



**North Korea-South Korea Relations:
Who's Singing Whose Song?**

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As the second half of 2005 begins, the prospects for inter-Korean relations appear more propitious than they have for at least a year. Not only has Pyongyang ended its wholly unreasonable boycott of most forums of North-South dialogue created after the June 2000 Pyongyang summit, but it has agreed to deepen and extend these in significant ways. If – always a big if – a 12-point joint statement signed in Seoul on June 23 is fully adhered to, then the summer and fall will see a busy calendar of meetings. Besides such familiar fora as ministerial talks (already resumed), the joint economic committee, and family reunions, there are to be military talks – but at remote Mt. Paekdu, of all places – plus new panels on cooperation in farming and fisheries. North Korea has even agreed to discuss the sensitive issue of persons “missing” (i.e., abducted, or POWs retained) from the Korean War.

So after a gray year, the Sunshine Policy, appropriately for summer, is now blazing brightly. Yet shadows persist. On past form, North Korea might not deliver; it may sulk, or take its bat home again. Above all, there is as yet no assurance that the DPRK will return to the Six-Party Talks. Although movement around this issue gives reasonable optimism that a much-delayed fourth round could be held in July or August, nothing is yet certain.

The two matters are patently linked. Continued nuclear defiance must set limits to how far Sunshine can go; though earlier fears of nuclear tests seem to have receded, any nuclear escalation would surely force Seoul to pull back. How to finesse the conditionalities here threatens in any case to be contentious, especially between a South Korea wedded to carrots and a skeptical U.S., which (at least rhetorically) would not rule out the stick.

North provokes, South soothes

When the past quarter began, North Korea was not only eschewing most contacts with the South, but also ramping up its nuclear provocations. Shutting down its Yongbyon reactor, unless a bluff (one never knows), could yield further spent fuel to be reprocessed into more plutonium for more bombs. There were also rumors of a planned nuclear test.

Nonetheless, a hint from Washington that the U.S. might be forced to take this matter to the UN Security Council brought swift public opposition to any such move from Seoul, echoed by Beijing.

Earlier, for the third year running the ROK abstained when the UN Commission for Human Rights in Geneva – UNCHR, not to be confused with UNHCR, the refugee body – passed a resolution condemning DPRK human rights abuses on April 14 by 30 votes to 9. Sponsored by Japan and EU member states, this for the first time included demands for the return of Japanese abductees. With similar sensitivity – or cravenness – the first ever videotape that apparently showed public executions in North Korea, aired in full and discussed at length on Japanese TV and around the world, was shunned by all major ROK broadcast networks; they merely transmitted fragments for about a minute. Awkward as it is for Seoul to find effective responses to Pyongyang's many challenges, emulating the three monkeys of the Chinese proverb – hear, speak, and see no evil – looks awful, and is not a policy solution.

Realigned in Jakarta

Perhaps gratified by such gestures, Kim Yong-nam – who as president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly is North Korea's titular head of state – was affable when he met South Korea's Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan on April 22. Both were attending the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta, marking the 50th anniversary of the 1955 Bandung conference, which led to the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This must have been a nostalgic occasion for Kim, a former long-serving foreign minister; for in its 1970s heyday, Pyongyang was active in the NAM. Besides resisting Cuban attempts to push a pro-Soviet line, in a rare diplomatic victory the DPRK succeeded in excluding the ROK – on the not unreasonable grounds that hosting U.S. bases and forces constituted alignment.

Such ancient strife presumably forgotten, the two Koreas' *de facto* deputy leaders met twice on successive days. Formally, this was the highest-level North-South meeting in five years, since the June 2000 summit in Pyongyang. Though Kim Yong-nam would not be drawn on the Six-Party Talks, he did agree to resume inter-Korean dialogue. This was perhaps not so surprising: the North had two reasons – one symbolic, the other practical – to mend fences at this juncture. Already in January it had committed to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the June 2000 joint declaration, and the sound of one hand clapping would not carry far.

Fertilizer and bird flu

Also in January, North Korea requested 500,000 tons of fertilizer from the South, almost twice the usual amount. With rare backbone, a month later Seoul said it would consider this – if Pyongyang asked via the inter-Korean economic committee, which it had boycotted for months. No response had come as of late April, with the planting season fast approaching.

