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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA NUCLEAR ENVOYS TO MEET TO DISCUSS TALKS DATE: SPOKESMAN ", Seoul, 2008/06/17) reported that Chief negotiators from the ROK, the US and Japan will meet this week to discuss the resumption of talks on scrapping the DPRK's nuclear programme, the foreign ministry said. A spokesman told AFP that the ROK envoy Kim Sook would leave Wednesday for talks in Tokyo with US counterpart Christopher Hill and Japan's Akitaka Saiki. Assistant Secretary of State Hill was expected to fly to Beijing on Friday to discuss the six-party talks schedule with his PRC counterpart Wu Dawei, Yonhap news agency reported.

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2. Sino-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S VICE PRESIDENT IN NORTH KOREA FOR TALKS: REPORT ", Beijing, 2008/06/17) reported that PRC Vice President Xi Jinping arrived in the DPRK for talks, state press said, in a visit that could push forward discussions on the denuclearisation of the DPRK. Xi is the highest-level PRC official to visit the DPRK since Pyongyang tested a nuclear weapon in October 2006, the China News Service said. The vice president broached the nuclear issue in a meeting with a high-ranking DPRK official, the PRC's state-run central television station reported. The broadcaster said Xi and Yang Hyong-Sop talked about "the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula and the security situation in Northeast Asia," without giving further details.

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3. DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN WANTS TO SEE N. KOREA ACT ON PROMISES BEFORE EASING SANCTIONS ",

Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that Japan appeared more cautious in regard to its recent announcement that it would partially lift sanctions against the DPRK as Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura stressed Japan will not take actions without first assessing whether Pyongyang is carrying out its promises, including reinvestigating past abductions of Japanese nationals. "We will partially ease sanctions after assessing whether North Korea is seriously implementing its promises to conduct investigations toward resolving the abduction issue and cooperate in the handing over of suspects in the Yodo hijacking incident," Komura told a news conference. Asked if the government is now being more cautious because of disappointment voiced by the families of abductees who remain missing, Komura downplayed such concerns.

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN PM SAYS WANTS 'NORMAL' TIES WITH NKOREA ", Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda said Tuesday that he hoped his country would eventually have normal relations with the DPRK after decades of tension. "Our hope is to have a normal relationship with the DPRK," Fukuda said. Fukuda, speaking ahead of the Group of Eight nations summit from July 7-9, said that the lifting of further sanctions would depend on the actions of the DPRK. "We can lift sanctions depending on their response. That is a possibility that really depends on the other side," Fukuda said.

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4. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Herald (Lee Joo-hee, "SEOUL LEFT OUT OF N.K. DISCUSSIONS", 2008/06/17) reported that following the DPRK's "successful" bilateral discussions with Japan last week, concerns are growing here that the Seoul government may be further left out in the field of the accelerating nuclear negotiations. Japan has been the last negotiating partner that the DPRK had refused to talk with among the members of the six-party talks. Bilateral communication between Washington and Pyongyang has already been activated since the DPRK's nuclear test in Oct. 2006. The PRC and Russia have maintained their close relationships with the DPRK. However, Pyongyang continues to be hostile toward Seoul, citing the "hostile" DPRK policies of the new Lee Myung-bak administration.

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5. DPRK Economic Reform

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK EMBRACES COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE TO STRENGTHEN FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS ", 2008/06/17) reported that according to an article run in the June 10 issue of the Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the DPRK Workers' Party, economic independence "is not closing the doors and solving everything 100 percent on our own," and stressed the fundamental rule of 'selling what is present and buying what is missing', otherwise known as comparative advantage, as the key to advancing overseas foreign economic relations. The article closed by noting, "the important, fundamental issue as [the DPRK] maintains the basic path toward the construction of a powerful economic state...is keeping the economic structure's distinctive qualities alive while technically reviving the people's economy," and furthering the development of heavy industries and national defense industrial sector.

