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I. NAPSNet

1. Russia on Six Party Talks

Interfax ("NO ALTERNATIVE TO SIX-SIDED TALKS ON NORTH KOREA - IVANOV", 2006-04-26) reported that "The six-sided talks on the North Korean problem have no alternative," said Russia's Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov. "I don't see any alternative to the six-sided talks. There is no alternative at all," Ivanov told the press in Beijing on Wednesday.

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2. US Senate Hearing on DPRK Illicit Activities

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. SENATE HEARS ABOUT N.KOREA'S ILLICIT ACTIVITIES ", 2006-04-26) reported that Since 1989, the US has seized US$50 million worth of the high-quality counterfeit $100 notes from 130 countries, according to Michael Merritt, a deputy assistant director of the US secret service during a Senate hearing on Tuesday. He said his agency made “definitive” connections between the counterfeit notes and the DPRK. The hearing was also told that a major source of income for the Kim Jong-il regime is fake American cigarettes. State Department director Peter Prahar said Pyongyang produces around 41 billion fake US cigarettes annually, raking in between $500 million to $700 million. A DPRK defector also testified that Pyongyang has systematically produced opium since 1983 on 30,000 hectares of land.

(return to top) Yonhap ("U.S. CLOSELY WATCHING N.K. DRUG TRAFFICKING: STATE DEPT. OFFICIAL ", 2006-04-25) reported that the US is routinely monitoring the DPRK’s suspected drug trafficking movements to see if it can apply sanction measures, a State Department official testified Tuesday. Peter Prahar, a director at the department's bureau for international narcotics and law enforcement, told a Senate hearing that the US does not yet have sufficient information to designate DPR Korean individuals or organizations under the Kingpin Act, a legislation that denies foreign drug traffickers access to US financial institutions. (return to top)

3. Kim Dae-jung's DPRK Visit

Joongang Ilbo ("KIM DAE-JUNG BEGINS PLANNING REPRISE TRIP NORTH ", 2006-04-26) reported that Lee Jong-seok, the unification minister and leader of Seoul's delegation to inter-Korean ministerial talks earlier this week, visited former president Kim Dae-jung last night and briefed him on the outcome of those talks. Late the previous evening, Mr. Lee announced that Pyongyang had accepted in principle a visit to DPRK by the former president in June. The Unification Ministry is expected to start internal consultations next week on the dates and delegations. A ministry official said they would contact Pyongyang when those proposed details were decided.

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4. Kaesong Industrial Complex

Yonhap ("NUMBER OF N.K. WORKERS AT KAESONG PARK RISES RAPIDLY: MINISTRY", 2006-0-

-26) reported that the number of DPRK workers at a ROK-run industrial complex in the DPRK border city of Kaesong rose 22 percent every month over the past one and a half years, the ROK's Unification Ministry said Wednesday. Over the same period, production increased 36 percent every month due largely to a rise in the number of ROK factories operating in the complex, according to the ministry. As of Friday, a total of 6,859 DPRK workers, including 1,047 construction workers, were registered at the complex.

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5. Inter-Korean Religious Relations

Reuters ("S.KOREA CATHOLIC DELEGATION VISITS COMMUNIST NORTH ", 2006-04-26) reported that a group of RO Korean Roman Catholics left for the DPRK on Wednesday, a Church official said. RO Korean Cardinal Nicholas Cheong Jin-suk is interested in rebuilding the Church in the DPRK and having a priest installed there. The 61-member delegation from the Archdiocese of Seoul will inspect how the more than $10 million it has sent to DPRK for humanitarian aid has been used. The ROK delegation will stay in the DPRK until Saturday and is being led by the director of the archdiocese's Reconciliation Committee, spokeswoman Ahn Sun-young said by telephone.

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6. Inter-Korean Archaeological Cooperation

Yonhap ("KOREAS EXCAVATE PALACE IN PYONGYANG BELIEVED TO DATE TO KOGURYO", 2006-04-26) reported that the ROK and the DPRK have jointly unearthed an ancient palace site in Pyongyang and found it was a royal residence of the Koguryo Kingdom, RO Korean archeologists said Wednesday. It was the first time the DPRK invited RO Korean archeologists to excavate ancient remains in its capital.