South Korea was quick, however, to proffer help with the avian influenza outbreak, which in March compelled the North to cull 210,000 hens. (That was bad news for the confusingly named Porky Products, a South Korean firm, which had just arranged to import 2,000 tons of Northern chicken; it hastily cancelled the order.) Seoul at once offered aid, but Pyongyang turned instead to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Not until April 8 did DPRK veterinary authorities contact their ROK counterparts, giving the necessary details – altruism apart, one Southern concern was to stop the infection crossing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) – and accepting help. South Korea sent quarantine supplies worth 723 million won (\$700,000) to the port of Nampo (surely slower than overland), arriving on April 23.

A day earlier, in the first government-level inter-Korean encounter since July 2004, a team from the ROK Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry crossed the DMZ for talks in Kaesong. The opening of a road-rail corridor (though the rail link is yet to be used) north of Seoul has given this border city, an ancient Korean capital, new significance. It is also the site of the fledgling Kaesong Industrial Zone (KIZ), which was notably exempted from Pyongyang's boycott of dealings with Seoul – doubtless because it brings in cash and jobs. As discussed below, work and contacts on the road and rail links have also continued, albeit fitfully.

Back on track

In mid-May (16-19), Kaesong hosted vice-ministerial talks, putting inter-Korean dialogue back on track. First came fertilizer, by now urgent. The North Koreans settled for the usual 200,000 tons, and delivery began at once: 50 ROK trucks shipped the first batch on May 20, and two days later the first of three DPRK ships docked in Ulsan to start loading the rest. These were the first Northern vessels seen in Southern harbors since 1984; when – unlikely as it sounds now – it was the North, which offered aid to South Korea after floods there. Seoul accepted, ushering in a year of talks before Pyongyang backed off. This now half-forgotten episode is a reminder that Sunshine did not begin with Kim Dae-jung; there is an important prehistory.

It was also agreed to revive at least some of the stalled inter-Korean channels. A 15th round (since 2000) of ministerial talks, the first since May 2004 (they should be quarterly), was fixed for June 21-24 in Seoul. At this stage, however, North Korea would not be drawn on further economic meetings or family reunions. It did however invite an official ROK team and an enlarged NGO contingent to Pyongyang for the summit anniversary on June 15. Twenty officials with 50 support staff, plus 615 civilians including 200 overseas Koreans, would have made this the largest South Korean contingent ever to visit North Korea.

But of course there was a curveball. At the last minute the North told the South to halve the size of its delegation, in protest at the U.S. deployment of stealth fighters to the peninsula. In the end they compromised, and a still large team – 40 present and past government officials, plus 295 delegates from NGOs – flew to Pyongyang in two separate planes on June 14. Leading the delegation was Unification Minister Chung

Dong-young, an ex-news anchor and contender to succeed Roh Moo-hyun as president in 2008, on his first visit to the Northern capital. (He had crossed the border last December for the official opening of the Kaesong Industrial Zone, only to be snubbed when the North sent no one of equivalent rank and ignored him.)

Springing a surprise

This could still have been a fairly hollow exercise, with the Southern side mere spectators of – and implicitly complicit with – the North’s usual spectacular, yet dull and tendentious, mass displays. Indeed, one senior ROK cultural official had to apologize when he got home for getting carried away and singing a Korean People’s Army (KPA) song at a banquet. But on the last day it became substantive. In a typical *coup de theatre*, Chung Dong-young, out for a morning jog, was whisked off to join the Dear Leader at an undisclosed location. (He had already met Kim Yong-nam, and must by then have had no hope of going higher.)

They spent five hours together, including a lunch to which Southern organizers of the 2000 summit were also invited. In another familiar ploy, Kim Jong-il sounded amenable on most matters – as if he were somehow above North Korea’s normal obduracy. A beaming Chung flew back to Seoul on the evening of June 17, convinced that inter-Korean relations were now back on track, and with his own likely future presidential bid conveniently boosted.

The smiles continued the next week, when a DPRK team in turn visited Seoul on June 21-24 for the first ministerial talks in over a year. Reflecting their leader’s new bonhomie, his diplomats in turn were accommodating – at least in manner. As their youngish (45) chief, Senior Cabinet Councillor Kwon Ho-ung, frankly admitted: “Chairman Kim instructed us to avoid needless confrontation to save face ... things went well ... as Minister Chung and I held negotiations in that spirit.” As a result, past lengthy battles – often well into the night – over every word or point were avoided this time. Significantly, the usual rectangular table with the two sides confronting each other was replaced by a round one; Kwon and Chung sat side by side, and spoke conversationally rather than exchanging lengthy set speeches.

