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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK-Japan Relations

Bloomberg ("JAPAN, NORTH KOREA TO DISCUSS RELATIONS IN MID-AUGUST, ASO SAYS", 2007-07-24) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso said Japan and the DPRK will meet by mid-August to discuss ways to normalize their relations. Negotiations between the two countries in March in Vietnam broke off after the two sides couldn't agree on resolving the issue of kidnapping of Japanese decades ago and Japan's occupation of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations and Humour

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREAN GENERAL SHOWS A LITTLE LOCKER-ROOM HUMOR", 2007-07-24) reported that Lieutenant General Kim Yong Chol opened inter-Korean military negotiations with the joke: A professor asks students: "Which part of the body becomes bigger when a person is stimulated?" A female student is too embarrassed to answer, but a male student provides the correct response: "The eyeball." He then concluded: "The reason the female student could not answer the question might have been because her head is full of ugly thoughts," Kim said. "The professor said it was important to listen to the other person or you may end up giving away your weaknesses." The general then applied the "lesson" to the talks that were about to start: "In North-South dialogue, it would be good to listen to the other side's story carefully rather than insisting on your position." The general says he got the joke from the internet, and admitted to watching RO Korean TV dramas.

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3. Fatal Collapse in DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("20 RUMORED KILLED IN N.KOREA BUILDING COLLAPSE", 2007-07-24) reported a rumor that a seven-story apartment building in Hyesan, Yanggang Province in the DPRK collapsed last Thursday, killing about 20 and seriously injuring dozens of others, mostly seniors and children. The ROK National Intelligence Service said it is checking the information. Despite being less than 10 years old, the building presumably collapsed due to shoddy construction.

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4. ROK Hostages in Afghanistan

Korea Herald ("AGONY PROLONGED FOR TALIBAN HOSTAGES", 2007-07-24) reported that negotiations for the release of 23 South Koreans in Afghanistan extended to another day yesterday amid conflicting news reports on what the militant group responsible is demanding in exchange for the hostages. The ROK government said it was maintaining constant contact with the kidnappers and that it is "mobilizing effective measures for a solution." "We have confirmed that the abductees are in safe condition for the time being. We are aware of their status," the official said.

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5. ROK-US Trade Relations

Reuters ("CONGRESS WARNED NOT TO REJECT S.KOREA PACT", 2007-07-24) reported that US congressional rejection of a free trade agreement with the ROK would deliver a severe blow to US standing in Asia, a top US trade official said. "If we succumb to protectionism within our own borders and allow KORUS (Korea-U.S free trade agreement) to fail or not even receive a congressional vote, the repercussions promise to be severe and enduring," US Trade Representative Karan Bhatia said in a speech to a US trade association.

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6. ROK-Russia Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA, RUSSIA AGREE TO PILOT FTA TALKS", 2007-07-24) reported that the ROK has agreed with Russia to launch study group talks on a bilateral free trade agreement in September, it was revealed on Monday. Trade talks between the ROK and Russia will likely gain steam starting early next year, as Russia will join the World Trade Organization by this year's end.

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7. Japan Nuclear Plant

Kyodo ("2,000 TONS OF WATER FLOWED INTO REACTOR BUILDING AFTER QUAKE", 2007-07-24) reported that about 2,000 tons of water flowed into the building housing one of the seven reactors at the world's largest nuclear power station in Niigata Prefecture operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. after it was hit by the earthquake last week, company officials said. The officials said no radioactive substances have been detected in the leaked water and that there is no danger of radioactive leakage from the building, which is kept pressurized.

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8. Japan-Australian Defense Relations

Kyodo ("KOIKE, NELSON AGREE TO PROMOTE JAPAN-AUSTRALIA DEFENSE RELATIONS", 2007-07-24) reported that Japanese Defense Minister Yuriko Koike and her Australian counterpart Brendan Nelson agreed Tuesday to promote bilateral defense relations, which have become active in recent months. The two also agreed to continue working on updating the 2003 Japan-Australia memorandum of understanding on defense exchanges, as agreed to earlier with a view to concluding the revised version around next spring.

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9. Japan Elections

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S RULING PARTY SAYS ABE WON'T QUIT", 2007-07-24) reported that Japan's beleaguered Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will not resign no matter how badly his coalition fares in Sunday's elections, his government vowed Tuesday. The remarks came despite opinion polls showing the conservative premier's approval ratings have plummeted to around 30 percent after a series of scandals and gaffes involving top aides.

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10. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("UN REJECTS TAIWAN'S APPLICATION", 2007-07-24) reported that the United Nations rejected Taiwan's application to become a member of the world body, citing U.N. adherence to the "one China" policy and its recognition of the PRC government in Beijing. In announcing its rejection, the United Nations cited a 1971 resolution that recognizes the People's Republic of China as the lawful representative to the world body.

[\(return to top\)](#) Reuters ("CHINA, TAIWAN TRADE BARBS OVER FAILED U.N. BID", 2007-07-24) reported that the PRC and Taiwan traded barbs over Taiwan's latest failed attempt to join the U.N.

"Scums of the nation who attempt to split the country cannot escape the punishment of history in the end," Xinhua news agency quoted an unnamed official with the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office as saying. "China is attempting to use the international community to pressure Taiwan and that just shows that it doesn't dare to face the fact that Taiwan is sovereign and independent, and that the two sides don't belong to each other," the Mainland Affairs Council said in a statement. [\(return to top\)](#)

11. PRC Floods

The Los Angeles Times ("CHINA GRAPPLES WITH EPIC FLOODING", 2007-07-24) reported that heavy rains have inundated central PRC, causing the worst flooding in half a century. More than 100 million people have been affected, and some of them have witnessed rainfall of mind-boggling ferocity, according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. The PRC has moved more than a million people from the paths of the floodwaters.

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12. PRC Rural Unrest

Agence France-Presse ("AS ILLEGAL LAND GRABS INCREASE, SO DOES UNREST IN CHINA", 2007-07-24) reported that in the PRC, where business chiefs and officials rarely wait for someone to put up a "for sale" sign before taking over the land, property disputes are one of the biggest sources of social unrest. The issue has leapt to the top of the national agenda in recent years amid a wave of violent land disputes often triggered by rapacious developers and corrupt local government workers snatching land from hapless farmers and city dwellers. There were 130,000 cases of illegal land grabs last year, an increase of 17.3 percent from 2005, the land ministry said in March.

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