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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. US - DPRK Relations

Reuters ("NEW FLURRY OF DIPLOMACY SWIRLS ON NORTH KOREA ", 2004-07-28) reported that the State Department's point man on the DPRK, Joseph DeTrani, arrived in Beijing on Wednesday on a visit that analysts and diplomats see giving a lift to efforts to resolve a 21-month nuclear standoff. A senior U.S. official in Washington said Tuesday DeTrani had been asked by the PRC to come and Beijing may be passing a message to the US from the DPRK, perhaps an official rejection of a U.S. proposal to end the nuclear stalemate made at the last round of talks in Beijing in June. But an Asian diplomat in Beijing saw the visit as a good omen, saying he would not visit if hopes for progress were slim.

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2. US - DPRK Diplomatic Visit

Reuters ("N.KOREAN NEGOTIATOR RI GUN TO VISIT U.S. SOON ", 2004-07-28) reported that a senior DPRK foreign ministry official will make a rare trip to the US soon, becoming the highest ranking figure from the DPRK to visit since President Bush took office. News of the planned U.S. visit by Ri Gun, deputy head of U.S. affairs at the DPRK's foreign ministry, came as the State Department's point man on the crisis over the DPRK's nuclear programs headed to Beijing for talks. The U.S. embassy declined to comment on Ri's expected trip, which would follow on the heels of a visit to Washington by the DPRK's U.N. ambassador -- the first allowed by the Bush administration.

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3. Russian - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("KIM JONG-IL PLANS RUSSIA VISIT: SOURCES ", 2004-07-28) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il is planning a visit to Russia as early as within this month, diplomatic sources here said Wednesday, citing the DPRK's balanced diplomacy toward Russia and the PRC and Kim's recent trip to the PRC. The DPRK leader will likely visit Vladivostok to hold a summit with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, possibly before the end of the month or early next month, sources familiar with DPRK affairs said on condition of anonymity.

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4. EU - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND N. KOREA UNCLEAR: EUROPEAN UNION ", 2004-07-28) reported that the European Union said its relations with the DPRK remain unclear, saying the

two sides have no diplomatic ties, a local trade organization said Wednesday. The EU also complained of the absence of monitoring on food aid it provides to the DPRK, despite providing 180 million euro (US$217million) in aid since 1995, the Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) said Wednesday, quoting the Europa Regions Magazine published by the EU.

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5. Japanese - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("JAPAN TO GIVE FOOD AND MEDICINE TO NORTH KOREA IN AUGUST ", 2004-07-28) reported that Japan will supply food and medical aid to DPRK in August that it promised at the May summit between the two countries, local media here reported Wednesday. The Japanese cabinet will approve the aid early next month ahead of an August 10 working group meeting in the DPRK to resolve the issue of Japanese abducted by northern agents, the media said.

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6. Working Level Talks on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Reuters ("CHINA WANTS TO HOST N.KOREA TALKS AUG 11-14: NHK ", 2004-07-28) reported that the PRC is proposing that six-party "working level" talks on the DPRK's nuclear programs be held on August 11-14, Japanese public television NHK reported on Wednesday. Quoting unidentified PRC government officials in Beijing, NHK said the PRC was stressing that the working-level talks should be held in mid-August so that senior-level six-way talks could take place by the end of September. Japan's top government spokesman, Hiroyuki Hosoda, said on Wednesday that no dates for working-level talks have been set.

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7. DPRK Defectors

Reuters ("OVER 200 REFUGEES FROM NORTH KOREA ARRIVE IN THE SOUTH", 2004-07-27) reported that a chartered plane carrying more than 200 DPRK refugees arrived Tuesday in the ROK, bringing them from temporary asylum in an unidentified Southeast Asian country. The first of two planes reported to be carrying the refugees touched down at a heavily guarded military airport in Sungnam, south of Seoul. Groups of people got off the plane and into about six buses, said a Reuters photographer at the scene. "We believe there are about 230 people arriving today," said Chun Ki Won, who leads a group of missionaries helping North Korean defectors. "We expect about the same number tomorrow."

The Associated Press ("227 MORE NORTH KOREANS ARRIVE IN SEOUL ", 2004-07-28) reported that the second wave in the biggest mass defection of former-DPRK citizens to the ROK arrived Wednesday on a flight from an unidentified Southeast Asian country, bringing the total in the two-day airlift to nearly 460. The group of 227 North Koreans arrived at Incheon International Airport on a chartered Korean Air plane arranged by the ROK government, the ROK's Yonhap news agency said. ROK government officials have been reluctant to confirm the arrival of the North Koreans and have declined to reveal which country they are coming from, but news reports said that 230 arrived Tuesday.

