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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Reuters ("CHINA BATTLES FOR NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS", 2004-08-18) reported that the PRC is battling to keep alive six-way talks on dismantling the DPRK's nuclear programs, saying it hopes all parties will stay calm and flexible and resume negotiations despite inevitable problems. The DPRK on Monday ruled out attending the working-level talks on its suspected nuclear arms programs and questioned the entire negotiating process, blaming hostile U.S. policy for Pyongyang's tougher stance. "We believe the six parties have the willingness to continue to promote the procedure of peaceful talks," the PRC's Foreign Ministry said.

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL SAYS TALKS STILL UNDERWAY TO PREPARE N KOREAN NUCLEAR TALKS", 2004-08-18) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon said Wednesday negotiations were still underway to hold a working group meeting to pave the way for another round of multilateral talks on the DPRK's nuclear stand-off. "Talks are underway among countries concerned in order to have a working group meeting in August," Ban said in a speech at a seminar here. "But it is hard to predict yet when (the working group meeting) will take place," he said.

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3. PRC - ROK Relations

Yonhap ("CHINESE OFFICIAL TO VISIT S KOREA OVER NORTH NUCLEAR ROW - OFFICIAL", 2004-08-18) reported that a top PRC official will visit the ROK next week to discuss the DPRK's nuclear weapons programme and bilateral issues, a parliamentary official said Wednesday 18 August . Jia Qinglin, ranked fourth in the PRC power hierarchy, will fly to Seoul aboard a private jet next Thursday at the invitation of National Assembly Speaker Kim Won-ki, the official said, requesting anonymity. Staying in Seoul for four days, Jia will meet President Roh Moo-hyun, Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan as well as the parliamentary speaker, he said. Jia's topics in Seoul are expected to include the large number of DPRK escapees in the PRC and a dispute between the ROK and PRC over the heritage of the ancient Koguryo Kingdom (37 BC - AD 669) that controlled the upper part of the Korean Peninsula and most of today's Manchuria in the PRC.

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4. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Kyodo News ("6-WAY TALKS ON N. KOREA MAY BE DELAYED UNTIL 2005: RUSSIAN ENVOY", 2004-08-18) reported that the next round of six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions may not be held until the end of the year or even early next year, given the U.S. presidential election in November, Russia's envoy to Japan told Kyodo News on Wednesday. Russian Ambassador to Japan Alexander Losyukov also reiterated in the interview that Moscow is prepared to provide the DPRK with energy aid, namely electricity, as well as oil and gas in the future. But Losyukov said that since the US, a major player in the talks, is currently completely focused on the Nov. 2 presidential election, it would be difficult in reality to realize the next round before November.

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5. Australia on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Kyodo News ("AUSTRALIAN MINISTER UPBEAT AFTER MEETINGS IN NORTH KOREA", 2004-0--18) reported that Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer on Wednesday offered an upbeat assessment at the end of talks in Pyongyang about six-nation talks to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis, the Australian Broadcasting Corp (ABC) reported. Downer, who arrived in Pyongyang from Beijing on Tuesday, was quoted as saying his visit has been very productive, but admitted that resolving the nuclear standoff will be a long-term effort. The Australian foreign minister met earlier Wednesday with DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun and with the country's No 2 leader Kim Yong-nam, president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly.

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6. Inter - Korean Military Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("CHIEF S. KOREAN DELEGATE URGES N. KOREA TO RESUME MILITARY WORKING LEVEL TALKS ", 2004-08-18) reported that the Ministry of Defense said Wednesday that Commodore Park Jung-hwa, the chief of the ROK representatives for inter-Korean military general-level talks, sent an urgent telephone message on Tuesday to his DPRK counterpart Ahn Ik-san to resume intra-Korean military working-level talks. The DPRK has yet to respond to the proposal. The DPRK and the ROK agreed in June to remove their propaganda facilities in three phases and hold working-level talks to check the progress of the dismantlement work. The DPRK has not made any

contact with the ROK since mid-July, and it has suspended the removal work by not finishing the second step. If the talks are resumed, the ROK will check the completion of the second phase and discuss the dismantlement of other propaganda facilities, which the DPRK has left intact.

