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I. NAPSNet

1. US - DPRK Relations

BBC ("NORTH KOREA, US TO HOLD TALKS 'LATER THIS MONTH' IN WASHINGTON - JAPAN PAPER", 2006-02-06) reported that the Japanese news source Sankei Shimbun, citing unnamed sources, claims the USA and the DPRK will hold a bilateral meeting later this month to discuss the ongoing dispute over nuclear weapons and financial restrictions. Neither the DPRK nor the USA has confirmed the report and ROK officials express skepticism that such a meeting would take place given current circumstances.

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2. Japan - DPRK Bilateral Talks

China Broadcast (CRI) ("LATEST FROM JAPAN-KOREAN TALK", 2006-02-07) reported that the DPRK and Japan held their fourth day of talks on the normalization of relations in Beijing, but did not achieve full consensus. Tadamichi Yamamoto, Japan's chief envoy, said the DPRK must settle the international dispute over its nuclear program before Tokyo will form official ties. However, DPRK diplomat Jong Thae Yang says the two sides have reached an understanding in some areas.

(return to top) Kyodo News Service ("JAPAN, N. KOREA FAIL TO AGREE ON ECONOMIC AID FORMAT", 2006-02-06) reported that the two nations failed to agree over an economic cooperation formula presented by Tokyo as a method to make up for its 35-year occupation of the Korean Peninsula. Japan is pushing for a plan under which it would give the DPRK economic assistance in the form of grants and low-interest loans rather than compensation payments to make up for damage inflicted during the occupation. A Japanese Foreign Ministry official said the talks did not represent a complete breakdown of the plan, but declined to elaborate on where differences remained. (return to top) Asahi Shimbun ("CALL FOR RETURN OF ALL ABDUCTEES, ABDUCTORS", 2006-02-06) reported that on the second day of bilateral negotiations with the DPRK, Japanese delegates made a strong push for the return of all Japanese abductees. Meanwhile, Pyongyang officials pressed their Japanese counterparts for details on Japan's DNA test on human remains believed to be those of abductee Yokota, and handed to Japan in November 2004. A DNA analysis in Japan found they were of other people. This round of negotiations aimed at normalizing bilateral ties, the 13th of its kind, is the first since October 2002. (return to top)

3. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("URI PARTY THINK TANK TAKES UP INVITATION TO N. KOREA", 2006-02-07) reported that four ruling Uri Party lawmakers flew to the DPRK for a five-day visit. The delegation is headed by Lim Chae-jung, chairman of the National Assembly's Unification, Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee. A Uri official said the DPRK's national unification research center invited the delegates as representatives of the Uri Party thank tank, the Open Policy Institute. The two parties will discuss academic exchanges and holding of a joint forum on Northeast Asian affairs, disarmament, a peace mechanism for the Korean Peninsula, and boosting inter-Korean economic cooperation.

(return to top) Korea Times ("S-N SUMMIT POSSIBLE THIS YEAR: UNIFICATION CHIEF", 2006-

02-07) reported that Lee Jong-seok, South Korea's unification minister-nominee, sees a summit between President Roh Moo-hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il possibly taking place within the year. "President Roh Moo-hyun already said that he'd like to hold the South-North summit regardless of timing and place," Lee said. "But we're also in the opinion that the summit, if held, needs to be a meaningful one rather than just a handshaking one." (return to top)

4. Violence on the PRC-DPRK Border

Donga Ilbo ("NORTH KOREAN BORDER POSTS ATTACKED", 2006-02-07) reported that unidentified men carried out a series of armed attacks on guard posts along the PRC-DPRK border. Some of those who conducted the attacks carried firearms and showed signs of organized movement, which has piqued curiosity as to their identity. In one scuffle, a guard was stabbed 38 times succumbing to his wounds. In an ensuing chase, the panicking men jettisoned their bags in which were found three disassembled rifles, ammunition, a camcorder, and a cell phone. Similar cases have also been reported along the Duman River, in neighboring Musan County and one other unnamed location. In the past, there have been cases of armed DPR Korean soldiers crossing the border into the PRC and engaging in robbery, however, it is unprecedented to have armed men infiltrating and attacking the heavily defended DPRK territory.

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5. Humanitarian Aid to DPRK

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA DONATES 2,000 TONNES OF RICE TO NORTH KOREA", 2006-0--07) reported that India donated 2,000 tonnes of rice in humanitarian aid to the DPRK. The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported the donation arrived by ship at the western port of Nampo with officials from both countries attending the arrival ceremony. The Indian government has donated humanitarian aid, including food and medicine, to the DPRK on nine occasions since 1995, according to Pyongyang.

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6. DPRK Diplomacy

Korea Times ("INDONESIAN ENVOY SHUTTLES PYONGYANG, SEOUL", 2006-02-07) reported that Indonesia's presidential envoy, Nana Sutrena, arrived in Seoul to brief ROK officials on the results of a four-day trip to the DPRK, amid growing concerns over the lack of progress in the Six Party talks, in limbo since November. Sutrena met with the North's high-ranking officials, including Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun and Kim Yong-nam, Pyongyang's second-most senior leader. But the DPRK did not give any "indication" on whether it will return to the six-party talks.

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7. Foreign Investment in DPRK

Yonhap News Agency ("N. KOREA RANKED AMONG RISKIEST COUNTRIES FOR INT'L INVESTORS", 2006-02-05) reported that the DPRK has been cited as one of the riskiest countries in the world for foreign investors. The Export-Import Bank of Korea said in its latest economic analysis that investors are increasingly wary of the DPRK. Its conclusion was based on risk assessments made by International Investment, PRS Group Inc., Euro-Money and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

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8. PRC on Iranian Nuclear Issue

Xinhua ("CHINA ALWAYS IN FAVOR OF DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION TO IRAN NUCLEAR ISSUE: FM ", 2006-02-07) reported that PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing reaffirmed here on Tuesday that the PRC hopes to solve the Iranian nuclear issue through diplomacy. "We hope to be able to find an adequate solution to this question through diplomacy in order to benefit peace and stability in the region," Li told reporters after talks with French President Jacques Chirac.