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8. ROK on DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("SEOUL URGED TO BRING N. KOREAN DEFECTORS IN CHINA TO S. KOREA ", 2004-0--28) reported that a ROK civic activist called on the government to make aggressive efforts to bring North Koreans in the PRC to the ROK, saying that this week's en masse defection will make defection a pending issue in the PRC. Song Boo-geun, a senior official of the Commission to Help North Korean Refugees, said the government should seek ways to fundamentally address the defection issue in the PRC through diplomatic negotiations.

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9. Inter - Korean Trade

Yonhap ("KOREA TO IMPORT DUCK, CHICKEN FROM N. KOREA ", 2004-07-28) reported that the ROK government said Wednesday that it is moving to revise existing import regulations to allow chicken and duck meat to be brought in from the DPRK. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry said it is putting the final touches to revisions to sanitation rules to permit the imports. The exact date for starting to allow the imports has not been set since various political factors need to be considered, but there is a possibility it could start next year.

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10. Inter - Korean Tourism

Reuters ("TABOOS ABOUND FOR VISITORS TO RECLUSIVE NORTH KOREA", 2004-07-28) reported that no cameras with too powerful a lens. No mobile phones. And certainly no criticism of the economy or politics. These are just some of the ground rules for tourists visiting the DPRK. The ROK's Hyundai Asan company started running cruises six years ago to scenic Mount Kumgang, just across the heavily fortified border between the two Koreas, after the area was designated a special tourism zone by the DPRK. Although around 700,000 people have been herded though Kumgang since tours opened, things haven't always been smooth. "It is very difficult running tourism in North Korea, but it must be appreciated that this project marks the beginning of something much bigger between the two Koreas," said Kim Yoon-kyu, chief executive of Hyundai Asan.

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11. Inter - Korean Relations

Yonhap ("PRESIDENT REITERATES PLEDGE TO RESOLVE NUCLEAR DISPUTE PEACEFULLY ", 2004-07-28) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun on Wednesday reiterated his government's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the dispute over the DPRK's nuclear program through dialogue and peacefully. In a message to a function in Washington honoring U.S. Korean War veterans, the president said, "I am determined to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully through dialogue." President Roh said in the message, read by Patriots and Veterans Affairs Minister An Joo-seob, that the six-party talks on the DPRK nuclear issue have begun producing signs of resolution.

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12. DPRK Human Rights

Agence France-Presse ("N.KOREAN SCIENTIST RECOUNTS CHEMICAL TESTS ON PRISONERS", 2004-07-28) reported that a former DPRK research scientists has said the DPRK routinely tests chemicals on political prisoners, and that this was intended to prepare for a possible attack on the ROK according to an interview. Newsnight interviewed a man identified only as "Dr Kim" -- he wanted anonymity as he has family members still living in the DPRK -- who defected two years ago. He recounted pioneering experiments in 1979 when poison gas was tested on political prisoners who were enclosed in sealed glass cubicles, allowing scientists to monitor the effects. He continued: "The purpose of this experiment was to determine how long it takes for a human being to die when x amount of gas is put into x cubic meters of space. "Since this was for military purposes we wanted to determine how much gas was necessary to annihilate the whole city of Seoul."

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13. ROK Defense Minister

Yonhap ("PRESIDENT LIKELY TO APPOINT DEFENSE ADVISER AS NEW DEFENSE MINISTER ", 2004-07-28) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun will likely accept the resignation of Defense Minister Cho Young-kil Wednesday and replace him with Yoon Kwang-ung, currently senior presidential aide for defense affairs, officials at Cheong Wa Dae, the presidential office, said. Cho on Tuesday expressed his intention to tender his resignation over the controversial misreporting of an inter-Korean skirmish around the maritime border with the DPRK in the Yellow Sea on July 14.

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14. Japan Cult Attack

Reuters ("JAPAN FREES CULT MEMBERS HELD IN SHOOTING OF TOP COP", 2004-07-28) reported that citing a lack of evidence, Tokyo prosecutors Wednesday released three former members of a Japanese doomsday cult, including an ex-police officer, arrested earlier this month over the shooting of Japan's police chief nine years ago. The 1995 shooting of then National Police Agency chief Takaji Kunimatsu came just 10 days after the cult, the Aum Shinri Kyo (Supreme Truth Sect), carried out a gas attack on the Tokyo subway that killed 12 and made thousands ill.