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7. Kerry on US Troop Realignment

Associated Press ("KERRY CONTENDS BUSH PLAN TO REDEPLOY TROOPS COULD HINDER NATIONAL SECURITY ", 2004-08-18) reported that Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry said Wednesday that President George W. Bush might hinder the war on terror and other aspects of national security with his proposal to recall as many as 70,000 troops from Cold War-era bases in Europe and Asia. In a speech prepared for the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Kerry said the redeployment would undermine relations with U.S. allies needed to help fight in Iraq and in the war on terror. It also would endanger national security as the US is working to deter the DPRK's nuclear program, he said. "North Korea has built up their nuclear weapons program over the past three years," said a statement from the Kerry campaign. "Why would we pull back our troops and give North Korea something for nothing?"

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8. ROK on US Troop Realignment

Korea Times ("ROK, US TO FINALIZE TROOP CUT PLAN", 2004-08-18) reported that the ROK and the US will hold negotiations starting Thursday on a US proposal to slash its troops here by one-third by the end of 2005, the Ministry of National Defense said Wednesday. "The US earlier expressed understanding of our stance on the planned troop cut on the Korean peninsula," Han Min-koo, director-general for the ministry's International Policy Bureau, told reporters. The timing and other details of the US troop withdrawals will be deliberated at the Aug. 19-20 Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative talks, or FOTA, to be held in Seoul, according to Han. ROK delegates are expected to ask the US side to delay the troop withdrawal by about two years and keep its key combat forces and their heavy weaponry systems such as anti-artillery batteries in the ROK.

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9. US - ROK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("WASHINGTON ASKS FOR SLOWDOWN OF GAESEONG INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX PROJECT ", 2004-08-18) reported that the ROK and the US are likely to confront each other over the Gaeseong industrial complex project, the Yomiuri Shimbun reported yesterday. The grounds of such a prediction lie in a recent demand by the US that called for the ROK to slow down the construction of the complex because of the possibility that the DPRK might channel foreign currency earmarked for Gaeseong into purchasing weapons, the Yomiuri Shimbun said. If the project is completed as scheduled, in 2012, $ 600 million will flow into Pyongyang per year and that amount may grow up to $ 2 billion after 2020. The US, however, is known to have complained that high-tech appliances and computers of companies that are moving into the complex are subject to "export controls for conventional weapons and sensitive dual-use goods and technologies." As a result, even while tough negotiations over the standard of materials inflow into the DPRK are under way, the discrepancy between the two countries is so wide that the negotiations are likely to face serious friction, reported the Shimbun.

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10. Ryongchon Blast Aid

Yonhap ("SEOUL TO SEND LAST AID SHIPMENT FOR N.K. BLAST VICTIMS", 2004-08-18) reported that the ROK will send its last shipment of aid on Wednesday to help rebuild a DPRK town devastated by a massive train blast in April, Red Cross officials said. The ROK has so far shipped 36.5 billion won (US$31 million) worth of construction equipment and materials to help rebuild Ryongchon, a town near the border with the PRC which was virtually leveled in the April 22 blast.

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11. Inter - Korean Cultural Exchange

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREAN TV PROGRAMS GROWING POPULAR IN NORTH KOREA: REPORT", 2004-08-18) reported that more and more DPRK citizens are watching ROK television programs that stream through overseas-made TV sets, a state-run think tank here said Wednesday, citing testimony from DPRK defectors. "Televisions in North Korea are meant to show domestic programs only, but by switching the channels, people happen to catch South Korean programs," said Jeung Young-tae, a researcher with the Korea Institute for National Unification.

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12. DPRK Defectors

South China Morning Post ("SOUTH KOREA TRIES TO PACIFY ANGRY NORTH OVER REFUGEES; RELATIONS HAVE STALLED SINCE SEOUL'S ACCEPTANCE OF 450 DEFECTORS FROM PYONGYANG", 2004-08-18) reported that Seoul has made conciliatory overtures to Pyongyang after it expressed anger at the recent decision by the ROK to accept hundreds of DPRK refugees. Inter-Korean relations have stalled since the ROK airlifted more than 450 DPRK defectors from Vietnam last month, provoking accusations of terrorism and kidnapping from the DPRK. Analysts suggest the ROK is now trying to distance itself from the sensitive issue to defuse tension between the two governments. The ROK is keen to revitalize inter-Korean relations as the international community struggles to resolve the standoff over the DPRK's nuclear weapons program.

