



**North Korea-South Korea Relations:
Sunshine Regardless?**

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For South Korea, as for all North Korea's interlocutors, dealing with Pyongyang during the first quarter of 2007 was – in a cliché beloved of British soccer commentators – “a game of two halves.” When the new year began, and well into February, most official contacts remained suspended in the wake of last year's twin shocks: the DPRK's missile launches in July, followed by its nuclear test in October.

Yet even then there were hopes of an early thaw amid visibly energetic efforts to breathe life into the Six-Party Talks after their resumed session in December ended in failure. On Feb. 13, after appearing close to collapse over North Korea's large energy demands, this on-off forum finally produced an agreement that – if imperfect – nonetheless looked more comprehensive and detailed than many observers had dared to hope after more than three years of getting nowhere much.

Tight deadlines

While it remains to be seen whether the DPRK will meet the tight and specific deadlines laid down in the Feb. 13 accord, the immediate effect was to create both an atmosphere of cautious optimism and a flurry of activity. South Korea, which under President Roh Moo-hyun remains committed to the Sunshine Policy – rebranded as “Peace and Prosperity” – of engaging North Korea pioneered by his predecessor Kim Dae-jung, lost no time in reactivating the various channels that had been on ice for half a year. As the first quarter ended, ministerial and other talks had already resumed, with much more to follow.

But even as many in Seoul celebrate an early spring, caution is in order. Dealing with North Korea has never been smooth, and the Feb. 13 deal could yet run into problems: for instance, if Pyongyang misses deadlines, or argues over interpretations and commitments.

Why seek a summit?

On the inter-Korean front specifically, there are at least two concerns. The immediate one is that a beleaguered Roh Moo-hyun, a lame duck leader in his final year (his term ends in February 2008), and the ruling – albeit collapsing – Uri Party may seek a second inter-Korean summit in Pyongyang to boost their position, even though Kim Jong-il appears to have no plan to come to Seoul, as he was supposed to in return for Kim Dae-jung's visit

to Pyongyang in June 2000. Besides typically letting the DPRK off the hook of genuine reciprocity, it is hard to see what of substance such a gesture could achieve.

Second, even a fresh summit is unlikely to bolster the Uri Party ratings enough to dent the conservative opposition Grand National Party (GNP)'s huge lead in opinion polls. While anything can happen in South Korean politics, the two upcoming elections – the Dec. 19 presidential and the April 2008 National Assembly elections – look set to return the political right to power in Seoul, ending a decade of center-left rule. While a GNP government would still pursue engagement, it would certainly demand more reciprocity from North Korea – whose media regularly and roundly abuse the GNP as pro-U.S. flunkies and traitors. All this suggests that any new burst of Sunshine this year may prove shortlived, with 2008 portending at the very least a chilly and possibly prolonged eclipse.

Marking time

Even before the Feb. 13 breakthrough, by no means all inter-Korean contact ceased. Official aid remained suspended, but ROK NGOs continued to help the North with medical supplies, food, and more. In mid-January doctors from the two Koreas began working side by side for the first time, in a small NGO-run hospital in the DPRK's Kaesong industrial complex.

Nor did ROK local authorities feel bound by the central government's aid freeze. In early February, the island province of Jeju, which has long cherished its autonomy, sent more of its tangerines and carrots to the DPRK, as it has been doing since 1998. The carrots may also serve as a metaphor: these days, few in the South now send the North sticks.

Semi-official contacts continued too. As is now usual, the two Koreas marched together in the opening ceremony of the Sixth Winter Asian Games in Changchun, China on Jan. 28 – but went on to compete separately. DPRK television reportedly omitted to mention the joint march. But talks toward a joint team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics remain stalemated: the South wants athletes picked on merit; the North demands equal numbers.

Kaesong opens wider

Nor did official contact wholly cease. On Jan. 24, Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung led a 100-strong Southern delegation on a visit to the Kaesong industrial complex. They were also allowed to tour Kaesong city, an historic ancient capital, the first Southern group to do so since Pyongyang banned this last July, in reprisal for Seoul's suspension of aid.