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6. DPRK Economy

JoongAng Ilbo ("IN NORTH KOREA, SIGNS OF RECOVERY", 2008/06/17) reported that the DPRK's economy has been gradually recovering from the country's worst economic troubles since the mid-1990s. A JoongAng Ilbo special reporting team visited the DPRK from May 8 to 13 and took a tour around the country. Pyongyang's electricity supply seemed to have stabilized and passersby on the streets looked livelier compared to observations made during the team's first visit in 2006. In Pyongyang, the capital, red banners were hanging all over the city, exhorting citizens with slogans such as "Enhance agricultural production, the foundation of a great, strong country" and "Bring a new wave of improvement in the production of consumer products."

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7. US-ROK Relations

Korea Herald ("FORUM URGES CLOSER TIES BETWEEN U.S. AND S. KOREA", 2008/06/17) reported that security and foreign affairs experts from the US and ROK gathered in Seoul yesterday to urge the forging of a stronger alliance between the allies. The challenges they face range from a nuclear-armed DPRK to the PRC's military modernization, the participants explained. Prominent scholars attended the event, which was jointly organized by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

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8. Japan Afghanistan Dispatch

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN PM SAYS NO PLANS TO SEND TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN ", Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda said that Japan has no immediate plans to send ground troops into Afghanistan, although there are studies for a potential deployment. Fukuda said that Japan was restricted in what it could do by its post-World War II pacifist constitution. "Therefore we are not taking part in ground operations in Afghanistan," Fukuda said in a group interview with news agencies from the Group of Eight rich nations ahead of their July 7-9 summit.

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9. Japan SDF Overseas Dispatch

Kyodo ("FUKUDA SUGGESTS EARLY ENACTMENT OF LAW TO SEND SDF OVERSEAS UNLIKELY ", Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda suggested that it appears difficult for the time being to enact a permanent law authorizing the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces overseas whenever the government sees it as necessary. Fukuda told a group interview with news agencies of Group of Eight nations in Tokyo that it would "take some time" to see such a permanent law enacted. Japan will continue to deal with individual issues by a "separate law" if necessary, Fukuda said, referring to the need for temporary legislation such as existing laws authorizing the current SDF missions in Iraq and Indian Ocean.

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10. Japan Space Program

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN APPOINTS FIRST SPACE DEVELOPMENT MINISTER", Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that Japan appointed its first ever minister of space development after the pacifist nation scrapped a decades-old ban on the use of space programs for defense. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda picked Fumio Kishida, the science policy minister, to take on the additional role, government officials said. The appointment was in line with last month's passing of a new law allowing the use of outer space for defense, breaking a decades-old taboo amid increasing concern about military threats in the region.

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11. Sino-Japanese Military Relations

Reuters ("JAPAN NAVY PLANS FIRST VISIT TO CHINA SINCE WW2", Tokyo, 2008/06/17) reported that a Japanese warship is set to arrive in the PRC next week in the first such visit since World War Two, Japan's Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba said. Japan's ship, the Sazanami, is set to dock at a naval port in Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, from June 24-28, the ministry spokeswoman said. During that time the crew will take part in friendship events, including a joint concert in the city, Kyodo news agency said. The visit follows a similar trip by a Chinese missile destroyer to Tokyo in November.

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12. Sino-Indian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIAN ARMY CHIEF WANTS MILITARY SPACE PROGRAM", New Delhi, 2008/06/17) reported that India's army chief said his country needs a military space program because its satellites are vulnerable to attack from countries like the PRC. Gen. Deepak Kapoor's comments highlight the military's growing concern that the PRC, India's giant neighbor to the north, poses a threat to India as it expands its power and influence in the region. The Indian Express newspaper quoted Kapoor, speaking at a local conference on using space for military purposes, as saying that India urgently needed to "optimize space applications for military purposes." He pointed out that "the Chinese space program is expanding at an exponentially rapid pace in both offensive and defensive content."