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13. ROK on DPRK Defectors

Reuters ("ACTIVISTS ON N.KOREA HAMPER REFUGEE RESCUES -SEOUL", 2004-08-18) reported that human rights activists who want to take the lead on bringing DPRK refugees to the ROK could end up hurting the people they are trying to help, the ROK government said on Wednesday. In the latest salvo in a row between human rights groups and the government over how the growing DPRK refugee problem should be handled, the ROK's foreign minister Ban Ki-moon argued that non-governmental organizations could end up hindering diplomatic and other efforts to help refugees. "When NGOs lead the North Korean defector issue and something goes wrong, it can lead to big problems for the defectors' safety and place a limit on whether the government can resolve the matter diplomatically," he said.

United Press International ("S.KOREA WELCOMES N.KOREAN DEFECTORS", 2004-08-18) reported that the ROK's foreign minister Wednesday said all North Koreans seeking to enter the ROK are

welcome. Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon backed off comments earlier this week, in which he indicated the government would not let any more DPRK citizens defect to the ROK, saying it cannot assume "unlimited responsibility" for all DPRK refugee-seekers.

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14. DPRK Food Shortages

BBC News ("N KOREA FOOD PRICES 'ROCKET'", 2004-08-18) reported that changes in the DPRK's economy have led to spiraling food prices which many people cannot afford, according to the World Food Program. "As the economy shifts from a planned economy to a more market-based economy, there are winners and losers," Richard Ragan, WFP director in Pyongyang, said. He said that a new class of people now needed food assistance. The country's public distribution system was only providing a fraction of the food that DPRK citizens need to live on, he told a press briefing in Beijing. And he said that despite the market reforms, the DPRK remained "a chronically food deficient country".

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15. DPRK on Food Aid

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA BACKTRACKS ON U.N. AID STANCE--KYODO", 2004-08-18) reported that the DPRK could receive increased aid from the UN after appearing to contradict a statement to the world body that it did not need any humanitarian aid next year, Japan's Kyodo news agency said on Wednesday. Last Saturday, Kyodo said the DPRK had told the U.N. it did not need humanitarian aid from 2005. It has now asked for aid to be funneled through individual UN agencies rather than a consolidated program, Kyodo said. Kyodo quoted an official at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs as saying the DPRK had rejected the current program in which UN aid bodies coordinate international donations. Instead, it wants to receive aid from individual UN aid bodies, the official was quoted as saying.

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16. DPRK Athletics

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN MEDIA: KIM JONG-IL IS A WORLD-CLASS SHARPSHOOTER ", 2004-08-18) reported that the DPRK is sure to be sore about missing out on winning one gold medal at the Athens Olympics because of the absence of one promising athlete. After a poor performance by its athletes, the DPRK indicated Wednesday that it could have won at least one gold if its leader, Kim Jong-il, had competed in a shooting event in Athens.

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17. ROK Typhoon

Chosun Ilbo ("TYPHOON MEGI HEADED TOWARDS SOUTHERN PARTS OF KOREA", 2004-08-18) reported that with Typhoon Megi approaching the southern sea off Jeju Island on Wednesday, the Korean Peninsula would come under the influence of the typhoon, predicted the Korea Meteorological Administration (KMA) Tuesday. The name "Megi" was proposed by Korea. The KMA forecasted that the typhoon would go past the southern parts of Korea on Thursday and move out to the East Sea on Friday. Due to the typhoon, southern regions and Jeju will experience rainfall of 100

to 300 millimeters. As of Tuesday noon, Megi, a medium-size typhoon, is moving north-northwest from 24 kilometers south of Japan's Okinawa at a speed of 31 kilometers per hour.

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18. US - Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("ANGER IN OKINAWA INTENSIFIES OVER CRASH", 2004-08-18) reported that the latest surge in anti-US military sentiment spread across Okinawa Prefecture on Tuesday, as assemblies demanded Japan and the US reduce the presence of American forces in the southern-most prefecture. The spark that ignited the anger was the crash of a US Marines helicopter on a university campus in Ginowan on Friday. Adding fuel to the fire is the US military's refusal to let Okinawa police investigate the crash site and its resumption of flight drills. The Okinawa prefectural assembly and at least six cities adopted resolutions denouncing the accident and seeking the early return to Japan of the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Ginowan. About 10 other municipalities are expected to follow suit.

