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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("EXISTING NUCLEAR ARMS 'OFF THE AGENDA' IN SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2007-03-21) reported that remarks made by the participants at the Six Party Talks suggest that the nuclear weapons Pyongyang has already built are not on the agenda at this stage, hinting that separate negotiations from the six-way framework will have to tackle them. That in turn suggests that the five countries have accepted the DPRK's position that the nuclear weapons themselves are not at issue in the talks, a position it has taken since a Sept. 19, 2005 statement of principles. The DPRK wants to discuss the issue of nuclear weapons only when it no longer feels threatened and mutual trust has been built up.

[\(return to top\)](#) Washington Post ("NEGOTIATORS AGREE TO EXTEND NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS", 2007-03-21) reported that the chief negotiators of the six party talks to extend the discussions one more day. For at least the second day in a row, the DPRK refused to come to the table, saying Pyongyang wanted first to see delivery of \$25 million in frozen funds from a Macau bank account. Hill expressed some impatience with the fact that while officials have been filling out bank forms and faxes and examining bank rules, there has been no wider discussion of nuclear issues, but stopped short of accusing the DPRK of playing games or stalling the talks, saying that Pyongyang so far continues to stand by its February 13 commitments. [\(return to top\)](#)

2. US-DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("N.K. ASKS FOR LETTER FROM BUSH ON DIPLOMATIC NORMALIZATION: SOURCES", 2007-03-20) reported that a DPRK envoy who traveled to New York earlier this month asked that U.S. President George W. Bush send a letter to Pyongyang's top leader as a show of serious intent to normalize bilateral relations. The official also suggested that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visit Pyongyang as Bush's special envoy. The U.S. side, however, was somewhat hesitant and explained it wanted more prior consultations, according to the sources.

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3. ROK-US on DPRK Plutonium

Joongang Ilbo ("SEND YOUR NUKES FOR DISPOSAL ABROAD, NORTH TOLD", 2007-03-21) reported that the ROK and US are proposing to move the DPRK's weapons-grade plutonium out of the country and dispose of it overseas. "The plan was also presented to the North last week during the working group meeting," said a senior RO Korean official. The DPRK's response was not known. The plan is similar to the "Ukrainian model", which was used to dispose of weapons after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In return for giving up the arms, Ukraine received security assurances and economic assistance from the international community.

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4. Banco Delta Asia

Chosun Ilbo ("MACAU TO TRANSFER BDA FUNDS TO N.KOREA WEDNESDAY", 2007-03-21) reported that the U.S. government has officially announced that it will unfreeze US\$25 million in DPRK funds from the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia (BDA), and the Macau government will reportedly transfer the money to a North Korean account on Wednesday.

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5. Shift in Bush's DPRK Policy

New York Times ("SENSING SHIFT IN BUSH POLICY, ANOTHER HAWK LEAVES", 2007-03-21) reported that Robert Joseph, architect of much of the Bush administration's strategy for countering nuclear proliferation, quietly left the State Department, where he was under secretary for arms control and international security, telling colleagues that, as a matter of principle, he simply could not abide the new agreement with the DPRK that the Bush administration struck in February. The departure of Mr. Joseph and others has been welcomed by officials, mostly in the State Department, who believe the administration's hawks blocked opportunities for negotiated settlements.

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6. ROK-US Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("HIGH LEVEL FTA TALKS HEAD FOR SEOUL", 2007-03-21) reported that the free trade agreement talks between the US and the ROK will be concluded at the end of the month, predicted Kim Jong-hoon, the chief ROK negotiator. The three-day talks in Washington finished Tuesday leaving only several issues unsettled ? including beef and oranges. Another set of talks at a minister-level are scheduled for March 26 in Seoul.

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7. US-ROK Joint Military Drill

Yonhap ("USS RONALD REAGAN TO ARRIVE IN S. KOREA TO PARTICIPATE IN JOINT DRILL", 2007-03-21) reported that US aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan will arrive at the southeastern port city of Busan Thursday to take part in joint training by ROK and US military forces, US military officials said. The week-long drill, dubbed RSOI (Reception, Staging, Onward movement and Integration exercise), tests the combined ability of ROK and US forces to receive and integrate forces from bases outside the country, in case of conflict on the peninsula.

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8. US on Comfort Women Issue

Kyodo ("US OFFICIAL LAUDS JAPAN'S PAST EFFORTS ON 'COMFORT WOMEN' ISSUE", 2007-0-21) reported that Japan has taken "sincere" steps to express its contrition for forcing women of other Asian nations into sexual servitude for its military during World War II, a State Department official said. The official, who declined to be named, told Kyodo News that he was "very moved" when he recently reread a 1993 Japanese government statement that acknowledged and apologized for the Japanese military's role in the wartime brothel and former Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's letter of apology sent out in 2001 to those women.

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9. PRC-Japan Environmental Cooperation

Kyodo ("JAPAN, CHINA TO JOINTLY TACKLE ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION", 2007-03-21) reported that Japan and the PRC have basically agreed to jointly tackle environmental pollution caused by discarded electronic devices exported from Japan to the PRC, bilateral sources said. The

two countries will set up a working group to compile concrete measures as their first move toward dealing with the waste material issue, according to the sources.

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10. Sino-Russian Economic Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, RUSSIA TO SIGN \$4.3B DEALS DURING HU'S VISIT", 2007-03-21) reported that the PRC and Russia are expected to sign a series of agreements and contracts worth more than US\$4.3 billion during PRC President Hu Jintao's coming visit to Russia, according to the PRC Foreign Ministry. Li said the two countries will sign a series of cooperation agreements and the enterprises of the two countries will hold talks at a China national exhibition.

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11. US on Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US ENVOY CALLS FOR EXPANDED TAIWAN-CHINA LINKS", 2007-03-21) reported that the US has urged Taiwan to expand economic links with the PRC if it is to be a regional business hub, saying its national interests would not be endangered by closer ties. In an address to the American Chamber of Commerce (Amcham) here, Stephen Young, director of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), hailed recent progress made in cross-Strait links. Taiwan's further opening of its economic relationship with the PRC "is critical if this island is to become a regional and global centre," he said.

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12. PRC Land Use

Agence France-Presse ("ILLEGAL LAND USE SOARS IN CHINA", 2007-03-21) reported that the dire social problem of local governments in PRC illegally taking land from ordinary farmers and giving it to industrialists significantly worsened last year, state press said. The number of cases of illegal land use -- one of the major forces behind the rising number of protests and riots in the PRC -- jumped 17.3 percent last year, the China Daily said, citing Ministry of Land and Resources figures. Local governments pursuing "blind economic growth" were the main culprits behind the 130,000 cases of illegal land use, according to a director at the ministry, Zhang Xinbao.

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13. PRC Media Control

The Los Angeles Times ("SIX YEARS IN PRISON FOR WEBSITE EDITOR", 2007-03-21) reported that a PRC activist accused of posting subversive articles on the Internet was sentenced to six years in prison for defaming the government, state media said. The New China News Agency said Zhang Jianhong was the former editor in chief of a Chinese website called Aegean Sea and had written articles that defamed the PRC government and amounted to agitation aimed at toppling the government.

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