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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Envoy Visit to US

Reuters ("N. KOREAN NEGOTIATOR MAY VISIT SAN FRANCISCO AND NEW YORK", 2007-02-26) reported that the DPRK's top nuclear negotiator may visit San Francisco to meet nongovernmental groups and then go to New York for talks with his U.S. counterpart. On Saturday, the ROK's Yonhap News quoted unidentified sources in the United States as saying that Kim would visit San Francisco for a lecture on March 1 and then head to New York for a meeting with Hill. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said a meeting between Hill and Kim, if one took place, was expected to happen in New York although the date and other details were still being worked out.

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2. Six Party Agreement

Associated Press ("U.S. INTELLIGENCE SAYS NORTH KOREA BEGINNING TO IMPLEMENT NUCLEAR ACCORD", 2007-02-27) reported that U.S. intelligence officials told skeptical lawmakers that the DPRK appeared to be taking the first steps to implement a recent nuclear disarmament agreement, but said they would keep close tabs on the situation. Lt. Gen. Michael Maples, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency, said officials had seen the DPRK begin inspections of its main nuclear reactor, which they pledged to shut down and seal in return for an initial load of fuel oil.

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3. Investigation into BDA

Joongang Ilbo ("RELEASE OF NORTH'S FUNDS EXPECTED", 2007-02-28) reported that the U.S. Treasury Department is expected to conclude its 18-month investigation of a Macau bank accused of laundering money for the DPRK as early as next week. This will allow the Macanese authorities to release some of the $24 million that was frozen in September 2005 when Banco Delta Asia was designated a "primary money laundering concern" abetting the DPRK. Between $11 million to $13 million of it is likely to be released, according to the source. Deputy Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser is visiting Macau this week for consultations, the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong confirmed earlier on Monday.

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("INTER-KOREAN MINISTERIAL TALKS RESUME IN PYONGYANG", 2007-02-27) reported that the 20th inter-Korean ministerial-level talks started in Pyongyang, seven months after the last round collapsed in the wake of the missile test last July. A 40 person RO Korean delegation led by Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung left from Gimpo Airport to fly directly to Pyongyang. The top issue on the agenda is likely to be food and fertilizer aid. The government official did not rule out that a proposal for a second inter-Korean summit will come up at the talks. Meanwhile, The Choson

Sinbo, the mouthpiece of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan or Chongryon, said the "basic issue" of the RO Korea's ban on officials visiting certain memorials in the DPRK will be on the agenda. At each round of the ministerial talks, the DPRK calls on the ROK to lift the ban.

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5. DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN EYES MEETING WITH N. KOREA DURING US-N. KOREA MEETING: ASO", 2007-0--27) reported that Japan and the DPRK are expected to hold a meeting of their working group aimed at discussing normalization of ties concurrently with a separate meeting on bilateral ties between Washington and Pyongyang. Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso indicated that coordination with the DPRK is going well, saying that they have been complying with a six-party accord that calls for setting up one working group on the normalization of Japan-DPRK ties and another on US-DPRK ties "within 30 days."

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6. Japanese Abductees

Associated Press ("JAPANESE GROUP TO DROP LEAFLETS BY BALLOON ON NORTH KOREA, OFFER REWARD FOR INFORMATION", 2007-02-27) reported that a Japanese advocacy group said it will use balloons to scatter flyers over the DPRK, offering residents a US$10,000 cash reward for information on Japanese citizens kidnapped by the regime decades ago. The Tokyo-based Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to North Korea plans to send the first batch of the balloons from near the RO Korea's border in late March, according to the group's leader, Kazuhiro Araki.

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7. Finland-DPRK Relations

Helsingin Sanomat ("NORTH KOREA FILES OFFICIAL COMPLAINT OVER KOUVOLA TRAIN INCIDENT", 2007-02-27) reported that the DPRK Embassy in Stockholm has filed a diplomatic note with the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, via the Finnish Embassy in the Swedish capital, on grounds of a human rights violation and actions in breach of international agreements. According to the wording of the missive, Finnish Customs officers and police used excessive force, including tear gas and releasing a police dog, against two DPRK couriers with diplomatic passports in an incident last week on the Moscow-Helsinki train. The two couriers - neither of whom spoke more than a word or two of English and certainly no Finnish - had refused to show their tickets to the Finnish conductor on the train and then had refused to open their bags for the Customs officials, and they were eventually escorted bodily from the train and were taken to Kouvola Police Station. A call to the Foreign Ministry in Helsinki confirmed that the two men did indeed hold diplomatic immunity, and they were returned to the next train to Helsinki. This is not the first occasion when there has been some friction between Finland and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea over an incident involving diplomats.

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8. ROK Soldier's Death

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN SOLDIER KILLED IN TERRORIST ATTACK IN AFGHANISTAN", 2007-02-27) reported that a ROK solider stationed in an engineering unit in Afghanistan was killed in a suicide bomb attack on Tuesday, the ROK's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JSC) said. The JCS identified him as 27-year-old Army Sgt. Yoon Jang-ho, who was on duty at the main gate of the US military base in Bagram at the time of the attack. US Vice President Dick Cheney, who was visiting the area, is believed to have been the target and is reportedly unhurt, according to the JCS.

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9. US-ROK Security Alliance

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. 'TO CUT BACK WARTIME REINFORCEMENTS'", 2007-02-27) reported that the US military has recently notified ROK military authorities that it plans to cut back wartime reinforcements specified in a strategic master plan by the two allies, sources said. Military sources said ROK-US Combined Forces Command and Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff are revising and supplementing the strategy known as OPLAN 5027, and in the process the US told the ROK of "plans to reduce the scale" of reinforcements.

