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I. NAPSNet

1. PRC on BDA Ruling

Associated Press ("CHINA VOICES DEEP REGRET OVER U.S. RULING ON NORTH KOREA AND MACAU BANK", 2007-03-15) reported that the PRC expressed "deep regret" Thursday over a U.S. decision to punish a Macau bank for alleged money laundering of DPRK funds, foreshadowing the difficulties ahead in enforcing an international agreement on the DPRK nuclear disarmament. The DPRK has yet to respond publicly to the U.S. Treasury's decision. "We feel deep regret for the ruling by the U.S.," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said at a routine media briefing. Qin did not explicitly say why the PRC was displeased, but suggested that the U.S. move could affect the six party process, as well as the reputation of Macau, a semiautonomous territory under Chinese rule.

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2. Japan on Removal of DPRK from Terror List

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPAN MAY BLOCK N. KOREA'S TERROR LIST REMOVAL", 2007-03-15) reported that the ROK National Intelligence Service (NIS) believes that opposition from Japan will likely affect the decision by the U.S. to remove the DPRK from its list of states sponsoring terrorism, which is called for under the Feb. 13 six-nation agreement. Japan's opposition to the removal is related to the abduction issue.

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3. DPRK Working Group: Energy and Economy

Itar-Tass ("SIX COUNTRIES' DELEGATES BEGIN TO DISCUSS ECON AID TO DPRK", 2007-03-15) reported that delegates of the six countries began to discuss steps to render economic and energy aid to the DPRK in exchange for curtailment of its nuclear programme.

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Deutsche Presse-Agentur ("NORTH AND SOUTH KOREA FAIL TO REACH AGREEMENT OVER TRAIN SERVICES", 2007-03-15) reported that renewed talks between the Koreas over a new date for the test run of the restored rail link between the two countries Thursday ended without any tangible results. Referring to information from delegation circles in the DPRK border city of Kaesong, Yonhap said Seoul had again made planned aid for the light industry dependent on the running of the rail service. The restoration of the train line, on which the two countries agreed seven years ago, is widely seen as one of the most important projects of inter-Korean rapprochement in recent years.

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5. Inter-Korean Tourism

Yonhap ("INTER-KOREAN TOURISM PROJECT REVIVING DUE TO PROGRESS IN DENUCLEARIZATION: MINISTER", 2007-03-15) reported that the inter-Korean tourism project Mount Kumgang is rebounding from months of decline thanks to progress in the nuclear

disarmament talks.

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6. DPRK-Russia Relations

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIA INVITES NORTH KOREA TO DISCUSS 13 COOPERATION ISSUES", 2007-0--15) reported that Russia has proposed that the DPRK put 13 issues, including its $8-billion debt to the former Soviet Union, on the agenda of a Moscow meeting of the bilateral cooperation commission March 23. Participants in the upcoming meeting will consider prospects for the use of DPRK workers in Russia, ways of settling debts to the former Soviet Union, and the activities of standing sectoral sub-commissions.

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7. UN on DPRK FMD Outbreak

FAO ("FAO AND OIE SEND MISSION TO NORTH KOREA", 2007-03-15) reported that in response to a request from the DPRK, the FAO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) are sending a mission to investigate the first outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease, evaluate the need for assistance and provide recommendations on the response to control the disease.

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8. Japan Nuclear Safety Disclosure

Reuters ("OUTRAGE OVER JAPAN NUCLEAR REACTOR COVERUP", 2007-03-15) reported that a Japanese power company admitted on Thursday that it had covered up a 1999 incident in which mishandling of nuclear fuel rods led to an unintended self-sustaining nuclear fission chain reaction for 15 minutes. Anti-nuclear activists expressed outrage over Hokuriku Electric Power Co.'s failure to report the accident, although the company said the mishap was relatively minor. The news of the 15-minute "criticality" -- an unintended self-sustaining nuclear fission chain reaction -- is likely to further dent public confidence in Japan's nuclear power industry, already undermined by safety scandals over the past decade.

