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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press (Matthew Lee, "RICE PUSHES TOP NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMAT ON NUKES", Singapore, 2008/07/23) reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pushed the DPRK to accept terms to verify the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program, as the two countries held cabinet-level talks for the first time in four years. Rice told Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun that his nation must move quickly to prove it has told the truth about its past atomic activities if it wants to improve ties with the US and the DPRK's immediate neighbors and end its international isolation. "We didn't get into specific timetables, but the spirit was good because people believe we have made progress," she told reporters.

Reuters ("SIX PARTIES HAD "GOOD MEETING" ON NORTH KOREA: RICE", Singapore, 2008/07/23) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who met her DPRK counterpart for the first time, said the six nations involved in the DPRK disarmament talks had a good meeting. "Everyone essentially confirmed (previous agreements) and the need to move rapidly to finish phase two obligations," she said. There was a lot of discussion about the mechanism to verify the DPRK's nuclear program and there was a general call for better relations among all the parties, Rice said.

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2. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters (Sue Pleming, "CHINA SAYS 6-PARTY MINISTERIAL TALKS "SIGNIFICANT"", Singapore, 2008/07/23) reported that foreign ministers from six nations involved in nuclear dialogue with the DPRK met for talks that the PRC said showed a "political will" to move the disarmament process forward. "I think this is quite significant," the PRC's Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi said at the start. "It shows that the six parties have the political will to move forward the six-party process." "We have made major headway," Yang said.

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3. Japan-DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN CALLS FOR BILATERAL TALKS WITH N. KOREA ", Singapore, 2008/07/23) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura called on the DPRK to hold another bilateral meeting to work on solving problems preventing the two countries from normalizing diplomatic ties, a Japanese government official said. In a meeting of foreign ministers involved in the six-way DPRK nuclear talks, Komura also indicated Japan's demand that Pyongyang move ahead with a reinvestigation of the abductions of Japanese nationals by DPRK agents. ''I would like to call for the holding of a Japan-North Korea meeting to prepare for that,'' he was quoted as saying.

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4. DPRK-US Relations

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "N. KOREA URGES U.S. TO LIFT ALL SANCTIONS ", Singapore, 2008/07/23) reported that the DPRK renewed calls for the U.S. to drop its "hostile policy" toward Pyongyang, as the top diplomats from the two sides were set to hold talks here on the sidelines of a regional security forum. "Our republic submitted a nuclear declaration in a sincere effort and even took the measure of demolishing a cooling tower (at the Yongbyon nuclear site), which was supposed to be done in the nuclear dismantling phase," Ri Dong-il, director of the DPRK Foreign Ministry's international organization department told reporters.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "LEE RESPONDS NEGATIVELY TO SENDING ENVOY TO N. KOREA", 2008/07/23) reported that President Lee Myung-bak responded negatively to the idea of sending a special envoy to the DPRK to seek a possible breakthrough in the stalemate in inter-Korean relations. ``At this moment, it would difficult for the North to accept an envoy and it would not do that,'' he told reporters. Lee said the issue should be resolved based on principles, noting that the shooting of an unarmed female tourist in the back by a DPRK soldier goes against a principle.

Donga Ilbo ("GOV'T IN DILEMMA OVER CIVILIAN VISITS TO N.K. ", 2008/07/23) reported that Pyongyang has recently been inviting many ROK civic organizations and local governments to the DPRK. The invites are posing a problem for the Lee Myung-bak administration. The ROK government has insisted that it would allow civilian exchanges, despite the souring relations between the two Koreas. Some organizations also feel awkward about the invitations due to public outrage over the shooting incident. Some argue, however, that the civilian exchanges might contribute to normalizing

the sour ROK-DPRK relations.

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA ANGRILY REACTS TO 'ENEMY' REMARKS", Seoul, 2008/07/24) reported that the DPRK lashed out on Thursday against statements earlier this week by ROK Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee that the military views the DPRK as "a present enemy" and threat. The Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland said in a statement that it will not tolerate the remarks and will respond to the ROK in a stronger manner, giving no specifics. The comment was an "unpardonable provocation" against the DPRK, said the statement, carried by its Korean Central News Agency.

