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I. NAPSNet

1. Kim Jong-il Succession

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA APPEARS TO BE READY TO ANOINT ONE OF KIM'S SONS AS HEIR: S. KOREAN OFFICIAL", 2006-04-05) reported that some DPRK officials were seen wearing lapel pins bearing the image of a son of leader Kim Jong-il, a possible preparation for power succession in the country, a ROK official said Wednesday. "One of our agents in China submitted a report that he saw North Korean officials wearing Kim Jong-chol's badge at a North Korean restaurant in Beijing," a ROK government intelligence official in Seoul said, requesting anonymity.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA VOWS NUCLEAR BUILDUP AGAINST U.S., S. KOREAN HOSTILITIES ", 2006-04-05) reported that the DPRK on Wednesday reconfirmed its possession of nuclear weapons and vowed to continue to build its nuclear arsenal, accusing the US and ROK of preparing a nuclear preemptive attack against it. "The U.S. is cooperating with the South Korean authorities in nuclear armament against the DPRK," Rodong Sinmun, official newspaper of the state's Workers' Party, said in a commentary carried by the KCNA.

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3. ROK on Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("UNIFICATION MINISTER QUESTIONS N.KOREA'S CHOICES", 2006-04-05) reported that Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok continued his tougher rhetorical line on the DPRK on Wednesday, saying the country “has a serious problem with its decisions” as illustrated by its boycott of six-nation talks on its nuclear program. “The North should think hard whether it is making wise decisions," Lee said. He made the remarks in a lecture at the Korean Council for Unification Education. "If North Korea takes part in the six-party talks and shows a proactive attitude, it would give many countries a chance to urge the U.S. to do the North a favor because the North is making such efforts to improve the situation,” he said

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4. US on Six Party Talks

Associated Press ("US RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE OVER NORTH KOREA: ENVOY", 2006-04-05) reported that the US is losing patience at the DPRK’s boycott of six-party talks aimed at ending its nuclear weapons ambitions, US ambassador to Seoul Alexander Vershbow said. He urged the DPRK to revive the nuclear talks which have been stalled for five months. "Everyone in Washington would like to reach a negotiated solution, but everyone in Washington is also running out of patience," Vershbow said in a message on a website run by the embassy.

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5. DPRK Negotiator to Visit Japan

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREAN NUKE NEGOTIATOR EYES SECURITY MEET IN TOKYO ", 2006-04-05) reported that the DPRK's chief nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-gwan and Deputy Ambassador to the UN Han Song-ryol want to visit Japan for an annual security seminar that starts on April 9, the Kyodo news agency reported Wednesday. Tokyo is reviewing whether to allow them into the country but is likely to give permission, the Japanese news agency said.

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6. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News ("TWO KOREAS FAIL TO AGREE ON FESTIVAL FOR SUMMIT ANNIVERSARY", 2006-04-05) reported that the ROK and the DPRK on Wednesday failed to see eye to eye on holding a joint festival to mark the sixth anniversary of the historic summit in 2000. "We proposed to hold a joint anniversary event in Gwangju on May 14-18 but the North just said it will consider the proposal," a ROK civic group for the realization of the summit declaration between the two sides. The two sides will hold a third round of working-level talks in Kaesong in late April, according to officials.

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7. DPRK-PRC Military Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("N. KOREA, CHINA 'AGREE TO STRENGTHEN MILITARY TIES' ", 2006-04-05) reported that a high-ranking DPRK military official says Pyongyang and Beijing have reached a consensus on strengthening military ties. Kim Il-chul, the minister of the People's Armed Forces of the DPRK, met visiting PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan on Tuesday. PRC and DPRK state media revealed few details of the meeting, which took place as pressure builds on the DPRK to return to stalled talks to dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

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8. DPRK Defector

Chosun Ilbo ("TWICE-EXILED KOREAN 'LOOKING GOOD' FOR ASYLUM IN U.S. ", 2006-04-05) reported that this week may end the odyssey of DPRK defector Ma Young-ae, who after settling briefly in the ROK defected again to the US. Ma is seeking asylum in the US as a refugee from what she says is "political oppression" in the ROK. A source close to DPRK human rights activists in Washington on Tuesday said Ma will have her final interview with US authorities on the matter on Thursday. The source added her chances look "extremely good."

