined to sit out George W. Bush's tenure by maintaining the status quo rather than hurry to improve its relations with Washington. The policy could be one reason, experts say, why the DPRK is again boycotting six-party talks on its nuclear program citing US financial sanctions.

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12. DPRK-Japan Abduction Allegations

Mainichi Daily News ("NORTH KOREA ISSUES ARREST WARRANTS FOR JAPANESE ACTIVISTS FOR 'ABDUCTING' ITS CITIZENS", 2006-03-27) reported that the DPRK said Monday it was seeking four Japanese activists after issuing arrest warrants for them for "abducting" its citizens, an accusation apparently referring to efforts to help DPR Koreans flee their homeland. A spokesman for the DPRK's Ministry of People's Security said the four were accused of "luring and abducting citizens ... in broad daylight," according to the KCNA. "We regard this as a grave infringement upon our national sovereignty and safety of citizens, part of the plot to overturn our system," the spokesman said.

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13. DPRK Forest Fires

Yonhap News ("SEVERAL FOREST FIRES BREAK OUT IN N.K.: RESEARCH CENTER ", 2006-03-26) reported that the DPRK had a few big forest fires on Friday and Saturday, a research center here

said Sunday. According to the Atmospheric Environment Research Center, located about 150 kilometers south of Seoul, satellite pictures showed the DPRK had three or four "hot spots," which indicated forest fires, in Tongchon, Kangwon Province and Chongpyong, South Hamkyong Province as of 10 p.m. on Saturday.

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14. US-ROK Military Exercises

The Associated Press ("U.S., SOUTH KOREA CONDUCT MILITARY DRILLS", 2006-03-27) reported that the ROK and the US began joint military exercises on Saturday amid angry protests by the DPRK, which has denounced the annual exercises as preparations for a pre-emptive nuclear attack. About 25,000 US troops and an undisclosed number of ROK soldiers will participate in the weeklong exercises, which involve a computer-simulated war game and field exercises aimed at improving US and ROK forces' defense capabilities.

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15. ROK-Russian Joint Oil Project

Asia Pulse ("S. KOREAN PARTNERS SIGN SHAREHOLDERS PACT ON RUSSIAN OIL PROJECT", 2006-03-27) reported that members of a ROK consortium have signed a shareholders agreement concerning the exploration of oil in eastern Russia, a state-run oil company said. Korea National Oil Corp. (KNOC) said the pact formalized the business commitments of the consortium's four members that will explore oil fields on the Tigil and Icha regions of the Kamchatka Peninsula.

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16. US-ROK Security Alliance

Donga Ilbo ("US: COMMAND TRANSFER IS ‘REASONABLE’ ", 2006-03-25) reported that US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld said on March 23 that the ROK and the US have agreed on the transfer of wartime command of ROK forces to the ROK, and that the two nations are discussing a timetable. “The timing depends on how quickly the Korean government develops its capabilities to assume [wartime command] responsibility. A greater South Korean role would allow further U.S. troop reductions.”

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17. Japan Military

BBC News ("JOINT COMMAND FOR JAPAN MILITARY ", 2006-03-27) reported that Japan's military has been placed under a new unified command to make it responsive to possible threats. The land, sea and air self-defence forces hope the joint command office will smooth co-operation with US forces in the Pacific.

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18. Japan Space Program

The Associated Press ("JAPAN WEIGHS SHIFT IN 'SELF-DEFENSE' SPACE POLICY", 2006-03-27)

reported that Japan's ruling party will consider new legislation that would clear the way for more military-oriented uses of its space program -- a sharp departure from its current peaceful-use only policy -- an official said Monday.

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19. USFJ Realignment

The Japan Times ("WRANGLING OVER OKINAWA PLAN CONTINUES", 2006-03-27) reported that Defense Agency chief Fukushiro Nukaga and Nago Mayor Yoshikazu Shimabukuro met again in Tokyo on Sunday in an attempt to narrow differences over a plan to relocate a US Marine Corps air station from central Okinawa to its coastline. According to the mayor, the city called on the central government to ensure that US military planes would not fly over four districts of the city, including Henoko and Toyohara.

(return to top) The Japan Times ("JAPAN OFFERS HALF", 2006-03-27) reported that Japan would be able to shoulder 50 percent of the US government's projected $10 billion price tag for relocating the US Marines from Okinawa to Guam, but not the 75 percent Washington wants Tokyo to pay, a key member of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party said Sunday. (return to top) Kyodo ("COURT DISMISSES ZUSHI'S SUIT OVER U.S. MILITARY HOUSING", 2006-03-23) reported that the Yokohama District Court rejected the Zushi Municipal Government's lawsuit against the central government over the state-approved construction of a US military housing complex in an area straddling the boundary between Yokohama and Zushi, both in Kanagawa Prefecture. According to the suit, filed with the court in September 2004, Zushi claimed the central government was bound by a 1994 agreement it made with the city and with the prefecture not to build additional housing in the Ikego district, an area known for its natural environment. (return to top)

20. Japan-PRC Relations

The Japan Times ("NEW ENVOY SAYS HE IS NOT TOO SOFT ON CHINA", 2006-03-24) reported that Tokyo's next ambassador to Beijing on Thursday played down concerns he might be too soft on the PRC and said he will continue to put Japan's interests first when he takes up his post April 10. One reason for the attention on Yuji Miyamoto, 60, is his background as a member of the so-called China School -- a group of Foreign Ministry officials who underwent Chinese language training to become specialists on the country. Regarding Beijing's fury over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to Yasukuni Shrine, Miyamoto said the leaders of Japan and China should both "thoroughly examine" the cultural, religious and historical background of the issue and make efforts to explain it to their citizens.

