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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. US, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Reuters ("RICE, CHINA'S JIANG DISCUSS N.KOREA NUCLEAR ISSUE", 2004-07-08) reported that U.S. national security adviser Condoleezza Rice discussed the urgent issue of the DPRK's nuclear ambitions with the PRC's military chief Jiang Zemin in Beijing Thursday, but her host showed more interest in Taiwan. Rice and Jiang "discussed the need for North Korea to give up its nuclear ambitions," said a senior U.S. administration official on her delegation. He declined to give further details. Rice flew to Beijing from Tokyo, where she met Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi Wednesday and vowed to pursue a diplomatic solution to the standoff with the DPRK. "For the United States, the nuclear issue is an urgent one, and we are focusing on how to get the North to give up its nuclear programs," Rice was quoted as telling Koizumi. But Jiang appeared more interested in Taiwan. Jiang told Rice the PRC will "not sit back and watch and do nothing if the Taiwan authorities cling obstinately to their push for Taiwan independence and if foreign forces meddle and support" the island, PRC state television reported. "The Taiwan issue is the most important and the most sensitive key issue in Sino-U.S. relations," Jiang said. "China's sovereign and territorial integrity are paramount," he was quoted as saying. "We will never tolerate Taiwan independence."

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2. DPRK Military Spending

Donga Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA LAYING 80 NEW TUNNELS ", 2004-07-08) reported that the Ministry of National Defense said in its "Report on the business of national defense" presented to the Committee of State Security on July 7 that the DPRK has been laying 80 new tunnels and reinforcing the camouflage of its army bases after the Iraq war in March 2003. It analyzed that the increase in tunnels is a prepatory response to the precision bombing strikes launched about 800 times a day by stealth fighters of U.S. army during the Iraq war. The Ministry of National Defense also stated that the DPRK is focusing investment on conventional weapons and strategic weapons, despite its serious financial difficulties in the recent years. The DPRK is improving the precision and the targeting of about 400 artillery tubes of 240mm in the neighborhood of the truce line, targeting the metropolitan area of ROK and also making progress in quality reform on about 40 armored vehicles named "Chunmaho" (an imitation of Russia's T-62 armored vehicle) deployed in their front-line units. In addition, through missile engine tests, the DPRK is planning on producing medium-range ballistic missiles and making submarines.

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3. DPRK Remembers Kim Il Sung

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("KIM JONG IL PAYS HOMAGE TO KIM IL SUNG", 2004-07-08) reported that the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army Kim Jong Il, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and chairman of the DPRK National Defense Commission, accompanied by commanding officers of the KPA, visited the Kumsusan Memorial Palace at 00:00 on Thursday. The palace was wrapped in an atmosphere of deep condolences on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the demise of president Kim Il Sung, father of socialist Korea and the nation.

Standing on both sides of the full-length statue of the President were flags of the WPK, the DPRK and the colors of the KPA and honor guards of the three services of the KPA. A floral basket was laid before the statue in the joint name of the Central Committee of the WPK, the Central Military Commission of the WPK and the National Defense Commission of the DPRK. Written on the ribbon of the floral basket were letters "The Great Leader Comrade Kim Il Sung Is Immortal". Kim Jong Il together with the cadres accompanying him paid homage to the President.

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG CRITICIZES SEOUL FOR BAN ON ANNIVERSARY VISIT ", 2004-07-08) reported that the DPRK on Thursday condemned the ROK government as an "unethical" and "inhumane" regime for preventing civic groups here from visiting Pyongyang for the 10th anniversary of its former leader's death. "The South Korean government committed an inhumane act by blocking the civic delegation from visiting Pyongyang to pay a tribute," the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of Fatherland, a state organ dealing with inter-Korean affairs, said. Its comment was published by the state-controlled Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

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5. DPRK Olympic Participation

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA SENDING ATHLETES TO ATHENS", 2004-07-08) reported that reclusive DPRK is expected to send at least 27 athletes to the Athens Olympics next month. The team from the DPRK would consist of eight gymnasts, six competitors in judo, four weightlifters, three table tennis players, three shooters, two boxers and a wrestler, Seoul's Yonhap agency said, quoting the Korea Sports Council. The athletes and about 50 DPRK officials have agreed to march together with the ROK's delegation of 376 athletes and officials in the Athens Games opening ceremony. The two Koreas signaled a thaw in their Cold War rivalry by marching together in Sydney in 2000. Media reports say they are trying to field a joint team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The DPRK placed 60th in the Sydney medals table, capturing one silver medal and three bronzes.