The Kaesong industrial park, controversially never subject to sanctions, continued normal operations throughout the quarter. On Feb. 20, the ROK Unification Ministry (MOU) said it will resume expansion of the complex, suspended last September as tensions rose, and lease a further 1.6 sq km of land in the zone to Southern firms by mid-April. Business apart, Kaesong has also become an ever more popular destination for politicians from the ROK's ruling but beleaguered Uri Party, to show their commitment to détente.

Calm seas

Two incidents (or non-incidents) in January were a reminder of real progress in at least one area. It is less than five years since the two Koreas' navies fought a brief but fierce and fatal battle in a disputed border zone. In earlier decades, ROK fishermen venturing too close to the border risked being seized by the DPRK, never to return: Seoul reckons some 434 are still held in the North. (Last quarter's article spotlighted one of these, who escaped via China only to be – at first – cold-shouldered by his own government.)

Today, Korean seas are calm, and incidents that in the past would have escalated are swiftly defused. On Christmas day, a solo ROK fisherman deliberately sailed his squid boat into Northern waters; alcohol was rumored. On Jan. 12, the DPRK returned the man and ship, without fuss. Five days later the ROK vessel *Heonseong-ho* returned to its homeport of Gunsan with a cargo of sand from Haeju in the DPRK, two days after colliding with a DPRK fishing boat in Northern waters. Though four of its fishermen were missing, Pyongyang did not read the riot act; it simply asked for Seoul's cooperation in searching.

Six-party deal unblocks bilaterals, too

As the examples above illustrate, rightly or wrongly Seoul hardly let the DPRK nuclear test cast a shadow on ongoing inter-Korean cooperation at the grassroots. So naturally, once the Six-Party Talks achieved their breakthrough on Feb. 13, the ROK moved swiftly to reinstate the formal channels of dialogue suspended for the past half-year, starting with ministerial talks – the 20th since the June 2000 summit, and the first since last July's unhappily session in Busan – held in Pyongyang from Feb. 27 to March 2.

That meeting produced a six-point statement that, like the new six-party accord, was encouragingly specific in setting dates and deadlines for a range of further events. (By contrast, too many earlier agreements were often vague on timelines, allowing Pyongyang to temporize and backslide – and for it to be hailed as progress if the North merely agreed to show up to a meeting. Such bad habits are now, one must hope, a thing of the past.)

Family reunions resume

One area resumed is reunions of separated families. A fifth videolink session was held on March 27-29, with the 15th face-to-face reunions to follow at Mt. Kumgang in early May. Construction of a permanent reunion center at Mt. Kumgang, halted since last July, was to resume on March 21. It remains to be seen whether the nature and pace of these events will evolve from the present pitiful charades into more genuine and lasting encounters. So far the scale and frequency of reunions, even when not interrupted, is grossly inadequate.

At the present rate, most of these now elderly folk, separated from their kin for over half a century, will die before ever having a chance to meet. Even for the lucky few who get this opportunity – selected by lot in the South, but seemingly by privilege in the North –

this is for one time only, much of it in the glare of the cameras as if in a reality TV show. Tears flow – as well they might, since thereafter those so briefly reunited are not allowed even to write, telephone, or email, much less visit. Besides, the stylized setting of the Mt. Kumgang resort is no substitute for the visits to hometowns and ancestral graves, which Korean custom and tradition dictate. If the DPRK's rulers had an ounce of humanitarian spirit, they would ease these cruel and indefensible restrictions forthwith.

Abductees: a thornier issue

Not unrelatedly, on April 10-12 an eighth round of Red Cross talks will *inter alia* tackle the thorny issue of “persons whose fate is unknown during or after the 1950-53 Korean War”. This phrase is code for some 542 Southern prisoners of war (POWs) still held in the North, and 485 (mainly fishermen) seized since 1953. Pyongyang denies holding anyone involuntarily, but in recent years a few have escaped to tell their grim stories. Seoul for its part had been hesitant to raise this issue – in marked contrast to Japan, for whom a far smaller number of abductions are its top policy priority with the DPRK.

