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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Reactor Project

Yonhap ("KEDO TERMINATES NUCLEAR REACTOR PROJECT IN N. KOREA AMID NUCLEAR STANDOFF", 2006-05-31) reported that an international energy consortium for the DPRK has decided to officially scrap its defunct project to build two light-water reactors in the state, the ROK's Unification Ministry said Thursday. The decision comes amid a prolonged stalemate in international negotiations over the DPRK's nuclear arms program.

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2. DPRK-PRC FM Meeting

JoongAng Ilbo ("LITTLE PROGRESS REPORTED IN TALKS WITH NORTH'S PAEK", 2006-05-31) reported that in a meeting between DPR Korean Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun and his Chinese counterpart, Li Zhaoxing, yesterday, both sides agreed to maintain close consultations and strive to expand mutually beneficial areas, the Chinese Xinhua News Agency reported from Beijing. In the meeting, the PRC also reaffirmed its strong support for its ally. A source familiar with the current visit said the stalled nuclear talks were discussed, but little progress was made. The source added that a visit by Christopher Hill, Washington's top envoy to the six-party talks, to Beijing shortly before Mr. Paek's visit also yielded little results.

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3. Kaesong Industrial Complex

JoongAng Ilbo ("U.S. OFFICIAL PLANS TO VISIT KAESONG", 2006-05-31) reported that a diplomatic source in Seoul said yesterday that US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State D. Kathleen Stephens is expected to visit the Kaesong Industrial Complex in the DPRK tomorrow. The source said that the official, during a visit to Seoul which began Tuesday, notified officials of her desire to visit the complex and that Pyongyang has already approved the visit. If Ms. Stephens' visit goes ahead, she would be the highest-ranking US administration official to visit the inter-Korean project to date.

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4. UN on DPRK Execution

Yonhap ("U.N. EXPERTS PRESS PYONGYANG TO SUSPEND SCHEDULED EXECUTION", 2006-0-31) reported that a group of UN human rights experts pressed the DPRK on Wednesday to suspend the execution of a man accused of treason, saying he was tortured and sentenced to death without a trial. The four special rapporteurs criticized the DPRK's refusal to respond in "any meaningful way" to their appeal for Son Jong-nam, who is believed to be under persecution for his links to defectors.

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5. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("U.N. AGENCY HAS NOT GIVEN REFUGEE STATUS TO N.K. DEFECTORS: REPORT", 2006-05-31) reported that the UN refugee agency has not granted refugee status to DPR Korean asylum seekers as they are entitled to citizenship in the ROK upon their arrival, a US government-funded broadcaster reported Wednesday. The report runs counter to the claim by a RO Korean minister that another seven DPR Korean defectors will be arriving in the US after obtaining the refugee status from the UN agency.

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6. ROK Local Elections

Korea Times ("VOTERS TURN BACK ON GOVERNING URI PARTY", 2006-05-31) reported that a large proportion of voters supporting the governing Uri Party during the 2004 general elections turned their back on it in the local elections Wednesday. Uri Party's humiliating election defeat is in stark contrast with its victory in the parliamentary elections two years ago when it succeeded in winning a majority of National Assembly seats. Political analysts attributed the poor performance to policy failures of the government, economic difficulties for people and antipathy against the ruling elite.

[\(return to top\)](#) Korea Times ("CAMPAIGNING PAST DEADLINES PREVALENT ", 2006-05-31) reported that dozens of candidates and campaigners across the nation were caught on Wednesday campaigning illegally on election day. The election law bans election day campaigning. [\(return to top\)](#)

7. ROK Economy

Chosun Ilbo ("THINGS LOOK GRIM FOR KOREA'S ECONOMY IN THE SECOND HALF", 2006-05-31) reported that the second half of the year will see growing dangers for the economy as factors like oil prices, interest rates and the exchange rate are showing no signs of improvement. "The Korean economy is in a virtual emergency, with all the negative factors aggravating the economy and no positive signs in sight," a pundit says. "After the May local elections and the World Cup, the public will have to face the reality."

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8. Japan-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("KOIZUMI, BUSH VOW TO SEEK STRONGER JAPAN-US ALLIANCE", 2006-05-31) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President George W. Bush vowed to seek a stronger Japan-US alliance when they meet in Washington next month, Japanese officials said. They made the pledge in a 10-minute telephone conversation ahead of Koizumi's trip to the US in late June, the officials said.