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6. US - ROK Relations

Korea Herald ("RICE VISITS SEOUL TODAY TO REAFFIRM STRONG ALLIANCE", 2004-07-08) reported that US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice will meet President Roh Moo-hyun in Seoul today, inviting much speculation what message one of the most influential figures in the US will convey at a time when the two countries have to fine-tune some tricky issues. Special attention focuses on a personal letter from President George W. Bush to Roh, which Rice is expected to bring as the U.S. leader's special envoy. Government officials say her one-day stay is aimed at reaffirming the "strong alliance" between the two countries, though some critics insist that bilateral relations have suffered a major setback under the liberal Roh administration. "President Bush will convey a clear message through Rice that Washington's commitment to the security of the ROK is firm," a high-ranking presidential official said on condition of anonymity.

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7. US - ROK Troop Repositioning

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREA PROPOSES ALLIANCE TALKS WITH US 22-23 JULY", 2004-07-08) reported that Seoul has proposed holding talks with Washington 22-23 July to finalize an agreement on repositioning the American military command out of Seoul, a ROK military spokesman said Thursday 8 July .The ROK also requested the US host the 10th round of the Future of the Alliance forum in Washington, Brig-Gen Nam Nam Dae-yeon, a Defence Ministry spokesman, said. "A response from the US side has yet to arrive," Nam said in a daily press briefing.

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8. DPRK Defectors in the ROK

Chosun Ilbo ("YOUNG N. KOREAN DEFECTORS EXPERIENCE OSTRACISM, DEPRESSION IN THE SOUTH", 2004-07-08) reported that for the last month, all 19-year-old DPRK defector O Dong-cheol has been doing is going back and forth between his apartment in Nowon-gu, Seoul and a nearby PC cafe. He can't feel when he goes to bed or gets up -- all he does is sleep and play video games. He doesn't wear a watch. Even though he lives with another 23-year-old defector and hence only has to pay half of the bills, most of his government stipend is spent on playing computer games. He has lived in the ROK for three years since defecting from the DPRK in 2001. He gave up on preparing for his high school equivalency exam and since coming up to Seoul has led a rather lethargic existence. "This society is scary and I'm also scared of meeting people. Even if I sleep 12 hours a day, I'm still sleepy." He thinks he may want to study, but to actually do is inconceivable right now. According to the Ministry of Unification, there were 530 school-age DPRK defectors between the ages of 6 and 19 inthe ROK as of late December of last year. Of these, only 105 were actually students, which means that not even 1 in 5 school-age defectors are regularly attending school.

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9. DPRK Defectors in the PRC

Yonhap ("U.S. BODY URGES CHINA TO ALLOW EDUCATION TO N. KOREAN YOUTHS ", 2004-0--08) reported that a U.S. human rights group has called on the PRC government to allow young DPRK defectors to attend schools in the PRC, saying they are suffering from a prison-like life with almost no access to education or employment. "Because of their illegal status, they have few opportunities for education and employment. They are vulnerable to various forms of exploitation," Refugees International, based in Washington, D.C., said in a report titled "No Chance to Dream: North Korean Children in China. "In interviews last year, young DPRK described their lives in the PRC as "hopeless" and "frustrated," the report said. They constantly fear detection and deportation, as the PRC police have increasingly stepped up efforts to crack down on North Koreans living there illegally, it said.

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10. ROK New Capital

Chosun Ilbo ("THE NEW CAPITAL IS UNSUITABLE FOR A REUNIFIED KOREA", 2004-07-08) reported that the government has virtually chosen Yeongi/Gongju as the site for the new capital and announced its choice. Government agencies will actually move to the new capital beginning in 2012 and a self-sufficient new administrative capital with a population of 500,000 will be completed by

2030. However, around 2030 or far earlier than that, the current regime of the DPRK would collapse and Korea would achieve reunification or quasi-reunification. By then, the top national task for a united Korea will be how to peacefully and orderly incorporate the northern part into the national system of Korea. If an opportunity for reunification appears in sight in 10 years, it is a sufficient reason for the new capital construction site to fall into a vast ruin or an ugly monument to a past government like the ill-operating DPRK skyscraper hotel.

