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I. NAPSNet

1. Five Party Talks Proposal

Yonhap ("KOREA, U.S. AGREE TO SEEK SIX-PARTY TALKS WITHOUT N.K. IF NECESSARY", 2006-07-18) reported that the ROK and the US agreed they will seek resumption of Korean nuclear disarmament talks without the DPRK should Pyongyang continue to boycott the dialogue, the ROK Embassy said Monday after a meeting of their nuclear envoys. "In order to prevent a situation in which the talks do not reopen for a long period of time and to maintain the momentum of the six-party process, we agreed to pursue a five-party meeting," the embassy said. Seoul's envoy, Chun Young-woo, flew to Washington on Sunday. Chun and US counterpart Christopher Hill talked for some two hours over lunch on Monday. "What we are trying to achieve is six-party talks," Chun told reporters. "But if six-party talks cannot be held, I think it's better to hold the five-party talks rather than not having any talks at all," he said. "Six is better than five, but five is better than none," Hill said, speaking side by side with Chun after their luncheon meeting.

(return to top) Korea Times ("CHINA SKEPTICAL ABOUT 5-WAY TALKS", 2006-07-18) reported that the PRC has not yet made a decision on whether or not to hold a "five-way" meeting, a new format of talks that excludes Pyongyang, an official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Seoul said on Tuesday. A diplomatic source in Seoul interpreted Beijing's reluctance as a sign that it does not like a situation where others take the lead in trying to solve the security issue in Northeast Asia. "Even though Beijing is reluctant to hold the five-way meeting now, China will likely give a green light if it can grab the chairman's position," the source told The Korea Times. (return to top)

2. DPRK Diplomats Gathering

Korea Times ("NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATS GATHER IN PYONGYANG", 2006-07-18) repoted that DPRK diplomats are gathering in Pyongyang this week for the first time in five years amid rising international pressures over its recent launch of seven missiles. But the meeting date does not appear to be an aftershock of the missile launches on July 5 as the diplomats were notified to come to Pyongyang "long before" the launches, intelligence sources said. Regardless of when the schedule was settled, the diplomats are expected to get "some kind of directives" from the Pyongyang regime on how to address the missile crisis.

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3. ROK on UN DPRK Resolution

Chosun Ilbo ("UNIFICATION MINISTER CALLS FOR STRICT IMPLEMENTATION OF UN RESOLUTION ", 2006-07-18) reported that Seoul's leading official on inter-Korean relations says the DPRK should abide by the UN resolution on its missile tests, and that the UN should be strict on how it applies the resolution. Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok, who spoke on a radio program Tuesday, said the UN resolution is about the DPRK's missiles and weapons of mass destruction, and does not prescribe economic sanctions. He said he thinks the council's weapons-related sanctions on Pyongyang should not adversely affect the on-going inter-Korean reconciliation projects, such as the Kaesong Industrial Park and tours to the DPRK's Mt. Kumgang.

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4. DPRK-PRC Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH'S PROPAGANDA MACHINE GOES AFTER UN DECISION", 2006-07-18)

reported that a diplomatic source in Seoul said that last week, before the resolution was adopted, the DPRK's leader told a US visitor that Beijing was "not to be trusted." Kim Jong Il reportedly told the visitor that he doubted the PRC's willingness to help the DPRK at a "decisive moment." That muttering was probably connected to the visit of a senior delegation from Beijing to Pyongyang last week in a last-ditch effort to head off Security Council action, in which the PRC could have exercised its veto but instead voted for the resolution.

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5. Japanese Sanctions on DPRK

Associated Press ("JAPAN PREPARING SANCTIONS ON NORTH KOREA", 2006-07-18) reported that Japan has begun preparations to impose its own economic sanctions on the DPRK after the hardline regime rejected a UN Security Council resolution condemning its ballistic missile tests, a top government official said Tuesday. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said he has instructed officials to prepare measures to ban cash remittances to the DPRK and implement sanctions already called for in the UN resolution.

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6. DPRK Media on DPRK-US Relations

Chosun Ilbo (" N.KOREA 'WILL CHANGE IF U.S. DOES' ", 2006-07-18) reported that the DPRK will not need its nuclear arms program if the US ends its attempts to overthrow the regime, a Pyongyang mouthpiece in Japan reiterated Tuesday. The Chosun Shinbo, published by the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan or Chongryon, said trust between the two countries could be fostered if the US "withdraws its hostile policy toward North Korea, and as North Korea would no longer feel threatened, it would not need a single nuclear weapon." A ROK official said there was no reason to set any great store by the statement. The paper earlier called signs that the DPRK was poised to test missiles "a fabrication," only to be stumped when the DPRK did test seven missiles several days later.

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7. DPRK Missile Arsenal

JoongAng Ilbo ("PYONGYANG REPORTEDLY TESTED A NEW SCUD", 2006-07-18) reported that some of the Scud missiles touched off by the DPRK among a seven-shot salvo on July 5 appear to be of a new type with longer range, a government official said yesterday. Citing intelligence from Seoul and Washington, the official said the radio signals from those missiles were different from those of a Scud-B or C model or a medium-range Rodong missile. The newer model, called the Scud ER, has an estimated range of 850 kilometers, 528 miles, and improved accuracy over its notoriously wayward predecessor.

