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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NO EARLY RESUMPTION SEEN TO KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS", 2006-0--18) reported that the top US negotiator to stalled six-nation talks aimed at ending the DPRK's nuclear weapons drive is to travel to the PRC and the ROK but experts see no early resumption to negotiations. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill will visit Beijing and Seoul on May 24-26 after an extensive Southeast Asian trip covering Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand beginning this week, the State Department said. "Clearly, I don't believe that there is going to be progress," said Charles Pritchard, former top US negotiator with the DPRK, who suggested that Hill's negotiating powers had been clipped.

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2. US DPRK Policy

New York Times ("U.S. SAID TO WEIGH A NEW APPROACH ON NORTH KOREA", 2006-05-17) reported that President Bush's top advisers have recommended a broad new approach to dealing with the DPRK that would include beginning negotiations on a peace treaty, even while efforts to dismantle the country's nuclear program are still under way, senior administration officials and Asian diplomats say. Aides say Mr. Bush is very likely to approve the new approach, which has been hotly debated among different factions within the administration. But he will not do so unless the DPRK returns to multinational negotiations over its nuclear program.

(return to top) Yonhap ("WASHINGTON URGED NOT TO BLINDLY APPLY LIBYA MODEL TO N. KOREA", 2006-05-18) reported that US officials should not let themselves be intoxicated by their earlier success with Libya when dealing with the DPRK's nuclear program, a high-profile expert on US affairs said Thursday. The Libyan model may tempt US officials to take an unrealistic and more hard-line policy to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis, said Han Sung-joo, who served as the ROK's foreign minister during the Clinton administration and Seoul's top envoy to Washington during the junior Bush government. (return to top)

3. Inter-Korean Military Summit

Chosun Ilbo ("TALKS BETWEEN GENERALS FROM BOTH KOREAS FLOP", 2006-05-18) reported that top brass from the two Koreas on Thursday ended another round of talks without any agreement on the key issues they had come to discuss -- test runs for cross-border railways and prevention of clashes around the ill-defined West Sea border. The two sides also failed to set a date for a fifth round of general-level talks or for working-level military talks, let alone produce a joint press statement.

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4. Inter-Korean Industrial Standards

Asia Times ("S KOREA SEEKING TO UNIFY STANDARDS WITH NORTH", 2006-05-18) reported that the ROK will push to unify industrial standards with the DPRK in a preparatory effort to help reduce the so-called unification cost in the future, a senior government official said Thursday. To that end, a civilian-government task force will be set up this year to collect related data and coordinate inter-ministerial efforts, Vice Industry Minister Kim Jong-kap said.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("KOREAS AGREE TO HOLD JOINT CEREMONY FOR JUNE 15 DECLARATION", 2006-0--18) reported that the ROK and the DPRK agreed Thursday to hold a joint ceremony in Gwangju, ROK on June 14 to mark the sixth anniversary of a joint declaration by leaders of the two Koreas in 2000, officials from the ROK committee for the event said. On June 15, 2000, former ROK President Kim Dae-jung met DPRK leader Kim Jong-il for a summit in Pyongyang and issued the landmark declaration.

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6. DPRK Economy

JoongAng Ilbo ("HINTS OF CAPITALISM AT FAIR IN PYONGYANG", 2006-05-18) reported that in a rare visit to this the DPRK, a group of ROK government officials, journalists, businessmen and economic experts attended a series of investment promotion events arranged this week by the DPRK government. At a trade fair, RO Koreans toured bustling booths set up by DPR Korean and foreign firms, and witnessed DPR Koreans buying goods there with US dollars in their hands ? an indication that Pyongyang's limited foray into capitalism, which began in 2002, is slowly progressing in the DPRK’s strictly controlled economy. .

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7. USFJ Realignment

Kyodo ("KADENA ASSEMBLY WANTS F-15S GONE", 2006-05-11) reported that the Kadena Municipal Assembly in Okinawa adopted a resolution and a statement of opinion on May 10 on a recent mishap involving a US F-15 fighter jet at the US Kadena Air Base. The assembly demanded that the US military unveil measures to prevent accidents and that they remove the F-15 squadron from Kadena.