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13. PRC Earthquake

The Los Angeles Times (Mark Magnier, "A NEW CHINA APPEARS AMID QUAKE RUBBLE", Beijing, 2008/06/17) reported that one month after a massive earthquake killed nearly 70,000 people, some of the effects of the crisis may hardly outlast the rubble, even as other seismic shifts irrevocably shake PRC government and society. The cooperative response of local government officials to the quake will probably be short-lived, analysts said, as corruption and a sense of entitlement resurge

just as billions of dollars flow into Sichuan province for reconstruction. One lasting change, however, is the prominent focus in recent weeks on the individual in a culture that has long emphasized collectivism. The tone was set by Premier Wen Jiabao's personal attention to victims in the wreckage and his well-publicized reminder that the army's first responsibility was to the public, not the other way around. "It is the people who are feeding you," he reportedly said.

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14. PRC Bird Flu Outbreak

Reuters ("CHINA REPORTS BIRD FLU OUTBREAK NEAR HK BORDER", Beijing, 2008/06/17) reported that the PRC reported a bird flu outbreak in ducks in the southern province of Guangdong, close to Hong Kong where poultry at all commercial markets was culled last week. The Guangdong outbreak, in a village administered by Jiangmen city, was first detected on June 13, the official Xinhua news agency said. A total of 3,873 ducks died of the disease and a further 17,127 were culled as part of a contingency plan that the report said had effectively contained the outbreak.

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II. PRC Report

15. PRC Floods

Xinhua Net, www.xinhua.net (Du Juan, "GUANGDONG RED CROSS ACTIVELY INVOLVED INTO FLOOD RELIEF", 2008/06/16) reported that according to the statistic of Guangdong Flood Prevention Headquarters on 15th afternoon, from May 25 to June 15, 5.76 million people in Guangdong Province have been hit by the heavy rainfall. Over 4800 houses collapsed, with 20 people killed and 8 missing. Reporters knew from the Guangdong Red Cross that as at 16th, Guangdong Red Cross has sent family relief kits, rice and other relief supplies totally worth of 750,000 yuan to the flood-affected disaster areas.

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16. PRC Civil Society and the 512 Earthquake

Procurational Daily (Wei Hong, "CHINA CHARITY FEDERATION LAUNCHES FUND-RAISING ACTIVITY FOR DISASTER AREA RECONSTRUCTION", 2008/06/16) reported that on June 16, China Charity Federation, International Exchange Promotion Association for Chinese Calligraphists and Painters, Orchid Branch of Botanical Society of China, Beijing Federation of Literary and Art Circles, and other units jointly launched "Reconstruct Campus and Light Hope, Tomorrow Will Be Better - Large Charitable Activity for Earthquake Relief ", held in the auditorium of the CPPCC. Dozens of famous painters and calligraphists painted and inscribed then and there. This activity started a nationwide fund-raising for built of "Guolan Charity Primary School" in the disaster areas. After the activity, the organizing committee will publish painting albums and special commemorated discs.

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17. US-PRC Economic Relations

Shanghai Securities News ("SINO-US ECONOMIC DIALOGUE OPEN TODAY, ENERGY-SAVING COOPERATION MAY HAVE BREAKTHROUGH", 2008/06/17) reported that on 17th U.S. time, the fourth Sino-US Strategic Economic Dialogue would be unveiled in Annapolis, Capital of Maryland, U.S.. Sino-US experts said before the meeting that the dialogue would focus on the prospect of the dialogue mechanism issue since the US facing reelection problem. No matter how political situation changes in the U.S., this active and effective bilateral dialogue mechanism will continue. This time, the dialogue will focus on bilateral relation in the next ten years. On the specific issues which are expected to have breakthrough on this meeting, experts are optimistic about the cooperation of Sino-US energy-saving and environmental protection.

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III. ROK Report

18. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

The Peace Foundation ("LEE MYUNG BAK SHOULD LISTEN TO HIS PEOPLE ", 2008/06/18) wrote that while the DPRK is rehabilitating its relationship with the U.S., PRC, and Japan, it seems that the ROK's role in East Asia dynamics will diminish unless it actively deal with trouble between the two Koreas. The Unification of Korea would become more difficult if the peace system is settled by the surrounding superpowers. The ROK government has to wisely keep the principle of reconciliation and cooperation.

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