Bitter suite

The Seoul daily *JoongAng Ilbo* gave some behind-the-scenes detail. The whole session cost 400 million won (just under \$400,000), and Seoul would like to do it cheaper. This time the venue was the Sheraton Walker Hill hotel, whose remote location was favored in the old days for secret visits by such as then DPRK Foreign Minister Ho Dam. Now, however, it simply won a competitive tender to host the meeting. Kwon Ho-ung’s regular seventh floor guest room cost a modest 430,000 won a night; his colleagues shared rooms on the same floor. By contrast, Chung Dong-young’s special suite on the 17th floor cost 3.5 million won – justified officially as necessary so he could hold private meetings with the North Koreans.

The latter also had secure phone and fax lines or could send coded telegrams to Pyongyang, where officials were able to follow the negotiations via live video feed. (Presumably South Koreans are afforded the same facilities when they go North.) It was also noted that for the first time the DPRK team included three women; the ROK fielded just one. Of the Northern trio, Ro Kum-sun, a young photographer for the Japan-based pro-North *Choson Sinbo*, was never seen without a cup of Starbucks coffee wherever she went.

What was discussed had predictable limits. To Southern chagrin, if not surprise, Pyongyang gave no commitment, much less a date, to return to the six-party nuclear talks; it has always refused to discuss the nuclear issue in this forum. But on bilateral matters, the eventual 12-point joint statement not only restored most channels of suspended North-South interaction but will, if fully implemented, deepen this and take it forward in important ways.

Bashing Japan

Here at least North Korea was not shy about setting dates. On the symbolic level, it agreed to take part in joint functions in the South around Aug. 15: the date on which both Koreas celebrate liberation from Japanese rule in 1945. Anti-Japanese sentiment is a cheap issue for them to agree on, especially since Seoul-Tokyo ties have worsened this year. Clause 5 of the joint press release was devoted to Japan-bashing: asserting the illegality of the 1905 Ulsa treaty by which “the Japanese imperialists” annexed Korea, and demanding the return of both a looted monument and the remains of “martyr An Jung-gun”, who assassinated Ito Hirobumi, Ulsa’s architect. It remains to be seen how far Seoul will really push such issues with a neighbor who, although disliked, is an important trade partner and fellow U.S. ally.

This also raises the question: when is a joint statement not joint? The above phrases come from the North’s official *Korean Central News Agency (KCNA)*, on June 24. South Korea took four days to post its version on the Unification Ministry website; this does not use the words “imperialists” or “martyr.” Even more seriously, Pyongyang’s version of May’s vice-ministerial agreement reportedly omitted any reference to Seoul’s fertilizer aid.

Other matters agreed were more strictly bilateral, and wide-ranging. Reunions of separated families at the North’s Mt. Kumgang resort will resume Aug. 26, after a year’s hiatus. Even at the normal quarterly intervals, the few hundreds who get to meet each time are only a fraction of the over 100,000 in South Korea alone who applied. Being elderly, many die disappointed. So it is some progress that both Koreas have now agreed, as an experiment, to let larger numbers see each other on Aug. 15, by a videoconferencing link. There will be no embracing, of course; and there is no suggestion of allowing regular contact by phone or email, much less the visits to ancestral homes and tombs which Korean tradition requires. Another agreement was to hold a groundbreaking ceremony for a permanent family reunion centre at Mt. Kumgang: a project long discussed, but which has yet to get off the ground.

Abductions: coming clean?

In an important concession, North Korea also agreed to resume Red Cross talks in August and “to discuss such humanitarian issues as the issue of ascertaining the whereabouts of those reported missing during the Korean War.” This is code for South Koreans abducted by North Korea during the 1950-53 conflict, as well as prisoners of war illegally retained there after the 1953 Armistice. In recent years a few, now elderly, have escaped; the total in both categories runs into thousands. Hitherto North Korea had bluntly denied their existence, so we shall see whether agreeing to talk means agreeing to deal. There is no comfort here for a third category: those (mainly fishermen) abducted since 1953. Whereas Japan puts its own far fewer kidnap victims at the top of its agenda with Pyongyang, Seoul has hitherto played this down – to the fury of victims’ families and their supporters, who ambushed the arriving DPRK delegation with a banner-waving motorcade as they were driven from the airport. If North Korea does come clean here, this would be both an important sign of sincerity and a political crutch to Roh Moo-hyun, whose approval ratings have plunged since last year.

Military: climb every mountain?

