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I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap News ("S. KOREAN SECURITY OFFICIAL VISITS U.S. FOR NUCLEAR BREAKTHROUGH", 2006-02-23) reported that the ROK's chief security official headed Thursday to the US, where he is expected to discuss face-saving measures for the DPRK to return to stalled international talks over its nuclear weapons program. The four-day trip by Song Min-soon comes just ahead of a planned bilateral meeting between the US and the DPRK, raising hopes of a possible breakthrough in the near future.

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2. DPRK on Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA SAYS BALL IS IN U.S. COURT ", 2006-02-23) reported that the DPRK's UN Ambassador Pak Gil-yon on Wednesday said a resumption of stalled six-party talks on the country's nuclear program depends entirely on the attitude of the US. Park was speaking at an event organized by New York's JoongAng Daily in Flushing, New York. "We are always ready" to attend the six-party talks, he said. If the US shows good faith, the six-party talks can resume, Park said.

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3. WFP Food Aid to the DPRK

World Food Program ("WFP GOVERNING BODY APPROVES NORTH KOREA AID PLAN; SEEKS ASSURANCES ON MONITORING", 2006-02-23) reported that the World Food Programme's governing Executive Board today approved a two-year plan to build on the agency's ten-year record of humanitarian assistance to the DPRK by tackling nutritional deficiencies and chronic hunger. The program is valued at US$102 million and requiring 150,000 metric tons of commodities for 1.9 million North Koreans. "Our board members have raised reasonable questions about our access to people in need and ability to monitor their donations. WFP shares these concerns and has worked hard to negotiate improved conditions for our operation," said WFP Executive Director James Morris. "We now look to the government of the DPRK to agree to conditions that will allow us to do our work properly, for the sake of the people who need our help."

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4. US on DPRK Food Aid

Yonhap News ("U.S. WILLING TO REVIEW NEW WFP PROPOSAL ON N.K. AID: STATE DEPT.", 2006-02-23) reported that the US will be open-minded about resuming food aid to the DPRK with an eye on the agreement with the UN relief body, the State Department said Thursday.

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5. Kim Dae Jung on DPRK Visit

Yonhap News ("FORMER PRESIDENT CITES LACK OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR DELAYING N.K.VISIT", 2006-02-23) reported that former ROK President Kim Dae-jung said Thursday that he postponed his planned visit to the DPRK until June because of a lack of public support. In a meeting with newly elected ruling party leader Chung Dong-young and other officials, Kim said, "I made the final decision after finding out what the general public thinks of it."

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6. Inter-Korean Cooperation

Yonhap News ("KOREAS AGREE TO CONFIRM FATE OF MISSING PEOPLE FROM KOREAN WAR", 2006-02-23) reported that the DPRK on Thursday agreed to work toward confirming the fate of missing RO Koreans from and after the 1950-53 Korean War. The agreement came at the end of three-day inter-Korean talks between the countries' Red Cross officials at Mount Geumgang.

(return to top) Yonhap News ("FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS TO VISIT INDUSTRIAL PARK IN NORTH KOREA", 2006-02-23) reported that a group of foreign media correspondents based in the ROK are to visit an industrial complex for ROK firms located in the DPRK next week, Seoul's Unification Ministry said Thursday. The group, consisting of 124 correspondents from 70 foreign news outlets, is to take a one-day trip on Monday to Kaesong, a city just north of the heavily-fortified inter-Korean border, Vice Unification Minister Shin Un-sang told a regular news briefing. "The ministry hopes the trip will allow the foreign correspondents to personally feel the inter-Korean rapprochement and will lead to active participation and cooperation of the international community" in the joint project, Shin said. (return to top)

7. Inter-Korean Economic Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL COULD CUT ELECTRICITY OFFER TO N.KOREA: MINISTER", 2006-02-23) reported that Seoul will have to revise a plan to supply the DPRK with 2 million kW of electricity a year in return for dismantling its nuclear program, Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok said Thursday. "The proposal was predicated on North Korea giving up its nuclear development program and not building any light-water reactors." He added the contents of the proposal were fluid and the government will “search for a way to realize the proposal at minimum possible cost." Lee also said his government will “under no circumstances” shoulder the full cost of dismantling a halted project to build a light-water reactor in the DPRK’s Sinpo. However, a Unification Ministry official later said the remarks meant that the period of power supply could change if new light-water reactors are built in the DPRK. But he added, “Nothing has changed in the government’s position on the power supply proposal.”

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8. DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo News ("N. KOREA SAYS ASO RESPONSIBLE FOR JAPAN'S PAST DUE TO FAMILY LINKS", 2006-02-23) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso should ''take the lead'' in atoning for Japan's 35-year colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, not just because of the job he holds but because of his family's ties to the country's wartime acts, the KCNA said Thursday. In a commentary, KCNA accused a mining company operated by Aso's family of making Koreans work in its coal mines after they were forcibly taken to Japan during its 1910-1945 colonization of the peninsula.

