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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Plant Shutdown

Voice of America ("UN NUCLEAR AGENCY CONFIRMS NORTH KOREA HAS SHUT DOWN REACTOR", 2007-07-16) reported that Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the UN nuclear agency IAEA, says his inspectors have confirmed that the DPRK has shut down its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, a key step in efforts to halt the country's production of nuclear weapons. ElBaradei says it will take his inspectors about a month to install seals and monitoring equipment to make sure Pyongyang keeps the reactor closed. The DPRK said it shut down its plutonium-producing reactor, about the time it received a shipment of oil from the ROK as part of February's aid-for-disarmament agreement. Six-party talks to map out the next phase of Pyongyang's disarmament begin in Beijing on Wednesday.

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2. Hill on Yongbyon Shutdown

Yonhap ("U.S. ENVOY POINTS TO GOOD START IN N.K. DISARMAMENT", 2007-07-16) reported that Christopher Hill, US envoy to Six Party Talks, arrived here Sunday for a three-day visit, said the shutdown of the Yongbyon complex is a good start, but that the countries still have a long road ahead.

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3. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Shutdown

Kyodo News ("JAPAN COOL TO NUCLEAR SUSPENSION BY NORTH KOREA", 2007-07-16) reported that the Japanese government's reaction to the Yongbyon shutdown was lukewarm, with a senior Foreign Ministry official calling it "no more than the first step." The official expressed concern over what appeared to be conciliatory moves the U.S. has taken recently, saying Washington "is in hurry to press for the process of denuclearization and appears to be pushing things a little prematurely."

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4. US Deliberations on DPRK

Stratfor ("U.S.: DELIBERATIONS ON NORTH KOREA TO BEGIN", 2007-07-16) reported that the United States will begin deliberations on removing the DPRK from its list of states that sponsor terrorism. To the Associated Press, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill laid out steps Washington will take to help the reconciliation process, including establishing a regional security forum in Northeast Asia and holding talks on replacing the Korean War cease-fire with a peace regime to formally end the conflict.

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5. DPRK Industry

Associated Press ("ORASCOM ACQUIRES STAKE IN NORTH KOREAN CEMENT FIRM", 2007-0--16) reported that Egypt's Orascom Construction Industries said Monday it signed a deal with DPRK's state-owned Pyongyang Myongdang Trading Corp. to acquire a 50 percent stake in Sangwon Cement for US$115 million (¤83 million). Sangwon Cement owns and operates a cement plant near the capital Pyongyang.

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6. US-ROK Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREAN LAWMAKERS URGE U.S. LAWMAKERS TO RATIFY FTA DEAL", 2007-07-16) reported that members of the ROK National Assembly's ROK-US FTA Forum urged US lawmakers to ratify the bilateral trade deal in the near future. At an FTA seminar hosted by the US House of Representatives in Washington, ROK lawmakers took time to persuade their counterparts to swiftly act on the deal claiming that while not everyone may be fully satisfied with the result, it was a good deal overall.

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7. EU-ROK Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("KOREA MOVES RAPIDLY IN DIRECTION OF EU TRADE DEAL", 2007-07-16) reported that the second round of negotiations toward a ROK-EU free trade agreement commenced yesterday in Brussels. Lee Un-taek, an analyst at Hana Daetoo Securities, predicted the EU would try to get more concessions for financial and legal areas, where the EU has advantages over the ROK. The ROK has raised questions on the closed structures ? not allowing foreign nationals in certain higher level executive positions ? of European financial companies. The ROK has also suggested recognizing each others' professional licenses, including those for lawyers and doctors.

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8. Japan on Nuclear Weapons

Kyodo ("32% OF LDP ELECTION CANDIDATES OK ON STUDYING NUCLEAR ARMAMENT: POLL", 2007-07-16) reported that thirty-two percent of Liberal Democratic Party candidates for the July 29 upper house election think Japan should study nuclear armament, a Mainichi Shimbun poll showed. The latest figure is 7 percentage points higher than a similar poll conducted before the previous 2004 election. According to the poll, 17 LDP candidates, or 24 percent, said Japan should consider arming itself with nuclear weapons, depending on the international situation, while six, or 8 percent, said Japan should start a study on nuclear armament.

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9. US-Japan Security Alliance

The Japan Times ("KOIKE, GATES AGREE TO MOVE AHEAD ON REALIGNMENT, MISSILE DEFENSE", 2007-07-16) reported that Defense Minister Yuriko Koike and US Defense Secretary Robert Gates agreed to move ahead on bilateral issues such as the US military realignment in Japan and the joint missile defense scheme as well as an early visit by Koike to the US.

