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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Counterfeiting

Korea Herald ("U.S. TO ISSUE NEW $100 NOTES NEXT YEAR ", 2006-02-15) reported that the US will roll out newly designed $100 notes next year to enhance the security of US currency, the Treasury Department said. The US says the DPRK has for years been making and circulating "supernotes," highly refined bogus $100 notes. In Seoul, US ambassador Alexander Vershbow said the DPRK should hand over all equipment used in making the fake dollars, including the plates, to prove it will stop counterfeiting.

(return to top) Kyodo News ("U.S. BELIEVES N. KOREA COUNTERFEITING DOLLARS: S. KOREAN ENVOY", 2006-02-16) reported that the US believes the DPRK is counterfeiting US dollars in a state mint, Yonhap News Agency reported Thursday, quoting the ROK ambassador to the US. "The U.S. believes North Korea counterfeited 'supernotes' in a place where it issues its currency, not in separate facilities," Yonhap quoted Ambassador Lee Tai Sik as saying. "Supernotes" refer to high-quality counterfeited $100 bills that Washington accuses Pyongyang of producing and circulating. (return to top)

2. Inter-Korean Summit

Korea Herald ("TWO KOREAS AGREE TO HOLD SECOND SUMMIT, CHUNG SAYS", 2006-02-16) reported that the ROK and the DPRK have agreed to hold their second summit this year. "I expect the summit will be held within this year. We have already agreed in principle to hold it, and the remaining issue is when to hold it," Chung Dong young said.

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3. Peninsular Polarization

Korea Times ("POLARIZATION COULD RESULT IN 3 KOREAS: ROH'S AIDE ", 2006-02-15) reported that presidential chief of staff Lee Byung-wan warned Wednesday that the widening social and economic gaps, if left intact, could result in ``three Koreas'', the DPRK and the divided ROK, on the peninsula. Lee described socioeconomic polarization as one of the biggest problems facing the country. He said the gap between the rich and poor in the country is one of the worst among member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). ``If left unsettled, it could divide South Korea which pursues reunification with the North, into two, resulting in three Koreas on the peninsula,'' he said in a speech.

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4. Sanctions on DPRK

Asahi Shimbun ("PANEL COMPILING BILL ON SLAPPING SANCTIONS ON NORTH KOREA", 2006-02-16) reported that a Liberal Democratic Party panel charged with overseeing the DPRK abduction issue agreed Thursday to draw up a bill that would oblige Tokyo to slap sanctions on Pyongyang if no progress is made in the dispute. According to the outline, the proposal will spell out the responsibility of the central government in coordinating with local governments to raise public

awareness of human rights violations by DPR Korean authorities. It will also require the state to work with other governments and international organizations in investigating Pyongyang's human rights wrongdoings.

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5. Japanese Postal Remittances to DPRK

Japan Times ("SPIKE IN POSTAL REMITTANCES TO NORTH KOREA SCRUTINIZED", 2006-02-16) reported that Japan has seen a sharp increase in the number of postal remittances to the DPRK in recent years. Citing Japan Post documents, Shu Watanabe, a House of Representatives member from the Democratic Party of Japan, told a Lower House panel the number of remittances to the DPRK was 1,560 in fiscal 2004, compared with 383 in fiscal 2002 and 506 in fiscal 2003. Japan Post will look at the details of the money going to the DPRK.

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6. Indonesian President to visit DPRK

Associated Press ("INDONESIA'S PRESIDENT TO VISIT SOUTH, NORTH KOREA ", 2006-02-16) reported that President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono will visit the DPRK and the ROK in the coming months to discuss ways to reduce nuclear tensions on the divided peninsula, an official said Thursday.

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7. ROK on Kim Jong-il's Birthday

Reuters ("N.KOREA SHOWERS KIM WITH PRAISE ON BIRTHDAY", 2006-02-16) reported that DPR Korean leader Kim Jong-il was showered with praise at home for his 64th birthday on Thursday but for the outside world the day underscored lingering questions of succession and of an unresolved nuclear crisis. "This year's birthday is expected to serve as an opportunity for Kim to reconfirm his country's loyalty to him as well as his hold on the country's system," RO Korea's Unification Ministry said.

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8. US Asia Relations

The Washington Post ("U.S. TO SHIFT ENVOYS TO CHINA, INDIA: RUSSIA, GERMANY TO LOSE DIPLOMATIC ", 2006-02-10) reported that the PRC and India have emerged as the big winners -- and Russia and Germany as the top losers -- in the first round of a broad restructuring of U.S. diplomatic posts.

