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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH WANTS TO KEEP ITS NUKES, SAYS EXPERT", 2008/06/04) reported that DPRK officials likened their future status to that of the Israelis, who are “friends” with the US despite having nuclear weapons, reinforcing the message that they are not willing to give up their atomic arsenal, a former US envoy said. Jack Pritchard, president of the Korea Economic Institute in Washington, said Pyongyang officials made clear to him that they would be willing to “begin” discussion of giving up their weapons only after “full and final normalization” of relations with the US. “Then, at that point we can begin discussions. Then at that point we will not have a basis for a need for nuclear weapons,” Pritchard quoted the DPRK as saying.

Yonhap ("N.K. NUKE DECLARATION MAY BE DELAYED TILL AFTER U.S. ELECTION: EXPERT", Seoul, 2008/06/06) reported that the DPRK's promised declaration of its complete nuclear holdings could take place after the U.S. presidential election due to the currently complex political terrain within the U.S., Gordon Flake, executive director of the Mansfield Foundation, said Friday. Flake said in an interview with Radio Free Asia (RFA) that the U.S. is in a difficult position in terms of carrying out an immediate removal of the DPRK from the list of terrorist sponsoring nations as conservatives in the U.S. may still be skeptical about the DPRK's credibility. Larry Niksch, an Asia and foreign affairs expert at the Congressional Research Service, told the RFA that the denuclearization process may lose momentum if the declaration and removal from the list does not occur in June, noting that the dialogue may have to be handed over to the next U.S. administration.

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "SOUTH KOREA PRAISES NORTH KOREA OVER NUCLEAR ISSUE", Associated Press, 2008/06/06) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak praised the DPRK on Friday for making progress in international negotiations on its nuclear programs. "I very positively assess North Korea cooperating with the international community for denuclearization," Lee said in a nationally televised Memorial Day speech honoring the country's war dead at Seoul's National Cemetery. "Sincere dialogue is also necessary between the South and the North about exchange and cooperation projects," he said.

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3. Inter-Korean Energy Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NORTH KOREA COMPLAINS OF SLOW ENERGY AID", Panmunjom, 2008/06/05) reported that the DPRK protested over what it said was the "very slow" pace of energy assistance it has received from six-party talks partners involved in an aid-for-disarmament deal. The complaint emerged when the two Koreas met at a truce border village of Panmunjom, north of Seoul, to work out details on further energy aid to the DPRK arranged under the agreement. "Energy aid is related to our disabling (of the nuclear site in Yongbyon)," Hyun Hak-Bong, the DPRK's deputy negotiator to six-party talks, told reporters. "While the disabling has been completed for more than 80 percent, overall energy cooperation business is going very slowly -- at 30 percent to 36 percent... We hope this meeting can bear fruit."

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4. Japan-DPRK Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN, N. KOREA TO HOLD WORKING LEVEL TALKS IN BEIJING SAT.", Tokyo, 2008/06/06) reported that Japan and the DPRK will hold unofficial working-level talks in Beijing on Saturday on Pyongyang's past abductions and other issues in preparation for a possible resumption of stalled bilateral working group negotiations under the six-party framework, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said Friday. Akitaka Saiki, director general of the Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, is expected to urge Song Il Ho, the DPRK's ambassador in charge of normalization talks with Japan, for concrete progress on the unresolved abductions of Japanese nationals when they meet at 3 p.m. on Saturday at the Japanese Embassy in Beijing. Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura told a separate news conference, "They will discuss the current situation of Japan-North Korea relations and how to proceed from where we are. If the other side suddenly comes up with some kind of offer (on the abduction issue), of course that would be good. But I am not holding such high expectations from tomorrow's meeting.''

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5. DPRK Food Supply

Yonhap News ("NORTH KOREA DENIES ALLEGED STARVATION DEATHS: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/06/05) reported that the DPRK admitted that the country is experiencing a dire shortfall in its

food supply, but denied claims by aid groups that massive deaths from starvation have begun in the country, a pro-Pyongyang daily in Japan said on May 30. "It's true that our food situation is difficult," said Choson Sinbo, the newspaper of Chongryon, the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, quoting an unnamed official of the DPRK's agricultural ministry. The official, however, "strongly denied" allegations that North Koreans are dying of starvation, said the newspaper, which usually represents Pyongyang's position.