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15. Japanese Military Spending

Donga Ilbo ("JAPAN IS CONSIDERING OFFENSIVE MISSILES TO ATTACK ENEMY BASES ", 2004-07-28) reported that a Japanese newspaper agency, the Asahi Shimbun, on July 26 reported the Japanese Defense Agency was considering including plans to retain weapons to attack enemies' ballistic missile bases for the next "National Defense Program Outline" to be revised at the end of this year. The weapons being considered are precision guidance bombs; the U.S. anti-ship missile Harpoon 2 with a 200-kilometer range and designed to attack ground targets; and Tomahawk cruise missiles with a range of around 2,000 km. Light aircraft carriers are also being considered for introduction next year. As for this move, the Asahi Shimbun added, "Some in the government have raised concerns that possessing such missiles as the Tomahawk could be seen as a threat to northeastern Asian nations and cause diplomatic conflicts." According to the Constitution's restrictions on owning war potential, Japan has not retained weapons to attack enemy bases and is

dependent on U.S. forces in times of urgency. However, many are demanding Japan possess missile capability as a precaution to a possible missile threat by the DPRK.

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16. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("TAIWAN HOLDS ARTILLERY EXERCISES NEAR CHINA",) reported that Taiwan held live-fire artillery exercises on Wednesday at an island fortress just a few miles from the PRC and days after the Chinese military staged a mock invasion of Taiwan. Television footage showed soldiers firing shells into the sea from artillery pieces, creating big waves. Wednesday's firing is part of a two-day drill on the island of Quemoy, which sits on the PRC's doorstep. Another round of exercises will run from August 2 to August 5, the Defence Ministry said in a statement. PRC militia staged a two-day weekend exercise off the southeastern coast, following up on drills by the People's Liberation Army this month that simulated an invasion of Taiwan.

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17. Cross Strait Economic Relations

Los Angeles Times ("KEEPING PARTY LINE, BOTTOM LINE SEPARATE", 2004-07-28) reported that Taiwanese video game salesman Simon Chang was drinking beer with a mainland customer at a nightclub here recently, laughing as a stand-up comedian delivered off-the-news material, Jay Leno-style. When the comic turned from bawdy punch lines to President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan and his supposed plans for the island's independence from the PRC, the crowd launched into a profane political chant. That's when Chang's smile vanished. "They're cursing my president," he said. "It makes me mad. But what can I do?" For the estimated 1 million Taiwanese entrepreneurs and staffers who have migrated here to cash in on the PRC's business boom, the answer is: Nothing. To prosper, they must keep their politics private. At least 50,000 Taiwanese companies, taking advantage of the PRC's cheap labor and fast-growing consumer base, have invested $100 billion here since 1987, experts say. The PRC has replaced the US as Taiwan's biggest trading partner, and half the companies on the Taiwan Stock Exchange have mainland operations. But PRC officials also have an ulterior motive. They're wagering that closer economic links will prompt the island's businesspeople--protective of their investments--to pressure Taiwan to join the People's Republic.

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18. PRC Economic Development

The New York Times ("NEW BOOMTOWNS CHANGE PATH OF CHINA'S GROWTH", 2004-07-28) reported that Dongguan has exploded from a mere town to a city of seven million in a little over 20 years. But the city officials are not content with a 23 percent annual economic growth rate. They are putting the finishing touches on a vast, entirely new annex city that they hope will draw 300,000 engineers and researchers, the vanguard of a new PRC. "We are the first in China to pursue this kind of vision," said Wang Jianya, deputy director of the development, called Songshan Lake Pioneer Park. "We're not trying to be the biggest, only the best." Dongguan is one of a score of PRC megacities whose extraordinary growth reflects the PRC's boom and its challenge. The country's rapid urbanization is helping to lift hundreds of millions of rural Chinese out of poverty. Economists like Tang Wing-shing, a specialist in urban development at Baptist University in Hong Kong, worry about the consequences: waste of resources, loss of arable land, fiscal crises, corruption and pollution.

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19. PRC Espionage Arrest

Reuters ("CHINESE-AMERICAN ON TRIAL FOR CHINA ESPIONAGE ", 2004-07-28) reported that a Chinese-American businessman will go on trial in the PRC soon, accused of spying on the PRC for arch-rival Taiwan while in the US, the PRC state media said. David Dong, 52, also known as Dong Wei, is the latest in a string of U.S. citizens and permanent residents arrested in the PRC on charges of spying. "How big exactly the scope of Taiwan's spy network in the United States is has become an alarming question," said the Global Times, a subsidiary of the People's Daily, the mouthpiece of the PRC's Communist Party. It was unclear if Dong's arraignment would strain PRC-US ties, but the spy scandal -- splashed on the front pages of the Global Times tabloid and the official China Daily -- appeared aimed at embarrassing Taiwan.