South Korea is delighted too that the North is prepared to resume military talks, something it has long sought. Two rounds held last year, before Pyongyang broke off contact, swiftly agreed to dismantle propaganda apparatus at the DMZ, and for the two navies to keep in contact to avoid clashes in the Yellow Sea. This time, so far, no date or agenda has been set; only the venue was agreed. Strangely, this will not be at the DMZ (or nearby, e.g., Kaesong), nor in either capital – but at Mt. Paekdu, a sacred peak (Korea’s highest) on the border with China. North Korea claims both that its founding leader Kim Il-sung was a guerrilla here (in fact in Manchuria) and that his son Kim Jong-il was born there (actually at Khabarovsk); so one fears charades rather than substance. Mt. Paekdu is also to be the venue of the next (16th) round of ministerial talks, set for Sept. 13-16. Usually these alternate between Pyongyang and Seoul, where the essential secure communications to each others’ capitals must be easier to rig up than in this remote mountain border area.

Back in business

But first up, in this busy resumed and expanded schedule is business. The 10th meeting of the North-South Committee for the Promotion of Economic Cooperation (CPEC) is due in Seoul on July 9-12. Giving flesh to the two sides’ pledge to “positively promote economic cooperation,” they also agreed to create both a new joint fisheries panel within the CPEC, and a more senior “North-South Committee for Agricultural Cooperation,” chaired by vice ministers, which for some reason will be under the ministerial talks rather than the CPEC.

Both of these new panels are due to start work in July. Perhaps the Kaesong zone’s success – though it is early days yet – has spurred Kim Jong-il, nor before time, to broaden the permitted scope of inter-Korean economic intercourse. Just how wide-

ranging this may soon become emerged after the talks, with revelations that Chung Dong-young put to Kim Jong-il a plan for Southern aid in seven fields: energy, rivers, railways, harbors, tourism, farming, and reforestation. The Unification Ministry put this package together in January, and some is already under discussion with the North: for instance, a scheme by the South's Korea National Tourism Organization (KNTO) to develop Mt. Paekdu. One wonders how much more the two Koreas now discuss behind the scenes, even when officially they are not talking and the North remains at nuclear odds with the international community.

It is, of course, the Sunshine Policy's premise that this is a better way to soften North Korea than to pressure or paint it into a corner. On June 29, Chung flew to Washington, hoping to convince such notorious skeptics as Vice President Dick Cheney of the merits of this strategy. U.S.-ROK relations are covered elsewhere, yet the risk of a vicious triangle is evident. To skeptics, Kim Jong-il is just stringing Seoul along to buy time for his nuclear programs.

Transports of delight

Perhaps also business-related, the ROK agreed to let DPRK merchant ships pass between its Cheju island province and the mainland. (In 2001 some Northern boats took illicit short cuts through Southern waters, for reasons never really explained.) But there was no word on expediting cross-border railways. While new roads across the once impermeable DMZ now let Southern managers commute to Kaesong and Hyundai tourist buses access the east coast resort of Mt. Kumgang – which in June welcomed its millionth Southern visitor since 1998 – rail links are marking time. The east coast one remains unfinished; but in the west, physically trains could now run from Pusan to Beijing via Seoul and Pyongyang – as noted by Minister Chung on April 18, when South Korea agreed to provide equipment and materials worth 26 billion won to build six railway stations in the North. Seoul sent the plans to Pyongyang last November; for some reason it took them five months to accept.

The ROK has allocated 142 billion won (\$140 million) for work on inter-Korean railways and roads this year, up from 86.4 billion won last year. Rather unambitiously, Chung said he hoped that South Koreans will be able to travel to the 2008 Beijing Olympics by train: one wonders why they must wait so long. Pyongyang is also refusing to hold official opening ceremonies for the two new cross-border roads, even though both are already in use. Yet a wise Kim Jong-il might see an active road and rail corridor – or at least the latter – linking China with South Korea as not only promoting North Korea as the hub (to coin a phrase) of a nascent Northeast Asian regional economy, but also in security terms as staying the hands of any U.S. hawks who might still harbor thoughts of surgical strikes. On the other hand this would mean opening on a scale far bigger and riskier than the tiny enclaves so far permitted in Kaesong and Kumgang, plus Rajin-Sonbong in the northeast.