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7. Inter-Korean Railway

Joongang Ilbo ("LEE USED KIM IL SUNG'S OWN WORDS", 2006-04-26) reported that one month before he died, DPRK leader Kim Il Sung said that using the railroad leading to the ROK to transport PRC products could earn the DPRK US$400 million per year, according to an official biography. ROK Unification Minister Lee Jong-seok used those words to pressure the DPRK delegation during inter-Korean talks, telling them it was one of the dying leader's last requests, said a government official. Mr. Lee pressured his DPRK counterpart, Kwon Ho-ung, to produce a concrete date for the reopening of the railroad and a test drive. However, the DPRK made no concrete concessions about the railroad.

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8. DPRK Abduction Allegations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN ASKS N. KOREA TO HAND OVER EX-AGENT SIN OVER KIDNAPPING ", 2006-04-26) reported that Japan requested Wednesday through its embassy in Beijing that the DPRK hand over former spy Sin Guang Su after Japanese police obtained an arrest warrant on him on the charge of abducting Japanese national Tadaaki Hara, the Foreign Ministry said. The police obtained the arrest warrant on Sin on Monday on a charge of abducting Hara with the intent of transferring the

abductee abroad. Hara disappeared at age 43 in 1980.

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9. US on DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap ("BUSH BRINGS UP NK REFUGEE ISSUE WITH ALL LEADERS HE MEETS: WH", 2006-0--26) reported that the Bush administration will continue to call the world's attention to the plight of DPRK refugees and help them, the White House said Wednesday. White House spokesman Scott McClellan at a daily briefing said the issue is a "very high priority" for President George W. Bush.

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10. PRC Economy

Xinhua ("CHINA'S CENTRAL BANK WARNS OF RISKS IN HOUSING FINANCE", 2006-04-26) reported that the PRC's central bank, the People's Bank of China, says the real estate industry is absorbing too much of the country's capital, causing government attention. "Real estate financing is making up a bigger and bigger share of the country's financial sector. The health of real estate financing is of critical importance to the health of the financial sector. We must pay close attention to developments in both the real estate industry and home financing sectors," Wu Xiaoling, deputy governor of the central bank, told a seminar here on Tuesday.

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11. PRC Regional Security

Xinhua ("SCODMs DISCUSS REGIONAL SECURITY ISSUES IN BEIJING", 2006-04-26) reported that defense ministers from the member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a six-member regional organization, gathered here on Wednesday for regional security talks. Vice-Chairman of the PRC Central Military Commission (CMC) Guo Boxiong met with visiting defense ministers of the other five member nations. Guo said the SCO has maintained a good development momentum since its foundation five years ago, and has become an important regional organization and a ligament linking the six member countries.

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12. PRC on War History

Crisscross News ("SINO-JAPANESE WAR VIDEOS BEING SOLD IN CHINA", 2006-04-26) reported that a series of videodisks on the PRC's war with Japan in the 1930s and 1940s are being sold in stores around the PRC, a manager with the major recording studio said Tuesday. The Guangzhou Huanyu Video Production Co in the southern PRC has released documentary videos on the Nanjing Massacre of 1937, the Japanese-operated Unit 731 germ warfare factory in Harbin and the Xian incident in 1936, when the ruling Nationalist Party and the insurgent Communist Party joined forces against Japan.

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13. Japan Politics

Japan Times ("KOIZUMI ERA ONE OF CHANGE, TENSION", 2006-04-26) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who pledged to "destroy" his own Liberal Democratic Party when he became its president five years ago, will probably be remembered for putting in place much-needed structural reforms. But as Koizumi marks his fifth year in office Wednesday, many observers say his administration will also be remembered for souring Japan's relations with other parts of Asia and for chipping away at the middle class.

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14. USFJ Realignment

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("U.S. TO RETURN 4 FACILITIES TO OKINAWA", 2006-04-26) reported that four US military facilities in Okinawa Prefecture--including the US Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station--will be returned to Japan by the end of fiscal 2013 according to an outline of the final report on the reorganization of the US military in Japan, government sources said. The two countries will compile a final report early next month.

