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I. NAPSNet

1. US and Japan on DPRK

Reuters ("JAPAN PM: MORE N. KOREA SANCTIONS MAY BE NEEDED", 2007-05-03) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said more sanctions against the DPRK may be needed if Pyongyang does not soon meet its initial obligations under a six-nation disarmament pact. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said that the United States and Japan do not have endless patience with the DPRK.

2. Inter-Korean - Russian Relations

Donga Ilbo ("PRESIDENT ROH INVITES PUTIN TO KOREA", 2007-05-03) reported that President

Roh Moo-hyun extended an official invitation to his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, to visit the ROK, and proposed the acceleration of the Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR)-Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) connection. The railroad connection project between the ROK and Russia has been postponed due to changes in inter-Korean relations and disagreements over selecting DPRK rail lines. Some political analysts point out the request was part of the Roh administration's efforts to secure political leverage or the so called "North Korean card" ahead of the presidential elections in December 2007 because there was no need to deliver a personal letter, considering Russia has been pushing for the project more than the ROK.

3. Inter-Korean Relations

KCNA ("NORTH KOREAN ASSEMBLY CHIEF MEETS SOUTH KOREAN DELEGATION", 2007-05-03) reported that Kim Yong-nam, president of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, met and had a talk with a delegation of the Northeast Asia Peace Committee of the Uri Party of the ROK led by Kim Hyok-gyu, in a "compatriotic atmosphere" at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.

4. DPRK Human Rights

Financial Times ("N KOREA GETS LESS SEVERE ON ESCAPEES", 2007-05-03) reported that international pressure is seemingly causing the DPRK to change the way it treats those caught trying to flee the country. In a new report based on interviews with 20 former political prisoners, the Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights said since 2002 DPRK authorities had slowly begun to treat differently those caught leaving.

5. US-ROK Trade Relations

Yonhap ("S. KOREA, U.S. TO DISCLOSE FULL TEXT OF FREE TRADE DEAL MAY 20:ROH AIDE", 2007-05-03) reported that the ROK and the US are scheduled to disclose the full text of their free trade agreement (FTA) around May 20, a top aide to President Roh Moo-hyun said. Yoon Dae-hee, senior presidential secretary for economic affairs, told reporters that the ROK government is now preparing to make public the full text of the FTA deal reached at the beginning of April.

6. Japan Constitutional Revision

Kyodo ("ABE REITERATES CALL FOR REVISING CONSTITUTION", 2007-05-03) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reiterated his call for revising the postwar Constitution, saying Japan can no longer proceed with major changes to its administration system, relations between central and local governments, and the basic framework for foreign and security policies under the current charter that was written 60 years ago and has remained unamended. Japan's parliament is certain to pass a bill setting the procedures for constitutional amendment during the current 150-day regular session lasting through June 23, paving the way for a constitutional revision.

Agence France-Presse ("PROTESTS AS JAPAN'S PM URGES NEW CONSTITUTION", 2007-05-03) reported that Japan marked the 60th anniversary of its pacifist constitution on Thursday amid protests and debate about Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's renewed call for revision to reflect the nation's growing global influence. Thousands of pacifist activists rallied through the capital to protest against the conservative premier's call for revising the absolute pacifism of the post-war constitution that has remained unchanged over the past 60 years.

7. US on Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US CALLS FOR TAIWAN TO PASS ARMS BUDGET IN FACE OF CHINA THREAT", 2007-05-03) reported that the top US official in Taiwan on Thursday renewed calls for the

island's parliament to approve a controversial 10-billion-US dollar arms budget in the face of the threat from the PRC's military buildup. De facto ambassador Stephen Young also said Taiwan should boost its missile defences. "We believe that Taiwan is not responding appropriately to the steady build-up of military across the Taiwan Strait. It seems to me this is a fundamental security problem for Taiwan," Young told a press conference. "But it unfortunately also causes Taiwan's friend the United States to question whether our security partner here is serious about maintaining capable defence."

8. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA, CHINA BORDER TRADE PASS REOPENS MONTH AHEAD OF SCHEDULE", 2007-05-03) reported that Asian giants India and the PRC have reopened trade via a famed alpine Silk Road route a month earlier than scheduled in response to demands from businesses on both sides, a local official said. Indian officials say the move marked Beijing's recognition of India's sovereignty over previously disputed Sikkim state.

9. PRC Port Strike

The Associated Press ("DOCKERS STRIKE AT MAJOR CHINESE PORT ", 2007-05-03) reported that hundreds of PRC workers demanding overtime pay went on strike at one of the world's busiest ports, holding up thousands of shipping containers at the terminal in southern PRC, Hong Kong newspapers reported. Crane operators and truck drivers at the Chiwan Container Terminal in the boomtown of Shenzhen stopped working at midnight on Tuesday.

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