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United States

- 1. US - DPRK Relations
  2. US on DPRK Human Rights
  3. ROK, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Issue
  4. Inter - Korean Relations
  5. DPRK Military Strategy
  6. US on DPRK Defectors
  7. US - ROK Relations
  8. US Troop Withdrawal
  9. Inter - Korean Border Dispute
  10. ROK - Japanese Relations
  11. KEDO Meeting
  12. Abductee Reunion
  13. Japanese - US Political Relations
  14. US - Japanese Whaling Ban
  15. Japan Population Growth
  16. ROK Labor Unrest
  17. PRC Energy Supply
  18. Sino - US Relations
  19. PRC Tourism

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. US - DPRK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("DEPUTY DIRECTOR LEE GEUN, NORTH KOREAN DEPUTY DELEGATE OF SIX-WAY TALKS, WILL VISIT U.S. IN AUGUST ", 2004-07-22) reported that, quoting a U.S. government source, the Japanese Asahi Shimbun reported on July 22 that the DPRK deputy delegate of the six-way talks and also the deputy director of the Foreign Ministry, Lee Geun, will visit the U.S. in early August. Starting from August 9, Deputy Director Lee is planning to stay in New York for several days in order to attend the international conference held by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy (NCAFP), a private organization that invites government authorities from the member countries of the six-way talks. At this conference, it is likely that an unofficial meeting will take place between the DPRK and the U.S. authorities as the U.S. deputy delegate of the six-way talks, Joseph DeTrani, special envoy for peace in the Korean Peninsula, is planning to attend as well.

(return to top)

2. US on DPRK Human Rights

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. HOUSE UNANIMOUSLY PASSES NORTH KOREA HUMAN RIGHTS ACT", 2004-07-22) reported that the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously passed on Wednesday the North Korea Human Rights Act of 2004, which calls for the U.S. government to be actively involved in the DPRK human rights issue and protect DPRK defectors. The bill specifically enumerates for the U.S. to take certain steps like: including the DPRK human rights issue as a major topic of discussion with Northeast Asian states; providing generous financial support for DPRK human rights groups; expansion of radio service to the DPRK; strengthening inspections of the distribution of humanitarian assistance; recognizing defectors as refugees and establishing international refugee camps; and permitting defectors to apply for asylum in the US. The bill calls for yearly totals of US$24 million -- including US$2 million for activities improving human rights in the DPRK.

(return to top)

3. ROK, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Reuters ("JAPAN, S.KOREA URGE N.KOREA TO MOVE ON CRISIS ", 2004-07-22) reported that the leaders of Japan and the ROK underscored Thursday a strong trilateral alliance with the US by calling on the DPRK to end a long-running nuclear crisis. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and ROK President Roh Moo-hyun, in casual meetings that ROK media dubbed a "no-necktie shuttle summit," sent a message to the DPRK that giving up its nuclear ambitions would bring economic and diplomatic support. "We hope that North Korea can fully understand this message and make a progressive move at the fourth round of six-party talks and at working-group meetings," ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told reporters after Wednesday's summit. "There still appears to be a strong distrust toward the United States, but the prime minister said Chairman Kim Jong-il's attitude seemed different this time compared with two years ago," Ban said. Kim appeared more receptive to diplomacy, he said.

(return to top)

4. Inter - Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TO TRY TO COAX N.K INTO DROPPING NUCLEAR AMBITION NEXT MONTH ", 2004-07-22) reported that the ROK will attempt to coax the DPRK into abandoning its nuclear weapons program in high-level talks next month by explaining benefits the DPRK can receive in return for the resolution of the nuclear row, Seoul's top strategist on the DPRK said Thursday. Unification Minister Chung Dong-young did not elaborate on details of the benefits, but the ROK has so far indicated massive economic aid if the impoverished country peacefully abandons its nuclear arms program. Chung, who will lead the ROK's delegation at next month's inter-Korean Cabinet-level talks here, also voiced hope that substantial progress could be reached in the next round of six-way nuclear talks slated for September.

