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I. United States

1. DPRK on Nuclear Crisis

Kyodo News ("N. KOREA ASKS FOR ENERGY AID WORTH 2 MIL. KILOWATTS OF ELECTRICITY", 2004-06-24) reported that the DPRK has asked for energy aid, apparently heavy fuel oil, worth 2 million kilowatts of electricity in return for freezing its nuclear programs, sources close to the ongoing six-nation talks said Thursday. The size of the request, made during the first-day session Wednesday of the third round of the six-way talks in Beijing, translates into 2.7 million tons of heavy fuel oil consumed by thermal power plants a year, a Japanese energy expert said, adding that the figure underscores a serious energy shortage in the DPRK. Given the massive size, the request could become a stumbling block for the four-day six-nation talks, which entered the second day Thursday, despite signs the US and DPRK are attempting to move forward the dialogue process. The size is equivalent to electric power supposed to have been generated by two light-water reactors promised to be provided to the DPRK through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization under a 1994 nuclear agreement between Washington and Pyongyang. It also compares with the North's power generation capacity believed to be some 8 million kilowatts a year. The DPRK request drove Japan to consider financially aiding a proposed ROK-led provision of heavy fuel oil. Japan's chief delegate, Mitoji Yabunaka, expressed Tokyo's readiness in the six-nation talks Thursday to extend energy assistance to the DPRK on condition that Pyongyang freeze its nuclear programs toward completely scrapping them in a verifiable manner.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Freeze Offer

Korea Times ("N. KOREA OFFERS FREEZE OF YONGBYON NUKE COMPLEX", 2004-06-24) reported that the DPRK proposed to freeze operation of its nuclear facilities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex in a verifiable way, while presenting its own package of offers in the opening session of the ongoing six-party talks, according to sources Thursday. But it was not known how the DPRK responded to the offer made for the first time by the US, in which it demanded the DPRK report "a full listing of its nuclear activities" including its plutonium- and uranium-based programs. An official familiar with the six-party talks said the DPRK delegation unveiled a six-point package of offers on Wednesday, including a verifiable freezing of its nuclear facilities at the controversial Yongbyon nuclear complex. "There are both some common grounds and some differences between the proposals made by North Korea and the U.S.," he said, adding the DPRK also demanded in its six-point package for the DPRK to be taken out of the U.S. list of terrorism-sponsoring states. The DPRK made it clear the freeze will be accompanied by inspections, the source said, but left pending the question of whether the inspections should be done by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) or in other ways.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Crisis

Washington Times ("U.S. OFFERS INCENTIVES FOR NUKE DISMANTLING", 2004-06-24) reported that the Bush administration yesterday offered the DPRK "provisional and temporary" rewards in exchange only for Pyongyang's commitment to dismantling its nuclear-weapons program. The White House, which had previously insisted that nothing less than concrete actions would trigger benefits for the North, said the DPRK would receive "non-nuclear energy assistance," including oil, as well as food and "some assurances on the security side." The proposal came in a detailed plan to eliminate the DPRK nuclear threat. U.S. officials made the offer at six-party talks in Beijing. "What we will be presenting is a practical series of steps to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear program," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters. At the State Department, spokesman Richard Boucher said the process would begin "with the North Korean commitment," followed by "a short preparatory period for dismantlement and removal." "At the same time, parties would be willing to take steps to ease the political and economic isolation of North Korea. Steps would be provisional or temporary in nature, and only yield lasting benefits to the North Koreans after the dismantlement has been completed," Mr. Boucher said.