This is obviously a delicate area. But if Kim Jong-il could bravely manage a personal admission and apology – if not the whole truth, unfortunately – for the DPRK's past kidnappings from Japan, then it is not clear why the ROK should settle for less and allow over a thousand of its aging citizens to remain prisoners of the North. The true number may be far higher, since this excludes thousands – estimates run as high as 84,000 – of South Korean civilians taken North during 1950-51 when the KPA overran much of the South. How bright, really, is a “Sunshine” that ignores or glosses over such crimes?

Yet unlike in Japan, for some reason this is not a matter that greatly exercises public opinion in South Korea. Similarly, the now 10,000 Northern defectors who have braved huge odds to find sanctuary in the South all too often face prejudice and lack of interest in their plight – or even criticism as “anti-unification” for speaking ill of Kim Jong-il. In this, what critics regard as the ROK government's oddly twisted stance in fact reflects its citizens' equally curious posture; the three monkeys of fable come to mind. Things may be different if next year the conservative opposition is voted back into power.

Economy and aid: not yet? (at first)

Turning to the less tricky area of economic cooperation, it was agreed to hold the 13th economic cooperation promotion committee (ECPC) meeting in Pyongyang on April 18-21. The North reportedly wanted it sooner, but the South initially insisted on waiting until after the 60-day deadline (from Feb. 13) in the six-party accord for Pyongyang to shut its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, as a key test of its commitment to genuine compliance.

This is presumably why the Pyongyang joint statement did not mention aid. North Korea apparently asked for 400,000 tons of rice and 300,000 tons of fertilizer, as it has received in most recent years until 2006; it repeated the latter demand on March 7. Seoul then, it seems, retreated; the same day, ROK Vice Unification Minister Shin Eon-sang said that fertilizer deliveries (which are time-sensitive), worth \$115 million, would begin later in March. By early April, Shin was ready to delink rice aid as well from nuclear compliance and offer it unconditionally, as described below. Actual shipments resumed on March 28, when a ship bearing 6,500 tons of fertilizer, 60,000 blankets, disinfectant to combat foot and mouth disease, and other items headed North from the southern ROK port of Yeosu.

An ROK parastatal does its own deals

As of early April, it looked ever more likely that the April 14 deadline to shut Yongbyon may be postponed, due to technical difficulties in resolving the Banco Delta Asia issue. That would let the ECPC meeting off the hook in terms of its further non-aid agenda of economic cooperation. Before everything got put on ice last July, the main focus was on a barter deal where the South would supply raw materials for very basic needs – clothing, soap, etc – in exchange for unspecified mineral rights. This sounds straightforward, but progress had been slow; the North reportedly wanted the raw materials as aid, while the South insisted on a formal linkage to mining investments as a *quid pro quo*.

Yet here again, neither this dispute nor the half-year freeze on official contacts impeded direct business dealings, including by ROK parastatals. One in particular, KoRes (Korea Resources Corp), has long been quietly doing deals in the North. The latest, reported on Jan. 10, is for feasibility and environmental studies on zinc and magnesite mines – among Asia’s largest – in Hamgyong Province in the DPRK’s northeast. Already KoRes has two ventures with the DPRK firm Samcholli: one for lead and zinc and the other for graphite at Yongho, just north of the DMZ. In the latter KoRes is providing machinery and equipment; annual sales of 10,000 tons of graphite to South Korea are envisaged.

Peace train?

Another crux for Seoul is Pyongyang’s persistent refusal thus far to put two reconnected cross-border railways into actual use. The track has long been ready, but test runs have been repeatedly postponed. The March 2 accord says these will take place by late June, subject to a security guarantee; yet working-level talks in Kaesong on March 14-15 got nowhere. With parallel trans-DMZ roads now in active use – albeit unidirectional: of course, no North Koreans come South except the odd official for talks – it is not clear why even the most paranoid of KPA hawks, having already allowed the front line to become a front door, should object to one form of locomotion more than another.