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9. PRC-US Security

Xinhua ("US SLAMMED FOR PLAYING UP "CHINA MILITARY THREAT"", 2006-02-07) reported that a PRC foreign ministry spokesman has expressed his firm opposition to a US defence review to play up the "PRC military threat". The PRC "has lodged serious representation" with the US side on PRC-related contents in the Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR), Kong Quan told a press conference.

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10. Cross-Strait Relations

China Post ("TAIWAN-U.S. RELATIONS ARE SOUND, MOFA SAYS", 2006-02-07) reported that Foreign Affairs Minister James Huang yesterday said Taiwan-U.S. relations were sound, following allegations that Taipei's Washington representative David Lee did not do enough to ease American concerns over controversial remarks from President Chen Shui-bian.

(return to top) Xinhua ("CHEN SHUI-BIAN UNDER FIRE OVER REMARKS OF ABOLISHING "NATIONAL UNIFICATION COUNCIL"", 2006-02-07) reported that in recent days, main Taiwan parties, media and both renowned and common people have strongly criticized Chen Shui-bian's remarks of abolishing the "National Unification Council" (NUC). Chen's remarks proved that he tried to salvage his power in the Democratic Progressive Party at the cost of provoking tension between the two sides across the Taiwan Straits, according to [People First Party Chairman]James Soong. Chen is hoping to transfer the focus of the common people, aiming to mask his image of corruption and failure in governing, Soong added. (return to top)

11. Cross-Strait Economic Relations

China Post ("BALANCE INVESTMENTS, CHEN URGES", 2006-02-07) reported that [Taiwan] President Chen Shui-bian yesterday called for investors in the PRC to seek a balance between their individual benefits and the overall national interest when conducting trade and investments across the Taiwan Strait. Chen also urged Taiwan firms to cut reliance on the mainland market and invest more on the island.

(return to top) Xinhua ("TAIWAN AUTHORITIES URGED TO LOOSEN CONTROL OVER CROSS-STRAITS ECONOMIC TIES", 2006-02-07) reported that business people in Taiwan have demanded the authorities to reduce restrictions on investment in the PRC mainland, allow mainland tourists to visit the island, and realize direct air, trade and postal links, according to Taiwan-based media.
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12. Taiwan Security

China Post ("MA: PARTY TO OUTLINE POLICY ON ARMS AND CONTROL YUAN", 2006-02-07) reported that Kuomintang (KMT) Chairman Ma Ying-jeou said yesterday that his party will soon formally make public its position on arms procurement and the confirmation of Control Yuan nominees so that the opposition alliance may build a consensus as early as possible.

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13. PRC on Environment

Australian News ("CHINA TAKES HARD LINE ON POLLUTION AFTER TOXIC SPILLS", 2006-02-08) reported that PRC's main environmental watchdog has demanded local officials report pollution accidents within an hour. It has promised to punish anyone who does not comply in an effort to prevent a repeat of last year's disastrous handling of the Songhua River toxic spill.

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14. Japan Territorial Issue

ITAR-TASS: News Agency ("JAPAN PM MISSES CONGRESS ON KURILES OVER TIGHT SCHEDULE", 2006-02-07) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Tuesday made an unprecedented decision not to attend the Nationwide Congress for the Return of Northern Territories that has opened in Tokyo and even not to send a greeting message to its participants "due to a busy schedule in parliament," the country's government secretariat said.

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15. Japan on Muslim Cartoons

Crisscross News ("JAPAN EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER CRISIS SPARKED BY MUHAMMAD CARTOONS", 2006-02-07) reported that the government on Tuesday expressed concern over the recent violence sparked by Muslim outrage over controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad and urged for an end to it. "We're concerned about the difficult situation over the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in newspapers and magazines published in Denmark and other Western European countries," Yoshinori Katori, the ministry's press secretary, said in a statement.

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16. Japan on US Military Bases

Japan Times ("SUSPECT BUILDERS LINKED TO U.S. BASE PROJECTS", 2006-02-07) reported that at least six construction projects at U.S. military bases in Japan were awarded in fiscal 2004 to contractors that have been searched by prosecutors investigating alleged bid-rigging at the Defense Facilities Administration Agency, investigative sources and documents indicated Monday.

(return to top) Crisscross News ("MAYOR CALLS PLEBISCITE ON RELOCATION OF U.S. AIRCRAFT TO IWAKUNI", 2006-02-07) reported that Iwakuni Mayor Katsusuke Ihara on Tuesday called a plebiscite to ask citizens whether they will accept a plan to relocate U.S. carrier-borne aircraft to a military base in Iwakuni from the Atsugi base in Kanagawa Prefecture. (return to top)

17. Japan-US Security

Crisscross News ("U.S. TO DEPLOY EARLY WARNING X-BAND RADAR IN JAPAN", 2006-02-07) reported that the United States plans to deploy in Japan within the next six months a mobile X-band radar for an advanced early warning system against ballistic missiles, a senior U.S. Missile Defense Agency official said Monday.

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18. Bird Flu

China Post, Reuters ("HK STEPS UP BORDER CHECKS AS 5TH BIRD DIES OF H5N1", 2006-02-07) reported that Hong Kong put customs officers on alert and tightened surveillance to stop people smuggling birds and poultry into the territory, as officials confirmed a fifth bird had died of the H5N1 avian influenza in the past month.

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