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4. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Crisis

Asia Pulse/Yonhap ("S. KOREA OFFERS N. KOREA ENERGY AID IN EXCHANGE FOR NUCLEAR FREEZE", 2004-06-24) reported that the ROK offered to provide the DPRK Wednesday with fuel oil and other rewards if the country freezes its nuclear facilities as a short first step to dismantle them. Vice Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck said the energy shipment is part of a set of ROK incentives which were presented at a third round of six-nation nuclear talks which opened in Beijing on Wednesday. "North Korea should first promise to freeze and eventually dismantle all of its nuclear programs in a variable and transparent manner," Lee said, outlining the ROK incentives. Lee said the DPRK and the US also spelled out the terms of their deals under which each other's concerns can be addressed, but he declined to elaborate. Lee said the ROK will also join a "provisional" international security guarantee for the DPRK when the DPRK freezes its nuclear facilities. A permanent security guarantee will be possible only when all of the DPRK's nuclear programs have been confirmed dismantled, he said. Lee also said the ROK will help arrange bilateral talks between the US and the DPRK if the North freezes its nuclear programs as a first step toward dismantlement.

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5. US - DPRK Bilateral Discussion

Reuters ("U.S.-N.KOREA MEETING OFFERS CHANCE TO DISCUSS OFFERS", 2004-06-24) reported that US and DPRK diplomats held a rare bilateral meeting Thursday with a U.S. offer of conditional aid and security guarantees aimed at breaking a deadlock in the nuclear crisis topping the agenda. ROK officials said U.S. and DPRK negotiators met for two hours, but they gave no details. Similar encounters at two previous rounds of talks have yielded little.

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6. US on Multilateral Talks

New York Times ("ABOUT-FACE ON NORTH KOREA: ALLIES HELPED", 2004-06-23) reported that President Bush's concrete offer to cajole the DPRK to give up its nuclear weapons program is a turning point for an administration previously caught between two conflicting approaches to one of the world's most isolated, impoverished and dangerous nations. One camp, encompassing many in the Pentagon and Vice President Dick Cheney's office, has argued for further isolating the DPRK's government and pressing for its collapse. Another, rooted in the State Department and some corners of the National Security Council, has said that Kim Jong Il, the DPRK's leader, should be put to the test, given a serious offer that lays out what kind of benefits would flow if he gave up an expanding nuclear program. For now, that camp has won the day. Mr. Bush selected his course because he had little choice: his Asian allies, picking up signals that the government of Mr. Kim may finally be willing to make a deal, were quietly beginning to negotiate a separate peace. "My hunch is that it's going to be very hard to get North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons," no matter how good the offer, said Kurt Campbell, a former senior Pentagon official during the Clinton administration. "But we need to try," he said, "because if things get unpleasant, we will need to demonstrate to the allies that the diplomatic effort was serious." Mr. Bush appears to have been pushed by those allies, at least according to the accounts offered up by Asian officials and confirmed by some but not all of their American counterparts.

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7. US Military

Reuters ("U.S. TO BOOST NAVAL, AIR PRESENCE IN ASIA ?PACIFIC", 2004-06-24) reported that the US plans to put "substantially" more ships and warplanes in Asia and the Pacific, even as it pulls troops out of the ROK, a top Pentagon official told Congress on Wednesday. The build-up of armaments is part of the broadest repositioning of U.S. forces worldwide since the end of the Korean War more than 50 years ago. In Asia, the moves are intended to boost the U.S. ability to meet commitments on the divided Korean peninsula and elsewhere in the region, despite any permanent cut of troop numbers on the ground, Douglas Feith, under secretary of defense for policy, told the House Armed Services Committee. "We are not focused on maintaining numbers of troops overseas," Feith said. "Instead, we are focused on increasing the capabilities of our forces and those of our friends." Once the changes are in place, the United States "will have increased substantially our naval and air assets in the Asia-Pacific region that increase our abilities to operate effectively ... and fulfill our commitments in the area -- on the Korean peninsula and elsewhere," Feith testified.