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9. Japan on Abductees in DPRK

Reuters ("JAPAN ISSUES ARREST WARRANTS FOR N. KOREAN AGENTS ", 2006-02-23) reported that Japan issued arrest warrants on Thursday for two suspected DPRK kidnappers, the latest step in a bitter, long-running row with the DPRK over Japanese nationals abducted by Pyongyang decades ago, media reports said. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said Japanese authorities issued a fresh arrest warrant for former DPRK agent Sin Guang-su on suspicion of kidnapping two Japanese nationals in 1978. Japanese media said a warrant was also issued for Choe Sung-chol, who is suspected of having kidnapped two Japanese nationals in a separate 1978 incident.

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10. US on DPRK Illicit Activities

Yonhap News ("N.K. OFFICIAL TO RECEIVE U.S. TREASURY'S BRIEFING NEXT WEEK ", 2006-0--23) reported that a DPRK Foreign Ministry official will receive a US Treasury briefing on March 7 in New York on his nation's illicit financial activities, the State Department said Thursday. Ri Gun, director-general of the US affairs bureau and deputy delegate to six-party nuclear talks, will lead the DPRK team of technical experts, department spokesman Adam Ereli said at a daily briefing.

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11. ROK on DPRK Counterfeiting

Korea Times ("NK PRODUCES FAKE US BILLS IN PYONGYANG: LAWMAKER", 2006-02-23) reported that lawmakers of the main ROK opposition Grand National Party (GNP) Thursday urged the government to take steps to prevent the increasing circulation of fake US bills allegedly counterfeited by the DPRK. On the second day of a five-day interpellation at the National Assembly, Rep. Kim Jae-won of the conservative GNP claimed that the DPRK has produced counterfeit US banknotes at a factory located in Pyongyang, showing photos taken by satellites. The lawmaker also said the fake US bills have been distributed by the DPRK's state-run international trading company called Kwangmyungsung to several foreign countries.

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12. DPRK Diplomats Caught Smuggling Currency

Chosun Ilbo ("PYONGYANG OFFICIALS CAUGHT SMUGGLING CURRENCY", 2006-02-23) reported that DPRK diplomats were caught attempting to smuggle US$1 million and 200 million yen into

Mongolia on Tuesday, the Mongolian press reported. Reports said the DPR Koreans told Mongolian authorities they were planning to put the money in a Mongolian bank account, according to Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun. The paper said that it was unclear whether the money was counterfeit or not, and what measures the Mongolian authorities will take.

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13. DPRK Train Derailed

Chosun Ilbo ("TRAIN DERAILED IN NORTH KOREA ", 2006-02-23) reported that a train that left Pyongyang for Beijing last Monday derailed in the area of Jeongju in North Pyongan Province, it emerged Thursday. A source in the DPRK said the train, which left for Shinuiju at about 7 a.m., derailed and rolled over about three hours later, resulting in the suspension of all traffic on the Pyongyang-Shinuiju line. The source said the People's Army stationed in the area cordoned off the area and the situation was brought under control. The train between Pyongyang and Beijing is normally used by diplomats visiting China or those involved in trade, and also transports goods for import and export.

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14. ROK on 1983 DPRK Bombing of Rangoon

Yonhap News ("CALLS RISE FOR REVIEW OF 1983 RANGOON BOMBING BY NORTH KOREA", 2006-02-23) reported that twenty-three years after 17 high-ranking Seoul government officials were killed in a DPRK bombing in Burma, now Myanmar, the full truth may be known soon as one of the DPRK agents involved wants to live in the ROK, according to a ROK lawmaker. On Oct. 9, 1983, a powerful bomb demolished the Martyr's Mausoleum in Rangoon, now Yangon, just before visiting ROK President Chun Doo-hwan was to pay homage there. Chun cancelled the rest of his schedule, returned to Seoul and pinpointed the DPRK as the culprit. The DPRK denied involvement but Burma, with evidence, publicly incriminated Pyongyang and severed diplomatic ties with it.

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15. Japan-China Trade Relations

Kyodo News ("CHINA AGREES WITH JAPAN TRADE MINISTER ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION", 2006-02-23) reported that PRC leaders have agreed with Japanese trade minister Toshihiro Nikai on boosting economic cooperation, particularly in the fields of investment, energy conservation and environmental protection.

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16. Japan-Chile Trade Relations

Crisscross News ("JAPAN, CHILE START FORMAL FTA TALKS", 2006-02-23) reported that Japan and Chile began two days of official negotiations in Tokyo aimed at concluding a bilateral free trade agreement, hoping to strike a deal by the end of the year.

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17. Japan on UN

The Los Angeles Times ("JAPAN MAY CUT FUNDING TO U.N.", 2006-02-23) reported that Japan might cut funding for peacekeeping if waste and fraud continue. The U.N. Security Council held a special session to discuss an internal investigation that found nearly $300 million was lost in waste and fraud in peacekeeping procurement.

