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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Border Fence

The Associated Press ("REPORT: N. KOREA BUILDING FENCE ALONG BORDER", 2007-08-27) reported that the DPRK has started building a fence along parts of its border with the PRC in an apparent move to prevent people from fleeing the impoverished country, a news report said. The North has put posts on a six-mile stretch along a narrow tributary of the Yalu River, which marks the border between the DPRK and PRC. It has also built a road to guard the area, Yonhap news agency reported. The DPRK has yet to string barbed wire fencing between the posts, the report said.

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2. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Joongang Ilbo ("GS CALTEX TO SELL GAS NEAR KAESONG", 2007-08-27) reported that GS Caltex Corp., the ROK's second-biggest oil refiner, plans to open a gas station near the Kaesong Industrial Complex as its first DPRK project. Jiudau said that once the Kaesong station is running well, GS Caltex will open stations in other DPRK cities, including Pyongyang. Hyundai Oilbank, another ROK oil refiner, is already operating a gas station in the Kaesong Industrial Complex and selling gasoline at $1 per liter.

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3. DPRK Arirang Festival

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH POSTPONES ARIRANG FESTIVAL ONCE AGAIN DUE TO FLOODING", 2007-08-27) reported that due to severe flooding in the country, the DPRK has temporarily suspended Arirang, its regular series of mass games, the country's state-run media reported. The Korea Central News Agency said the mass gymnastics and dance performances will be canceled for the time being because laborers around the nation are being mobilized for flood recovery projects. The report said the Arirang festival will resume after the DPRK recovers, but did not give any specific date.

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4. DPRK Floods

Yonhap ("S. KOREA SENDS EMERGENCY AID TO N. KOREA FOR FLOOD RECOVERY", 2007-08-27) reported that the ROK made the first delivery of 7.1 billion won ($7.5 million) worth of emergency aid to the DPRK to help the country recover from flood damage, officials said. About 40 truckloads of instant noodles, blankets, emergency kits and mineral water were delivered to the border town of Kaesong via a reconnected road in the western section of the Korean Peninsula.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("FLOOD TOLL IN N.KOREA AT 454 DEAD, 156 MISSING", 2007-08-27) reported that floods in the DPRK have left at least 454 dead, 156 missing, and 4,351 injured, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said Sunday. In a comprehensive compilation of reports on flood damage from DPRK authorities and international agencies, UNOCHA said torrential rains in early August affected more than 436,000 residents in six provinces and 92 counties in the DPRK. (return to top)

5. ROK Hostages in Afghanistan

Korea Times ("DIRECT TALKS ON HOSTAGES RELEASE TO RESUME", 2007-08-27) reported that after several days of hiatus, Taliban militants and ROK officials are set to resume talks on the fate of the remaining 19 Korean hostages, who are about to complete their sixth week of captivity in war-torn Afghanistan. Zabeehullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, told The Korea Times that the militants were ready for the next phase of talks to amicably resolve the issue. However, he said, their demands will remain the same and the Korean side should assure them that they will not stick to their stance of being unable to put pressure on the Afghan government.

(return to top) Donga Ilbo ("GOVERNMENT: "NO AGREEMENT YET FOR RELEASE OF HOSTAGES"", 2007-08-27) reported that the Afghanistan Islamic Press (AIP) reported that 19 ROK hostages in Afghanistan will soon be released. However, the government denied the report. The AIP argued that the report was from a credible source and said, "The Taliban and the South Koran government made an agreement to release the 19 hostages under the auspices of Saudi Arabia, and Korean and Saudi officials will announce the agreement on August 26 in Gazni." The AIP added, "According to the agreement, South Korean will withdraw its army within weeks and Christian missionaries in Afghanistan will also go back to Korea in exchange for the release of the hostages."
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6. Japan Cabinet Reshuffle

Reuters ("JAPAN PM SEEKS RATINGS BOOST WITH VETERAN CABINET", 2007-08-27) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe picked familiar faces for key posts in a sweeping reshuffle of his cabinet, but analysts doubted whether the changes would do much to revive the Japanese leader's badly sagging popularity. Abe selected former defense minister Fukushiro Nukaga, 63, as finance minister. Leading the government push on the legislation will be new Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, a former foreign and education minister who heads the LDP's biggest faction and shares Abe's goals of winning Japan a bigger say in global affairs. Former foreign minister Masahiko Komura, known for his ability to avoid creating waves, was chosen as Japan's new defense minister. Outspoken Foreign Minister Taro Aso was chosen as LDP secretary general, the party's number-two post.

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7. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo ("MACHIMURA CONFIDENT OF DPJ SUPPORT IN EXTENDING ANTITERROR LAW", 2007-08-27) reported that new Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura expressed confidence that Japan's antiterrorism law would be extended beyond its Nov. 1 expiration date with eventual support from the largest opposition Democratic Party of Japan. Machimura also promised to continue Japan's so-called assertive diplomacy, one of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's basic policies, in pushing forth the country's interests in the international community through events such as the Group of Eight summit to be held in Hokkaido's Lake Toya district next year.

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8. Japan, PRC Space Programs

The Associated Press ("CHINA, JAPAN RACE FOR THE MOON", 2007-08-27) reported that Japan

claims its project is the biggest since Apollo. The PRC says it is readying its probes to study the lunar surface to plan a landing. Officials have tried to play down the importance of beating each other off the pad, but their regional rivalry is never far below the surface.

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9. US on PRC Military

The Associated Press ("SKELTON: CHINA CANDID ABOUT ITS MILITARY", 2007-08-27) reported that the PRC military has been open and candid about its military capabilities with a visiting US delegation, allowing the group to tour a navy destroyer and visit an artillery division that controls nuclear missiles, a top US lawmaker said. Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, said the group of seven US lawmakers were in the PRC to seek "continued openness" with the PRC military. "Thus far we've received very candid answers about the capability of their military, they seem to be hiding nothing in our discussions with them."

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10. PRC Foreign Business Regulations

Agence France-Presse ("NEW CHINA LAW CHANGES RULES FOR FOREIGN BUSINESS", 2007-0--27) reported that the PRC is preparing to pass a tough new anti-monopoly law this week, underlining what analysts say is a major shift in policy on incoming foreign investment. The law will require a national security investigation as well as anti-monopoly checks into foreign companies that are planning to merge with or take over PRC enterprises. Analysts say the new measures, which state media say are due to be approved this week, have grown out of fears that the increasing muscle of foreign firms is putting the squeeze on home-grown companies.

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11. PRC Rural Unrest

The Associated Press ("CHINA POLICE, FARMERS CLASH IN LAND ROW", 2007-08-27) reported that at least two people were injured and two detained when villagers and police clashed over a land dispute in northeastern PRC, a witness said Sunday. A newspaper reported one person was killed in the incident. Farmers in Yutian, a village in Heilongjiang province, set up roadblocks Saturday to protest a new commercial housing project requiring the razing of their homes, said a villager reached by telephone.

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12. PRC Environment

The New York Times ("AS CHINA ROARS, POLLUTION REACHES DEADLY EXTREMES", 007-08-27) reported that just as the speed and scale of the PRC's rise as an economic power have no clear parallel in history, so its pollution problem has shattered all precedents. Environmental degradation is now so severe, with such stark domestic and international repercussions, that pollution poses not only a major long-term burden on the PRC public but also an acute political challenge to the ruling Communist Party. And it is not clear that the PRC can rein in its own economic juggernaut.

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