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8. DPRK on US Troop Redeployment

Yonhap News ("N.K. THREATENS TO BUILD UP MEASURES AGAINST U.S. FORCE REDUCTION ", 2004-06-24) reported that the DPRK said Thursday it will strengthen its stance against the U.S. policy of reducing its troops in the ROK, saying the reduction is aimed at retaining a "qualitative edge" to stifle the state by force. "The United States made public its plan to cut part of its troops stationed in South Korea, but is massively shipping advanced weapons into South Korea under the 'arms buildup plan' that calls for spending \$11 billion," a spokesman for the DPRK foreign ministry said in an interview with the (North) Korean Central News Agency.

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9. Japanese - DPRK Relations

Associated Press ("JAPAN, N KOREA AGREE TO WORK TOWARDS SOGA FAMILY REUNION", 2004-06-24) reported that the DPRK has agreed to work on arranging a reunion between a Japanese former kidnapping victim and her family - including her fugitive American husband, Japanese officials said Thursday. The understanding was reached during a meeting between Japanese envoy Mitoji Yabunaka and DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan on the sidelines of talks on the DPRK's nuclear program, now taking place in Beijing, said the officials, who spoke on condition they not be named. The issue of a family reunion between former abductee Hitomi Soga, and her family, who remained behind in the DPRK when she left for Japan, has hindered progress between the two governments on normalizing ties. Yabunaka told Kim that Japan "hopes for a reunion of the family in a third country at an early date," a Japanese official told reporters. Kim told Yabunaka that the DPRK would cooperate as necessary, he said.

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10. ROK Hostage Death

New York Times ("HOSTAGE'S DEATH UNLEASHES MIXED EMOTIONS BACK HOME ", 2004-0-23) reported that the beheading of an ROK hostage in Iraq provoked demonstrations on Wednesday against plans to send 3,000 more troops to Iraq this summer. But it also set off an angry backlash. Callers deluged mosques with telephone bomb threats, e-mail messages crashed a Defense Ministry Web site with offers to fight terrorists, and nearly one-quarter of poll respondents at two youth-oriented Web sites said the killing of their compatriot prompted them to back the deployment of more troops. As intended by the kidnappers, the killing of Kim Sun Il, a 33-year-old interpreter, pumped new life into a movement to stop the plan to send more troops, a deployment that would make the ROK the third-largest source of foreign troops, after the US and Britain. The killing emboldened 50 members of the National Assembly to endorse a motion on Wednesday to stop the planned deployment. "The environment in Iraq has changed significantly," the lawmakers said, echoing the sentiments shared by 3,000 demonstrators at a candlelight vigil here on Wednesday night. But the legislative group is 100 members short of a majority, and the ROK's president, Roh Moo Hyun, is expected to prevail with his plan to send the troops to northern Iraq's Kurdish areas. "I still feel heartbroken to remember that the deceased was desperately pleading for his life," Mr. Roh said in a television address, recalling the video images broadcast here that showed Mr. Kim crying, "I don't want to die." But, Mr. Roh said, "we shouldn't let them achieve what they want through terrorism."

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11. DPRK on ROK Hostage Death

Yonhap News ("N.K. CALLS BEHEADING CONSEQUENCE OF SEOUL'S PRO-U.S. POLICY ", 2004-06-24) reported that the DPRK claimed Thursday the recent killing of a ROK hostage by an armed group in Iraq was a "natural consequence" of Seoul's support for U.S. policy. The DPRK also demanded the ROK government to scrap its decision to send thousands of troops to Iraq.

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12. ROK - DPRK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("PERMISSION FOR CONDOLENCE VISITS FOR LATE NORTH KOREAN LEADER'S TENTH ANNIVERSARY UNDER CONSIDERATION ", 2004-06-24) reported that in celebration of the tenth anniversary of the late DPRK leader Kim Il-sung's death on July 8, Reunification Minister Chung Sae-hyun said on June 24 that the government will discuss with related agencies in consideration of the South-North relationship, and examine the possibility of granting permission if some civic groups apply for visits to the DPRK to attend the memorial service. In a regular briefing session, Chung said, "It is an issue that should take consideration of the aspects such as interchange cooperation law, public sentiment and the reconcilable and cooperative relationship between South and North, while still cognizant of the tense situation." "Certain groups may have another purpose other than attending the memorial ceremony," said the Minister. "It is an issue difficult to simply say 'yes' or 'no' to. The situation now is different from ten years ago." As for the possibility of a summit between North Korea and Russia, Chung explained, "From an economic perspective, North Korea may require assistance from outside as it starts to move and come to life. Therefore, the two leaders will need to talk again." However, he added that there is no way to verify whether Russian President Vladimir Putin would possibly meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-il on his way to visit a military base which is located in the easternmost region of the country.