If the trains do finally run, this will renew hopes for the “iron silk road” – a rail link from Pusan to Paris, or even Portugal – dear to Kim Dae-jung and at least some in Moscow. But for this to be realized would require modernizing the DPRK’s decrepit rail network. It is unclear who would pay for that, or whether a regime that rebuffed the late Chung Ju-

Yung's hopes to run a gas pipeline from Siberia to Seoul is yet ready for the far more intrusive prospect of ROK freight trains transiting its carefully guarded territory.

Military CBMs?

On Feb. 20, a week after the six-party accord, MOU issued its policy goals for the year. For the first time these include arms control measures, like a direct telephone line between defense chiefs and confidence-building steps such as exchanges of military personnel. One lives in hope, but hitherto the DPRK has always refused invitations to observe regular joint ROK-U.S. exercises, which it criticizes every year in hackneyed phrases as though these routine war games represented a real threat of invasion. Thus of late, daily diatribes in the Pyongyang media have warned that the hardy perennial *RSOI* and *Foal Eagle* exercises – the latter dating back to 1962! – which began March 25 are “very dangerous provocations” that risk jeopardizing the Feb. 13 six-party agreement.

Pyongyang has also been consistently reluctant to discuss significant security issues with Seoul. Southern hopes were high when the DPRK defense minister came to Seoul in September 2000, soon after the Pyongyang summit. KPA Vice Marshal Kim Il-chol visited the Blue House in uniform, and even reportedly saluted Kim Dae-jung. But he would discuss only railways (still unresolved six years on, as noted above); and no return visit was allowed. In recent years, lower-level military talks have inaugurated naval radio communications and dismantled border propaganda, but have yet to address major underlying security issues. Were the DPRK stance to change, this would be a major and welcome shift of strategy toward taking the ROK seriously as a dialogue partner in this most fundamental area, instead of treating it as a mere subaltern of the U.S. – and a cash cow.

Sunshine as axiom?

Overall, since the Feb. 13 six-party breakthrough (if such it prove) it has been back to full steam ahead for the Sunshine Policy; as if Pyongyang's missile and nuclear tests were a tiresome inconvenience, rather than a brazen slap in the face to all Seoul's olive branches.

While it would be churlish for a foreigner to begrudge Koreans any genuine steps on the road to reunifying their sundered land, sentimentality is not enough. The almost unseemly haste with which Seoul rushed to resume Sunshine suggests this has become – at least for the current government – an axiom and article of faith, rather than a cool-headed targeted policy with clear goals, to be revised or fine-tuned with constant ongoing appraisal of whether its objectives are actually being met. Are they? Is there genuine reciprocity here?

Secret contacts last October are admitted, at last

A particular risk, in an election year, is of *Nordpolitik* being abused for partisan purposes – as distinct from the right of parties to offer voters a choice on this as on other policies.

After months of rumors and official denials, it is now confirmed that South Korea held secret talks with the North last fall. On Oct. 20, just days after the nuclear test, two close aides of President Roh – Ahn Hee-jeong, who served a year in jail for taking illicit funds for Roh's election campaign but now holds no official post, and Rep. Lee Hwa-young of the ruling Uri Party, met in Beijing with Ri Ho-nam, said to be a councilor of the DPRK's National Economic Cooperation Federation. Only on March 29 did the Blue House finally admit that this meeting took place. A day later Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung told a skeptical press conference that he did not deem this illegal, even though it is far from clear whether the law and procedures for inter-Korean contacts were followed.

According to the Seoul daily *Donga Ilbo* – no friend to Roh Moo-hyun, admittedly – one month later Suh Hoon, in charge of North Korea strategy and intelligence at the ROK's National Intelligence Service (NIS), also met Ri in Dandong, China circa Nov. 19-23, 2006. Suh denies any such meeting, but Rep. Lee Hwa-young confirmed it, adding that the NIS was not keen to get involved. The feeling seems mutual: Gwon O-hong, a businessman go-between for Ahn's Beijing contact, in a written memorandum quoted Ri as saying: "When Suh comes, tell him I have nothing to say or hear, so go back as soon as possible and save hotel fees."

