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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA NUCLEAR NEGOTIATOR IN BEIJING", 2007-09-25) reported that DPRK nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-Gwan arrived in Beijing for a new round of six-nation disarmament talks as host PRC called for all parties to push for progress. According to the ROK's Yonhap news agency, Kim warned that if this round of talks produce no results, denuclearisation efforts would grind to a halt. "Denuclearisation will continue if we reach an agreement on the steps we have achieved so far," Kim was quoted saying. "And this is a very important meeting where things will return to the starting point if no agreement is produced."

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2. Alleged Syria-DPRK Nuclear Deal

Yonhap ("TOP N. KOREAN ENVOY REITERATES DENIAL OF PYONGYANG-DAMASCUS NUCLEAR TIES", 2007-09-25) reported that the DPRK's chief nuclear negotiator reiterated his country's denial of allegations that the DPRK is helping Syria with a secret atomic weapons program, warning six-nation talks aimed at denuclearizing the DPRK could grind to a halt if no substantial agreement is reached this week. Dismissing recent media reports that the North may have provided nuclear technology to Syria, Pyongyang said last week "dishonest forces" were spreading such suspicions to overturn progress in ties between Washington and Pyongyang.

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3. US on DPRK Terror List Status

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA MAY BE DROPPED FROM TERRORISM LIST, U.S. HINTS", 2007-09-25) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice hinted that the DPRK could be dropped from a US terrorism blacklist before fully accounting for the Japanese citizens it abducted in the 1970s and 1980s. Such a move could antagonize Japan, a key US ally for whom the fate of the abductees is a politically sensitive issue. Asked if Washington might also drop Pyongyang from the list before it provides a complete accounting for Japanese citizens kidnapped by the DPRK, Rice said the US should not tie its hands in doling out such carrots to Pyongyang.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Donga Ilbo ("WHO SHOULD PAY FOR GAESONG COMPLEX'S ELECTRICITY?", 2007-09-25) reported that while the Ministry of Unification plans to incorporate the power supply cost for the DPRK's Gaesong Industrial Complex into the ROK's electricity fee system, the Ministry of Justice reportedly released its official opinion on the plan yesterday, saying, "There are no legal grounds for it." The Unification Ministry has been seeking ways to subsidize KEPCO, South Korea's only electricity distributor, in the amount of two billion won, which corresponds to the annual losses incurred by supplying power to Gaesong. The losses have been compensated by government funds for inter-Korean cooperation, but the Unification Ministry was seeking to offset future costs by incorporating the power bill into the ROK's fee system.

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5. US-Japan Relations

Japan Times ("LITTLE CHANGE EXPECTED IN JAPAN-U.S. RELATIONSHIP", 2007-09-25) reported that those who keep close watch on Japan's political and defense ties with the US expect no major changes in the fundamental security relationship under Yasuo Fukuda. At the same time, doubts among experts are growing that Fukuda will be able to get an extension of Japan's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean and questions remain over how much headway he will make on the realignment of US bases. "The U.S. can work with Fukuda," said Brad Glosserman, executive director of Hawaii-based think tank Pacific Forum Center for Strategic and International Studies. "He's made the right noises about Japan's military alliance with America," he said. "There's no sign that improving ties between Japan and its Asian neighbors will come at the expense of the alliance."

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6. Japan Government

The Asahi Shimbun ("15 MEMBERS KEPT IN FUKUDA CABINET", 2007-09-25) reported that Yasuo Fukuda, chosen Tuesday as the nation's prime minister, announced a familiar Cabinet lineup but with a new defense chief who faces perhaps the toughest test in the Diet. Fifteen ministers in the previous administration remained in the Cabinet. Thirteen of them kept the same posts. Two new faces in the administration are: Kisaburo Tokai, 59, who gained his first Cabinet post as education minister; and Shigeru Ishiba, 50, the defense minister. Ishiba was director-general of the former Defense Agency during the administration of Junichiro Koizumi.