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13. ROK -DPRK Naval Ties

Yonhap News ("TWO KOREAS TO HOLD TALKS ON TELEPHONE HOTLINE BETWEEN NAVIES ", 2004-06-24) reported that working-level officers of the rival Koreas will meet on the border this week to follow up on an agreement to set up a telephone hotline between their navies, the Defense Ministry said Thursday. Earlier this month, general-grade officers of the ROK and the DPRK agreed on a set of measures to avoid accidental armed clashes along the disputed western sea border and to ease tension along the land border.

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14. ROK POWs

Yonhap News ("S. KOREAN POW ESCAPES FROM N. KOREA: CIVIC GROUP", 2004-06-24) reported that a ROK prisoner of war (POW) held in the DPRK has succeeded in escaping to the PRC along with his family, a humanitarian group official said Thursday." A South Korean POW whose family name is Lee and is 75 years old is now staying in China," said Do Hui-yun, secretary general of a civic alliance for South Korean POWs. "Also, he has been reunited with one of his family members from South Korea." A sergeant first class, Lee served in the first regiment of the Army Capital Defense Division during the Korean War. He was classified as killed in action on July 16 in 1953, and a memorial tablet has been dedicated to him at the cemetery of the National Memorial Board, Do explained.

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15. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News ("GOV'T TO SET UP DISARMAMENT CENTER FOR REGIONAL PEACE REGIME ", 2004-06-24) reported that the presidential office of Cheong Wa Dae said Thursday it plans to soon establish a disarmament center to formulate policies for resolving the DPRK nuclear crisis peacefully and seeking a permanent peace regime in Northeast Asia. "We are planning to build the Northeast Asia Center for Peace and Disarmament as soon as possible, which will produce ideas and policies

for institutionalization of a permanent peace regime," Moon Jung-in, chairman of the presidential Northeast Asian Era Committee, said.

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16. Korean Olympic Teams

Korea Times ("2 KOREAS AGREE ON JOINT MARCH AT ATHENS OLYMPICS", 2004-06-24) reported that athletes from either side of the Demilitarized Zone will walk hand-in-hand once again during the opening ceremony of the Athens Olympics after officials from South and North Korea came to an agreement Wednesday at the inter-Korean talks in Beijing, China. The upcoming Summer Games will mark the fifth time athletes from the two Koreas have marched together at an international sporting event after joining hands for the first time at the 2000 Sydney Olympics. The Korean Olympic Committee (KOC) announced on Thursday that top sports officials from the two Koreas signed an agreement with five clauses on the joint march for the Aug. 13 opening ceremony in Athens. Following the talks, the chief representatives of the countries, Park Yang-chon, honorary executive of the KOC, and Cho Sang-nam, vice-president of the DPRK National Olympic Committee, issued a joint statement. According to the statement, the two Koreas will follow the precedents on the details of the joint march - athletes and staff from the South and North will march under the name of Korea wearing identical uniforms, and one male athlete from the North and one female athlete from the South will bear the Korean peninsula flag together as "Arirang" plays in place of the national anthems.