Inter-Korean back channels as such are nothing new. Their full history, over at least 36 years, would make a fascinating read: someone should write it. (Who now recalls that 20 years ago Park Chul-un, the then dictator Chun Doo-hwan's secretary for political affairs, had a direct hotline on his desk to Han Si-hae, a vice-director of the central committee of the North's ruling Workers Party of Korea (WPK), later to be DPRK ambassador to the UN? According to Don Oberdorfer's invaluable *The Two Koreas*, Park and Han not only spoke often but met no less than 42 times during 1985-91 in many places: Pyongyang and Seoul, Mt Paektu, Jeju island, Panmunjom, Singapore, and elsewhere. While all this was secret and bore few fruits, the new "authorized version" in both Koreas that dates contacts as starting only with Sunshine and the 2000 summit is profoundly misleading.)

Back channels have their precedents and uses. The NIS – an agency deeply conflicted nowadays about its role re the North – may have been coy this time; yet its predecessor, the dreaded KCIA, used to keep up its own contacts with Pyongyang – not always telling its nominal political masters. Each case must be judged on its merits, but in this case one must share the NIS's reservations. What on earth did Roh think he was up to, just days after the North had tested a nuke? The official line is that this was to sniff out a rumored Northern offer of fresh talks, and whether the source was reliable. Both proved elusive, so the channel was shut down after a month. Even if that is true, the timing seems gauche.

Political judgment aside, what of the legalities? Should the latest revival of inter-Korean ties turn sour, the next ROK government may well act as Roh did against Park Jie-won, Kim Dae-jung's former presidential chief of staff and a key player in the Sunshine Policy, who served over three years in jail for illegal contacts with the North (admittedly money was involved) until freed under one of the ROK's regular presidential pardons on Feb. 9.

A summit in Kaesong?

Also playing politics is Chung Dong-young, a former unification minister who once met Kim Jong-il, and ex-head of the ruling but now imploding Uri Party. After lying low for several months, Chung has resurfaced in hopes of reviving what once seemed a plausible bid to be South Korea's next president – although like all Uri wannabes, he languishes in single figures in opinion polls. On March 28, Chung visited the Kaesong zone, with two other key former unification ministers: Lim Dong-won, *eminence grise* of the Sunshine Policy under Kim Dae-jung (albeit later convicted of breaking the law by secretly sending money to Pyongyang as an inducement), and Park Jae-kyu, now an influential academic.

Before his trip, Chung made headlines by proposing Kaesong as a good venue for a new inter-Korean summit, both for its “political and economic significance” and convenience: the two leaders could get there and back within a day. That sounds a brief encounter, for a meeting that Chung claims is “not a matter of choice but of necessity” to achieve a permanent peace regime on the peninsula. Sounding a nationalist note that will grow as December's presidential election draws nearer, Chung asked: “Should we just be looking at the United States or China? With our fate at stake, naturally we should take the helm.”

Fine rhetoric, but unfortunately Pyongyang's predilection for making a nuclear and wider nuisance of itself, on a regional and even global scale, has so multilateralized the North Korean question that Seoul can no longer thus claim ownership of it. Many hands are on this tiller, and not all have confidence in whatever map Seoul's helmsmen are steering by.

Rice aid, regardless

As April began, all eyes were on the laudably precise but now pressing schedule laid out in the Feb. 13 six-party joint statement. With a publicly expressed skepticism that itself might be said to tacitly license Pyongyang to prevaricate, the continuing tangle over the Banco Delta Asia funds issue prompted growing anxiety as to whether the DPRK would in fact fulfill its undertaking to shut its Yongbyon reactor by mid-April.

But some parties seem less anxious than others. On April 5, Vice Unification Minister Shin Eon-sang said that in any case the ROK will “give rice to the North as scheduled” – the usual 400,000 tons as requested, presumably, costing over \$200 million at the ROK's inflated domestic prices – after the bilateral ECPC economic talks set for April 18-21 in Pyongyang. As noted, the timing of that meeting – the DPRK pressed for an earlier date –

had been seen as building in conditionality: no closure, no rice. No longer, apparently: Shin now insists that “the momentum for inter-Korean development should not be lost.”