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19. Japanese Nuclear Safety

Reuters ("NO NEW JAPAN NUKE SHUTDOWNS NEEDED AFTER CHECKS", 2004-08-18) reported that no more Japanese nuclear reactors need to be closed for inspections, the operators said on Wednesday after submitting reports ordered by the government following Japan's deadliest nuclear industry accident last week. Four workers were killed on Aug. 9 when super-hot non-radioactive steam gushed from a broken pipe at a plant run by Kansai Electric Power Co. at Mihama, in western Japan. A day after the mishap, Kansai Electric said the pipe that burst had not been inspected in 28 years and that no action had been taken even after the company was advised by a sub-contractor that the pipe was potentially dangerous. The Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA), Japan's nuclear watchdog, had told the 10 nuclear power firms to check documentation to ensure that inspections on pipes similar to the one that ruptured at Mihama had been carried out properly.

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20. Japanese - ROK Relations

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA COLLABORATION WITH JAPAN REVIEWED", 2004-08-18) reported that recorded screams echo through the basement of Seodaemun prison, where bloodied mannequins portray the "patriotic fighters" - Koreans tortured for resisting Japan's 35-year colonial rule. Unmentioned at the prison in central Seoul, now a museum where schoolchildren file past the torture chambers taking notes, is the role of Korean collaborators who worked for Japan during its 1910-45 occupation of the peninsula - a side of the ROK's history never vigorously investigated. Now, President Roh Moo-hyun is taking a new look at that unresolved past. He has called for a parliamentary commission on the issue and accuses some families of still benefiting from previous pro-Japanese ties. "For the bright future of Korea, we should know the facts of history," said Kim Hee-young, a 36-year-old teacher touring the museum with her two sons.

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21. Koguro Historical Revisionism

Korea Times ("KOGURYO ISSUE TOP PRIORITY: FM", 2004-08-18) reported that the ROK will give top priority to tackling the PRC's move to distort history of the ancient Koguryo kingdom, the ROK's top diplomat said Wednesday. "The South Korean government is placing high priority on addressing the issue as the history of Koguryo is related to the roots and identity of this country," Ban Ki-moon, foreign affairs and trade minister, said in his weekly press briefing. He added the ROK government was trying to work out elaborate and systemic measures to thwart the PRC's attempt to claim Koguryo as part of its own history.

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22. Sino - US Relations

Reuters ("CHINA HINTS U.S. MUST RETURN GUANTANAMO SEPARATISTS", 2004-08-18) reported that Beijing has hinted that if the US releases any Guantanamo Bay detainees from its restive Muslim far west Xinjiang region, they should be handed over to Beijing and not sent to a third country. Many of the Turkic-speaking Uighurs who make up the majority of Xinjiang's 19 million people favor greater autonomy for the region. In recent years, some have staged riots and deadly bomb attacks both in Xinjiang and in other parts of the PRC, including Beijing, as part of a campaign to establish an independent state one day that they would call East Turkestan. "The United States should handle the issue according to international rules and with a view toward international anti-terrorism co-operation and bilateral ties," spokesman Kong Quan said. The PRC was responding to a report that the US did not plan to send such detainees back to the PRC but was trying to find another destination for them, the official Xinhua news agency said.

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23. Sino - Indian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA, CHINA TO HOLD ANOTHER ROUND OF BORDER TALKS IN SEPTEMBER", 2004-08-18) reported that India and the PRC are to hold the next round of talks on a dragging border dispute in September, Foreign Minister Natwar Singh told parliament. Answering MPs' queries on border talks held last month, Singh said neither side had fixed a time frame for resolution of the issue, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency said on Wednesday. Singh said both sides were working on a memorandum on expanding border trade, stemming from a round of talks on July 27 between India's National Security Advisor J.N. Dixit and his PRC counterpart Dai Bingguo. The July talks were the third round since June 2003 when the neighbors appointed special representatives during a trip to the PRC by then Indian premier Atal Behari Vajpayee.

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24. Sino - Russian Relations

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA: CHINA TO COVER YUKOS' RAIL FEES", 2004-08-18) reported that the PRC has agreed to step in and pay Russian rail fees to ensure that it continues to receive Yukos oil if the company is unable to cover the transport costs, officials at Russia's rail transport monopoly said Wednesday. "China will pay for everything if Yukos encounters problems with payment," said Russian Railways president Gennady Fadeyev, according to the Interfax news agency. Russian Railways spokesman Anton Shapovalov confirmed that the PRC promised to pay. Yukos sends about

124,000 barrels of crude every day by rail to the PRC, which is already the world's No. 3 oil importer and has seen its consumption increase annually as the economy grows.