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7. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo ("NEW DEFENSE MINISTER ISHIBA VOWS EFFORTS TO CONTINUE REFUELING MISSION", 2007-09-25) reported that New Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba said he will do his utmost to continue Japan's contribution to U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in and near Afghanistan despite an expected temporary hiatus and to push a contentious plan to realign U.S. military bases in Japan. Ishiba indicated the government has yet to finally decide whether to try to extend the current temporary law or draw up a new law authorizing the MSDF mission.

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8. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Kyodo ("FUKUDA'S STANCE OF NOT VISITING YASUKUNI UPSETS FAMILIES OF WAR DEAD", 2007-09-25) reported that new Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's stance of refraining from visiting the war-related Yasukuni Shrine has provoked resentment among some families of the Japanese war dead and adherents of the Tokyo shrine that honors fallen soldiers. Fukuda, 71 has maintained that he will opt not to visit the shrine in order to avoid hurting the feelings of people in the PRC and other Asian nations who see the shrine as a symbol of Japanese military aggression and have voiced anger over the repeated visits to the shrine by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

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9. Sino-Japanese Military Relations

Straits Times ("JAPAN TO ATTEND CHINA'S MILITARY DRILL", 2007-09-25) reported that Japanese observers will attend a military drill in north-eastern PRC on Tuesday for the first time, PRC media reported, in the latest sign of warming ties between the two countries. A Japanese staff officer and a defence attache to the PRC would attend the 'Warrior 2007' exercise, in what PRC Defence Ministry official Qian Lihua called a 'tangible measure' of strengthening military cooperation.

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10. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("CHINA ISSUES FRESH WARNING TO TAIWAN OVER U.N. BID", 2007-09-25) reported that the PRC has sounded a fresh warning to self-ruled Taiwan over a planned referendum on its bid to join the United Nations, saying such a move by an island it considers sovereign territory would endanger regional peace. Jia Qinglin, ranked fourth in the Communist Party hierarchy, said "splittist activities" on the island remained "vehement." "It is set to damage the fundamental interests of compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and threaten peace and stability in the region and Asia-Pacific," Jia said, according to a report in the People's Daily.

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11. PRC Party Congress

The Christian Science Monitor ("WHY CHINA SHUT DOWN 18,401 WEBSITES", 2007-09-25) reported that the PRC authorities are in the midst of an unusually harsh crackdown on the Internet, closing tens of thousands of websites that had allowed visitors to post their opinions, according to bloggers and Internet monitors in the PRC. The new censorship wave appears linked to next month's 17th Communist Party Congress, a key political gathering that will set the PRC's course for the coming five years. Party leaders generally prefer to meet undisturbed by criticism. But this campaign seems more indiscriminate. In recent weeks, police nationally have been shutting down Internet data centers (IDCs), the physical computers that private firms rent – from state-owned or private companies – to host websites offering interactive features, say industry insiders.

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12. PRC Public Health

Xinhua ("OFFICIAL: IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH IN RURAL AREAS", 2007-09-25) reported that PRC Vice Premier Wu Yi said that the government will strengthen the sanitary work in rural areas as a part of the country's public health campaign dating back to 1952. Wu reiterated a series of measures to be taken to prevent diseases and improve the health condition of people living in the rural areas at a recent meeting on the 55 anniversary of the country's public health campaign. Wu also stressed the education on rural people's healthy habits in daily life to prevent diseases in rural areas.

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13. Asian Space Programs

Agence France-Presse ("ASIAN SPACEFARERS RACE FOR THE MOON", 2007-09-25) reported that

Asian giants Japan, the PRC and India are engaged in a race to map lunar resources and make the moon a platform to explore planets beyond, amid a renewed burst of global space activity. Japan flagged off the Asian lunar race on September 14 when it successfully launched its first lunar orbiter. the PRC plans to launch its own moon probe before the end of the year, followed by India in the first half of 2008. Mineral samples from the moon contained abundant quantities of helium 3, a variant of the gas used in lasers and refrigerators as well as to blow up balloons, and space experts say that may offer a solution to the earth's energy shortages.

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