Wrong call then; wrong signal now

Arguably it was wrong in the first place, as we suggested at the time, for Seoul to breach international norms and suspend humanitarian food aid rather than business projects like the Kaesong and Kungang zones in retaliation for Pyongyang’s missile tests last July. On March 28, the UN World Food Program (WFP) warned that “millions of people [will] go hungry” in North Korea in the current pre-harvest lean season, unless donors delink food aid from nuclear concerns and help plug a food gap of about 1 million tons, 20 percent of the DPRK’s total needs.

Yet after the far greater threat of October’s nuclear test, this is a major U-turn for Seoul. As he celebrates Sun’s Day – his late father Kim Il-sung’s birthday – with the usual pomp on April 15, Kim Jong-il could be forgiven for concluding, as he watches the continuing disarray among the other five parties, that in practice he can do pretty much what and when he pleases, with no serious fear of reprisal from any quarter. He may also infer that South Korea in particular is happy to remain a unilateral cash cow for his regime, and that he has but to snap his fingers for a naïve and politically desperate Roh Moo-hyun to come running for a second inter-Korean summit – any place, any time. This cannot be a healthy basis for successful future diplomacy, whether bilateral or multilateral.

Chronology of North Korea-South Korea Relations January-March 2007

Jan. 1, 2007: Lee Kun-hee, chairman of Samsung, Korea’s largest conglomerate, in his new year address cites the North Korean nuclear issue as one of three reasons (the others being high oil prices and the appreciating won) why “this year, the future for us isn’t that bright.”

Jan. 2, 2007: ROK Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung calls for more aid to the DPRK once it abandons its nuclear ambitions, saying that “unless we fundamentally solve the problem of poverty in North Korea, security on the Korean Peninsula will always be in danger.” The opposition Grand National Party (GNP) criticizes Lee the same day, saying the problem is nuclear weapons rather than poverty and accusing the Roh administration of “begging for the inter-Korean summit.”

Jan. 2, 2007: Former ROK President Kim Dae-jung says the “possibility of an inter-Korean summit is higher than ever, as President Roh Moo-hyun has vowed to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong-il anytime, anywhere.”

Jan. 9, 2007: Jong Geun, secretary general of Green Doctors, an ROK NGO, says that from Jan. 11 doctors from both Koreas will work side by side for the first time, in GD’s 396 sq m hospital in the Kaesong industrial complex.

Jan. 10, 2007: Good Neighbors International, a Southern NGO, says it has sent penicillin and antibiotics worth \$5 million to the North to help fight a scarlet fever epidemic.

Jan. 10, 2007: The ROK Olympic Committee says that on Jan. 5, the DPRK proposed, via an official in the border village on Panmunjom, that both Koreas march jointly in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Winter Asian Games to be held in Changchun, China, from Jan. 28.

Jan. 12, 2007: North Korea returns a Southern squid boat and its crew of one engineer, who had sailed into Northern waters on the east coast on Dec. 25 for reasons unknown.

Jan. 13, 2007: The DPRK's Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland issues a statement attacking the U.S. for sending a wing of *F-117* Stealth fighter bombers and at least 300 support personnel to South Korea.

Jan. 17, 2007: Northern political parties, government, and organizations issue a joint statement on unification, calling on South Koreans to eschew conservatism and cooperation with the U.S.

Jan. 17, 2007: The ROK vessel *Heonseong-ho* returns to its homeport of Gunsan, North Jeolla, with a cargo of sand from Haeju in the DPRK, two days after colliding with a DPRK fishing boat in Northern waters. Four DPRK fishermen are missing, and Pyongyang asked for Seoul's cooperation in search and notification.

Jan. 24, 2007: In what is seen as a sign of détente, ROK Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung visits the Kaesong industrial complex. The 100-strong delegation is also allowed to tour Kaesong city, the first Southern group to do so since the North banned this last July.

Jan. 24, 2007: A spokesman for the DPRK's Korean Asia-Pacific Peace Committee says KAPPC has no formal agreement with the ROK's Hyundai Asan to organize city tours to Kaesong. The North has been trying to offer the contract to a rival ROK operator, Lotte.