(return to top) The Asahi Shimbun ("REALIGNMENT LIKELY TO COST JAPAN 3 TRILLION YEN", 2006-04-26) reported that Tokyo will have to pay a staggering 3 trillion yen for the realignment of the US military in Japan, according to a top US official. However, the government has yet to figure out--let alone explain to the public--where the money will come from. Richard Lawless, US deputy defense undersecretary for Asia and Pacific affairs, told a news conference in Washington on Tuesday that Japan's share of the cost would be $26 billion (about 2.98 trillion yen). (return to top)

15. Taiwan Politics

China Post ("PRESIDENT CHEN FACING A REBELLION", 2006-04-26) reported that President Chen Shui-bian still has two years before he has to step down, but his former premier Frank Hsieh, while still at Harvard, didn't hesitate to kick off a post-Chen power struggle within the ruling Democratic Progressive Party. In a summation of his two-month research, Hsieh told a Harvard University audience that political leaders in Taiwan have to follow what he calls a symbiosis between Taipei and Beijing, which is an anathema to President Chen, who plans to write a new Constitution to give Taiwan de jure independence.

(return to top) China Post ("HSIEH URGES LEADERS NOT TO RUN IF DPP LOSES POLLS", 2006-04-26) reported that former Premier Frank Hsieh has urged ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) leaders not to run in the 2008 presidential poll if the party loses in the year-end mayoral races in Taipei and Kaohsiung. DPP Legislator Lee Chun-yi cited Hsieh as saying that by promising not to run in the 2008 race if the party loses in the mayoral polls, DPP leaders would show voters their determination and responsibility. (return to top)

16. Taiwan Constitution

Taipei Times ("CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSAL RELEASED", 2006-04-26) reported that a private constitutional reengineering group yesterday unveiled its first version of proposed constitutional amendments, which would give the public the ability to initiate future constitutional revisions and adopt a two-house legislative system. Currently, only the legislature or the president can initiate constitutional revisions.

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17. Taiwan-UAE Relations

Taipei Times ("HUANG TO SEEK CLOSER TIES WITH UAE", 2006-04-26) reported that Minister of Foreign Affairs James Huang left for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) last night to observe the resumption of direct flights between Taiwan and UAE capital Abu Dhabi, and to visit local officials to press for bilateral projects. The trip, which comes shortly after PRC President Hu Jintao's visit to Saudi Arabia last Saturday, has thrown a spotlight on the cross-strait diplomatic competition that's heating up in the Middle East.

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18. Cross Strait Relations

China Post ("SU EXPANDS 'SMALL DIRECT LINK'", 2006-04-26) reported that in a follow-up to his demarche, Premier Su Tseng-chang announced a series of decisions to expand what is popularly known as a "small direct link" between Taiwan-controlled offshore islands of Kinmen and Matsu and their neighbor cities in the PRC. Starting May 1, Premier Su said, close relatives, including cousins, in Taiwan of residents of Kinmen and Matsu would be allowed to take ferries from the offshore islands to Amoy (Xiamen) and Foochow (Fuzhou) in the PRC without any restriction.

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19. Solomon Islands

Xinhua ("OPPOSITION PARTY APOLOGIZES TO CHINESE SOLOMON ISLANDERS", 2006-04-26) reported that a spokesman for the Opposition Party of Solomon Islands, Gordon Darcy Lilo, said Wednesday his party has written a letter of apology to Chinese Solomon Islanders who left island following riots. According to reports from Radio New Zealand International, Lilo said the letter is "asking them (the Chinese) to come back to the islands."

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20. Environmental Issues

The Asahi Shimbun ("ASIA/ENVIRONMENTALISTS FEAR WORST WITH LAKE BAIKAL OIL PIPELINE PLAN", 2006-04-26) reported that a plan by Russia to build part of the Eastern Siberia-Pacific Ocean pipeline near Lake Baikal, a World Heritage site in southern Siberia's Irkutsk province, has provoked an angry response. Activists and local governments in Siberia fear the clear waters of the crescent-shaped lake could become the site of an environmental disaster if an earthquake or terrorist attack ruptured the pipeline.

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