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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Working Groups Schedule

Reuters ("N.KOREA TALKS TO TACKLE DETAILS NEXT WEEK: U.S.", 2007-08-01) reported that US negotiator Christopher Hill said officials will start hammering out technical details next week of the next steps to ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program. The DPRK shut down its Yongbyon nuclear reactor last month, keeping its side of a deal. A working group on energy and economic cooperation will convene on August 7 and 8 in Panmunjom. The group focusing on the technicalities of denuclearization will meet in Beijing and the bilateral group on U.S.-DPRK relations will probably meet in a Southeast Asian country where both had embassies.

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2. Radioactive Leak at Yongbyon

Kyodo News ("RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION TO DELAY IAEA WORK AT N. KOREA FACILITIES", 2007-08-01) reported that the IAEA found small-scale radioactive contamination at Yongbyon that is likely to delay work to set up equipment for monitoring their shutdown.

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3. US-DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("U.S., N. KOREA AGREE TO PUSH 6-WAY DENUKE TALKS", 2007-08-01) reported that the US and DPRK agreed to implement their respective commitments made within the framework of six-party talks and press ahead with the multilateral talks, at a break during ASEAN.

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4. Brownback on DPRK Evangelist

Christian Examiner ("EVANGELIST FACING EXECUTION IN N. KOREA", 2007-08-01) reported that US presidential candidate Sen. Sam Brownback, R.-Kan., has teamed up with Voice of Martyrs, an Oklahoma-based ministry in an effort to secure the release of a DPR Korean evangelist allegedly to be executed.

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5. New DPRK Foreign Minister

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA'S NEW FOREIGN MINISTER DEBUTS IN REGIONAL SECURITY FORUM", 2007-07-31) reported that the new DPRK Foreign Minister, Pak Ui Chun, is making his first overseas trip since becoming the DPRK's top diplomat in May, to attend the ASEAN Regional Forum. His visit comes amid renewed optimism that his country will eventually abandon its nuclear weapons program in return for economic aid and other political concessions. In his first appearance on an international stage, 74-year old Pak is showing that he knows how to smile and even recognizes a good photo opportunity.

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6. Japan, PRC Talks on DPRK

Associated Press ("JAPAN, CHINA DISCUSS NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, TERRITORIAL DISPUTES", 2007-08-01) reported that foreign ministers from Japan and the PRC discussed ways to achieve further progress in Six Party Talks but remained far apart in settling a territorial dispute in the East China Sea. Japan's Taro Aso and the PRC's Yang Jiechi also discussed food safety, the environment and efforts by Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian to push toward formal independence, Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Mitsuo Sakaba said. Aso told Yang that Japan opposes Chen's bid for Taiwan to enter the United Nations under its own name.

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7. DPRK-Singapore Relations

Channel News Asia ("NORTH KOREA'S NUMBER TWO LEADER IN SINGAPORE FOR OFFICIAL VISIT", 2007-08-01) reported that DPRK's Kim Yong Nam is in Singapore on a three-day official visit. It is his first visit as President of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly. Kim and Singapore President SR Nathan discussed developments between the two countries, as well as the wider region.

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8. DPRK-New Zealand Relations

New Zealand Herald ("PETERS TO VISIT 'AXIS OF EVIL' MEMBER NORTH KOREA", 2007-08-01) reported that New Zealand foreign minister Winston Peters has accepted an invitation to visit the DPRK. Mr Peters, who is in the Philippines for the Asean Regional Forum and associated meetings, said he was pleased North Korea had honoured its agreement to shutdown its Yongbyon nuclear reactor and allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to return.

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9. Joint Korean TV Drama

Korea Times ("KOREAS PRODUCE EPIC DRAMA ON ROYALTY", 2007-08-01) reported that the first-ever television epic drama jointly produced by the Koreas will finally be unveiled on KBS2 Aug. 8. Titled "Sayuksin," the much-awaited show was produced, shot and edited by (North) Korean Central Television. The ROK's state-run broadcaster KBS has paid 1.9 billion won, or roughly $2.1 million for the production costs and has provided the infrastructure including technology.

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10. ROK Hostages in Afghanistan

Agence France-Presse ("TALIBAN THREATEN SKOREAN HOSTAGES AS DEADLINE PASSES", 2007-08-01) reported that Afghanistan's Taliban threatened to kill more of its 21 ROK hostages after a deadline expired, as helicopters dropped leaflets asking people to leave the area where they are held. By evening, hours after the noon (0730 GMT) deadline, there appeared to have been little movement, with negotiators unable to provide new information and the Taliban saying there had

been no developments. "After the deadline passed, one or more hostages could be killed any time," Taliban spokesman Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP.