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9. PRC-Japan History Study

AHN ("JAPAN, CHINA TO HOLD SECOND ROUND OF JOINT HISTORY STUDY", 2007-03-15) reported that Japanese and Chinese historians are scheduled to gather next week for the second round of a joint history study that will also touch on war-related issues. The new round of talks comes amidst worldwide anger over Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's claim that there was no evidence of Asian women being forced into Japanese military brothels during WWII.

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10. PRC on Austro-US-Japan pact with India

Bloomberg News ("AUSTRALIA, INDIA SECURITY TIES MAY ALARM CHINA, ANALYSTS SAY", 2007-03-15) reported that a proposed security accord between Australia, Japan, the U.S. and India

may create trade and security tensions with the PRC. "A four-way relationship with the U.S., Japan and India would encircle China," says Robert Ayson, a professor at the Canberra-based Australian National University. Australia has signed defense agreements with the U.S. and Japan and is mulling an arrangement to provide uranium to India. The Australian government is also negotiating a free trade agreement with China and last year signed an accord to export uranium to Asia's biggest energy consumer.

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11. PRC Rural Unrest

BBC ("SECURITY TIGHT IN CHINA RIOT TOWN", 2007-03-15) reported that security is tight in a town in central PRC following riots that involved as many as 20,000 people. A BBC correspondent in the town, in Hunan province, says it appears the protests began after a local firm took over the town's bus routes and doubled the fares. Vehicles were burned and several people were injured in clashes with police as the protests climaxed on Monday. Reports said one person had been killed, although this was denied on Wednesday by the official Xinhua news agency, which played down the incident.

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12. PRC AIDS Issue

Washington Post ("GROUP HONORS DOCTOR WHO EXPOSED CHINA AIDS SCANDAL", 2007-0--15) eported that Gao Yaojie, under house arrest and harassed by Chinese officials for revealing the cause of an HIV outbreak among blood plasma donors, has been granted permission to travel to Washington to receive the Vital Voices Global Leadership Award. International pressure lead to her release from house arrest. In the mid-1990s, she single-handedly led a crusade that exposed a catastrophic blood plasma donor business that had triggered an HIV/AIDS epidemic in Henan province. She tried to get tests done but was told at the local hospital that only foreigners contracted AIDS.

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13. PRC Property Laws

Times Argus ("CHINA SET TO PROTECT PROPERTY RIGHTS", 2007-03-15) reported that the PRC's legislature is about to enact a hotly contested law safeguarding the rights of property owners. Sentiments are running so high that censors this year have blocked most opponents from airing their views in domestic media. In theory, the law should help citizens fight indiscriminate seizures of land as well as protect a growing class of urban homeowners, but land grabs for industrial and real estate development have sparked violent unrest, often pitting poor farmers against officials who are in cahoots with business owners.

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14. PRC Internet Censorship

CNet ("YAHOO WINS RULING IN CHINA CENSORSHIP CASE", 2007-03-14) reported that Yahoo Hong Kong has been cleared of any liability for sharing a journalist's e-mail account with the Chinese government in an investigation that landed the person in jail. Yahoo and Google have been

criticized for cooperating with officials in the PRC on Internet censorship efforts. But Yahoo has been singled out for providing information that helped officials convict Chinese journalist Shi Tao. Yahoo shareholders will be voting at their annual meeting in June on a proposal by a pension fund to force the company to refuse Internet censorship requests by governments. The same proposal will be considered at the Google shareholders meeting.

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15. PRC Manners

Associated Press ("OLYMPIC OFFICIALS THREATEN TO GET TOUGH ON PUBLIC SPITTING IN CHINA", 2007-03-15) reported that PRC officials say they are prepared to take harsh measures against people who spit in public if appeals do not work. Bad manners have been a constant worry for Chinese officials who see the Olympics as a chance to impress the world and humanize the PRC's remarkable re-emergence as a global power.

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