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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks Diplomacy

Yonhap ("TOP S. KOREAN NUCLEAR ENVOY VISITS U.S. AMID STALLED N.KOREA TALKS", 2007-04-23) reported that the ROK's chief nuclear negotiator Chun Yung-woo is headed to the United States to discuss how to woo the DPRK back to six-nation talks. In Washington, Chun plans to meet his U.S. counterpart, Christopher Hill, for discussions on "technical issues" that are preventing the resolution of US\$25 million in DPRK funds frozen at Banco Delta Asia (BDA). Washington had agreed to transfer the frozen funds to an account at a Chinese bank. It has apparently been unable to do so, or find any other financial institute that will accept those funds. Pyongyang has yet to make known any attempts to withdraw or transfer the funds, or to shut down its reactor at Yongbyon.

2. PRC DPRK Oil Exports

Kyodo ("CHINA EXPORTS NO OIL TO N. KOREA FOR 2ND STRAIGHT MONTH IN MARCH", 2007-04-23) reported that the PRC did not export any oil to its impoverished neighbor for the second straight month in March. The zero shipment in March put the total of China's crude oil exports to the country in the first three months of this year at 52,089.93 tons, down 48.4 percent from a year earlier, the General Administration of Customs said. Whether this development is linked in any way to six-party talks is unclear.

3. ROK Aid to DPRK

UPI ("NORTH TO GET \$152M OF SOUTH KOREA RICE", 2007-04-23) reported that the ROK will send 400,000 tons of rice to the DPRK despite the delay in shutting down Yongbyon. ROK officials say they feel the \$152 million aid agreement reached Sunday can be used for political leverage, the International Herald Tribune reported Monday. In agreeing to provide the aid, the ROK warned that not all of it would be sent if the DPRK failed to keep its Feb. 13 agreement. The first shipment is to be sent next month. The food aid deal calls for the two countries to make a May 17 test run of a railroad across their border, which would be symbolic as the two countries have not had such a service since the end of fighting in the Korea war in 1953, the Tribune reported.

4. Lefkowitz on DPRK Human Rights

U.S. Department of State Press Release ("IMPROVING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NORTH KOREA STRENGTHENS GLOBAL SECURITY", 2007-04-23) reported that Jay Lefkowitz, U.S. special envoy for human rights in North Korea spoke at the Heritage Foundation, and said that improving human rights in the DPRK can make the Asia-Pacific region and the rest of the world safer. Lefkowitz said there is a strong correlation between human rights and security. "Dictators often are deeply and necessarily invested in a confrontational posture toward the outside world, typically to justify their own strong-arm rule at home. Conversely, democracies with the rule of law are invested in peaceful interaction among nations," he said.

5. DPRK IT Infrastructure

Asia Times ("NORTH KOREA'S IT REVOLUTION", 2007-04-23) reported that the state of the DPRK's information-technology (IT) industry has long been a matter of conjecture, however, investigation reveals it is surprisingly sophisticated. The main agency commanding the DPRK's IT strategy is the Korea Computer Center (KCC), which was set up in 1990 by Kim Jong-il himself at an estimated cost

of US\$530 million. Its first chief was Kim's eldest son, Kim Jong-nam, who at that time also headed the State Security Agency, the DPRK's supreme security apparatus, which is now called the State Safety and Security Agency. The KCC has 11 field offices overseas and received help from a German businessman with the investment of close to 1 billion USD. But skeptical observers have noted that the DPRK still has a long way to go before it can seriously threaten the sophisticated computer networks of the ROK, Japan and the US.

6. Inter-Korean IT Cooperation

EE Times ("NORTH, SOUTH KOREA PLANNING IT FORUM", 2007-04-22) reported that the Koreans are getting together to talk tech. In October, the two sides will meet for a Unification IT Forum, according to the Yonhap news agency. The meeting will be held in Pyongyang, and should follow the opening of the Pyongyang Science and Technology College in September. The college will have 150 graduate students.

7. DPRK Cabinet Shuffle

Chosun Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA SHUFFLES MILITARY HEADS", 2007-04-23) reported that the DPRK has appointed two new military leaders and reshuffled the cabinet. According to reports, Kim Kyok-sik, a former general, was promoted to the chief of the general staff of the Korean People's Army, and Kim Yong-chun, the former chief of the general staff, was promoted to vice chairman of the National Defense Commission. Kim Kyok-sik's new position makes him the chief of the military. The last time the chief spot was replaced was 12 years ago. While some experts had expected Kim Yong-chun's promotion, the shuffle still raises many questions.

8. ROK-PRC Military Relations

Yonhap ("S. KOREA SEEKS CLOSER MILITARY TIES WITH CHINA", 2007-04-23) reported that ROK Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo arrived in Beijing to discuss setting up military hotlines, preventing PRC vessels from illegally fishing in the ROK's western waters and other issues of mutual concern. Kim visited the PRC Space Center on the outskirts of Beijing. While being briefed on the facilities, he emphasized the need for the two countries to cooperate in the aerospace field. Kim is also scheduled to tour naval bases in Shanghai later this week before flying back home.

9. ROK-Canada Trade Relations

Korea Herald ("KOREA, CANADA RESUME FREE TRADE TALKS", 2007-04-23) reported that the ROK and Canada began their 10th round of negotiations for a proposed free trade agreement in Seoul yesterday aiming to narrow differences in services, investments, and agriculture. Discussions will also focus on resuming imports of Canadian beef. Clinching a free trade pact with Canada is an "important" part of the "multi-track" FTA policy initiative of the Roh Moo-hyun administration.