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9. Russia East Asia Relations

ITAR-TASS: News Agency ("RUSSIA, JAPAN TO AGREE ON PROMISING DIRECTIONS OF SCIENTIFIC COOP", 2006-02-15) reported that Russia and Japan will agree to maintain scientific-technical cooperation on more than 100 projects.

(return to top) ITAR-TASS: News Agency ("RUSSIA, VIETNAM PMS DISCUSS COOPERATION, SIGN AGREEMENTS", 2006-02-16) reported that agreements on action to combat the trafficking of narcotics and in the field of education have been signed by Prime Ministers Mikhail Fradkov of Russia and Phan Van Khai of Vietnam. Provision is made, in particular, for giving greater scope to exchanges of students and faculty members between the two countries. (return to top)

10. Japan Trade Relations

Crisscross News ("JAPAN, 6 PERSIAN GULF NATIONS TO HOLD FTA TALKS", 2006-02-16) reported that Japan and the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates will hold preparatory talks on sealing a free trade agreement in late May.

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11. Japan-Iraq Troop Contribution

Reuters ("JAPAN SAYS TOO EARLY TO DECIDE IRAQ TROOP PULLOUT", 2006-02-16) reported that Japan said it had yet to decide when to withdraw its non-combat ground troops from Iraq despite a report that it was discussing with Washington and London its plans to start pulling them out next month.

(return to top) The Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN TO WITHDRAW TROOPS EVEN BEFORE IRAQI GOVERNMENT IS ESTABLISHED", 2006-02-16) reported that the government has decided to start withdrawing the Ground Self-Defense Force troops from Iraq even before a new government is established in the country. (return to top)

12. USFJ Troop Realignment

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("MARINES' GUAM MOVE TO COST 7.6 BIL. DOLLARS", 2006-02-16) reported that the United States has told Japan the total cost of relocating the headquarters of the U.S. Marine Corps in Okinawa Prefecture to Guam is an estimated 7.6 billion dollars (813.2 billion yen). More than 60 percent of the total cost, or 4.7 billion dollars, will be used to build and improve housing for more than 7,000 marines and their families--a total of 17,000 people.

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13. PRC Tibet Relations

BBC News ("TIBET ENVOYS 'IN CHINA FOR TALKS'", 2006-02-15) reported that envoys of Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama are in the PRC for talks on allowing the region some form of autonomy.

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14. PRC Anti-Graft Efforts

Xinhua ("CHINA TO TACKLE COMMERCIAL BRIBERY OF GOVT OFFICIALS", 2006-02-16) reported that another major task to ensure that major decisions of the central authorities are implemented effectively without commercial bribery will represent a major goal of the PRC government this year. "Disobedience of orders and violations of bans shall be severely punished," was said according to a recent meeting.

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15. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua ("PETROCHINA CLOSES MAJOR BUYOUT PROCESS", 2006-02-16) reported that PetroChina Company Ltd., the PRC's largest oil producer, closed its major buyout process of listed subsidiaries recently with the delisting of Jilin Chemical Industrial Company Ltd. from the domestic "A share" market.

(return to top) The International Herald Tribune ("NUCLEAR PLANTS PLANNED FOR SOUTH CHINA", 2006-02-16) reported that two nuclear power plants will be built in the southern PRC's Guangdong and Fujian provinces as steps to meet the county's surging demand for energy. (return to top)

16. PRC & Media Censorship

BBC News ("CHINA ALLOWS NEWSPAPER TO RE-OPEN", 2006-02-16) reported that the PRC has decided to allow the re-opening of an investigative newspaper shut down last month. The Bingdian (Freezing Point) will hit news stands on 1 March, but Communist Party officials in charge of the weekly would not allow the former editor and his deputy to work there.

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17. Cross Strait Relations

The China Post ("MA 'SINGING DUET WITH CHINA,' CHEN SAYS", 2006-02-16) reported that President Chen Shui-bian yesterday criticized an opposition leader's warning about Taiwan seeking "unilateral separatism, " claiming that it was "singing in tune with China's rhetoric."

(return to top) The China Post ("KMT TRIES TO CLARIFY AD WITH INDEPENDENCE AS POSSIBILITY", 2006-02-16) reported that Kuomintang leader Ma Ying-jeou and other officials yesterday scrambled to clarify an advertisement published by the party suggesting the KMT viewed independence for Taiwan as a possible option. (return to top)

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