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I. NAPSNet

- 1. [Six Party Talks](#)
- 2. [DPRK on Japan at Six Party Talks](#)
- 3. [DPRK-Russia Rail Link](#)
- 4. [PRC on DPRK Asylum Seekers](#)
- 5. [Inter-Korean Relations](#)
- 6. [ROK Veterans on GNP DPRK Policy](#)
- 7. [EU-ROK Trade Relations](#)
- 8. [Japan Earthquake](#)
- 9. [Japan on Comfort Women Issue](#)
- 10. [PRC on Food Quality Issue](#)
- 11. [PRC Environment](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS SET GOALS BUT NO DEADLINE", 2007-07-19) reported that the Six Party Talks veered away from setting a deadline for the next phase of disarmament but settled on a set of tasks the United States said could be carried out this year. Hill said the working groups would grapple in coming weeks with the details of disarmament and would also discuss how the DPRK might get the equivalent of some of the 950,000 tons of fuel oil in other energy or infrastructure help.

[\(return to top\)](#)

2. DPRK on Japan at Six Party Talks

Forbes ("NORTH KOREA SAYS JAPAN FOCUS ON ABDUCTEES COULD WRECK NUCLEAR TALKS", 2007-07-19) reported that the DPRK accused Japan of using the issue of abducted Japanese nationals to try to wreck six-nation nuclear negotiations and acquire a pretext to develop its own nuclear weapons.

[\(return to top\)](#)

3. DPRK-Russia Rail Link

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIA, N. KOREA TO OPEN JV TO LINK RAILROADS", 2007-07-19) reported that Russia and the DPRK will set up a joint venture to reconstruct a rail link between the Russian border town of Khasan and DPRK's Najin. Russian oil companies are interested in investing in the development of the railway network, given that the port of Najin houses a large inactive oil refinery with a capacity of up to 6 million metric tons a year (120,000 bbl/d). By expert estimates, up to 200,000 heavy containers could be delivered from the ROK to Western Europe each year if the project is implemented. Russian Railroads estimates say the project will cost at least \$2 billion.

[\(return to top\)](#)

4. PRC on DPRK Asylum Seekers

Asia Times ("LADIES FIRST: CHINA OPENS TO KOREAN REFUGEES", 2007-07-19) reported that there are signs that the PRC is easing up on its policy on DPRK refugees. The PRC reportedly issues temporary-resident permits to some DPR Koreans, particularly women married to Chinese men.

[\(return to top\)](#)

5. Inter-Korean Relations

Hankoryeh ("S. KOREA PROPOSES TO HOLD INTER-KOREAN MINISTERIAL TALKS NEXT MONTH", 2007-07-19) reported that the Koreans have agreed to hold a new round of family reunions via video link in mid-August, but the DPRK has yet to respond to the ROK proposal to hold ministerial talks early next month.

[\(return to top\)](#)

6. ROK Veterans on GNP DPRK Policy

Hankoryeh ("VETERANS SHOWER LAWMAKER WITH EGGS OVER SOFTENED N. KOREA POLICY", 2007-07-19) reported that an ultra-rightist ROK lawmaker was hit with eggs as he visited Korean war veterans to explain a softened DPRK initiative of the Grand National Party (GNP). Chung was there to give a briefing on "Peace Vision for the Korean Peninsula," a package of new DPRK policies that the GNP recently adopted ahead of December's presidential election. The new policies reflect a shift from the GNP's hard-line policy to a flexible, reconciliatory one.

[\(return to top\)](#)

7. EU-ROK Trade Relations

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREA'S CHIEF NEGOTIATOR FRETS OVER INTERNAL RIFT IN EU FREE TRADE TALKS", 2007-07-19) reported that the chief ROK negotiator in free trade talks with the European Union admitted he was concerned by internal disagreement about how his government would slash tariffs on automobiles, saying he was "shamed" by the rift within government ministries. As negotiations began, the top ROK negotiator, Kim Han-soo, told reporters he was frustrated by the "conservative" tariff proposal on automobiles presented by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy, which is in charge of auto trade.

[\(return to top\)](#)

8. Japan Earthquake

The Los Angeles Times ("JAPAN NUCLEAR PLANT SHUT AFTER QUAKE", 2007-07-19) reported that officials ordered the world's largest nuclear power plant to be idled indefinitely after the government acknowledged that it had not been built to withstand the force of an earthquake that hit Japan's west coast, and that it probably sits atop a previously undisclosed active fault. The revelations are a blow to Japan's massive nuclear power industry, which already suffers from a reputation for questionable safety standards and a record of hiding accidents.

[\(return to top\)](#)

9. Japan on Comfort Women Issue

Korea Times ("JAPAN WARNS US AGAINST 'COMFORT WOMEN' RESOLUTION", 2007-07-19) reported that Japan has warned the US House of Representatives that a resolution on comfort women, if passed, will seriously damage Tokyo-Washington relations, according to a US-based report. Japanese Ambassador to Washington Ryozo Kato sent a letter on June 22 to five House leaders, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, that the passage of the resolution will almost certainly have "lasting and harmful effects" on the bilateral relations, the Washington Post reported.

[\(return to top\)](#)

10. PRC on Food Quality Issue

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE PM PLEDGES BETTER FOOD SAFETY AMID GLOBAL CONCERN", 2007-07-19) reported that the PRC Premier Wen Jiabao has pledged to step up food safety inspections amid rising foreign concern over dangerous goods from the PRC, members of a

Japanese trade mission said. During talks with the trade mission, Wen pledged to improve food quality and increase inspections of factory products, a Japanese official told journalists.

[\(return to top\)](#)

11. PRC Environment

The Age ("CHINA WARNED OF POLLUTION DISASTER", 2007-07-19) reported that the PRC's efforts to tackle pollution are failing, and unless it redoubles efforts to implement its environmental laws and policies, hundreds of millions of people will fall ill and millions die prematurely from some of the world's filthiest air and water. The conclusion appears in an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development study that also says the PRC's environmental laws and five-year economic plans provide a good framework for tackling chronic pollution, but the country has been unable to implement or enforce them properly.

[\(return to top\)](#)

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