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10. Japan Earthquake

The Associated Press ("STRONG QUAKE ROCKS JAPAN, NUCLEAR PLANT", 2007-07-16) reported that a strong earthquake struck northwestern Japan, causing a fire and radioactive water leak at the world's largest nuclear plant. At least eight people were killed and hundreds injured in the 6.8

magnitude quake that collapsed wooden houses, ripped apart roads and buckled seaside bridges. Flames and billows of black smoke poured from the Kashiwazaki nuclear plant — the world's largest in terms of power output capacity. It took two hours to extinguish the fire in an electrical transformer, said Motoyasu Tamaki, a Tokyo Electric Power Co. official.

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11. Sino-Russian Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA, RUSSIA SEEK 'MULTI-POLAR WORLD'", 2007-07-16) reported that Russia and the PRC stressed their common desire for a "multi-polar world" - one not dominated by the US - and vowed to keep improving economic ties that President Vladimir Putin said are already improving fast. Putin met with PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, a former ambassador to the US who suggested the trip to Moscow less than three months after his appointment, underscoring Russia's importance for Beijing.

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12. PRC on Shanghai Cooperation Organization Drill

Xinhua ("CHINA'S TOP MILITARY OFFICER STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF SCO DRILL", 2007-07-16) reported that the joint anti-terrorist drill which will be launched by member countries of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a good opportunity to enhance international cooperation on combating terrorism, separatism and extremism, the PRC's top military officer said. The drill will be carried out in Chelyabinsk in Russia's Ural Mountains region and in Urumqi, capital of northwest the PRC's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. All six SCO members -- the PRC, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan -- will take part.

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13. PRC Corruption

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S CADRES ABUSING IDEOLOGY SCHOOLS TO PUSH CAREERS: REPORT", 2007-07-16) reported that the PRC's Communist Party schools, formed decades ago to instill socialist ideas in top cadres, have become unseemly networking hubs for promotion-minded officials, state media said. At some party schools, lower-ranking officials take turns hosting lavish banquets at government expense to curry favour with senior party members, the People's Forum, a top party mouthpiece, complained in its most recent edition. "This unhealthy party behaviour threatens to engulf all party cadres and all of society," it said.

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14. PRC Media Control

Agence France-Presse ("INTERNET MAKING IT TOUGHER FOR CHINA TO BLOCK BAD NEWS", 2007-07-16) reported that the Internet, mobile phones and other new technologies are making it harder for the PRC's rulers to block negative news, a top government official said. "It has been repeatedly proved that information blocking is like walking into a dead end," the state-run China Daily newspaper quoted Wang Guoqing, a vice minister with the cabinet's information office, as saying. Wang said local governments needed to be more transparent, describing some as being "too naive" in thinking they could hide damaging information.

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15. PRC Environment

Reuters ("CHINA WARNS OF MORE FLOOD MISERY ", 2007-07-16) reported that hundreds of thousands of villagers in east PRC's Huai river basin, already suffering the region's worst flooding in 50 years, have been told to brace for more heavy rains this week, state media reported. Torrential summer rains across the country have fed floods and landslides that had killed 403 people, left 105 missing and forced the evacuation of 3.17 million by Friday, the China Daily said.

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II. CanKor

16. CanKor # 287 -- SPECIAL EDITION

CanKor ("FOCUS: Inside DPRK Part 3", 2007-07-11) Subscribers consistently name stories about life inside the DPRK as their top interest when reading CanKor. This is the third in a series of special editions of CanKor assembling "Inside DPRK" stories. Not all these stories are current, and in some cases may already be outdated. Readers are therefore advised to note the date each story was first published. The stories included in this full-edition relate to the leadership succession issue that has been reawakened by reports that DPRK Leader Kim Jong Il has experienced health problems of late. At a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi on 3 July, the 65-year-old leader appears thinner, with serious hair loss and dry skin. Rumours circulate since May that he has undergone bypass surgery. Yonhap News claims that he has made fewer than half as many public appearances as last year. Apparently in response to international speculation, the official DPRK Rodong Sinmun newspaper publishes an article about the leader's lifestyle that shows him as a robust workaholic who frequently stays up all night working. Nonetheless, numerous DPRK-watchers assess the consequences of a sudden demise of Mr. Kim, ranging from civil war to a military take-over to a collective leadership or -- the perennial favourite -- a dynastic succession to one of his sons. Kim Jong Il himself is reportedly embarrassed by talk of a father-to-son succession.

(return to top) CanKor ("FEEDBACK", 2007-07-11) In an email to the editor, British diplomat Jim Hoare comments on reports about UNDP funds in the last issue of the CanKor Report. (return to top)

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