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I. NAPSNet

1. US on Six Party Talks

Associated Press ("CHIEF US NEGOTIATOR IN NUCLEAR TALKS SAYS IT'S TIME FOR NORTH KOREA TO ACT", 2007-05-24) reported that Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill says the US won't let a standoff over $$25 million in DPRK funds get in the way of making progress in nuclear disarmament. Hill says the dispute over the money is 1 of the most complex problems he's dealt with in his career, but insists a solution is being ironed out.

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2. ROK Aid to DPRK

Hankyoreh ("S. KOREA TO POSTPONE RICE AID UNTIL N. KOREA ACTS ON DENUCLEARIZATION", 2007-05-24) reported that the ROK has decided to put off food shipment to the DPRK until the country fulfills its promise to shut down its main nuclear reactor. The ROK had planned to start sending 400,000 tons of rice late this month in the form of a loan to be paid back over 30 years after a 10-year grace period. Hoping that the banking dispute would have been resolved by the end of May, the ROK government approved budget spending for the rice aid worth $170 million and raw materials worth $80 million for the DPRK to make soap, footwear and clothing.

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3. Inter-Korean Business and Peace

Agence France-Presse ("N. KOREA'S CAPITALISTS SEEK FOREIGN SUPPORT", 2007-05-24) reported that diplomats who toured the Kaesong Industrial Complex Tuesday were urged to set aside worries over the DPRK's nuclear program and to invest in the complex as this would help reduce tension on the Peninsula.

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4. US-ROK Trade Relations

Korea Times ("SEMANTICS OVERSHADOWS KOREA-US FTA", 2007-05-24) reported that US Trade Representative explained that the earlier referred to "vocabulary renegotiation," meant a "discussion" that would take place with South Korea on labor and environmental issues. Steve Norton, press secretary to Wendy Cutler, who is the US chief negotiator for the KORUS FTA said "I wouldn't call it 're-negotiation.' But we will be discussing a new template on labor and environment that the (Bush) administration and Congress agreed on with South Korea."

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5. Japan Climate Change Initiative

Kyodo ("ABE UNVEILS CLIMATE CHANGE INITIATIVE TO HALVE EMISSIONS BY 2050", 2007-0--24) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe unveiled a Japanese initiative aimed at halving global greenhouse gas emissions from the current levels by 2050 to fight climate change and the creation of a new post-Kyoto Protocol framework. The premier announced the three-pillar initiative, dubbed "Cool Earth 50," ahead of the Group of Eight summit next month in Heiligendamm, Germany, and the G-8 summit which Japan will host next year.

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6. Sino-Japanese Relations

The Associated Press ("JAPAN, CHINA WORKING ON BILATERAL TALKS ", 2007-05-24) reported that the leaders of Japan and the PRC have agreed to hold their third meeting on the sidelines of the upcoming G-8 summit, a Japanese government official said in an indication of the two nations' deepening rapprochement. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki told reporters that arrangements were being made for the talks between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and PRC President Hu Jintao, "but nothing has been set at this point."

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7. PRC-US Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("BUSH URGES CHINA TO STRENGTHEN CURRENCY", 2007-05-24) reported that President Bush told a senior PRC economic minister that the US is "watching very carefully" whether Beijing will strengthen the value of its currency. After a meeting with Vice Premier Wu Yi Bush told reporters the US is "making it clear to China that we value our relationship, but the $233 billion trade deficit must be addressed." Strengthening the PRC's currency, he said, is one way to deal with the deficit.

(return to top) Reuters ("CHINA WARNS U.S. AGAINST TRADE "CONFRONTATION"", 2007-05-24) reported that US "confrontation" with the PRC will not solve trade friction between the two economic giants, PRC state media said, urging greater cooperation after talks failed to resolve key sticking points. The China Daily said in an editorial that both countries bore responsibility for the trade gap between them and warned against US impatience for a rapid cure. "The dialogue made it clear that a confrontational approach focusing on so-called immediate results only complicates the situation and adds nothing to problem solving," it said. (return to top)

8. PRC Rural Unrest

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE VILLAGERS DENOUNCE BRUTAL 'ONE-CHILD' BLITZ", 2007-05-24) reported that residents of this southern PRC county angrily accused authorities of forcing women to have abortions and vandalising homes in a brutal campaign to enforce birth-control policies. "Many women have been forced to have abortions. Authorities are going into their homes and destroying their homes to implement the policy," said a woman in Bobai county who gave only her surname, Chen. "The people are angry. This is not the way to carry it out."

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9. PRC Rural Income Disparity

Xinhua ("CHINESE GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO SUBSIDIZE ALL RURAL POOR", 2007-05-24) reported that the PRC's State Council, or the cabinet, held an executive meeting on expanding a rural subsistence allowances system that will satisfy the rural poor's minimum requirements for living. The meeting, chaired by Premier Wen Jiabao, decided to cover all needy people in rural areas across the country under the allowance program, including the aged, the disabled and those who are unable to work.

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10. PRC Space Program

The New York Times ("SNUBBED BY U.S., CHINA FINDS NEW SPACE PARTNERS", 2007-05-24) reported that for years, the PRC has chafed at efforts by the US to exclude it from full membership in the world's elite space club. So lately the PRC seems to have hit on a solution: create a new club. Beijing is trying to position itself as a space benefactor to the developing world — the same countries, in some cases, whose natural resources the PRC covets here on earth. The latest and most prominent example came last week when the PRC launched a communications satellite for Nigeria, a major oil producer, in a project that serves as a tidy case study of how space has become another arena where the PRC is trying to exert its soft power.

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11. PRC Disease Outbreak

Reuters ("CHINA VIRUS OUTBREAK KILLS THIRD CHILD ", 2007-05-24) reported that a viral disease that has broken out in eastern PRC's Shandong province has killed a third child, Xinhua said on Thursday, raising doubts over earlier claims that the epidemic may have been contained. The news agency said that an 11-month-old boy had developed a fever and blisters before dying in a hospital in Linyi city, where 1,263 cases of "hand, foot, and mouth disease" have been reported since April.

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