(return to top)

5. DPRK Military Strategy

Chosun Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA ANNOUNCES YEAR 2004 AS "YEAR OF CAMOUFLAGE" ", 2004-0--22) reported that it was recently learned that the DPRK designated this year as the "Year of Camouflage" and is strengthening the camouflaged tactics of its army, navy and air force in order to avoid ROK and the U.S. intelligence nets. According to in intelligence source, the DPRK is constructing a large number of fake naval, air and army bases strengthening concealment facilities for existing bases. The DPRK army constructed many concrete towers disguised as anti-tank emplacements near the Military Demarcation Line and created about 80 fake underground bases. On the other hand, its navy has recently been having conversations in code while maneuvering.

(return to top)

6. US on DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("U.S. GAVE THREE N. KOREAN REFUGEES ASYLUM LAST YEAR, REPORT SAYS ", 2004-07-22) reported that the US allowed three DPRK defectors last year to seek refugee in the country, according to a report by the U.S. Justice Department on Thursday. The Executive Office for Immigration Review said in its annual report that it received requests from nine DPRK defectors in 2003 seeking refugee status in the US but granted immigrant status to only three, whose identities were not revealed.

(return to top)

7. US - ROK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("KOREA, U.S. TO CONCLUDE TALKS ON YONGSAN BASE TRANSFER ", 2004-07-22) reported that the ROK and the U.S. will conclude discussions on moving the Yongsan U.S. military base in Seoul to south of the Han River during the tenth Future of the Alliance (FOTA) talks in Washington D.C. on July 22 and 23. Regarding the size of the transfer site, a major point of contention in the talks, Korea is considering providing 200,000 pyong more than its original offer of 3.3 million pyong, whereas, the U.S. is of the opinion that "the land for the base must be at least 3.6 million pyong when taking the standards of other overseas U.S. military base transfers and favorable deployment conditions into consideration."

(return to top)

8. US Troop Withdrawal

Donga Ilbo ("JOHN KERRY TO HALT WITHDRAWAL OF USFK WHEN ELECTED", 2004-07-22) reported that Stars and Stripes, a newspaper for American troops overseas, published an article on July 20 that quoted presidential candidate John Kerry's campaign saying Kerry will stop moves of overseas US forces, including the US Forces in Korea (USFK), if elected. The article quotes a staff member of Kerry's campaign committee, saying, "Senator Kerry opposes withdrawals for now." As for the ROK, Kerry would aim to pull back from the tense Demilitarized Zone and eventually reunify the Koreas, but only sometime in the distant future. The Pentagon plans to pull 12,500 of the 38,000 troops in the ROK and plans to reduce by about one-half its 70,000-strong troop contingent in Germany.

(return to top)

9. Inter - Korean Border Dispute

Chosun Ilbo ("ROH TO BE BRIEFED ON NLL REPORT TO DECIDE WHETHER TO PUNISH ", 2004-07-22) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun will be briefed Friday on the outcome of the Defense Ministry's probe into the alleged distortion of a report on inter-Korean radio communications in seas near the de facto maritime border last week, Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Jong-min said Thursday. "The Defense Ministry will report to the president on Friday the result of its probe into the alleged false reporting of the case so he can decide whether to punish those involved," Kim told reporters accompanying Roh here for a two-day summit with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. The presidential spokesman dismissed reports that Cheong Wa Dae was to going to carry out a major reshuffle of the military in the wake of the suspected false reporting case. "Cheong Wa Dae has yet to make any decision on whether to make a sweeping shakeup of the military," he said.