Jan. 28, 2007: Teams from North and South Korea march jointly behind a neutral flag at the opening ceremony of the sixth Winter Asian Games in the northeast Chinese city of Changchun. As usual they go on to compete separately. DPRK television does not mention the joint march.

Jan. 31, 2007: The North's *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)* accuses the South of at least 70 cases of aerial espionage during the past month, and U.S. forces of a further 110 incidents.

Feb. 5, 2007: The ROK's island province of Jeju sends 2,150 tons of carrots and tangerines to the North. A similar amount again was due to be sent later in the month. Since 1998, Jeju has sent the DPRK 36,228 tons of tangerines and 13,000 tons of carrots.

Feb. 6, 2007: The South's *Yonhap News Agency* quotes an unnamed senior ROK official as saying that Southern aid to the North may resume once inter-Korean dialogue is restored and if the six-party nuclear talks make progress.

Feb. 13, 2007: The Six-Party Talks in Beijing agree on a detailed joint statement, setting up five working groups and laying down a detailed timetable for first steps by all concerned; including the closure of the DPRK's nuclear site at Yongbyon within 60 days.

Feb. 13, 2007: A seven-hour meeting in Kaesong, the fourth since 2004, on fielding a joint team for the 2008 Beijing Olympics again ends in disagreement. South Korea wants athletes to be selected on merit, while the North insists on equal numbers from each side.

Feb. 14, 2007: The head of the North's delegation to inter-Korean ministerial talks accepts an offer from his Southern counterpart for working-level talks toward a resumption of this channel.

Feb. 15, 2007: Meeting in Kaesong, the two Koreas agree to hold the 20th ministerial talks – the first since last July – in Pyongyang, starting on Feb. 27.

Feb. 20, 2007: The ROK Unification Ministry (MOU) says it will resume expansion of the Kaesong industrial park, suspended last September due to rising tensions. It plans to lease a further 1.6 sq km of land in the zone to Southern firms by mid-April.

Feb. 20, 2007: MOU issues its policy goals for the year. They include establishment of peace systems on the peninsula, economic cooperation for co-development, humanitarian aid and socio-cultural exchanges. In the medium- and long-term, MOU plans to develop strategies to modernize infrastructure in the North, such as ports and railroads.

Feb. 24, 2007: *KCNA* reports that the co-chairmen of the National Alliance for the Country's Reunification – Pomminryon, a pro-North front organization – held an extraordinary meeting on Feb. 23 by exchanging faxes between the North, South, and overseas, to discuss plans for 2007.

Feb. 26, 2007: For the first time in an official ROK text, MOU says it will seek arms control talks with the DPRK this year. Ideas include a direct phone line between the two sides' defense chiefs, and confidence-building steps like exchanges of military personnel.

Feb. 27, 2007: A Southern delegation, led by Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung, flies into Pyongyang for the 20th inter-Korean ministerial talks.

March 1, 2007: Kim Yong-nam, the DPRK's titular head of state as president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly (SPA), meets ROK Unification Minister Lee and other Southern delegates to the ministerial talks in Pyongyang.

March 2, 2007: North-South ministerial talks in Pyongyang close with a six-point joint statement, setting a detailed timetable to resume a range of inter-Korean contacts.

March 7, 2007: MOU says the North has sent a fax asking for 300,000 tons of fertilizer.

March 7, 2007: A delegation of the Committee for Peace in Northeast Asia of the ROK's ruling Uri Party, led by former Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan, arrives in Pyongyang at the invitation of the DPRK's National Reconciliation Council. Lee rebuts speculation that he is President Roh's special envoy seeking to broker a second summit.

March 8, 2007: Lee Hae-chan meets the DPRK's titular head of state, Kim Yong-nam.

March 9, 2007: ROK Foreign Minister Song Min-soon says the DPRK still wants to be supplied with a light-water reactor (LWR), and that this can be discussed at a later stage of the Six-Party Talks.