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18. Japan Satellite Launch

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("INFRARED SATELLITE SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED", 2006-02-23) reported that the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency successfully launched from Uchinoura Space Center in Kimotsukicho, Kagoshima Prefecture the country's first infrared telescope satellite--the third successful satellite launch for the space agency in a month.

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19. Japan German Bilateral Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("STEINMEIER: JAPAN HAS STRATEGIC ROLE / GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER ALSO URGES ", 2006-02-21) reported that German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier sees an important strategic role for Japan in dealing with global issues, "Germany views Japan as a major security partner in Asia."

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20. PRC Energy

Xinhua ("SHANDONG TO INVEST 9.5 BLN YUAN ON POWER GRID CONSTRUCTION", 2006-02-23) reported that the Shandong Electric Power Corporation plans to invest 9.498 billion yuan (1.18 billion U.S. dollars) on grid construction in 2006. The investment will help build about 1,725 kilometers of a 220 kilo-volt or over 220 kilo-volt electricity line with 14.25 million kilo volt-ampere transformer capacity.

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21. PRC Trade

The International Herald Tribune ("MANDELSON COMMITS TO ASIA SHOE TARIFFS", 2006-02-23) reported that the European Union's top trade negotiator on proposed protective duties on imports of shoes from the PRC and Vietnam after finding what he called "compelling" evidence that the Asian countries are unfairly dumping footwear on European markets.

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22. PRC Rural Poverty

The New York Times ("CHINA UNVEILS PLAN TO AID FARMERS, BUT AVOIDS LAND ISSUE", 2006-02-23) reported that the PRC government, faced with rising inequality and unrest in the

countryside, formally announced major initiatives this week to expand health, education and welfare benefits for farmers but left unresolved the fundamental issue of whether they should be allowed to buy or sell their land.

(return to top) Crisscross News ("WORLD BANK CAUTIONS CHINA ON POVERTY REDUCTION", 2006-02-23) reported that World Bank officials cautioned China on its approach to poverty alleviation, saying the government should listen more to its people, let more citizens say what projects are done in their villages and plan cities to accommodate 200 million more migrant workers. (return to top)

23. PRC Corruption

Xinhua ("CHINA TO CONTINUE AUDIT OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS, MINISTERS IN 2006", 2006-02-23) reported that the PRC will audit the financial statements of six leading state-owned enterprises and financial records of a number of provincial governors and ministers in a substantial effort to increase financial accountability in the country which is also seeing the maturation of its audit systems.

(return to top) Xinhua ("CHINA TO CLAMP DOWN ON ORGANIZED CRIMES", 2006-02-22) reported that senior leader Luo Gan has said the PRC will launch a nationwide crackdown on organized crime to ensure a safe and stable social environment. (return to top)

24. PRC Human Rights

BBC News ("TIANANMEN ACTIVIST 'MENTALLY ILL' ", 2006-02-23) reported that Yu Dongyue was freed on Wednesday, after 17 years in prison, but family members said he did not recognise them and spoke unintelligibly. Human rights groups have alleged Yu was tortured by guards in prison.

(return to top) The International Herald Tribune ("CHINA FREES JOURNALIST JAILED AFTER TIANANMEN", 2006-02-23) reported that the PRC released journalist Yu Dongyue from prison after nearly 17 years for splattering paint and hurling eggs on a portrait of Mao Zedong during the 1989 pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square. (return to top)

25. PRC Vatican Relations

The International Herald Tribune ("NEW CARDINALS INCLUDE CHINA CRITIC", 2006-02-22) reported that Pope Benedict XVI named 15 new cardinals, including Bishop Joseph Zen of Hong Kong, an often outspoken critic of the PRC who has nonetheless played a leading role in efforts to open diplomatic relations between Beijing and the Vatican.

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26. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US SAYS TAIWAN SHOULD NOT HARM REGIONAL STABILITY", 2006-0--23) reported that the United States urged Taiwan against endangering stability in the region after the island's ruling pro-independence party endorsed scrapping guidelines for reunification with the PRC.

(return to top) ("CHINA PILES ON THE RHETORIC AGAINST TAIWAN'S CHEN", 2006-02-23) reported that the PRC issued another volley of rhetoric against Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian on

Thursday, branding his plan to scrap a council advising on eventual unification with the mainland as a "dangerous provocation." (return to top) The China Post ("MAC DEFENDS ABOLITION OF NUC, UNIFICATION GUIDELINES", 2006-02-23) reported that the Mainland Affairs Council came out yesterday to defend President Chen Shui-bian's decision to scrap the National Unification Council. In a press release, the MAC commented on Beijing's warning against the Chen decision, charging the PRC with standing in the way to normal development of relations across the Taiwan Strait. (return to top)

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