Yonhap News ("LACK OF FERTILIZER IS MOST URGENT PROBLEM FOR N.K. FARMERS: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/06/05) reported that a lack of fertilizer is the most urgent problem for farmers in the DPRK, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper said on June 3, amid indications that the DPRK's chronic food crisis could extend into next year. Choson Sinbo, organ of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, quoted a manager of a farm in a suburb of Pyongyang as saying that the production of fertilizer is currently a matter of great urgency, adding the central command economy did not provide enough fertilizer this year.

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6. DPRK Human Rights

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA GIVEN FAILING GRADE IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING REPORT", 2008/06/05) reported that the US has classified the DPRK as a “tier three” country under the US Trafficking Victims Protections Act again this year. Tier three is the lowest possible rank and refers to countries that fail to satisfy the minimum conditions required. According to the report, the DPRK “is a source country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. The most common form of trafficking involves North Korean women and girls who cross the border into China voluntarily. Once in China, they are picked up by traffickers, and sold as brides to Chinese nationals, usually of Korean ethnicity or forced into prostitution.” NGOs estimate that tens of thousands of North Koreans are living in the PRC as illegal immigrants, more than half of them women.

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7. DPRK Public Health

Yonhap News ("NORTH KOREA CONDUCTING NO-TOBACCO CAMPAIGN: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/06/05) reported that the DPRK, a country where more than half of the adults smoke, is conducting a no-tobacco campaign nationwide on the occasion of World No-Tobacco Day. The (North) Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on May 31 said with the formation of the State Tobacco Control Committee, the campaign is being conducted as a state health activity, and all forms of advertisement, support and promotion of tobacco goods which may encourage smoking are banned throughout the country. "The public places have been set as no-smoking districts, people are allowed to smoke only in limited places and smoking among the students is controlled strictly in particular," the news outlet said.

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8. US-ROK Security Alliance

Joongang Ilbo (Kim Min-seok, "8TH ARMY HAWAII MOVE CONFIRMED", 2008/06/05) reported that even after the Eighth U.S. Army's commanding headquarters leaves Seoul to relocate to Hawaii, the combat capabilities of US units here will be bolstered, a senior Korean Defense Ministry official said. Following the JoongAng Ilbo report on the move, which is scheduled for around 2012, the ministry official said the relocation is currently under review as a part of the US Army's general reform plan. "As of now, the Eighth U.S. Army command only performs an administrative role. After it moves to Hawaii, an Operational Command Post-Korea will be established here to improve combat capabilities," another military source said.

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9. ROK Politics

Reuters (Jack Kim, "S.KOREA PRESIDENTIAL AIDES QUIT OVER U.S. BEEF", Seoul, 2008/06/06) reported that all nine top aides to ROK President Lee Myung-bak have tendered their resignations to share responsibility for a series of policy decisions that have sent his popularity plummeting, an official said on Friday. The president's chief of staff has the resignations in hand," spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said at a briefing. "And he has reported the tendering of the resignations to the president."

BBC ("POLL REBUFF FOR S KOREA PRESIDENT", Seoul, 2008/06/06) reported that the ROK's ruling party suffered a heavy defeat in its first electoral test since President Lee Myung-bak took office. The Grand National Party won only 10 out of 52 seats being contested in local polls. The main opposition party, the United Democratic Party, took 22 seats. Others went to minority parties and independent candidates.

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10. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("MINSHUTO TO SUBMIT CENSURE MOTION AGAINST FUKUDA", 2008/06/05) reported that Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) plans to submit a censure motion against Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and a no-confidence motion against his Cabinet before the current Diet session ends on June 15, sources said. However, the motion will not be legally binding, and Fukuda is not expected to dissolve the Lower House for a general election or have his Cabinet resign, sources said.