So many North Korean concessions naturally have a price. South Korea agreed to send an extra 150,000 tons of fertilizer, on top of the 200,000 tons it had already supplied; delivery began on June 27. Pyongyang also wants 500,000 tons of rice; this will be further discussed at July's CPEC meeting, but will surely be granted. Seoul has already sent 400,000 tons in each of the last three years, yet Northern need is more acute now than ever. The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has warned that its own stocks are running out, while the DPRK's meager daily ration of 250 grams of grain may soon be cut further to a minuscule 200 grams.

Happily ever after?

As of now the two Koreas look set for a summer of love. How long this will last, let alone whether they will live happily ever after, is another question. On past form, one cannot rule out that Pyongyang may on some pretext or other switch off the new smile as suddenly as it switched it on; or that noises off, the nuclear issue above all, may curtail if not derail these renewed inter-Korean exchanges, especially in the business field.

On the other hand, if June's 12-point joint statement and Seoul's new sevenfold aid plan are even partly fulfilled, the prospect looms of North-South economic ties deepening from their present marginality toward the kind of profound integration now seen between China and Taiwan. The Koreans are starting almost two decades later, yet in principle Kaesong could become their Shenzhen – but only if the nuclear issue is resolved. For now, Kim Jong-il may be able to have both guns and butter; but ere long he will face a momentous choice, and it is still not clear which way he will jump. For South Korea, the challenge is to lure the North into win-win forms of cooperation, while working harder than it has done hitherto to reassure its allies – Japan as much as the U.S. – that it is not merely propping up a cynical nuclear malefactor, who is simply pocketing the cash while playing for time.

Civilian contacts surge

In a busy quarter, this account has perforce concentrated on the official level of renewed meetings. Yet as we have stressed before, besides this macro level, North-South relations also have a crucial micro dimension: in the now numerous unofficial business and civilian contacts which have blossomed since the late 1990s, and barring war or sanctions, which must now be seen as irrevocable. At this level, foundations for reunification are being laid.

On May 6 the Unification Ministry published statistics documenting this trend, which has continued apace despite Pyongyang's suspension until recently of official talks. It approved 11 applications for cultural cooperation in the first quarter of 2005 alone, compared to 15 in the whole of 2003 and 2004. Applicants included three broadcasters and film and football institutes. Their activities are diverse, ranging from joint TV programs and sports events to advertisements. Samsung recently featured a leading North Korean dancer in its ads.

Crossing the border

Nor is nuclear tension deterring Southern visitors to the North (this is, of course, a one-way flow). In April alone, 31,330 people took Hyundai Asan's tour to Mt. Kumgang, bringing the total for the first four months to 88,300: almost double last year's equivalent figure. The number of vehicles crossing the DMZ – unimaginable until recently – is rising rapidly, from 3,814 in January to 10,893 in April. In the same period the South imported 196,000 tons of Northern sand, bringing the cumulative total to 1.2m tons. Last year 28 companies were approved to build plants in the Kaesong zone, though so far only four are operational.

Total official costs to Seoul in the first quarter were a modest 159.2 billion won, in line with recent years. South Korea's governmental fund for inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation spent some 480 billion won (\$4.8 billion) in 2000, 594 billion won in 2001, 585 billion won in 2002, 842 billion won in 2003, and 557 billion won in 2004. A U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS) report on May 26 tallied total ROK aid to the DPRK for the decade 1995-2004 at \$3.5 billion, with over 90 percent provided since 2000. If and when serious cooperation to rebuild the Northern economy gets under way, far larger outlays will be required.

TV quiz: let's pretend

If at one level all contact might be deemed good, a recent hit TV show exemplifies some ambiguities. "Exclamation Point," aired in South Korea on Saturday nights, appears to be a quiz between Northern and Southern elementary school children. In fact the North Korean quiz was shot last year, and was interwoven with studio scenes in Seoul; so the impression of a live contest is false. Even the presenters' dialogue is redubbed to make it seem they are bantering with one another. The show is certainly revealing. The identically clothed young pioneers – white shirt, red kerchief – rarely smile; they are strong on math, nature, history, and military terms. They tend to win: it is a Northern show, using the original questions.

By contrast, the colourfully, brand-clad Southern kids joke with the moderator, and do better on astronomy and naming famous inventors, explorers, and musicians (many non-Korean). Their languages have diverged: the South uses many English words, while Northern speech sometimes requires subtitles. The Southern producers' avowed aim is to combat negative images of North Korea; but critics claim they whitewash and falsely romanticize it. There is, needless to say, no question of even such a stitched-up job being aired in Pyongyang.

