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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Associated Press (Hyung-Jin Kim, "NKOREA COMPLETES 8 DISABLEMENT MEASURES", Seoul, 2008/01/31) reported that the DPRK has completed eight of the 11 measures required to disable nuclear facilities under an international disarmament deal, the ROK's chief nuclear envoy said. The DPRK has made progress in disabling its main plutonium-producing facilities but failed to complete the work by an end-of-2007 deadline because of technical reasons, Chun Yung-woo told a forum, according to organizers. Chun and other diplomats have said removing fuel rods from the reactor would take several months and the entire disablement work is expected to be completed by March.

Korea Times (Yoon Won-sup, "DISMANTLEMENT PROGRAM APPLICABLE TO PYONGYANG", Seoul, 2008/02/01 19:00:00 GMT+0) reported that Chun Yung-woo, ROK envoy to the six-party talks, said Friday that the nuclear dismantlement program that the United States led with regard to the former Soviet Union can apply to the DPRK. "We will face a problem about how to educate the North Korean nuclear scientists if North Korea realizes denuclearization," he said. "They should work in peaceful and productive fields after the denuclearization." As part of the program, he suggested peaceful use of the land occupied by the Yongbyon nuclear complex, such as using it for a uranium refinery, in an environmentally friendly way. He expected such a transformation to create jobs for DPRK citizens.

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2. DPRK on Nuclear Program

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL CALLS 6-PARTY TALKS SNAG 'TEMPORARY'", 2008/01/31) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il assured a visiting PRC delegation that his regime was still committed to holding up its end of the stalled six-nation nuclear deal, the PRC's official Xinhua news agency said. Kim met with Wang Jiarui, head of the liaison office of China's ruling Communist Party, on Wednesday and told him "the present difficulties are temporary and can be conquered," Xinhua said. "There are no changes in the North's stance to continue pushing forward the six-party talks persistently and implementing all the agreements," Kim was quoted as saying.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("US ENVOY HOLDS TALKS IN NKOREA", Washington, 2008/01/31) reported that a US envoy who is seeking a full declaration from Pyongyang on its nuclear activities had some preliminary talks Thursday with DPRK officials, a senior US official said. Sung Kim, the State Department's top Korea expert, "has had some preliminary meetings with officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters in Washington. "He expects to have some more tomorrow," he added without giving details.

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4. US on DPRK Terror List Status

Yonhap ("NO TERRORISM LIST REMOVAL BEFORE N.K.'S DECLARATION: ENVOY", Washington, 2008/01/31) reported that the top US envoy to the ROK affirmed that his government will not remove the DPRK from its list of terrorism-sponsoring states until the DPRK provides a full declaration of its nuclear stockpile and activities. Ambassador Alexander Vershbow called rumors that Washington is considering a phased removal of Pyongyang from the list "idle speculation." Expressing his disappointment that the DPRK delayed its actions pledged in the six-party talks, the envoy said that the U.S. "will persevere."

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5. Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("CHINESE PARTY OFFICIAL VISITS KASEONG INDUSTRIAL PARK", Seoul, 2008/01/31) reported that a senior PRC Communist Party official pledged to make efforts to help develop an industrial complex in the DPRK border city of Kaesong, a ROK body handling the cross-border project said. Wang Jiarui, head of the International Liaison Department of the PRC Communist Party, arrived at the inter-Korean industrial park at 1:30 p.m. to inspect two plants there, the Kaesong Industrial District Management Committee said.

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6. DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("TIES WITH JAPAN WON'T IMPROVE UNTIL ABDUCTION ISSUE DROPPED: N. KOREA", Beijing, 2008/01/31) reported that DPRK-Japan relations will never improve if Japan continues to link their improvement with a bilateral dispute over the DPRK's past abductions of Japanese nationals, the DPRK's state-run media said. In a lengthy commentary, the Korean Central News Agency said that the DPRK has not forgiven Japan for forcing many Korean women into sexual slavery and taking many Korean men to Japan during World War II, and that it will make the country pay.

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7. DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap ("SOME REFUGEES TREATED BETTER IN N.K.: REPORT", Washington, 2008/01/31) reported that although the DPRK's human rights conditions remain abysmal, some refugees have described "improved" treatment of those who try to flee the country, citing less verbal and physical abuse, an annual report by Human Rights Watch said. The report omitted references to the ROK, which in last year's version was cited for a lack of protection of non-Korean refugees and the arrest of people sympathetic to Pyongyang.