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8. ROK Repatriation, Reparations Legislation

Yonhap ("GOV'T TO PUSH FOR LAW ON REPATRIATION OF CITIZENS ABDUCTED BY N. KOREA", 2006-07-18) reported that the ROK government on Tuesday said it would push for legislation that would call for government efforts to bring back hundreds of ROK citizens kidnapped by the DPRK

and reparations for the abduction victims and their family members here.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TO COMPENSATE THOSE ABDUCTED BY N.KOREA", 2006-07-18) reported that the government is drafting a law to compensate families of RO Koreans taken to the DPRK after the armistice in 1953 and financially support repatriated victims. The ministries of unification and of government administration and home affairs aim to have the bill passed after a public hearing later this year. It would compensate families of abduction victims who have yet to return or repatriated following a stay of more than three years in the DPRK. Payouts will be based on the period they spent in the DPRK and their living conditions. (return to top)

9. DPRK-Japan ASEAN Conference Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN, N. KOREA FOREIGN MINISTERS HAVE NO PLANS TO MEET IN MALAYSIA", 2006-07-18) reported that Foreign Minister Taro Aso said Tuesday he has no plans to meet with his DPRK counterpart Paek Nam Sun on the sidelines of a regional security forum next week in Malaysia. Hosted by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the ASEAN Regional Forum will be held July 28 in Kuala Lumpur, and Paek has confirmed he will attend the meeting, according to host Malaysia.

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10. Kim Jong-il's Whereabouts

Kyodo ("N. KOREAN LEADER'S WHEREABOUTS NOT REPORTED AFTER MISSILE LAUNCH", 2006-07-18) reported that the DPRK's official media, which routinely report about the activities of the country's leader Kim Jong Il, has remained silent about his whereabouts ever since the country test-fired its missiles on July 5. The last time the Korean Central News Agency reported on his activities was on July 4, the day before the missile launches, which triggered an international outcry.

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11. Inter-Korean Olympic Talks

Yonhap ("TALKS FOR UNIFIED KOREAN TEAM LIKELY TO BE POSTPONED", 2006-07-18) reported that talks for fielding a single team from the DPRK and the ROK in the 2008 Beijing Olympics will likely be delayed after the two Koreas' ministerial talks ended without any breakthrough last week, an official at the (RO) Korea Olympic Committee said Tuesday.

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12. US-ROK Security Alliance

The Associated Press ("USS ENTERPRISE VISITS SOUTH KOREAN PORT ", 2006-07-18) reported that the aircraft carrier USS Enterprise arrived in the ROK Tuesday for a routine port call, officials said, amid heightened tensions in the region over the DPRK's missile launches. The vessel's visit "has been previously scheduled and it is not in response to any specific event," the US Navy statement said.

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13. Japan Iraq Role

Kyodo ("JAPAN VOWS TO HELP IRAQIS IN SAMAWAH LAND JOBS AFTER SDF PULLOUT", 2006-07-18) reported that Japan will help people in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah land new jobs even after its Ground Self-Defense Force troops completely withdraw from there, Japanese Defense Agency chief Fukushiro Nukaga said Monday. Nukaga told reporters that the Japanese government will help about 150 people whom the GSDF directly hired as guards at its camp in the city or interpreters find new jobs.

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14. US-PRC Military Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINESE GENERAL MEETS WITH RUMSFELD ", 2006-07-18) reported that the PRC's most senior military officer, Gen. Guo Boxiong, met with Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld in a sign of widening contacts between the Pentagon and the PRC military. Bryan Whitman, a Pentagon spokesman, would not discuss the agenda for Tuesday's meeting before it began, but he said Guo's visit was affirmation of a consensus reached in recent high-level meetings - including Rumsfeld's visit to Beijing last October — that both countries should have more military-t--military exchanges and contacts.

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15. PRC Currency

The Associated Press ("BEIJING SHOWS NO SIGN OF LETTING YUAN RISE ", 2006-07-18) reported that worried that the PRC's sizzling economic growth could ignite a financial crisis, the country's leaders have raised interest rates and imposed regulatory controls. But they have avoided the step that Washington most wants: a sharp rise in the value of the PRC's currency.

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16. PRC Environment

Reuters ("CHINA TO INVEST $175 BLN IN ENVIRONMENT CLEAN-UP", 2006-07-18) reported that the PRC plans to invest $175 billion in environmental protection in the next five years to curb water and air pollution so severe it causes riots and health problems. The money -- equivalent to about 1.5 percent of GDP -- is to be spent on measures including control of water pollution, improving air quality in cities and halting soil erosion.

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17. PRC-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN-CHINA TIES SHOULD BE IMPROVED: YAMASAKI", 2006-07-18) reported that Taku Yamasaki, former vice president of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, on Tuesday stressed the need for Japan to improve bilateral ties with the PRC, which have deteriorated over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's visits to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo.

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18. PRC Media Control

Interfax ("INTERNATIONAL PRESS ASSOCIATIONS URGE CHINA TO FREE JAILED JOURNALIST", 2006-07-18) reported that the World Association of Newspapers (WAN) and World Editors Forum have sent a letter to Premier Wen Jiabao calling for the immediate release of Li Yuanlong, who has received a two-year sentence for publishing an essay on democracy and freedom. In an article titled 'On Becoming an American in Spirit' Li reportedly expressed his desire for democracy and freedom and had also reported on the plight of marginalized farmers and laid-off workers. He had posted his essays on overseas websites currently banned in the PRC.

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