Love, actually

But in other contexts, North and South Koreans do actually get to meet – if usually only in the North. In the Kaesong industrial zone, unprecedented forms and intensity of contact are having varied effects. On May 26, the zone hosted the DPRK's first Western-style fashion show, complete with catwalk, plunging necklines, and rock music. Shinwon,

one of four ROK firms operating in the zone so far, marked its official opening – several months after the fact – by showcasing its spring collection, some but not all made in the zone. While 500 South Koreans crossed the DMZ to see the show, none of Shinwon’s 280 Northern workers watched it. Affecting a lack of interest, and criticizing the outfits as too revealing, they countered the thumping beat from upstairs with music extolling the virtues of socialism.

Currently 3,200 North and 600 South Koreans work at Kaesong, but these numbers are set to rise. Already the juxtaposition of Southern male managers and Northern female workers is having a predictably human effect: romance. On June 27 it was reported, but as quickly denied, that an ROK supervisor at SJ Tech, which makes gaskets at Kaesong, hopes to marry one of his DPRK workmates. If this were permitted, it would indicate real change in Pyongyang. The fear, rather, is that any hint of a liaison would see the woman lose her job, or worse. In the long run, the old saying *nam nam puk yo* (southern man, northern woman) prefigures how, in an eventual reunified Korea, some lucky Northern lasses will get their piece of the Southern pie: by matrimony. Perhaps unification begins at home.

Chronology of North Korea-South Korea Relations April-June 2005

April 8, 2005: North Korea requests equipment and veterinary supplies after South Korea offers to help contain an outbreak of bird flu.

April 8, 2005: ROK Ministry of National Defense says it is considering armed robots to patrol the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). If feasible, they could be in place by 2011, allowing troops to be redeployed away from the border. This could cost \$1.9 billion.

April 8, 2005: With DPRK permission, for the first time since the 1950-53 Korean War, two ROK helicopters fly over the DMZ, near the east coast, trying to put out a forest fire.

April 13, 2005: In Germany, ROK President Roh Moo-hyun says that “serious aid” to the North Korean economy will only be possible when the nuclear problem is resolved.

April 14, 2005: In Germany, President Roh says that “the possibility of North Korea’s collapse is very low” and South Korea “has no intention to encourage it.”

April 14, 2005: South Korea says it will discuss aiding the North with its bird flu outbreak in talks at Kaesong on April 22, and will ship related equipment to Nampo immediately.

April 14, 2005: For the third consecutive year, the ROK abstains when the UN Commission for Human Rights in Geneva (UNCHR) passes a resolution condemning DPRK human rights abuses, sponsored by Japan and EU member states, by 30 votes to 9.

April 18, 2005: ROK National Assembly Committee watches a video of a public execution in North Korea, despite objections by lawmakers of the ruling Uri party who question its authenticity.

April 18, 2005: South Korea agrees to give equipment and materials worth 26 billion won (\$25 million) to build six stations in North Korea on reconnected rail lines.

April 18, 2005: ROK Unification Ministry says it plans legal revisions to permit bigger borrowings abroad to fund eventual larger-scale economic cooperation with DPRK.

April 19, 2005: ROK Unification Ministry says it has officially agreed to North Korea's request to protect the copyright of DPRK literary and artistic works in South Korea. An earlier agreement to this effect, signed in 1991, had never been implemented.

April 21, 2005: In what is claimed as the first ever joint statement by Northern and Southern political parties since the Korean War, ROK Democratic Labor Party (DLP) and DPRK Social Democratic Party (SDP) accuse Japan of reviving militarism. A week later, after a three-day meeting at the North's Mt. Kungang resort, the two parties say that their leaders will meet in Pyongyang in July, another first.

April 22, 2005: Three ROK agriculture ministry officials, with eight support staff, cross the DMZ for talks in Kaesong on containing the DPRK outbreak of bird flu. This is the first official government-level inter-Korean meeting since July 2004.

April 22-23, 2005: Kim Yong-nam, the DPRK's titular head of state, twice meets ROK Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan at the Asia-Africa Summit in Jakarta. They agree to resume inter-Korean dialogue, suspended for almost a year.

April 23, 2005: *Rodong Sinmun*, daily paper of the DPRK's ruling Korean Workers Party (KWP), accuses the ROK of preparing for war by taking arms from the U.S., and calls this a "double-dealing trick reminding one of a peddler crying wine and selling vinegar."

April 28, 2005: KT (Korea Telecom), the leading ROK fixed-line telecoms operator, says it has signed a €164,000 contract with the DPRK's Samcholli Corp. to develop two sorts of software. It claims that North Korea's voice-recognition technology is the world's best.

