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I. NAPSNet

1. Working Group: De-nuclearization

Yomiuri Shimbun ("'N. KOREA TO DEMAND LIGHT WATER REACTOR'", 2007-03-06) reported that DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan said Sunday that the DPRK would demand a light water reactor in return for denuclearization. In a meeting with Charles Kartman, U.S. special envoy for Korean Peninsula affairs under former U.S. President Bill Clinton, Kim emphasized the demand for the reactor. U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, the chief U.S. negotiator at the six-party talks, told The Yomiuri Shimbun and others in an interview that the United States would not even discuss the provision of a light water reactor if it comes before the DPRK abandons its nuclear program completely. The light water reactor provision is likely to surface again as an issue of contention in future six-party talks.

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2. UNDP DPRK Program

Washington Post ("U.N. CLOSES N. KOREA DEVELOPMENT OFFICE", 2007-03-06) reported that the U.N. Development Program has suspended its operations in the DPRK. The decision to halt the $3.7 million-a-year program represented an awkward situation for the DPRK as it prepared for its highest-level talks with the United States on American soil since 2000. The UNDP executive board decided Jan. 25 to restrict payments to local staff and businesses to DPRK currency, the won, and to halt its practice of hiring local aid workers from a government-controlled roster. Pyongyang has a seat on the agency's executive board but did not have the power to block its decision. U.N. officials warned that it was unlikely that they would be able to recruit local labor, and on Thursday, the DPRK's U.N. ambassador, Pak Gil Yon, rejected the board's terms in a meeting with UNDP Associate Administrator Ad Melkert. The decision will immediately shutter 20 UNDP operations, but eight international workers who manage the program will remain in Pyongyang for a few days to see whether the government backs down. The UNDP's action will have no impact on other U.N. humanitarian operations in the DPRK, senior U.N. officials said.

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3. Inter-Korean Summit

Joongang Ilbo ("ROH AIDE HEADS TO NORTH AMID TALK OF SUMMIT; BLUE HOUSE DENIES TRIP ", 2007-03-07) reported that sources are already saying Lee Hae-chan’s four-day trip to the DPRK starting today may be a prelude to an inter-Korean summit meeting, even though the Blue House denies it. Mr. Lee, a special adviser to the president for political affairs, will meet with Kim Yong-nam, the president of the Supreme People’s Assembly and the nominal head of the DPRK, said Uri Party spokesman Choi Jae-seong. On his way home, Mr. Lee will visit Beijing and meet Chinese leaders. It is unclear, however, if Mr. Lee will be able to meet Kim Jong-il. The Grand Nationals called the visit an attempt to boost the Uri Party’s plunging popularity and try to stop the Grand National Party from winning the presidential election. The spokesman said the Grand National Party welcomes normal relations between the two Koreas, but many people oppose having an inter-Korean

summit before the presidential election.

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4. DPRK-Russia Relations

Interfax ("LAVROV WANTS PROBLEM OF NORTH KOREA'S DEBT SETTLED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE", 2007-03-06) reported that Moscow hopes that the problem of DPRK's debt will be resolved in the near future, which will allow Russia to provide more assistance to the country. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told a news conference following talks with his South Korean counterpart Song Min-soon that it will "offer additional opportunities for more effective and detailed negotiations on Russia's contribution to efforts aimed at meeting North Korea's needs."

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5. EU Visit to DPRK

Agence France-Presse ("EU DELEGATION IN NORTH KOREA FOR TALKS ON NUCLEAR DEAL", 2007-03-06) reported that a high-level EU delegation arrived in Pyongyang on Tuesday for talks aimed at ensuring that the DPRK honours a landmark deal to scrap its nuclear arms programme. "The aim of this trip by the EU troika is to promote the rapid implementation of an agreement reached on February 13 in Beijing," the German presidency said in a statement. It added that the trip by officials representing Germany, the European Commission and EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana -- the so-called troika -- as well as the next EU president Portugal was also of "an exploratory nature" as it would inform future ties between the EU and Pyongyang.

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6. US on DPRK Human Rights

Voice of America ("US REPORT: NORTH KOREA AMONG WORLD'S MOST REPRESSIVE, ISOLATED STATES", 2007-03-06) reported that the United States has listed the DPRK as one of the world's most isolated and repressive states in its annual report on human rights released Tuesday. The State Department report says the government in the DPRK controls all aspects of citizens' lives, denying them freedom of speech, press, assembly and association. It estimates that up to 200,000 people, including political prisoners, are in detention camps, and that many die from torture, starvation, disease and exposure.

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7. DPRK Human Rights

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA REVIVES ONE CHILD ABROAD POLICY: YONHAP", 2007-03-06) reported that the DPRK has revived a rule where its diplomats can only take one child with them on overseas assignments in order to lessen the risk of its citizens fleeing the impoverished state. The DPRK had relaxed its policy in 2002, it said. Separately, Human Rights Watch said in a report that the country has increased the penalties for its citizens caught trying to flee in order to cut down on the number of defections.