10. Japan Defense

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN COULD ASK US TO LIFT STEALTH BAN: REPORT", 2007-04-23) reported that Japan is considering asking the US to lift a current ban on exporting US stealth fighters so it can buy the high-tech aircraft. The defence ministry may want the radar-evading F-22As after acquiring cheaper upgraded F-15FX fighters. These fighters would replace Japan's ageing fleet of F-4s to be scrapped beginning in April 2008. The acquisition of the state-of-the-art fighters is aimed at boosting Japan's air defence in the face of DPRK's nuclear arms threat and improving joint operations with the US air force.

11. Sino-Japanese Military Relations

The Associated Press ("JAPAN WON'T INCREASE MILITARY SPENDING TO KEEP UP WITH CHINA", 2007-04-23) reported that Japan has no plans to boost its defense spending to keep up with PRC's own rising military spending, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. The PRC has recorded double-digit spending increases for its 2.5 million member military nearly every year since the early 1990s. The growth has prompted the Japanese Defense Ministry to list the PRC's military expansion as a top regional security concern, while Japanese officials have called the PRC a potential threat. It was not clear if Abe's comments meant that Japan did not plan to keep pace with PRC's military spending, or if Japan did not plan to increase spending in the future.

12. Japan Elections

Kyodo News ("RULING, OPPOSITION CAMPS SPLIT BY-ELECTIONS", 2007-04-23) reported that the opposition Democratic Party of Japan was victorious in one of two Upper House by-elections Sunday, while the ruling coalition candidate won the other race with national implications. The two Upper House by-elections will be closely scrutinized for their possible impact on the Upper House election in July, which could decide the political fate of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his Cabinet. The ruling coalition led by the LDP will try to retain its majority in the upper chamber, while the opposition forces such as the DPJ will be seeking to gain control.

13. Japan Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Kyodo ("39 LDP, DPJ LAWMAKERS VISIT YASUKUNI SHRINE ", 2007-04-23) reported that thirty-nine lawmakers, including two with senior government posts, of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan visited the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine on Monday, the final day of its three-day annual spring festival.

14. Japan on Environment Treaty

Reuters ("JAPAN PM TO BROACH POST-KYOTO COOPERATION WITH BUSH", 2007-04-23) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe hopes to find ways in which the US can cooperate on a post-Kyoto Protocol framework when he meets US President Bush later this week. A Japanese official said earlier that climate change and nuclear energy would be on the agenda when the two leaders meet during Abe's two-day visit to the US from Thursday. The US has been criticized for pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in 2001 and Japanese officials have said Washington should take part in whatever framework replaces the pact when it expires in 2012.

15. Japan-India Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO HELP PROMOTE ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN FAST-GROWING INDIA", 2007-04-23) reported that Japan and India launched a bilateral ministerial dialogue as both sides agreed to promote energy-saving measures in India as a way of curbing surging energy demand in the emerging economic powerhouse. Japan will help improve electricity distribution and transmission infrastructure in India to develop its power generation. To discuss concrete steps for bilateral energy cooperation, Japan and India set up five working groups dealing with electricity and power generation, energy efficiency, coal, renewable energy, and petroleum and natural gas, according to the statement.

16. PRC India Territorial Dispute

Agence France Presse ("CHINA SEEKS SOLUTION TO BORDER DISPUTE WITH INDIA", 2007-0-23) reported that the PRC urged cooperation with India to resolve a decades-old border dispute saying an accord would benefit the people of the world's two most populous nations. "We need to be

good friends, good neighbours and good partners," PRC's Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo told reporters after several rounds of talks with India's national security advisor M.K. Narayanan since Friday. This is the 10th round of talks between the two sides since India and the PRC appointed special representatives in 2003 to speed up a resolution to the dispute which is a legacy of the brief but bitter 1962 conflict.

17. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("TAIWAN SHOWS MODEL MISSILES TO STRIKE CHINA", 2007-04-23) reported that Taiwan's military simulated a battle using defensive short-range and cruise missiles that could hit military targets in the PRC if fully developed. During five days of annual drills, the military simulated a battle via computer featuring weapons that could hit targets on the PRC's coast but not kill civilians, the spokesman said. The Ministry of Defence has not decided whether to develop the weapons.

18. US on PRC Anti-Satellite Program

New York Times ("U.S. KNEW OF CHINA'S MISSILE TEST, BUT KEPT SILENT", 2007-04-23) reported that US intelligence agencies knew that the PRC was preparing to launch an anti-satellite weapon in January. Bush administration officials ultimately decided to say nothing to the PRC until after the test. Some experts outside government say that US officials might have been able to discourage the PRC from launching the missile, had the officials been willing to enter into a broader discussion of ways to regulate the military competition in space.

19. PRC Environment

The Los Angeles Times ("SOIL POLLUTION IMPERILS FOOD PRODUCTION", 2007-04-23) reported that more than 10% of the PRC's farmland is contaminated, threatening the ability of the world's most populous nation to feed itself, the official New China News Agency reported. About 30 million acres have been damaged, at a time when the PRC is losing large amounts of arable land to other uses. The two trends pose a "severe threat" to national food security, the news agency said.

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