(return to top) The New York Times ("SOUTH KOREA URGES U.S. TO CHANGE STANCE ON NEGOTIATING WITH THE TALIBAN", 2007-08-01) reported that the ROK urged the US and Afghan governments to show "flexibility" over Taliban demands for the release of imprisoned militants. "The government is well aware of how the international community deals with these kinds of abduction cases," Cheon Ho-seon, a spokesman for President Roh Moo-hyun, said. "But it also believes that it would be worthwhile to use flexibility in the cause of saving the precious lives of those still in captivity, and is appealing to the international community to do so." Mr. Karzai was criticized by the US and by European governments after he approved a deal in March in which five Taliban fighters were freed in exchange for the release of an Italian journalist. He said the trade was a one-time deal. (return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL ORDERS NGO WORKERS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN", 2007-0--01) reported that with the ROK hostage situation continuing, the Foreign Ministry sent letters to nine non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan requesting their ROK employees leave the country. The NGOs include Good Neighbors International, Global Care and East-West Cultural Development Cooperation Council. (return to top)

11. Japan Constitutional Revision

Kyodo ("OVER HALF OF ELECTION WINNERS OPPOSE REVISING ARTICLE 9", 2007-08-01) reported that more than half of the winners in Sunday's upper house election are opposed to revising war-renouncing Article 9 of the Constitution and nearly half of them do not approve exercising the right to collective self-defense, a Kyodo News survey showed. The results also showed 65.5 percent are against visits by prime ministers to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine.

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12. Japan Election

Kyodo ("SCANDAL-HIT FARM MINISTER AKAGI EFFECTIVELY SACKED", 2007-08-01) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe effectively dismissed farm minister Norihiko Akagi after just two months in the post over a series of political fund scandals that caused damage to the ruling coalition in Sunday's upper house election, making him the fourth minister to leave Abe's 10-month-old Cabinet. Abe summoned Akagi in the morning, where the minister agreed to submit his resignation.

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13. ARF Meeting

Agence France-Presse ("ASIA OPENS SECURITY SUMMIT", 2007-08-01) reported that the US said it was committed to Asia, the PRC accused Japan of hyping a food scare and Australia pledged money to fight sex tourism as Asia's hectic security summit kicked off. Every year, ASEAN caps days of meetings with the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) -- Asia's main security talks, which this year bring in 17 partners including the PRC, Japan, the Koreas, Russia, Australia, the US and others.

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14. Cross Strait Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA'S ARMY DECLARES ZERO TOLERANCE OF 'TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE'", 2007-0-

-01) reported that the PRC army marked its 80th birthday with a high-profile reception at which Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan said the army will have zero tolerance of "Taiwan independence". Cao said Hu Jintao, chairman of the Central Military Commission and the PRC's president, had put forward basic guidelines for the military to develop in a sound and rapid way.

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15. Sino-US Trade Relations

Kyodo ("SENATE BANKING PANEL OKS CHINA CURRENCY BILL", 2007-08-01) reported that the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs passed a bill aimed at toughening US laws against what they call the PRC's "currency manipulation." The move came after the Senate Finance Committee last week passed a bill aimed at forcing nations such as the PRC to let their currencies rise more quickly with a timeline for escalating punitive actions should they fail to do so.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("PAULSON: CHINA WANTS FINANCIAL REFORM", 2007-0--01) reported that US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson said he was assured that Beijing is committed to currency flexibility and more financial reforms. "I heard from everyone, right up to the top, they are committed to currency flexibility, to currency reform," Paulson told reporters after two days of trade talks with PRC leaders that ended with no major concessions. (return to top)

16. Sino-Kazakh Trade

BBC News ("TRADE DILEMMA ON CHINA-KAZAKH BORDER", 2007-08-01) reported the PRC-Kazakh border is the country's busiest frontier: lorries and cars cue for hours here, empty on the way to the PRC, loaded with merchandise on the way back. Hundreds of people and millions of dollars worth of goods cross the border every day. "Official policy here is to say that China is a very good neighbour, but unofficially there are plenty of fears," said Dostym Satpaev, the head of the regional Risk Assessment Group. There is, Mr Satpaev says, a real worry in the region that the PRC will simply become too much to handle, and that the growing number of goods and people it sends will pose a serious demographic and economic threat.

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