(return to top) Reuters ("CHINA MILITARY BUILDUP DESTABILIZING-JAPAN REPORT ", 2006-0--27) reported that the PRC's growing military strength and its tense relationship with Taiwan are major destabilizing factors in East Asia, according to a strategy report issued on Monday by a think tank affiliated with Japan's Defense Ministry. (return to top)

21. Japan DFAA Dissolution

The Japan Times ("BID-RIGGING TO BE DFAA'S UNDOING: KOIZUMI, NUKAGA", 2006-03-25) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Defense Agency chief Fukushiro Nukaga agreed Friday to disband the Defense Facilities Administration Agency (DFAA) in a bid to stop further bid-rigging on agency construction projects. "We will draw up the outline (of the changes) by the time requests are made for the (next) fiscal budget allocations" in August, Nukaga said.

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22. Japanese Nuclear Power

The Japan Times ("COURT ORDERS NEW REACTOR'S HALT", 2006-03-25) reported that the Kanazawa District Court ordered Hokuriku Electric Power Co. to shut down the No. 2 reactor at its Shika power plant Friday in Ishikawa Prefecture, recognizing a citizen group's claim that it would be vulnerable, as it sits near a fault line, if a major quake hit. The 135 plaintiffs, from 17 prefectures, filed the lawsuit in August 1999, initially demanding the reactor not be built. The plaintiffs had said the reactor was too weak, noting it was built using 20-year-old antiquake-design guidelines from the government.

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23. Japan on Cross-Strait Relations

The Washington Post ("JAPAN-TAIWAN TIES BLOSSOM AS REGIONAL RIVALRY GROWS", 2006-0--27) reported that in recent months, Japan has made a series of unprecedented overtures toward Taiwan. In Tokyo, leading politicians are increasingly adopting the view that Japan must come to the island's aid in the event of PRC aggression. Many analysts say they believe Japan's evolving interest in Taiwan could tilt the regional balance of power.

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24. Japan-PRC Relations

Kyodo ("CHINA SAYS ATMOSPHERE NOT YET RIGHT FOR SUMMIT WITH JAPAN ", 2006-03-27) reported that the PRC believes the atmosphere remains too clouded for the leaders of the PRC and Japan to meet, a PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman said Monday, sounding a negative note to a Japanese lawmaker's proposal to hold a bilateral summit before Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's term ends in September.

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25. Taiwan Arms Deal

Reuters ("TAIWAN'S MA SAYS BUILDING CONSENSUS ON ARMS DEAL ", 2006-03-27) reported that Taiwan's main opposition Nationalist Party is building a consensus on a key $11 billion US arms package that has long been delayed by political wrangling, the party's leader said. Ma Ying-jeou, chairman of the Nationalist Party, blamed the latest glitch in an arms package first offered by Washington in April 2001 on President Chen Shui-bian's controversial move last month to scrap the dormant National Unification Council.

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26. PRC Gas Explosion

Agence France-Presse ("GAS EXPLOSION IN CHINA POLLUTES RIVER, 11,500 EVACUATED", 2006-03-27) reported that a gas leak in southwest PRC has triggered a huge explosion, forcing the evacuation of 11,500 people and polluting a river, according to state media. The accident in Chongqing municipality early on Saturday morning occurred in Xiaoyang village, the same location

as another gas leak in December 2003 that killed 243 people in one of the nation's most deadly industrial incidents.

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II. CanKor

27. Report #242

CanKor ("CURRENT EVENTS", 2006-03-24) Chinese and Russian leaders include a plea to their Six Party Talk colleagues for patience and flexibility in dealing with the DPRK nuclear issue. Following a recent nuclear deal between the USA and India (under which the USA promised nuclear know-how and atomic fuel, even though New Delhi is not an NPT signatory), the DPRK asks the USA to consider "nuclear cooperation". It also responds to the recent US report on national security strategy by stating, "A preemptive attack is not the monopoly of the USA." Meanwhile, the DPRK asks Norway to mediate in its ongoing dispute with the USA. The EU Parliament decides to link humanitarian aid to the issue of DPRK Human Rights. The decision coincides with the opening of a human rights conference in Brussels, led by activist groups from the USA and across Europe. Meanwhile, some 100 students and civil activists from the South are in the Belgian capital on an "Expedition for Peace on the Korean Peninsula" to protest against what they see as a hidden agenda behind the conference. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres travels to Beijing to discuss the issue of DPR Korean asylum-seekers. Although he gives no indication about whether China agrees to drop its refusal to accord them refugee rather than migrant status, he does say that China is creating its first legal asylum system, which might help to resolve the conflict. The ROK press corps stands united in protest at the DPRK authorities' interference with their coverage of an ongoing divided family reunion event.

(return to top) CanKor ("BOOK REVIEW", 2006-02-24) In the CanKor BOOK REVIEW section, Erik Mobrand of Princeton University reviews two unusual books: A graphic novel, "Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea" by Canadian Guy Delisle, and "North Korea in Quotation: A Worldwide Dictionary, 1948-2004" by Steve Shipp. Bill Drucker adds his take on the Delisle book in a review that appeared in the Korean Quarterly Winter 2006 issue. (return to top)

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