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11. Japan SDF Afghanistan Role

Mainichi Shimbun ("JAPAN CONSIDERS SENDING TROOPS TO BOLSTER COALITION IN AFGHANISTAN", Tokyo, 2008/06/05) reported that Japan is considering sending troops to Afghanistan on a non-combat mission, the country's top government spokesman said. Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said Japan could initially send a fact-finding team to study what is needed and what Japan could provide. He stressed, however, that troops were just one of many options being considered.

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12. US, Japan, Australian Defense Cooperation

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, U.S., AUSTRALIA TO HOLD TALKS ON IRAN, N. KOREA ON MON.", Tokyo, 2008/06/05) reported that senior diplomats from Japan, the US and Australia will hold strategic talks on Monday in Tokyo as well as a series of bilateral talks involving them the same day, Japanese Foreign Ministry officials said. Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Kenichiro Sasae, US Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns and Australian Foreign Secretary Michael L'Estrange are expected to discuss issues including nuclear issues of Iran and the DPRK.

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13. Cross Strait Relations

Yomiuri Shimbun (Toshinao Ishii and Kenichi Yoshida, "MA: MISSILE WITHDRAWAL PRECONDITION FOR CHINA TALKS", Taipei, 2008/06/06) reported that Taiwan will demand that the PRC withdraw ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan as a precondition for future peace talks, Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou said in an exclusive interview with The Yomiuri Shimbun. "In order to fully reconcile with each other, we should hold peace talks on both sides [of the Taiwan Strait]. In that case, prior to the talks, I would demand the withdrawal of the missiles or some other way to remove the threat," Ma said. Ma sought support from the international community, including Japan, for his administration's efforts to improve ties with Beijing. "Normalizing economic ties with China is beneficial for both sides and for the [Asian] region," he said.

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14. PRC Earthquake

The Associated Press (Cara Anna, "REFUGEES EVACUATED AS QUAKE LAKE RISES ", Mianyang, 2008/06/05) reported that more than 10,000 people were moved to higher ground as water continued to rise in a brimming lake formed by landslides from the PRC's May 12 earthquake and another strong aftershock rocked the quake-battered region. Meanwhile, Premier Wen Jiabao arrived by helicopter Thursday afternoon in the town of Mianyang downstream from Tangjiashan lake to oversee attempts to drain the water. It was his third trip to the quake zone. "Now is a critical moment for the Tangjiashan quake lake, and the most important thing is to ensure there are no casualties," Wen was quoted as saying by the official Xinhua News Agency.

Reuters (Lindsay Beck, "CHINA LAUNCHES QUAKE ZONE RECONSTRUCTION ", Chengdu, 2008/06/05) reported that the PRC, facing emergencies ranging from swollen lakes to rehousing millions after last month's devastating earthquake, is looking to the future, planning a huge reconstruction of schools, homes and hospitals reduced to rubble. The State Council, or cabinet, looked to the future, passing draft regulations on reconstruction, outlining requirements for resettlement sites and safety standards of public buildings like schools and hospitals.

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15. PRC Media

The Los Angeles Times (Mark Magnier, "CHINA TIGHTENS MEDIA LIMITS LOOSENED AFTER SICHUAN EARTHQUAKE", Dujiangyan, 2008/06/05) reported that the PRC has begun rolling back many of the media and online freedoms that were permitted in the immediate aftermath of last month's earthquake. Restrictions on foreign and domestic reporters have been tightened in recent days. Web discussion groups have seen postings deleted. Internet filtering has been stepped up. The propaganda ministry and the State Council, the PRC's Cabinet, have issued directives to state-run news media outlining forbidden topics. Among them: questions about school construction, whether government rescue efforts lagged and whether Beijing knew in advance that the earthquake would happen but failed to warn people. Although the latter issue is scientifically questionable, it has nonetheless transfixed millions of PRC Internet users.

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16. Tibet Unrest

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "SECURITY FORCES ARREST 16 BUDDHIST MONKS IN TIBET", Beijing, 2008/06/05) reported that security forces in Tibet have arrested 16 Buddhist monks on charges of planning or carrying out separatist bombings that authorities said were inspired by propaganda from the Dalai Lama, the New China News Agency reported. The arrests, which the official agency said took place in May, refocused attention on Tibet after nearly a month during which the devastating earthquake in Sichuan province has dominated news from the PRC and eclipsed a still-intense security crackdown in the restive mountain region.