(return to top) Kyodo ("NAGO DEAL ATTACKED AT RALLIES MARKING OKINAWA'S RETURN", 2006-05-13) reported that annual peace rallies marking the 1972 return of Okinawa began Friday with many participants criticizing the recent Japan-US agreement to realign the US forces in Japan.
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8. Japan-US Nuclear Cooperation

Kyodo ("FUEL PROGRAM MAY VIOLATE U.S.-JAPAN NUCLEAR PACT", 2006-05-14) reported that a US-initiated international program aimed at safely providing nuclear fuel to developing nations, in which Japan has agreed to take part, may violate the Japan-US pact on atomic energy cooperation, Japanese government sources said Saturday. The pact clearly bans the transfer of recycling technology for nuclear waste.

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9. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

The Japan Times ("BID TO ADDRESS CONGRESS HAS YASUKUNI PROVISO", 2006-05-17) reported that Henry Hyde, chairman of the House of Representatives International Relations Committee, is

seeking a guarantee from Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi that he will not visit Yasukuni Shrine if he is invited to deliver a speech to Congress during a trip to Washington planned for late June.

(return to top) Kyodo ("ANNAN SAYS KOIZUMI'S YASUKUNI VISITS RAISED REGIONAL TENSIONS ", 2006-05-18) reported that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said Thursday that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to the war-related Yasukuni Shrine have raised regional tensions and hinted that Japan should take action to ease its strained ties with the PRC and the ROK. (return to top)

10. Japan War Plans

Donga Ilbo ("LEAKED PAPERS INCLUDE JAPAN WAR PLANS ", 2006-05-18) reported that of 3,000 Japanese Maritime Self Defense Forces (MSDF) documents leaked on the Internet, among them was the largest-ever 2003 MSDF's exercise plan to prepare for a military emergency on the Korean peninsula, said Japanese daily Asahi Shimbun on May 17. The exercise scenarios include a nation's crisis, effectively regarding the DPRK (a crisis in neighboring country), two nations preparing a ballistic missile attack against Japan (emergency situation in Japan), and a country claiming sovereignty over its "S isles" in the southwest.

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11. Japan Anti-Terror Measure

The Japan Times ("DIET PASSES BILL TO TAKE FOREIGNERS' PRINTS, PICS", 2006-05-18) reported that a bill requiring fingerprinting and photographing of foreigners upon entry to Japan was passed Wednesday as a way to prevent terrorism. The collected data will be electronically registered and cross-checked with a list of past deportees and internationally wanted criminals.

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12. PRC-Japan East Sea Gas Dispute

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN AND CHINA FAIL TO BRIDGE GULF ON SEA DISPUTE ", 2006-0--18) reported that Japan and the PRC tried to find common ground in a heated row over lucrative gas and oilfields in the East China Sea but failed to make a breakthrough. "Both sides have gained further understanding of each other's position but there still remains a gulf," said Kenichiro Sasae, the chief Japanese delegate to the one-day meeting.

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13. US on PRC Currency

Reuters ("CHINA RISKS US BACKLASH IF NO ACTION ON YUAN: SNOW ", 2006-05-18) reported that the PRC faces an increased chance of a protectionist backlash in the US Congress unless it moves more quickly to a market-based exchange rate, US Treasury Secretary John Snow said. In testimony before the U.S. Senate Banking Committee, Snow also said Treasury could label the PRC as a currency manipulator unless the yuan appreciates more in the first half of 2006 than it did in the last half of 2005.

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14. US-PRC Relations

Reuters ("CHINA DENIES HAVING WEAPONS AGENTS IN US ", 2006-05-18) reported that the PRC has no covert agents in the US trying to buy military gear on its behalf, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said on Thursday. "The so-called allegations that China is conducting intelligence collection on military or science and technology in the United States are purely fictitious," spokesman Liu Jianchao told a regular news conference.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org