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25. PRC Economy

BBC News ("CHINA INVESTMENT SPENDING JUMPS", 2004-08-18) reported that an unexpected jump in the PRC's fixed-asset investment during July has raised question marks over government attempts to curb spending. During the first seven months of 2004, the statistical office estimates that spending on assets such as factories and roads rose 31% from a year earlier. The market had expected growth of closer to 20%. The concern among some analysts is that the country's booming economy is still in danger of overheating. "This figure will surely puzzle investors and even trigger questions on the effectiveness of the government's investment cooling measures," said Jun Ma, an economist at Deutsche Bank.

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26. PRC Religious Freedom

Reuters ("CHINA DETAINS EIGHT ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS -GROUP", 2004-08-18) reported that the PRC has detained eight Roman Catholic priests in northern Hebei province, continuing a crackdown on those loyal to the Pope, a US-based religious right group said on Wednesday. Priests Huo Junlong, Zhang Zhenquan and Father Huang were among those held after a police raid last week in the village of Sujiazhuang, near Baoding city, the Connecticut-based Cardinal Kung Foundation said in a statement. The foundation did not give the names of the other five priests, but said local police had also detained two seminary students attending a religious retreat in the village. "Approximately 20 police vehicles and a large number of security policeman surrounded Sujiazhuang village and conducted a house to house search in order to arrest these priests and seminarians," said the statement.

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27. Illegal Export to PRC

The Associated Press ("SUPPLIER PLEADS GUILTY IN CHINA SHIPMENTS", 2004-08-18) reported that an aircraft parts supplier, Interaero Inc., pleaded guilty in US court Tuesday to illegally shipping $40,000 worth of missile and jet fighter equipment to a supplier in the PRC who planned to forward the shipment to Iran. Interaero, of Westlake Village, Calif., acknowledged exporting six shipments of parts between June 2000 and March 2001 for F-4 Phantom and F-5 Tiger jets and parts for Hawk missiles without permission from the US government. The parts could only have been used for military purposes, authorities said. The company agreed to pay a $500,000 fine and spend five years on corporate probation. Sentencing was set for Oct. 26.

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28. PRC on 1989 Tiananmen Protests

Reuters ("CHINA EX-PM MOVES TO WASH HANDS OF 1989 MASSACRE", 2004-08-18) reported that PRC ex-premier Li Peng, dubbed the Butcher of Beijing for declaring martial law days before troops crushed the 1989 Tiananmen protests, has defended his role in the massacre by invoking late

leader Deng Xiaoping for the first time. Analysts saw the essay, titled "Commemorating Deng Xiaoping," as an attempt by Li to wash his hands of the controversial decision and clear his name. In a rare essay published in the monthly magazine Seeking Truth, a Communist Party mouthpiece, Li said Deng had "firmly and forcefully backed" the government's decision to send troops and tanks into Beijing's Tiananmen Square. "With the boldness of vision of a great revolutionary and politician, comrade Deng Xiaoping and other old comrades firmly and forcefully backed resolute measures by the party and the government without delay," said Li, who as premier at the time was reviled throughout China for his role in the crackdown. Deng died in 1997 at the age of 92.

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29. PRC Pro-Democracy Arrest

The New York Times ("CHINA HOLDS CANDIDATE FROM HONG KONG ON PROSTITUTION CHARGE", 2004-08-18) reported that an already heated election campaign for the legislature here took an unexpected turn on Tuesday with an announcement by the Democratic Party that one of its candidates had been arrested in mainland PRC on charges of soliciting a prostitute and had been sentenced without trial to six months in detention. The candidate, Alex Ho, was arrested Thursday at a hotel room in Dongguan and held without access to a lawyer or to family members until he signed a confession that he had hired the prostitute, said Fred Li, a senior Democratic Party member of the Legislative Council. Mr. Li said Mr. Ho initially refused to sign, but did so when told he would be released on Monday if he signed, and when threatened with prosecution for rape if he did not sign. Instead of being released, however, Mr. Ho was then sentenced to six months in detention, Mr. Li said.