May 2, 2005: ROK deputy foreign minister says Seoul sees no sign that North Korea is preparing for a nuclear test.

May 3, 2005: ROK National Intelligence Service says 26,213 South Koreans (not including tourists) visited the North last year, up 72 percent from 15,280 in 2003.

May 4, 2005: ROK joint chiefs of staff intelligence head tells lawmakers that Kilju on the northeast coast, and 6-7 other areas in the DPRK, are being monitored for signs of nuclear test preparations.

May 6, 2005: ROK Unification Ministry publishes statistics on inter-Korean transactions.

May 12, 2005: South Korea asks the North to discuss the return of a monument taken to Japan in 1905. Tokyo has agreed to return it if the two Koreas can agree on terms.

May 16-17, 2005: Vice ministerial talks take place in Kaesong: the first high-level official inter-Korean dialogue in 10 months. They agree to hold a 15th round of Cabinet-level talks in Seoul in June. The South will send the North 200,000 tons of fertilizer, starting May 21.

May 17, 2005: Cheil Communications reveals that Cho Myong-ae (23), a leading North Korean traditional dancer who has performed in Seoul, is shooting a four-part commercial for Samsung's Anycall mobile phones in Shanghai. Her fee was not disclosed.

May 22, 2005: A DPRK merchant ship, the first of three, docks in Ulsan to load fertilizer. These are the first Northern vessels to visit Southern ports since 1984, when North Korea delivered aid after floods in South Korea.

May 22-23, 2005: An inter-Korean student meeting is held at Mt. Kumgang. The 70 ROK delegates, who join over 400 from the DPRK, include the current chair of Hanchongryun, a student federation still banned in the South as pro-North. Southern conservatives protest.

May 24, 2005: North Korea agrees that foreign buyers may access Southern factories in the Kaesong industrial zone from Seoul, by crossing the DMZ. A German buyer visits Living Art, a kitchenware maker, by this route shortly afterward. Pyongyang also approves a joint concert at Hyundai's Mt. Kumgang resort on June 8, to mark its millionth Southern tourist.

May 26, 2005: Head of the ROK presidential committee on balanced national development says that South Korea plans to help two Northern cities, Pyongyang and Wonsan, plus four zones: Kaesong, Sinuiju, Rajin-Sonbong, and Mt. Kumgang.

May 26, 2005: Shinwon, an ROK apparel maker, stages the DPRK's first Western-style fashion display at its Kaesong plant to showcase its spring collection, partly made there.

May 28, 2005: Both Koreas agree that the South will send 70 officials and 615 civilians to Pyongyang to celebrate the fifth anniversary of the North-South joint declaration.

May 30, 2005: The mayor of Incheon, Ahn Sang-soo, flies to Pyongyang with a 42-person delegation on a plane provided by the DPRK, to pursue city-level exchanges. Ahn proposes that a road be built linking Incheon to Kaesong, to facilitate exports from its industrial zone.

June 2, 2005: Citing U.S. hostility, North Korea asks South Korea to slash its delegation for the fifth summit anniversary to 30 officials and 190 civilians. They compromise.

June 8, 2005: Ri Jong-hyok, vice chairman of the DPRK's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, attends a concert at Mt. Kumgang to mark the millionth ROK tourist brought by Hyundai since its project to develop the Northern east coast resort began in 1998.

June 9-11, 2005: President Roh flies to Washington for a single 3-hour meeting (including lunch) with President George W Bush. North Korea is on the menu.

June 12, 2005: Hyundai Asan says it is building a golf course at Mt. Kumgang on a former military base, to include the world's longest par seven fairway at 1,014-yards. It will also develop 109 km of coast up to Wonsan as a "huge resort belt." ROK tourists will be able to drive their own cars across the DMZ and camp at Mt. Kumgang as early as this summer.

June 13, 2005: Former President Kim Dae-jung tells a conference in Seoul that the 2000 summit was "very successful" until 2002 when "U.S.-DPRK relations fell into stalemate."

June 13, 2005: Kang Chol-hwan, a DPRK gulag survivor and author, now a journalist in Seoul, is invited to the Oval Office to meet President George W Bush, who read his book.

June 14, 2005: Two Southern delegations, one of 295 civic leaders and the other of 40 current and former officials, fly from Seoul to Pyongyang in separate planes. An opening ceremony for the summit's fifth anniversary is held in Kim Il-sung Stadium.