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11. Japanese - ROK Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN PM KOIZUMI EYES VISIT TO SOUTH KOREA", 2004-07-08) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is considering visiting the ROK around July 21 for talks with President Roh Moo Hyun, with issues related to the DPRK likely to top the agenda, the Kyodo news agency reports Thursday, citing government sources. Koizumi is expected to make an overnight trip and aim at reinvigorating bilateral relations that have been soured by his visits to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine. The summit may take place on the southern ROK resort island of Cheju, diplomatic sources said. Koizumi is expected to brief Roh about his May 22 meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong Il and ask Seoul to support Tokyo's effort to resolve the issue of the DPRK's past abductions of Japanese citizens, the government sources said. Koizumi and Roh are also expected to compare notes on ways to resolve the standoff over the DPRK's nuclear ambitions.

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12. Japanese - DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN LIKELY TO PROVIDE FOOD, MEDICAL AID TO N. KOREA SOON", 2004-0--08) reported that Japan is likely to soon start providing the promised food and medical aid to the DPRK, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hatsuhisa Takashima said Thursday. The aid - 250,000 tons of food and $10 million worth of medical supplies - is expected to be provided 'in the not-so-distant future,' Takashima told a press conference. He did not elaborate. In May, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged to provide the aid 'within one or two months' during his talks with DPRK leader Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang.

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13. Abductee Reunion

The Associated Press ("FORMER N KOREA ABDUCTEE REUNITES WITH FAMILY IN INDONESIA", 2004-07-08) reported that the Japanese wife of an American accused of deserting his Army unit 40 years ago to defect to the DPRK arrived in Jakarta Thursday ahead of a long-awaited reunion with her husband and two daughters. Soga arrived on a commercial flight at Jakarta's international airport, and a police escort accompanied her to a hotel. Before boarding her flight in Japan, she said she was happy beyond words. "I don't want to say anything, I just want to hug my daughters," she said. On arrival at the hotel, she appealed to the media to give the family time to discuss their future. "This is my first visit to Indonesia and I found this is a truly beautiful country," she said. "And now I can meet my family after one year and nine months thanks to the cooperation from the Indonesian government. For the time being, I would like to have a quiet moment for the four of us to talk." Jenkins was to be flown from Pyongyang to Indonesia Friday aboard a flight charted by the Japanese government. "From the humanitarian perspective, it can be helpful in facilitating the improvement in political relations, not only between Japan and North Korea, but in the end help

build confidence among the nations of the six-party talks," he said.

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14. Australian - US Relations

Voice of America News ("AUSTRALIA JOINS CONTROVERSIAL US MISSILE PLAN", 2004-07-08) reported that Australia and the US have signed a pact to develop a controversial missile defense shield. Critics have questioned its cost, viability, and Australia's need for such a system. Australia's government says it needs a way to protect its shores from ballistic missiles, even though at the moment the remote continent faces no threat from long-range weapons. So Australian Defense Minister Robert Hill and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld signed a pact Wednesday in Washington to develop and test missile defense systems, as well as establish joint training centers. Mr. Hill says his government is committed to this ambitious project. "We have a responsibility to address not only the threats of today but the threats that we might face in the future," he says. Defense analysts say the joint project is aimed at the danger posed by the DPRK. Opposition politicians in Australia believe the development of a defensive shield could have a destabilizing effect on the country's Asia-Pacific neighbors and could spark an arms race with the PRC.

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15. US - PRC Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA CONCERNED ABOUT U.S. SHRIMP MOVE ", 2004-07-08) reported that the PRC expressed concern Thursday about proposed U.S. antidumping measures on shrimp imports, but said such disputes were normal in their fast-growing trade relationship. The U.S. Commerce Department proposed punitive tariffs of 8 percent to 113 percent after ruling Tuesday that PRC and Vietnamese firms were selling shrimp in the United States at artificially low prices. "It is fair to say that China expresses concern over the decision made by the United States," said Zhang Qiyue, a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman. Half of the PRC's $800 million in shrimp exports in 2003 went to the United States, according to state media. Beijing has promised to cut its soaring trade surplus with the United States, which reached a record $124 billion in 2003. As trade surges, "it is very normal for the two sides to witness some trade problems," Zhang said. "But we should handle those problems properly and deal with them calmly so as to preserve and ensure the smooth development of trade between the two countries."

