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I. NAPSNet

1. Kim on Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA DUSTS DOWN LIGHT-WATER REACTOR DEMAND", 2007-07-23) reported that the DPRK's chief nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-gwan talked to reporters before boarding an Air Koryo plane at Beijing Capital International Airport to return home from the latest round of six-nation nuclear talks. "What we're discussing right now is the current nuclear plan, in other words,

the Yongbyon nuclear facility stopping its operation, getting disabled and ultimately getting dismantled," Kim said. "For dismantlement, a light-water reactor should be brought in." "What is basically important in the solution of the nuclear issue is not whether we will receive the supply of heavy fuel oil, but whether the U.S. will change its policy," he said. "We're not a parasite living on heavy oil." The envoy declared himself "satisfied" with the latest talks. "It is obvious what we're supposed to do. But the other nations seem to be not so well prepared." Kim added the reason the six nations failed to agree on a timetable for the next stage "was that we didn't have enough time."

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2. Inter-Korean Military Relations

Deutsche Presse-Agentur ("NORTH, SOUTH KOREA SET FOR NEW CONFIDENCE-BUILDING TALKS", 2007-07-23) reported that top-ranking military envoys from both Koreas will be discussing a number of confidence-building issues when they meet at the ceasefire village Panmunjom on Tuesday. Among the issues for debate would be the creation of a common fishing zone along the disputed boundary in the Yellow Sea, and a permanent safety guarantee for the two cross-border rail links which are to be reestablished.

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3. DPRK-Mongolia Relations

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA SIGNS PACTS WITH MONGOLIA", 2007-07-21) reported that the DPRK signed deals with resource-rich Mongolia on Friday, in the first visit by a high-ranking DPRK official to Ulan Bator since 1988. The two countries signed three protocols on cooperating in the fields of health and science, trade and sea transport, and the exchange of labor. Mongolia also offered Ulan Bator as a venue for meetings on the DPRK nuclear issue and regional summits on such topics as the impact of global warming on Northeast Asia.

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4. ROK Hostages in Afghanistan

Korea Herald ("DEADLINE FOR HOSTAGES EXTENDED UNTIL TUESDAY EVENING", 2007-07-23) reported that Taliban militants extended the deadline for their ROK hostages by another 24 hours, but told the government to put them in direct contact with ROK negotiators. The rebels have threatened to kill the 23 Korean aid workers they kidnapped unless 23 Taliban prisoners held by Afghan authorities are released and the ROK withdraws its 200 soldiers from Afghanistan. The ROK has dispatched a crisis team, led by Vice Foreign Minister Cho Jung-pyo, to Kabul and has repeatedly stressed that it will pull out its troops who are serving with a US-led coalition by year's end as planned.

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5. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Yonhap ("EU DEMANDING GREATER ACCESS TO S. KOREAN AGRICULTURE MARKET AT FTA TALKS", 2007-07-23) reported that the European Union (EU) is demanding greater access to the ROK's agricultural market at free trade pact talks between the two sides, the government said. In the five-day negotiations that ended Friday, the EU said only a minimal number of goods should be

excluded from tariff cuts, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry said. The gathering in Brussels was the second one aimed at forging a free trade agreement (FTA) between the trading partners.

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6. Japan Nuclear Plant

The Associated Press ("JAPAN OKS IAEA AT QUAKE-HIT NUKE PLANT ", 2007-07-23) reported that Japan will allow investigators from the UN nuclear watchdog to inspect a nuclear power station damaged last week by a powerful earthquake. On Thursday, International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei offered to dispatch global experts to inspect the damage but Japan rejected the offer, saying it could handle the safety check on its own. Local officials then petitioned the central government to accept the inspection, saying the plant's problems and leaks had stirred "great unease" among residents and were tarnishing the state's reputation overseas. Tokyo decided to accept the IAEA offer from the viewpoint of "international cooperation and information sharing,".

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7. Japan Elections

Agence France-Presse ("ABE'S PATRIOTIC AGENDA TESTED AS JAPAN VOTES", 2007-07-23) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's agenda to build a more patriotic Japan is on the line in elections next Sunday, with voters paying more attention to bread-and-butter issues and a string of scandals. Riding on the waves of what some call a "neo-nationalism" in Japan, Abe has rammed through parliament legislation to teach patriotism at schools and create a full-fledged defence ministry, both taboos since the war. But Abe's support rate has fallen by half since he took office after an incessant set of scandals embroiling his top aides and a government agency's admission that it bungled millions of pension payment records.

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8. Japan Defense

The New York Times ("BOMB BY BOMB, JAPAN SHEDS MILITARY RESTRAINTS", 2007-07-23) reported that from Micronesia to Iraq, Japan's military has been rapidly crossing out items from its list of can't-dos. The incremental changes, especially since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, amount to the most significant transformation in Japan's military since World War II, one that has brought it ever closer operationally to America's military while rattling nerves throughout northeast Asia. Japan is acquiring weapons that blur the lines between defensive and offensive.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN EYES EDITING CHINA FROM TEXTBOOKS", 2007-07-23) reported that Taiwan plans to revise school textbooks to drop references that recognize PRC historical figures, places and artifacts as "national," an official said. The announcement is the latest in a series of moves by the island in the past few months to assert its sovereignty as President Chen Shui-bian's final term in office winds down.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN MULLS RARE NATIONAL DAY MILITARY PARADE

", 2007-07-23) reported that Taiwan is considering staging its first National Day military parade in more than a decade to show off its arms build-up, the defence ministry spokesman said, amid the PRC's growing perceived threat. "We may hold a military parade on the National Day... so that the training results of the armed forces could be presented before the eyes of our countrymen," Major General Yu Sy-tue told AFP. (return to top) Washington Post ("TAIWAN DEFIES U.S., SEEKS U.N. MEMBERSHIP UNDER DEBATED NAME", 2007-07-23) reported that brushing aside warnings from the Bush administration, the Taiwanese government of President Chen Shui-bian announced Friday that it has applied for U.N. membership under the name Taiwan. Chen's move, the latest tactic in a long campaign to promote Taiwan's sovereignty, drew an immediate condemnation from the PRC, which has vowed to use force if necessary to prevent the self-ruled island from acquiring formal independence. (return to top)

10. Shanghai Cooperation Organization Drill

Xinhua ("MORE CHINESE SOLDIERS LEAVE FOR MILITARY DRILL IN RUSSIA", 2007-07-23) reported that more PRC officers and soldiers boarded trains on Saturday for Russia, where they will join an anti-terrorism drill held by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The six member countries of the SCO -- the PRC, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan -- will stage a joint anti-terrorism drill from Aug. 9 to 17.

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11. PRC Environment

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S REGIONS IGNORING BEIJING ON ENVIRONMENT GOALS", 2007-07-23) reported that local governments in the PRC are continuing to invest in dirty, resource-intense industries, jeopardising Beijing's goals of saving energy and cutting pollution, state media reported. Some regions are encouraging steel, cement and other heavy industries to boost economic growth despite demands from Beijing to rein in those sectors, the China Daily newspaper said, quoting a top development official.

(return to top) BBC News ("CHINA POSTPONES POLLUTION REPORT ", 2007-07-23) reported that the PRC has indefinitely postponed the release of an environmental report on the costs of economic development. Several local governments are reported to have objected to the release of "sensitive" information about the pollution they cause. Government officials from different departments also appear to disagree on how to calculate the figures. (return to top)

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