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20. Sino - Pakistani Relations

Reuters ("PAKISTAN TO BUILD NUCLEAR PLANT WITH CHINA'S HELP", 2004-07-28) reported that Pakistan has formally approved proposals to build a new nuclear power plant with help from longtime ally the PRC, Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Wednesday. Aziz, who is expected to become prime minister next month, told state-run television the new nuclear plant would cost 51 billion rupees ($874 million). The 300 megawatt plant will be built at Chashma on the banks of the Indus river, around 280 km (170 miles) south of Islamabad, alongside the first plant that the PRC helped build in 1999. An official statement said the project also envisaged the transfer of technology from the PRC to enable the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission (PAEC) to run the plant itself. Pakistan says its new nuclear plant is for peaceful use only.

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21. Sino - Indian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA, CHINA END TALKS ON BORDER DISPUTE, AGREE TO MEET AGAIN", 2004-07-28) reported that India and PRC ended high-level talks on their border disputes and said top representatives would meet again in search of a resolution to the issue which has dragged since 1988 when negotiations first began. The Indian foreign ministry in a statement said the two days of talks in New Delhi were held in a "friendly, constructive and cooperative atmosphere." National Security Advisor J.N. Dixit and his PRC counterpart Dai Bingguo led the talks, the third round since June 2003 when the two sides appointed special representatives during a trip to the PRC by then Indian premier Atal Behari Vajpayee.

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22. US on PRC Media Freedom

Agence France-Presse ("US STRESSES NEED TO RESPECT MEDIA FREEDOM IN HONG KONG", 2004-07-28) reported that the US highlighted the need to respect media freedom in Hong Kong amid an international outcry over raids on seven newspapers by the PRC's anti-graft body. "Our position would be to urge that Hong Kong's civil liberties, including its press freedoms, be protected, as guaranteed by the Basic Law," the US State Department said following the weekend action by Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC). Ereli said the United States believed

that the people of Hong Kong wanted and supported freedom of the press. "We would also note that the people of Hong Kong, who have been engaged in a serious debate and discussion about this incident, are following the actions of the independent commission closely, and belief and support for freedom of the press is strongly rooted in Hong Kong," he said. The Hong Kong Newspaper Society, a trade advocacy group for the city's dozens of newspapers, said the raids had a "chilling effect on the press".

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23. PRC Space Program

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO LAUNCH SECOND MANNED SPACE MISSION IN 2005", 2004-07-28) reported that the PRC is expected to launch its second manned spacecraft, Shenzhou VI, on a five-day mission in the second half of next year, state media quoted a PRC space expert as saying. Huang Chunping, chief of the PRC Manned Space Program's rocket carrier system, added China would realize its dream of space walk with the launch of Shenzhou VII, although he did not specify a date, Xinhua news agency reported. Huang, 66, who was speaking to children in a speech in Fuzhou, Fujian province, said the mainland also aimed to establish a laboratory in space by 2010 and a space station by 2015, the agency said.

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO SCOUR HIGH SCHOOLS FOR WOMEN ASTRONAUTS NEXT YEAR", 2004-07-28) reported that the PRC will start scouring high schools for its potential first woman astronaut next year, following a suggestion from the country's leading women's group. Huang Chunping, director of the PRC's manned space program carrier rocket system, said they would be looking for candidates "with quality, especially physical qualities". "They will first be trained in flying aircraft, and then in space flight technology," he was quoted as saying by the People's Daily on Wednesday. "It is hoped that Chinese women can realize their space dream as soon as possible," he added.

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24. PRC Floods

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S FLOOD DEATH TOLL HITS 439 WITH 20,000 INJURED", 2004-0--28) reported that the death toll from summer rains and floods in the PRC has risen to 439, with more than 20,000 people injured and massive loss to property and farmland, government figures showed. Disaster relief officials said 1.46 million people had been forced to flee their homes and described the situation as "very grave" with no let up in sight. "The flood situation is very grave, especially in Hunan, Henan, Hubei and Yunnan provinces and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region," said Wang Zhenyao, director of the Ministry of Civil Affair's Disaster Relief Department. He said this year's floods were the worst in decades.

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