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6. Mt. Kumgang Shooting

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "S. KOREA DELIVERS MINISTER-LEVEL PROTEST MESSAGE TO N. KOREA ", Singapore, 2008/07/23) reported that the ROK conveyed its formal request for the DPRK to cooperate in an investigation into the recent death of a ROK tourist who was shot near the DPRK's mountain resort, officials said. The message was delivered during a brief bilateral meeting here between the foreign ministers of the two sides shortly after a wider meeting also involving top diplomats from the U.S., PRC, Russia and Japan, they added.

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun , "SEOUL TO RELEASE INTERIM REPORT ON GEUMGANG TOURIST KILLING", 2008/07/23) reported that the government plans to disclose an interim report on its inquiry into the July 11 shooting death of a ROK tourist on Friday, Unification Ministry spokesman said. "We plan to hold a press briefing on the results of the investigation so far this Friday," spokesman Kim Ho-nyoun said. Kim explained that the upcoming briefing did not mean Seoul's investigation had been completed.

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7. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("THOUSANDS CANCEL KAESONG TOUR RESERVATIONS", 2008/07/23) reported that more than 2,000 people have canceled their reservations to tour the DPRK border city of Kaesong since a ROK woman was shot and killed earlier this month. Tour operator Hyundai Asan said on Tuesday alone the number of people visiting Kaesong dropped to less than 300, down from a daily average of more than 400 tourists. Hyundai Asan said despite the fallout from the incident the tours will continue unless the government decides to shut it down.

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8. DPRK Military

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "'N. KOREA MAY DEVELOP ELECTROMAGNETIC PULSE WEAPON SYSTEM'", 2008/07/23) reported that a top US scientist warned American lawmakers of a possible catastrophic national security scenario: a possible development of Electromagnetic Pulse (EMP) weapons by rogue states, including the DPRK, and a potential detonation of such a device on

American soil. William Graham, chairman of the U.S. government-sponsored ``Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States," told U.S. lawmakers that the DPRK has the required technologies to develop such weapons.

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9. DPRK-ASEAN Relations

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA SIGNS ASEAN NONAGRESSION PACT", Singapore, 2008/07/24) reported that the DPRK signed a nonaggression pact Thursday with Southeast Asia. DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun signed the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations at a ceremony on the last day of the group's annual security conference. The TAC, which came into force in 1976, requires signatories to renounce the use or threat of force and calls for the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

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10. US-ROK Security Alliance

Xinhua ("S KOREA REJECTS CHANGES TO U.S. MILITARY CONSTRUCTION PLAN", Seoul, 2008/07/23) reported that the ROK government rejected a proposal of changing construction plans on a new US military base in the country. According to local media, the change of plans, proposed by the Defense Ministry's US Base Relocation Office, could have helped save up to 100 billion won (100 million US dollars) in a currently evaluated 550-billion won (550 million US dollars) construction project to raise the ground level at the site of the new U.S. base in Pyeongtaek, 40 km south of Seoul. However, a government review committee dismissed the proposal as they concluded that such last-minute changes to the construction plan could delay its completion at least by a few months.

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11. ROK Space Program

Xinhua ("S KOREA'S FIRST ROCKET LAUNCH MIGHT BE PUT OFF ", Seoul, 2008/07/23) reported that the ROK's first rocket launch may be put off until 2009 due to delays in the arrival of the main booster rocket and other key parts from Russia, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology said. The ministry said it plans to talk with the Russian authorities next month to determine the exact launch date.