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8. Private Investment in DPRK

Bloomberg News ("CHINESE SEE BUSINESS OPENINGS IN NORTH KOREA", 2007-03-05) reported that business executives in Dandong, one of the main conduits for trade on the DPRK-PRC border, see opportunity in the recent six-nation agreement, even those who lost their investments when the plan to make Sinuiju a special economic zone fell through. If another opportunity comes along, "I'll be the first to go in," said He Ho, a 34- year-old Chinese investor in an interview. "North Korea's a good investment because so many things are lacking." There's no guarantee against another disappointment for entrepreneurs like He Ho, said Peter Beck, the Seoul-based Northeast Asia project director for the International Crisis Group, a Brussels- based organization that works to resolve crises around the world. But "If they get the politics right, this venture could work," said Marcus Noland, senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

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9. US-ROK Trade Relations

Yonhap ("SEOUL-WASHINGTON FTA NEEDS 'POLITICAL' BACKING OF TOP LEADERS: ANALYSTS", 2007-03-06) reported that backed by the political will of their leaders, the ROK and the US will be able to adopt a free trade agreement (FTA) by the end of March as planned, but the big question is whether it will be acceptable to their respective legislatures and diverse interest groups, analysts said. The ROK does US$74 billion worth of trade with the US. Some studies show that a successful deal would increase the trade volume by 20 percent.

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10. Japan Iraq Role

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN DEFENCE CHIEF WANTS TO EXTEND IRAQ MISSION BY TWO YEARS", 2007-03-06) reported that Japan's defence minister said he wanted to extend an air mission supporting US forces in Iraq by two years, despite criticism in Tokyo of US policy in the war-torn country. "That would be my hope," Defence Minister Fumio Kyuma said, "But the final decision will be made after the Cabinet Secretariat coordinates with ministries and agencies concerned."

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11. Japan on PRC Military

Kyodo News ("JAPAN PUSHES CHINA ON DEFENSE FUNDS", 2007-03-06) reported that Japan again urged the PRC to improve transparency of its defense policies but refrained from calling it a military threat, a day after the PRC announced it is boosting defense spending by 17.8 percent this year. A government spokesman said the issue of military transparency will be on the agenda when PRC Premier Wen Jiabao visits Tokyo next month.

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12. PRC Military

Agence France Presse ("CHINA SAYS MILITARY POSES NO THREAT", 2007-03-06) reported that the PRC has brushed aside foreign concern over its military build-up, insisting that it was a force for

peace and stability in the world. "China pursues an independent foreign policy of peace. It safeguards its own lawful rights and interests, and also respects the lawful rights and interests of other countries," Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing told reporters.

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13. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA GENERAL WARNS OF RESPONSE TO TAIWAN", 2007-03-06) reported that the PRC's top general said the nation's military would block any attempt by Taiwan to formalize its independence, restating long-standing policy following remarks by the self-governing island's president that it should be an independent nation.

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14. US on Cross Strait Relations

People's Daily Online ("U.S. REAFFIRMS IT DOES NOT SUPPORT 'TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE'", 2007-03-06) reported that the US State Department reiterated on Monday that it "does not support independence for Taiwan" in an official response to the pro-independence statements by Taiwan leader Chen Shui-bian. Chen said at a gathering on Sunday that he wanted independence, a new constitution, development, and new names for local firms that use the word "China" in their title. "President Bush has repeatedly underscored his opposition to unilateral changes to the status quo by either Taipei or Beijing because these threaten regional peace and stability, U.S. national interests and Taiwan's own welfare," said State Department spokesman Sean McCormack.

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15. Taiwan Missle Defense

BBC News ("TAIWAN 'TESTS NEW CRUISE MISSILE'", 2007-03-06) reported that Taiwan secretly test-fired a cruise missile from its southern Chiupeng base on 2 February. The Hsiungfeng 2E missiles have a range of up to 620 miles, enough to hit the PRC's two important financial centres, Shanghai and Hong Kong.

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16. Comfort Women Issue

BBC News ("CHINA RAPS JAPAN OVER SEX SLAVES", 2007-03-06) reported that PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing has said that Japan should face up to history and take responsibility for its army's use of sex slaves during World War II. Mr Li told a press conference in Beijing that the treatment of so-called comfort women "is one of the serious crimes committed by the Japanese militarists in World War II".

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17. PRC Internet Ban

BBC News ("CHINA BAN ON NEW INTERNET CAFES", 2007-03-06) reported that the PRC will not allow any more internet cafes to open this year, according to a government order. In January,

President Hu Jintao ordered internet regulators to promote a "healthy online culture" to protect the government's stability. The government encourages internet use for education or business purposes, but has been criticised for censoring items it deems subversive or offensive. The PRC government has denied such reports, and insists its regulation of the internet is in line with the rest of the world.

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18. PRC NGOs

The Los Angeles Times ("CHINA'S NGOS LEARN TO STAND ALONE", 2007-03-06) reported that decades after opening its borders to foreign products and ideas, the PRC government still maintains tight control over nongovernmental groups, whether they are chambers of commerce, churches or environmentalists. The PRC has 350,000 registered nongovernmental organizations, but many thousands more, including most international organizations, operate without official approval. But the PRC government's attitude toward nongovernmental groups has started to change.

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19. PRC Space Program

BBC News ("CHINA CONFIRMS MOON PROBE IN 2007", 2007-03-06) reported that the PRC will launch its first lunar probe this year, and expects to be able to land a man on the Moon within 15 years. The Moon exploration programme includes a planned lunar fly-by in 2007, a "soft landing" in 2012, return of lunar samples by 2017, and landing an astronaut on the Moon within 15 years.

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20. PRC Environment

Xinhua ("CHINA VOWS TO TAKE DUE RESPONSIBILITY TO CURB GLOBAL WARMING", 2007-0--06) reported that the PRC will work to fulfill its commitment to curb global warming as the country is seeking sustainable development, said PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing. The PRC has set a target to put the emissions of greenhouse gas under control and reduce energy consumption for per unit GDP by 20 percent during the 2006-2010 period.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org