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17. PRC Olympic Preparation

The Associated Press ("CHINA MISUSES \$13M IN OLYMPIC FUNDS ", 2004-06-24) reported that PRC sports officials misused more than \$13 million meant for the 2008 Beijing Olympics to build apartments for their staff, state media said Thursday. The disclosure was an embarrassment for officials who have pledged to keep the Summer Games free of the corruption and abuses that plague China's government. The money diverted to apartment construction was among \$15.9 million in misused Olympic funds found by an audit of the Beijing sports bureau, the Xinhua News Agency said. Some \$13.2 million was spent on apartments, with the rest invested illegally in companies, Xinhua said, citing a report to parliament by the PRC's auditor-general, Li Jinhua.

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18. US - PRC Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("EVANS: CHINA PROMISES TRADE DEFICIT TRIM", 2004-06-24) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao and other top officials promised to do more to help trim Beijing's soaring trade surplus with the United States, U.S. Commerce Secretary Don Evans said Thursday. Diplomatic efforts, rather than threatening trade sanctions, are the best way to improve the PRC's trade and labor policies, he said. But Evans vowed to be "tough, very tough" on enforcing U.S. trade laws. The PRC's trade surplus with the US hit a record \$124 billion in 2003 - the highest level ever with any country. "We have to make sure there is a level playing field in markets around the world," Evans said. His visit comes as the countries trade accusations over the alleged dumping of various products in their markets.

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19. Taiwan Election Dispute

Agence-France Presse ("TAIWAN POLICE UNVEILS SHOOTING REPORT, SNUBBED BY OPPOSITION", 2004-06-24) reported that Taiwanese police authorities unveiled their first ballistics report on the election-eve shooting of President Chen Shui-bian, but the opposition said it did little to solve the case. "The report basically match with the evidence gathered at the crime scene," said an official with the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) Thursday. The result of three trial shootings showed the lead bullets punching a jacket, a shirt, and an underwear on a model stuffed with pig skin -- the material often used in similar trial shootings. But all the three bullets were stopped by the underwear after they either punched a hole on the pig skin or grazed it. "Judging from the simulated shootings, it was reasonable that the lead bullet was powerful enough to go through the clothes of President Chen but only left a scratch" on his belly, the official said. But the CIB report was dismissed by the Kuomintang-led (KMT) opposition. "This report was of little significance on grounds that the crime scene has been spoiled," said Taipei Mayor Ma Ying-jeou, also a KMT vice chairman.

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20. PRC Religious Freedom

The Associated Press ("CHINA DENIES CLAIM OF BISHOPS DETAINED ", 2004-06-24) reported that the PRC on Thursday denied Vatican claims it had detained three bishops from the country's underground Roman Catholic church. A Vatican spokesman said that a bishop from the county of Xuanhua was taken into police custody and had not been heard from since May 27. A bishop in the town of Xiwanzi was held from June 2-12, while the bishop of Zhengding county was held for five days, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Wednesday. All three areas are in the northern province surrounding Beijing. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue denied the claims and insisted that the PRC "protects religious freedom." "The relevant government officials of China have refuted these allegations," Zhang said. "They do not conform with the facts."

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21. Issue # 170

Preparations are underway for a third round of 6-Party talks on the DPRK's nuclear program, scheduled for Beijing next week. The USA, Japan and ROK complete their own preparatory talks, aimed at coordinating the positions of the three allies. Speaking on condition of anonymity, a US official indicated that the North Korean offer of a nuclear freeze with IAEA inspections could be viewed as progress worthy of aid concessions, as long as it is clear that any freeze is a step towards the total elimination of nuclear program. This suggests an adjustment in the US position. Final propaganda messages are broadcast across the Demilitarized Zone on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the inter-Korean summit. The two Koreas agreed to halt the war of words from loudspeakers and propaganda billboards. The last broadcasts before midnight had a decidedly conciliatory tone, markedly different from four decades of strident exchanges, expressing wishes for a peaceful reunification. This week's FOCUS examines the significance of the June 15th Joint Declaration as North Korea experts evaluate the fourth summit anniversary. Included are opinions of former ROK Unification Minister Lim Dong-won, and Ralph Cossa, president of the Pacific Forum CSIS research institute.

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