June 16, 2005: The head of the visiting ROK delegation, Unification Minister Chung Dong-young, meets Kim Yong-nam, president of the presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) and titular head of state.

June 17, 2005: Minister Chung has unscheduled meeting with Kim Jong-il. The dear leader pledges to resume family reunions and military and maritime talks, and hints at returning to the Six-Party Talks.

June 17, 2005: Yoon Hong-joon, head of ROK cultural heritage administration, issues a statement apologizing for having sung the theme song of "Nameless Heroes," a DPRK film series lauding its spies during the Korean War, at a banquet in Pyongyang on June 14.

June 19, 2005: South Korea's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon says U.S. officials agree on the need for a "positive tone" toward North Korea and to avoid "trivial remarks."

June 19, 2005: An opening ceremony is held for Pyongyang Lions Ophthalmic Hospital, attended by the DPRK's health minister and ROK and international Lions Club officials. The \$8 million, 76-bed facility was funded by Lions Clubs in South Korea and worldwide. The largest eye hospital in North Korea, with 100 staff, it will open its doors in July.

June 21, 2005: 33 North Korean delegates arrive in Seoul for 15th ministerial talks since the June 2000 summit. The last meeting was held in May 2004. Their Air Koryo plane returns to Pyongyang carrying Han Wan-sang, president of the ROK's Red Cross, for talks.

June 23, 2005: The DPRK delegation to the ministerial talks, led by Kwon Ho-ung, a senior Cabinet Councillor, meets President Roh at the Blue House in Seoul.

June 23, 2005: Ministerial talks closed with a 12-point joint statement, pledging not only to resume most previous channels of North-South cooperation but to set up new ones.

June 24, 2005: DPRK ministerial delegation flies back to Pyongyang. Han Wan-sang, president of the ROK's Red Cross, returns to Seoul after his talks in Pyongyang.

June 24, 2005: South Korean officials say the North has asked for 500,000 tons of rice aid. This will be discussed at a joint economic committee due to meet in Seoul on July 9-12. On June 27, the UN World Food Program (WFP) warns that North Korea will soon cut its daily food ration from an already inadequate 250 grams to 200 grams.

June 25, 2005: In a speech on the 55th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, President Roh warns that North Korea's nuclear ambitions are the peninsula's biggest threat.

June 25, 2005: Paju city, north of Seoul, announces a peace festival to run Aug.1-Sep. 11. Highlights include a French illusionist who will make the DMZ disappear.

June 27, 2005: GNP leader Park Geun-hye calls on North Korea to address humanitarian issues, including the return of ROK POWs and abductees, in return for aid from the South.

June 27, 2005: South Korea says it will send an additional 150,000 tons of fertilizer to the North, starting today.

June 27, 2005: SJ Tech, an ROK firm that makes gaskets at Kaesong, describes reports that one of its managers wants to marry a Northern colleague as "exaggerated."

June 28, 2005: ROK Unification Ministry says it has offered a 7-point aid package to the DPRK, which could begin even before the nuclear issue is resolved. Some of this has been under discussion with the North since January.

June 28, 2005: Antonio Guterres, new UN High Commissioner for Refugees, says he wants “constructive dialogue” with Beijing on North Korean fugitives in China. He adds that “the first principle is that refoulement [forced return] cannot be accepted.”

June 28, 2005: DPRK boxers win all bouts, against ROK, Japanese, and U.S. opponents, at a World Boxing Council Female (WBCF) match in Pyongyang. The WBCF is newly created by Park Sang-kwon, an ROK businessman linked to the Unification Church who also runs Pyonghwa Motors, which assembles Fiat cars at Nampo. Critics say the WBCF is divisive.

June 28, 2005: ROK Maritime Ministry says it will remove 3 km of a 68 km barbed wire coastal fence in Kangwon province on the east coast south of the DMZ, to make beaches more user-friendly. It adds that closed-circuit TV suffices to guard the coast.

June 29, 2005: Unification Minister Chung leaves for a hastily arranged trip to Washington, to brief U.S. officials on his talks with Kim Jong-il and the North-South ministerial meeting. He hopes to persuade skeptics of the merits of engaging the DPRK.

June 30, 2005: There is surprise in Seoul at the inclusion of Ryonbong, a DPRK enterprise that is Pyonghwa Motors’ joint venture partner, among eight companies named on an order signed by President Bush on June 29 freezing the U.S. assets of alleged WMD proliferators. Two other North Korean firms, Tanchon bank and Changgwang, are also listed.