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12. US Arms Sales for Taiwan

The Associated Press ("WOLFOWITZ SAYS US WILL OK TAIWAN ARMS DEAL", Taipei , 2008/07/23) reported that President Bush is committed to an $11 billion arms package for Taiwan, former Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz said, amid reports that the US is freezing such sales to the island to avoid angering the PRC. Wolfowitz, a former World Bank chief, is now the chairman of the

US-Taiwan Business Council, a nonprofit organization working to develop trade and business between the US and Taiwan. "President Bush treats commitments as commitments," Wolfowitz said. "I would just predict these will be approved."

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13. Taiwan Military Posture

Associated Press (Peter Enav, "TAIWAN DEMILITARIZES OFFSHORE ISLAND", Dongsha, 2008/07/24) reported that a government plan to reduce the strength of Taiwan's armed forces from the 450,000 it numbered in the late 1990s to as few as 200,000 by 2012 is taking its toll on military staffing throughout the island, including on far-flung offshore territories like Dongsha. Only this week a Taiwanese newspaper reported the army was placing dummies at guard posts on major military bases because there are not enough real guards to go around. The present Taiwanese military force level stands at about 270,000.

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14. Cross Straits Relations

Associated Press ("TAIWAN OPPOSES OLYMPIC NAME CHANGE", Taipei, 2008/07/24) reported that lawmakers of Taiwan's ruling Nationalist Party said Thursday that the PRC must not attempt to change the name under which the island will compete in next month's Olympics to suggest that Taiwan is part of China. Some are threatening a boycott unless the issue is resolved.

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15. PRC Relations with the US, Japan

Bloomberg (Dune Lawrence, "U.S., JAPAN VIEWED AS ENEMIES BY A THIRD OF CHINESE, POLL SHOWS", 2008/07/23) reported that more than a third of PRC people view Japan and the US as enemies, according to a survey that examines public sentiment in Asia's fastest-growing economic and military power. Thirty-eight percent of PRC consider Japan to be an enemy compared with 34 percent who regard the US that way, according to the 2008 Pew Global Attitudes Survey. About three quarters of those polled said Japan has not sufficiently apologized for military actions in the 1930s and 1940s.

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16. PRC Government

The New York Times (Brian Knowlton, "ECONOMY HELPS MAKE CHINESE THE LEADERS IN OPTIMISM, SURVEY FINDS ", Washington, 2008/07/23) reported that buoyed by years of extraordinary growth and the promise of the Olympic Games, the PRC people hold strikingly positive views of their national economy and the direction their country is heading, ranking first in both measures among 24 countries recently surveyed, the Pew Research Center said. Eighty-six percent of PRC people surveyed said they were content with the country’s direction, up from 48 percent in

2002. Sixty-five percent of the Chinese said the government was doing a good job on the issues most important to them, though support was somewhat less in the western and central provinces, which have not enjoyed the rapid growth of eastern regions.

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17. PRC Protests

The Associated Press (Charles Hutzler, "BEIJING TO SET UP OLYMPIC PROTEST ZONES ", Beijing, 2008/07/23) reported that Beijing will set up specially designated zones for protesters during next month's Olympics, a security official said, in a sign the PRC's authoritarian government may allow some demonstrations during the games. Liu Shaowu, director for security for the Beijing Olympic organizing committee, said that areas in at least three public parks near outlying sporting venues have been set aside for use by demonstrators. "This will allow people to protest without disrupting the Olympics," said Ni Jianping, director of the Shanghai Institute of American Studies.

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18. Asia Regional Disaster Response

Straits Times ("ASIA-PACIFIC NATIONS PLAN DISASTER DRILLS ", 2008/07/23) reported that Asia-Pacific states are discussing a plan to hold military-led disaster relief exercises in the Philippines next year, senior defence officials said. At a defence dialogue on the sidelines of the annual meetings of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), officials expressed the need to plan and test how member states could help each other during disasters such as the Myanmar cyclone, the PRC quake and Philippines ferry sinking in recent months.