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30. PRC Antiquities Theft

The Associated Press ("CHINESE OFFICIAL SENTENCED TO DEATH", 2004-08-18) reported that an official once in charge of guarding cultural relics has been sentenced to death in the PRC's biggest antiquities theft case since the start of communist rule in 1949. Li Haitao was convicted of stealing 259 objects, some of them national treasures, from an imperial villa in Chengde, a city north of Beijing, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Tuesday. Li was sentenced Friday by a court in Chengde, where he was security chief for the city's Cultural Relics Bureau, the report said. Four accomplices were sentenced to terms ranging from two to seven years for trafficking in stolen relics, Xinhua said. Li pocketed 3.8 million yuan - about $460,000 - by selling the relics, Xinhua said.

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31. US - ROK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR A FRANK, CAPABLE PROBLEM SOLVER", 2004-08-17) reported that 52-year-old Christopher Hill assumed his new position as U.S. Ambassador to ROK on Thursday. Counted among his major acquaintances in ROK is Son Myeong-hyeon, former ROK Ambassador to Sweden. Son said, "Hill loves ROK so much that when he was instructed to extend his service as ambassador to Poland, he requested to the US government that after one year, he wanted to go to ROK... Because he enjoys the confidence and expectations from the State Department and White House! , and is recognized for his abilities, he was able to come to ROK, a 'conflict zone.'" Hill is known for his role in finding solutions in such "conflict zones." He said the ambassador is a man with whom one could comfortably talk without regards for official position, and is a person who both

understands ROK's situation and likes the country.

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32. Inter - Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH DROPS PROHIBITIONS ON TERMS FOR SOUTH KOREA", 2004-08-16) reported that DPRK is no longer banning the word Hanguk, the short form of ROK's official name, or a semilar term, Daehan. Pyeongyang had long insisted that the terms not be used there. DPRK calls itself Joseon, and has insisted on "South Joseon" for ROK, just as residents here call DPRK Bukhan, or North Hanguk. Several incidents were triggered by imported goods marked with the terms. And all ROK vehicles delivering aid to DPRK had to cover up the word. Truck license plates with the names of ROK cities or provinces also had to be masked by duct tape. Reporters from a ROK daily newspaper, The Korea Daily News, had to tape over their name cards. Now, trucks from ROK Express, a ROK shipping company, are traveling to DPRK to deliver ROK rice aid and are not hiding the origin of their shipments. The government corporation in charge of rice aid said Seoul had asked for the change, and Pyeongyang had posed no objections.

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33. Japan Nuclear Accident

The Japan Times ("KEPCO COST-CUTS PROVED FATAL: PROTESTERS", 2004-08-11) reported that antinuclear activists in Fukui and Osaka prefectures said the accident at the Mihama atomic plant was due to Kansai Electric Power Co.'s (KEPCO) attempts to cut costs and will negatively effect the utility's plans to burn MOX fuel in the reactor. "KEPCO officials put cost-cutting ahead of safety. And the fundamental reason they were under so much pressure to cut costs was because of deregulation of the electric power industry," said Teruyuki Matsushita, a Mihama assembly member who has long opposed nuclear power. While KEPCO officials were kept busy apologizing to Mihama and Fukui residents, about 30 antinuclear activists held a protest in front of the utility's headquarters in Osaka. "This accident comes just a few years after KEPCO admitted that data related to a MOX fuel shipment from England had been fabricated. KEPCO has shown that it is not qualified to operate nuclear plants," said Hideyuki Koyama, an Osaka-based activist.

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34. DPRK Nuclear Development

The Asahi Shimbun ("CHARLES PRITCHARD: U.S. SHOULD CONFIDE IN ALLIES ON N. KOREAN NUKES", 2004-08-07) reported a commentary by Charles Pritchard, a former US special envoy for negotiations with the DPRK, on the DPRK nuclear issue. Here is a brief excerpt: "The last round of six-party talks produced some surprising results. Surprising in that the conventional wisdom going into the talks was that both the United States and North Korea would simply stall for time until after the US presidential election in November. [...] The reality is that the United States has no intention of seriously considering Pyongyang's proposal anymore than Pyongyang intends to accept the US proposal in its current form. [...] The nuclear crisis has gone on too long. It has potentially resulted in North Korea increasing its nuclear arsenal from two to eight nuclear weapons. It's time to assuage our allies' concerns and put the negotiations on track for resolution as soon as possible."

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