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17. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

PTI ("USD60 MN TRADE TARGET WITH CHINA WILL BE MET BEFORE 2010: INDIA", Guangdong, 2008/06/05) reported that India is keen to learn from the PRC's "remarkable success" in developing Special Economic Zones and expects the trade target of USD 60 billion between the two countries to be surpassed before 2010,External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said today. "The trade target of USD 60 billion by 2010 set by our two prime ministers is very likely to be surpassed before 2010," Mukherjee, who is on a four-day visit to the PRC. "There is tremendous interest in India to learn from your experiences, including your remarkable success in developing your Special Economic Zone," he said.

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18. PRC Energy Supply

The Financial Times (Geoff Dyer, "CHINA HIT BY FUEL SHORTAGES AS SUPPLIES ARE CUT", Beijing, 2008/06/05) reported that the PRC’s main cities are beginning to face growing fuel shortages as oil companies cut supply into the fixed-price local market in response to rocketing global prices. Over the past week, petrol stations in Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have reported worsening supply shortages – especially of diesel oil – which has forced them either to ration their

stocks or operate for only a few hours a day. The creeping shortages, in spite of pressure on oil companies to increase supply, are leading to a situation similar to last autumn when Beijing was forced to raise prices by 10 per cent amid fears that fuel rationing was threatening social stability.

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19. Sino-US Relations

Yomiuri Shimbun (Yoshinari Kurose, "U.S., CHINA EXPANDING N-SUB FLEETS DEPLOYMENT OF JIN-CLASS SUB AT HAINAN ISLAND SPARKS U.S. FUNDING OF MORE VESSELS", Washington, 2008/06/05) reported that the US government has begun strengthening its submarine fleets to counter the PRC's growing buildup of naval forces in the Pacific Ocean, partly because of the recent discovery of a PRC submarine base at Hainan Island in the South China Sea. The base for nuclear-powered submarines with ballistic missile capabilities is located near an important sea lane for maritime traffic in Southeast Asia. The U.S. government initially planned to build one Virginia-class submarine each year in 2010 and 2011. The additional budget will double the number of subs to be built.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Environment

The Internet version of Southern Weekend ("ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT NOTIFIES 2007 CHINA ENVIRONMENT REPORT", 2008/06/05) reported that the relevant director of Environmental Protection Department notified to the media today about the 2007 China Environment Report. He said, in 2007, the emissions of COD and sulphur dioxide achieved double-drop. The pollution prevention shifted from passive response to active control. The emissions of main pollutants appeared an "inflection point" for the very first time. Solid waste emission decreased slightly. The overall environment quality was improving, but the situation of water pollution and rural environmental protection was still grim.

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21. US-PRC Security Relations

People’s Daily (Xin Benjian, "CHINA CONTRIBUTES TO THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL SECURITY", 2008/06/06) reported that on June 4, U.S. Deputy Undersecretary of Department of State John Rood who was in charge of arms control and international security affairs said in Beijing that in the process of dealing with the DPRK Nuclear Issue and the Iranian Nuclear Crisis, the PRC made a ‘valuable’ contribution. John Rood made the above statement in a media interview conference held for the Sino-US security talks. During the talks, the United States and the PRC exchanged views on the DPRK Nuclear Issue, Iran Nuclear Crisis, space security, nuclear proliferation prevention, the US missile defense system and other issues of common concern.

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22. PRC Earthquake

Sichuan Daily ("SICHUAN TO REBUILD QIANG CULTURAL AND ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION ZONE", 2008/06/05) reported that Qiang culture protected area was serious damaged by 512 Earthquake. On June 3 the Provincial Cultural Office published the 'Initial Reconstruction Programme of Qiang Cultural and Ecological Protection Zone'. Mao County will be the core of the zone, including Beihuan, Wenchuan, Lixian, Pingwu, etc. as well. The protected zone will maintain the original architectural style, folk custom practices, worship ritual of the Qiang to present the original ecological environment and geological structure.

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