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9. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation

Kyodo ("JAPAN, U.S. AGREE ON JOINT RESEARCH ON BMD RADAR, COMPUTER SYSTEMS", 2006-04-05) reported that Japan and the US agreed to begin two-year joint research projects in developing advance technologies for a sea-based radar system and combat command system as part of bilateral cooperation in ballistic missile defense, Japanese defense officials said. The two countries aim to achieve results from their joint research by March 2008 to build advanced phased-array radar

with greater capability to detect ballistic missiles.

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10. Russian Naval Exercises

The Vladivostok News ("NAVAL EXERCISES LAUNCHED IN KAMCHATKA ", 2006-04-05) reported that week-long large-scale naval drills off the Kamchatka Peninsula coast were started by the Russian Pacific Fleet on Monday, news reports said. The exercises aim to train disclosures and attacks upon underwater and on-water objects as well as repelling air attacks which involve a total of 15 ships and submarines and about ten aircraft and coast units.

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11. PRC Aid to Pacific Islands

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA OFFERS AID PACKAGE TO PACIFIC ISLANDS", 2006-04-05) reported that the PRC Premier Wen Jiabao announced a new package of aid to Pacific countries as he sought to deepen the PRC's influence over the island nations and contain Taiwan's diplomatic clout. Wen offered new loans and aid and promised that the world's most populous country was committed to long-term engagement with some of the world's smallest and least populated nations.

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12. Hamas FM Visit to PRC

Agence France-Presse ("HAMAS FM SAYS WILL VISIT CHINA", 2006-04-05) reported that Palestinian foreign minister Mahmud al-Zahar announced plans to visit the PRC as Beijing became the latest power to reach out to Islamists Hamas despite a Western boycott. "We are going to go to east Asia, probably in late May, to attend an international conference. During the same month we are going to tour countries in east Asia, starting with China," he said.

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13. PRC-Turkmenistan Gas Deal

The Associated Press ("REPORTS: CHINA TO BUY TURKMENISTAN GAS", 2006-04-05) reported that the PRC will buy 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually from Turkmenistan during 30 years, official Turkmen papers said Tuesday, unveiling details of a deal signed during a visit by the Central Asian nation's leader to Beijing. The deal was signed Monday by PRC President Hu Jintao and Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov.

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14. US-PRC Space Program Cooperation

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S SPACE PROGRAM CHIEF REGRETS US REFUSAL TO COOPERATE", 2006-04-05) reported that the PRC regrets that the US has rebuffed space cooperation with the PRC, the head of the PRC's space agency told his American counterpart. Asked if the PRC was interested in cooperating with the US and other countries in the development of the International Space Station, Luo Ge said: "We have always been interested, but we don't have (an

admissions) ticket yet."

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15. PRC Defense Spending

International Outlook magazine, translated by China Digital Times ("REPORT DISMISSES CONCERNS ABOUT CHINESE MILITARY THREAT – YU PING", 2006-04-05) reported that the major difference of western perspective on the PRC military is the different definition of “defense spending.” The items listed in the PRC’s defense white papers are “military spending,” not including expenditures of dual-use technology agencies or companies, armed police or other reservist personnel. Even add up the spendings for armed police, reservist forces and research for dual-use technologies, the PRC’s military spending will be at most several tenths more, definitely not three times of the disclosed figure.

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16. PRC Environment

Agence France Presse ("CHINA SUSPENDS INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS CITING ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS", 2006-04-05) reported that the PRC has suspended approval of, or rejected, proposed industrial plants worth billions of dollars because they could threaten the environment, an environmental chief said. Pan Yue, deputy director of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), said his bureau suspended approval for 44 proposed industrial plants and rejected plans for another 16 in the first quarter.

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