Associated Press (Vijay Joshi, "ASIA-PACIFIC EYES COORDINATED DISASTER RELIEF WORK", Singapore, 2008/07/24) reported that Asia-Pacific powers on Thursday announced a plan to pool their military and civilian resources for disaster responses. Foreign ministers of 26 countries and the European Union discussed a joint relief exercise to be held in 2009 and called for civilian-military coordination in future disaster relief. A statement at the end of the meeting said the ministers "recognized that military assets and personnel, in full support and not in place of civilian responses, have played an increasingly important role in regional disaster responses."

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19. Mongolia Elections

BBC News (Michael Kohn, "MONGOLIAN MPS BOYCOTT PARLIAMENT ", Ulan Bator , 2008/07/23) reported that the opening session of the Mongolian parliament has stalled after opposition Democrats staged a walk-out. The session was to be a swearing-in day for new MPs, but the president had to close the session early as there were not enough MPs for a quorum. Mongolian politics have been in turmoil since the disputed election on 29 June that sparked riots in the capital.

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II. PRC Report

20. Sino-Vietnamese Territorial Dispute

China Daily (Li Xiang, "CHINA ANGERED OVER EXXON MOBIL OIL AGREEMENT", 2008/07/23) reported that the PRC opposes any activities that violate its sovereignty and jurisdiction over the South China Sea, Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said. He made the remarks at a regular press briefing after being asked to comment on the oil exploration deal signed between US oil giant Exxon Mobil and Vietnam's state oil firm. Exxon Mobil had recently signed a preliminary cooperation agreement with Vietnamese state-owned oil firm PetroVietnam on an exploration project in the South China Sea. PRC diplomats in Washington earlier spoke to Exxon Mobil executives, saying the project is a breach of PRC sovereignty and if the company goes ahead with it, its future business on the mainland could be threatened, the Sunday Morning Post cited unnamed sources close to the US firm as saying.

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21. PRC Energy

Xinhua Net (Yi Fengqiong, "20% OF POWER SUPPLY FOR BEIJING'S OLYMPIC VENUES TO BE WIND-GENERATED",) reported that a wind power plant has become operational in suburban Beijing, considered a major step towards making 20 percent of the power supply to the city's Olympic venues during the games wind-generated. The Guanting Wind Power Plant, beginning operation on Saturday, would not only help fulfil Beijing's promise of a "green Olympics", but symbolize the first-ever large-scale employment of wind power generation project in the PRC capital, said a spokesman for the project.

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III. ROK Report

22. DPRK Denuclearization

Yonhap News ("DPRK IGNORES THE SUGGESTION", 2008/07/24) wrote that it is said that Park Ui-chun, the DPRK foreign minister, ignored the suggestion of the ROK and the U.S. to hold the denuclearization forum as soon as possible. DPRK spokesman Ri Tong-il held his ground on nuclear issue, reassuring that its position that verification is not only issue of the DPRK, but the examination of all six party nations to fulfill their obligations. Ri’s remark is interpreted as saying that denuclearization verification should be done on both Koreas, corresponding to the clauses of 9.19 joint declarations. Some believe the silence of the DPRK can be a positive omen.

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23. Inter-Korean Relations

Seoul Shinmun ("MT.KUMGANG INCIDENT TO BE SOLVED BY TWO KOREAS", 2008/07/24) wrote that Yu Myung-hwan, the ROK foreign minister, urged global society to show concern about the Mt.Kumgang incident at the Singapore ASEAN+3 foreign ministers' forum. Without the actual plan of cooperation, mere expression of the ROK position is meaningless. The government should reassure the principle that inter-Korean problems are to be solved by the two Koreas.

Tongil News ("MINISTRY OF UNIFICATION RESTRAINS PRIVATE LEVEL INTEREXCHANGE", 2008/07/23) wrote that it is known that the Ministry of Unification restrained the inter-Korean interexchange program promoted by private organizations and the Democratic Labor Party. Non-stop flight service requires de facto mutual agreement, and it seems the ROK government expressed discomfort to the DPRK, as the DPRK refused government level conversation while giving approval to private level ones.

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