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9. Japan on Iran Nuclear Talks

Kyodo News ("JAPAN WELCOMES U.S. PROPOSAL ON IRAN, VOWS TO PLAY FAIR ROLE", 2006-05-31) reported that Japan welcomed Thursday the US proposal to join talks with Iran on its nuclear program, vowing to support the US and to play a "fair" role." Japan reiterates its strong expectation that Iran will appropriately respond to this issue for its peaceful and diplomatic solution," Foreign

Minister Taro Aso said in a statement.

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10. Japan Workforce

Reuters ("JAPAN PANEL PROPOSES LIMITS ON FOREIGN WORKERS", 2006-05-31) reported that Japan should limit the number of foreign workers allowed into the country and require those who are let in to acquire a command of the Japanese language, a Justice Ministry panel recommended this week. Japan is debating ways to boost its aging workforce while taking into account public fears that admitting more foreign workers could lead to a rise in crime.

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11. Japan Economy

Agence France-Presse ("DESPITE ECONOMIC RECOVERY, JAPAN FRETS OVER RICH-POOR DIVIDE", 2006-05-31) reported that Japan's economy is headed for its longest post-war expansion but away from the thronging shopping malls, new skyscrapers and luxury condominiums, many elderly and unemployed complain of losing out. "In Japan, poor people hide. Those who live on social security don't talk about it because they think they are responsible for their own misfortune," said Kazuya Hata, a charity worker at The Group to Protect Living and Health. Japan's economy may be finally emerging from the 'lost decade' of deflation but it is still expected to have more than one million households on welfare on average in the year to March, according to the most recent government survey.

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12. PRC-US Free Trade Dispute

Reuters ("CHINA TEMPERS CRITICISM OF US DECISION ON LENOVO", 2006-05-31) reported that the PRC's Commerce Ministry struck a more conciliatory note on Wednesday after saying a State Department decision to restrict the use of computers made by PC firm Lenovo Group Ltd. smacked of a Cold War mentality. Assistant Commerce Minister Huang Hai said that although the PRC understood the right of other countries to use their own rules to regulate trade, it wanted a level playing field. Washington should abide by the free trade principles advocated by the World Trade Organization, he said.

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13. PRC-Russia Relations

Reuters ("CHINA SAYS TIES WITH RUSSIA AT UNPRECEDENTED HIGH", 2006-05-31) reported that relations between giant neighbors the PRC and Russia have reached an unprecedented high, the PRC's president said in comments published on Wednesday ahead of a regional security forum summit. President Hu Jintao also called Russia the PRC's most important strategic cooperation partner in an interview with journalists from member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

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14. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("CHINA REBUKES TAIWAN OVER NATIONAL SECURITY REPORT", 2006-05-31) reported that the PRC rebuked Taiwan on Wednesday for a national security report that said the mainland could avert looming social chaos by learning from the island's transformation into a democracy. Li Weiyi, a spokesman for the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office, said Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian was using the report to advance the cause of the island's independence and provoke the PRC.

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15. PRC Foot and Mouth Disease

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA REPORTS TWO NEW OUTBREAKS OF FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE", 2006-05-31) reported that the PRC reported two fresh outbreaks of foot and mouth disease but said the situations were under control. Both outbreaks were confirmed as Asian type I foot and mouth disease by the national-level veterinarian laboratory on Monday, it said.

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16. PRC Water Shortage

BBC News ("DROUGHT WORSENS CHINA WATER WOES", 2006-05-31) reported that Environmentalists warn current levels of water consumption may not be sustainable. More than a decade of near double-digit economic growth has put serious strain on water demand in the PRC, which has only 7% of the world's total water resources, compared with more than 20% of the global population. The economic boom is making matters worse. Go to any shopping centre and you can see the country's new middle classes snapping up bring machines, dishbrers, showers and baths.

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17. PRC Pyramids

Reuters ("CHINA'S "PYRAMIDS" IN DANGER OF COLLAPSING: REPORT", 2006-05-31) reported that tombs almost 1,000 years old in the western PRC -- known as the "pyramids of the east" -- are in danger of collapse due to natural erosion and man-made damage, Chinese state television said on Wednesday.

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