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16. Chiang Kai-shek to be Buried in Taiwan

Reuters ("CHIANG KAI-SHEK TO BE BURIED - AT LAST - IN TAIWAN ", 2004-07-08) reported that Nationalist Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek will be buried at last -- three decades after his death. Chiang fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the mainland in a bloody civil war and died on the island in 1975. His remains lie embalmed in a "temporary" mausoleum in the northern Taiwan city of Taoyuan, awaiting a proper burial on the mainland. His son and successor as president, Chiang Ching-kuo, also lies in Taoyuan awaiting a permanent resting place. The Defense Ministry said on Thursday that descendants of the Chiang family had asked the government to hold a state burial for the late presidents and to entomb them in a military cemetery in Taipei. "The ministry will respect the will of the late presidents' family," it said.

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17. PRC SARS Outbreak

The Associated Press ("SECOND HONG KONG OFFICIAL QUITS OVER SARS", 2004-07-08) reported that Hospital Authority Chairman Dr. Leong Che-hung said Thursday he was resigning over last year's SARS crisis, making him the second senior health official in Hong Kong to do so in as many days. Leong said he was stepping down to demonstrate the spirit of political accountability. But he stressed that "no mistakes" were made by the Hospital Authority in the battle against SARS, which infected 1,755 people in Hong Kong, killing 299 of them, before subsiding one year ago. A legislative report released Monday said the authority, which runs all public hospitals in Hong Kong, had failed to put in place a contingency plan for large-scale outbreaks of infectious diseases like SARS.

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18. PRC Irregular Weather

Agence France-Presse ("FREAK WEATHER KILLS 41 PEOPLE, INJURES 150 ACROSS CHINA ", 2004-07-08) reported that at least 41 people have been killed and more than 150 injured in freak weather-related incidents across the PRC, officials and reports said. Three people were killed and 143 injured when a hurricane lashed eastern China Wednesday, turning a rural community into a blizzard of walnut-sized hailstones and falling tree trunks, officials said. The hurricane came during a week of bad weather across China that has proved unusually lethal. In southwest Sichuan province, seven people, including two girls aged three and seven, were killed and 10 others injured during a lightning strike Sunday, the official Xinhua news agency reported. In the northwest Xinjiang region two people drowned and six went missing in mountain torrents on Tuesday, while on Monday at least 14 were killed and 22 were missing after a huge mudslide in southwestern Yunnan province. Finally a heat wave in southern Guangdong province's Dongguan city has claimed 15 lives over the past two weeks, according to figures released Wednesday in the Yangcheng Evening Post.

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19. Mongolian Elections

The New York Times ("A CUNNING OPPOSITION TURNS TABLES IN MONGOLIA", 2004-07-08) reported that voters in this literate, sparsely populated country between the PRC and Russia have handed their governing party of former Communists an uncommon lesson that indicates that a young democracy may have come of age. In a boisterous election 10 days ago that pitted guile against might, the country's 1.5 million voters cut the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party numbers in the 76-seat Parliament from 72 to 36. On Wednesday, the General Election Commission confirmed that the opposition, the Motherland Democratic Coalition, known as the Democrats, won 34 seats. The Democrats claim to have won two more seats, and have taken their argument to an administrative court. They are also wooing three independents in the hope of forming a government.

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20. AIDS in Asia

The Associated Press ("U.N.: AIDS COULD COST ASIA $17.5B A YEAR ", 2004-07-08) reported that the cost of the AIDS epidemic in Asia could jump by more than $10 billion annually by 2010 unless countries in the region take urgent steps to halt its spread, the Asian Development Bank and United Nations said Thursday. Failure to bolster current HIV treatment and prevention programs could

result in about 10 million more infections by the end of the decade, according to a joint report by UNAIDS and the ADB. At present about 7.2 million people are living with HIV in the Asia-Pacific region with hundreds of thousands dying each year. The cost of fighting the epidemic in Asia is expected to soar to $17.5 billion annually by 2010 from the current $7 billion if anti-AIDS programs are not improved, the report said. Some $1.5 billion is required yearly to contain the AIDS epidemic in Asia, and that amount is expected to increase significantly as more people are diagnosed with the disease, said Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS. "The cost of inaction, of not acting against AIDS, is very high," Piot said. "The longer one waits, the higher the bill becomes."

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