(return to top)

10. ROK - Japanese Relations

Donga Ilbo ("PRESIDENT ROH TO VISIT JAPAN IN SECOND HALF OF THIS YEAR ", 2004-07-22) reported taht regarding the ROK and Japan's view on shared history, ROK President Roh Moo-hyun said on July 22, "The issue will move in the right direction with the resolve of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi." President Roh pointed out, "Children of Korea and Japan are learning the same historic facts with different viewpoints. It might be difficult to agree on what is historically true, but efforts should be made to reach a consensus on the direction of our history education in the interest of our future." "Though Japan has resolved all wrinkles in its relations with the U.S., does it still not have issues to resolve in northeast Asia (in its relations with Korea and China)? I hope the prime minister will resolve these issues during his tenure," added President Roh. At this, Prime Minister Koizumi refrained from making specific comments, only responding, "More student exchanges are needed between the two nations."

(return to top)

11. KEDO Meeting

Chosun Ilbo ("EXECUTIVE BOARD OF KEDO MEETS IN NEW YORK ", 2004-07-22) reported that the executive board of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization, or KEDO met in New York on Wednesday. Board members from the ROK, the US, EU and Japan, focused on ways to

preserve and maintain equipment and materials for the suspended project of two light-water reactors in the DPRK. The first reactor was due to be completed last year but work had been delayed because of nuclear tension and other problems.

(return to top)

12. Abductee Reunion

Agence France-Presse ("ALLEGED US ARMY DESERTER GETS MORE MEDICAL CHECKS AT TOKYO HOSPITAL", 2004-07-22) reported that an alleged US army deserter has undergone medical checks for a third day at a Tokyo hospital, an official said, as Washington delayed its request for his custody. Charles Robert Jenkins, 64, faces court martial by the US military for alleged desertion to the DPRK following his disappearance on the ROK's border with in 1965. He came to Japan on Sunday to receive medical treatment for complications arising from earlier stomach surgery in Pyongyang as well as problems with other internal organs. The US has offered to delay a request for his handover while he is being treated.

(return to top)

13. Japanese - US Political Relations

The Washington Post ("JAPANESE PARTY CHIEF TO OBSERVE DEMOCRATS", 2004-07-21) reported that the head of Japan's largest opposition party, Katsuya Okada, will visit Boston during the Democratic National Convention next week on a tour designed to bolster his ties with the US, this nation's most important ally. Okada's first stop in the US will be in Boston on Tuesday, when he hopes to pick up some political pointers at the Democratic convention, he said in an interview Wednesday. With about one-third of Japanese voters remaining independents, one of the opposition's great disadvantages against the Liberal Democrats has been its inability to establish grass-roots support in rural areas of Japan. "But the Republicans are the ruling party, so our relations with them are important as well," Okada said. To that end, he also plans to meet with Bush administration officials in Washington.

(return to top)

14. US - Japanese Whaling Ban

The Associated Press ("U.S. EXPLAINS COMMERCIAL WHALING POSITION", 2004-07-22) reported that the US sought Thursday to remove doubts it had abandoned its traditional anti-whaling stance after supporting a proposal on managing a commercial hunt of the marine mammals if a nearly two-decade ban is lifted. The US backed the proposal at Wednesday's meeting of the International Whaling Commission - a move one environmentalist called "inexplicable." A resolution endorsing the plan was to be voted on later Thursday. "It's not a shift in the U.S. position," William Hogarth, the U.S. commissioner to the IWC, told The Associated Press. "The United States is totally against commercial whaling. There's no change in that philosophy." But, he added, if whaling does resume, "It's the position of the U.S. government that we need good strong measures in place." It envisions measures to ensure whalers do not exceed quotas.

(return to top)

15. Japan Population Growth

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN FACING DE-POPULATION AS SOCIAL VALUES CHANGE", 2004-0--22) reported that, confronted with a record low birth rate and increasing numbers of elderly, Japan is trying to revive the desire to have children to combat the long-term threat of de-population predicted by demographers. Japan's 2003 fertility rate of 1.29 children per woman, announced last month by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare is the country's lowest ever, and demographers estimate that by 2050 the country's population could drop to 100 million from its present level of 127 million. Fifty years later, they say that figure could fall to 64 million and warn that if unchecked, this trend could cause Japan's population to collapse within a few centuries. Among the prime causes are the sharp increase in both late marriages and in Japanese choosing to remain single, while the year-on-year drop in birth rate since 1990 has also contributed to the decline, said Tetsuo Yoshioka, who heads the health ministry unit dealing with the falling birth rate.