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10. Japan Security

Kyodo News ("PREMIER, 3 MINISTERS TO FORM JAPAN VERSION OF US NSC", 2007-02-27) reported that a Japanese government panel proposed that the prime minister, chief Cabinet secretary, foreign minister and defense minister should form the Japanese version of the White House's National Security Council. The new body, expected to be launched in April next year, will take over the functions of the existing nine-member Security Council of Japan. It proposed defining the new body's duties as discussing Japan's basic positions on important diplomatic and national security affairs, on key diplomatic and national security policies involving several ministries and agencies, and on responses in the event of contingencies.

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11. Japan-Mongolia Relations

Australia Broadcasting Corporation ("JAPAN, MONGOLIA TO COOPERATE ON UN SEAT AND NORTH KOREA", 2007-02-27) reported that Japan and Mongolia have agreed to cooperate on easing the DPRK nuclear standoff and help Japan achieve a seat on the UN Security Council. The agreement will also see closer political, trade and cultural ties over the next decade. The agreement comes a month after the Mongolian president agreed to relinquish its bid for a UN Security Council Seat, to allow Japan run for the post.

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12. Japan Middle East Peace Negotiations

Reuters ("JAPAN PLANS TO HOST 4-WAY MEETING ON MIDEAST PEACE", 2007-02-27) reported that Japan plans to host a meeting with Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian officials next month to help

broker peace in the Middle East. Japan has long felt it has a special role to play as a mediator between Israel and the Palestinians since it lacks much of the political baggage of the US, allowing for warmer ties with Arab nations.

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13. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo News ("CHINA BRUSHES OFF JAPAN LAWMAKER'S CONCERNS, QUESTIONS MOTIVE", 2007-02-27) reported that the PRC brushed off comments about it's military spending in response to a senior Japanese lawmaker concerns. Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said that the PRC has a right to defend itself as a sovereign nation and that it does not pose a threat to other countries.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN FACES BECOMING 'CHINESE PROVINCE'", 2007-02-27) reported that a top Japanese policymaker has warned that Japan risks becoming a PRC province due to the Asian giant's growing military spending, domestic media said. Shoichi Nakagawa, policy chief of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, called on Japan to question the PRC's future intentions, despite an effort by the two countries to ease tensions. "If something goes awry in Taiwan in the next 15 years, then within 20 years Japan might become just another one of China's provinces," Nakagawa said. (return to top)

14. Japan Anti-Radiation Bill

Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVT EYEING TOUGH NEW RADIATION LAW/ BILL PAVES WAY FOR RATIFYING N-TERROR PACT", 2007-02-27) reported that Japan will submit a bill to create a new law to penalize the deliberate release of radiation in preparation for the ratification of an international convention against nuclear terrorism. The Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, designed to prevent terrorism involving radioactive materials, was adopted at the U.N. General Assembly in 2005, but has not gone into effect due to the shortage of countries ratifying it. Japan hopes to promote ratification of the convention by developing relevant domestic legislation. According to the bill, those who own radioactive substances or manufacture equipment that produces such substances for terrorism purposes will be subject to punishment.

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15. PRC Military

The Associated Press ("CHINA DISPUTES CHENEY ON MILITARY PLANS", 2007-02-27) reported that the PRC rejected criticism by VP Dick Cheney about its military ambitions, saying that it is a force for stability in the world. Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said the PRC was opposed to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

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16. PRC Stock Market

BBC News ("SHARE SALE KNOCKS CHINESE MARKET", 2007-02-27) reported that the PRC stock market has suffered its worst day of trading in 10 years after a large wave of share selling by leading investors. The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index fell nearly 9%, its worst daily performance since February 1997. The fall comes amid rumours of a crackdown on illegal share offerings and trading, as well as fears about accelerating inflation. The drop triggered falls in other markets

across Asia and Europe.

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17. PRC Reform

Washington Post ("COMMUNIST PARTY CAUTIONS REFORMERS IN CHINA", 2007-02-27) reported that the Communist Party cautioned the PRC's reformers and intellectuals that political liberalization and democracy are still a long way off. The warning, in an article attributed to Premier Wen Jiabao, constituted the party's first-known response to a bubbling up of political debate as the PRC prepares for an annual session of its legislature and an important Communist Party congress that is scheduled for this fall.

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II. CanKor

18. Report #274

CanKor ("Current Events", 2007-02-23) On the one hand, the DPRK representative at the UN in New York sends the new Secretary General Ban Ki Moon a letter accusing the USA of hostile intent in pushing through an external audit of UNDP operations in Pyongyang. On the other, the DPRK invites the director of the International Atomic Energy Agency to Pyongyang for discussions related to the dismantling of its nuclear facilities. It is a sign that North Korea intends to move quickly to show good faith in complying with the recent Beijing Six-Party agreements, while maintaining a suspicious vigilance in its relationship with the USA. Veteran journalist Donald Kirk explores the fate of concerns regarding the DPRK's presumed production of highly enriched uranium (HEU), mention of which has dropped from sight in the recent Six-Party document.

(return to top) CanKor ("OPINION", 2007-02-23) Russia's interest and role in the Six-Party process has been somewhat of a mystery to many. Were it not for the DPRK's insistence, Russia might not even have been invited to the table. We are pleased to publish a paper written for CanKor by Michael Berk, Research Fellow at the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, which reveals Russia's foreign policy perspective relating to regional security, and the DPRK in particular. The Russian approach to North Korean-related issues can be characterized as extremely pragmatic, writes Berk, based on a combination of economic and strategic considerations. (return to top)

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