March 10, 2007: After two days of working-level Red Cross talks at Mt Kumgang, both Koreas agree to resume construction, halted last year, of a family reunion center at the DPRK resort. The South will also give the North \$400,000 to buy equipment for more frequent video reunions.

March 12, 2007: Anonymous ROK government sources predict that former President Kim Dae-jung will revisit Pyongyang around June, followed by a North-South summit in August or September.

March 12, 2007: Former ROK Premier Lee returns from Pyongyang. He again denies being a special envoy, and says the North has shown movement on the "missing persons" (abductees) issue.

March 14-15, 2007: Talks in Kaesong fail again to agree on a much-delayed test train run on two reconnected, but so far unused, cross-border railways. A separate meeting agrees to resume family reunions in May.

March 15, 2007: After chairing the first meeting in Beijing of the six-party working group on energy cooperation, chief ROK nuclear negotiator Chun Yung-woo says Seoul will pay for the first batch of 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil which the DPRK is due to receive once the Yongbyon site is closed.

March 20, 2007: The DPRK's 32-strong under-17 soccer squad arrives in the ROK's Jeju island province for a month of training: the first time a Northern team has trained in the South. They will also tour four cities and play friendly matches. DPRK ice hockey and taekwondo teams are due to visit the ROK in April.

March 21, 2007: Good Friends, a Seoul-based NGO, claims that 70 percent of North Koreans are short of food, and that DPRK local officials fear famine may return.

March 22, 2007: The ROK's Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation Promotion Committee holds its 182nd meeting. Seven agenda items are approved, including video reunions and the provision of aid for this as well as fertilizer and medical aid (measles, malaria, and foot and mouth).

March 22, 2007: The DPRK Foreign Ministry criticizes the annual U.S.-ROK *RSOI* and *Foal Eagle* war games, due to start on March 25, as "very dangerous provocations" which jeopardize the Feb. 13 six-party agreement. Northern media repeat such routine attacks almost daily thereafter, into April.

March 22, 2007: Lee Hae-chan proposes a four-way summit between the two Koreas, the U.S., and China. He again denies having been an envoy to broker a North-South summit.

March 24, 2007: Meeting in Kaesong, labor unions from both Koreas agree to celebrate May Day together in the ROK industrial port city of Ulsan, Hyundai's heartland. This is the first time that this event, ongoing since 2002, will be held in South Korea. Some 60 North Koreans will attend.

March 26, 2007: At a brief chance meeting at a reception in Kuwait with DPRK ambassador to Kuwait Ho Jong, Roh Moo-hyun asks him to tell Kim Jong-il "that I am acting from my heart."

March 27, 2007: Seoul daily *JoongAng Ilbo* says Lee Hae-chan will return to Pyongyang soon, rekindling speculation that he is acting as a special envoy to arrange a summit.

March 27-29, 2007: A fifth round of video reunions is held, briefly reuniting around 120 separated families in 13 locations in South Korea and 10 in the North. After more than half a century apart, each family gets around two hours of contact.

March 28, 2007: South Korean aid to the North resumes. A ship leaves the ROK port of Yeosu bearing 6,500 tons of fertilizer, 60,000 blankets, and other items.

March 29, 2007: Aide to Lee Hae-chan claims that while in Pyongyang recently the ex-ROK premier suggested that the warship *USS Pueblo*, seized in 1968, should be returned to improve relations with the US. DPRK officials were reportedly not averse to the idea.

March 28, 2007: Former Unification Minister Chung Dong-young visits the Kaesong zone, and suggests this is the best venue for a second inter-Korean summit: as a symbol of North-South cooperation, and for its convenience.

March 29, 2007: After months of denials, the Blue House admits that Ahn Hee-jeong, a close aide of President Roh who currently holds no formal post, secretly met a senior North Korean envoy in Beijing on Oct. 20, 2006, just days after the North's nuclear test.

March 30, 2007: ROK Unification Minister Lee says he does not see Ahn Hee-jeong as having broken the law by his secret meeting.

March 30, 2007: It is announced in Seoul that for the first time two ROK athletes will run in a marathon in Pyongyang on April 15: a major DPRK holiday marking the late Kim Il-sung's birthday.