(return to top)

16. ROK Labor Unrest

Yonhap ("INCHEON SUBWAY UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT REACH DEAL TO END STRIKE ", 2004-07-22) reported that unionized subway workers and management in Incheon struck a deal Thursday to end a two-day walkout and restart normal subway operations on Friday morning, according to subway authorities. The two sides reached a comprehensive agreement on a three-percent wage hike, the hiring of 35 workers and 174 working hours per month, the officials said. The 289 striking union workers are to return to their jobs at 9 a.m. Friday morning. Subway unionists in Seoul, Busan and Daegu remain on strike since Wednesday.

Reuters ("SOUTH KOREA STRIKERS DEFY DEADLINES, FACE ARREST ", 2004-07-22) reported that the ROK deployed hundreds of troops to help at subway stations Thursday during a strike while union action widened to a car plant and activists at a major oil refiner defied arrest and deadlines to return to work. The wave of strikes pose a serious test for President Roh Moo-hyun, a former labor lawyer who has previously been criticized by employers and foreign investors for being too soft on militant labor unions. The widening strike action comes when the economy, Asia's third-largest, is struggling with weak domestic spending and depressed business investment. Ahn Chang-ho, deputy chief for public security at the state prosecution office, said it planned to file for court warrants later in the day for the arrest of five union leaders at LG-Caltex Oil Corp for organizing the strike. Another official denied that prosecutors had come under pressure to act against the strikes, which the government has called illegal.

(return to top)

17. PRC Energy Supply

The Associated Press ("CHINA WARNS OF MORE POWER, OIL SHORTAGES", 2004-07-21) reported that the PRC's power shortages show no signs of easing, state media said Wednesday, as the company in charge of the nation's power grid threatened to cut off factories that fail to conserve energy. The PRC will face growing demands for power, oil and coal in the next few months, said Ma Liqiang, director of the economic operation bureau of the National Development and Reform Commission. "We still see no sight of change or things getting better," said Ma, quoted by the official China Daily newspaper. Areas throughout the PRC have suffered shortages as booming demand outstrips supplies, aggravated in major cities by heavy air-conditioning use in an unusually hot summer.

(return to top)

18. Sino - US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US PACIFIC COMMAND CHIEF IN CHINA FOR DEFENSE TALKS", 2004-07-22) reported that Admiral Thomas Fargo, commander of the US Pacific Command, is in Beijing for talks with senior defense officials on a visit coinciding with the PRC war games in the Taiwan Straits. "This trip is an opportunity for Admiral Fargo to personally meet with defense leaders of the People's Republic of China," the US Pacific Command said in a statement, which described the visit as "routine". "These trips allow Admiral Fargo to meet with senior defense officials in the region and to discuss security issues of mutual interest," it said. His visit coincides with the PRC's largest war games of the year, which pro-Beijing newspapers in Hong Kong say are underway in the Taiwan Straits. Fargo, who is in charge of all US military air, ground and naval forces in the Pacific and Indian Ocean areas, is in the PRC until Sunday.

(return to top)

19. PRC Tourism

Reuters ("CHINA TO TOUT 'RED TOURISM' IN ANNIVERSARY YEAR ", 2004-07-22) reported that the PRC, treading down the capitalist road, will launch a "red tourism" drive this year to mark the 70th anniversary of the Communist Red Army's epic Long March escape from pursuing Nationalist troops. Nostalgic tourists will be able to choose from themes like "re-experience the Long March," "revisit the battlefield," "heroic city tour" and "tours to famous personage hometown" for the 70th anniversary of the Long March, it said. "The promotion of 'red tourism' is a need to eulogize the brilliant cause of the Party, inspire and carry forward China's national spirits," it quoted He Guangwei, head of China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), as saying.

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