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8. ROK UAV Crash

RIA Novosti ("S. KOREA SPY DRONE CRASHES NEAR INTER-KOREAN BORDER", Moscow, 2008/01/31) reported that a ROK unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) used to monitor DPRK troop movements crashed near the heavily fortified inter-Korean border, national television said. The Israeli-made Searcher UAV in service with the ROK Air Force went down near the city of Pocheon, 25 kilometers (about 15 miles) south of the Demilitarized Zone, the YTN television said, citing military sources.

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9. US-ROK Military Exercises

Associated Press ("US, SKOREA TO HOLD JOINT MILITARY DRILL", Seoul, 2008/02/01) reported that the ROK and the United States will hold a joint military exercise next month to prepare for plans to handover wartime command of ROK forces, the U.S. military said Friday. The March 2-7 drill, called Key Resolve, replaces previous annual exercises held since 1994 to practice how to receive troops that would flood into the Korean peninsula in case of war. The new exercise will involve similar maneuvers, but ROK forces will take on more leadership in preparation for the command transfer, said U.S. Military spokesman Kim Yong-kyu.

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10. US-ROK Security Alliance

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "KOREA AIMS TO COMPLETE BASE CLEAN-UP BY 2010", 2008/01/31) reported that the Defense Ministry said it aims to complete by 2010 the clean up of pollutants at 18 former U.S. military bases returned to the ROK. It is expected to cost up to 119.7 billion won ($126.7 million). The ministry yesterday released a roadmap for the decontamination process. The bases were transferred last year from the U.S. military. The roadmap comes after a month-long investigation into the bases, believed to be seriously contaminated.

Korea Times (Yoon Won-sup, "BELL WANTS TO LENGTHEN TOUR STAY OF US SOLDIERS", Seoul, 2008/02/01) Gen. B. B. Bell, commander of the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), said that he plans to extend the length of tours of U.S. servicemen here from one year to three and create more slots for their families to join them. Bell said the basis for making the decision for unaccompanied tours has changed tremendously, mainly because Korea has experienced significant economic growth in the past 30 years. He further said that 30 years ago, American families would have faced real hardships if they were assigned to the ROK but that is no longer the case.

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11. US-ROK Trade Relations

Donga Ilbo ("FTA WITH U.S. FACING GLOOMY FUTURE", 2008/01/31) reported that despite U.S. President George W. Bush's plea for early passage of the free trade agreement with the ROK, the deal faces a gloomy future in Washington. The biggest obstacles are the congressional insistence on the ROK's unconditional opening of its beef market before ratification and renegotiation of terms on American cars and auto parts. A diplomatic source in Washington, on the condition of anonymity, said beef is one of the biggest problems, but that the Democrat-controlled Congress will not budge an inch without resetting auto trade terms. Seoul, however, has also refused to step back, saying further compromise of its position on auto trade will strengthen voices in the ROK opposed to the accord.

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12. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("PROGRESS MADE, BUT EU FTA BATTLE GOES ON", 2008/01/31) reported that as the sixth round of ROK-EU free trade talks come to a close, intellectual property rights and place-o--origin issues are nearly resolved, according to Kim Han-soo, the ROK's chief negotiator, during a briefing Wednesday at The Shilla Hotel. "We are moving smoothly as far as intellectual property rights are concerned," he said. An agreement has also been reached on safeguards on agricultural products. But the two key issues of auto industrial standards and tariff concessions have not been discussed in this round.

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13. ROK Middle East Diplomacy

Yonhap ("LEE VOWS TO ENHANCE TIES WITH MIDDLE EAST: AIDE", Seoul, 2008/01/31) reported that President-elect Lee Myung-bak promised to seek closer diplomatic ties with Middle Eastern nations through frequent summits with their leaders, an aide to Lee said. Lee made the remarks while meeting with ambassadors from 13 Arab countries, including the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Seoul, Abdullah A. Al-Aifan, in his office. "Although South Korea and Arab countries are closely related in the economic sector, the diplomatic ties have not been as strong," Lee was quoted as saying by his spokesperson Joo Ho-young. "I will promote frequent meetings with leaders of Arab countries to strengthen diplomatic ties with the Middle East under the incoming administration."

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14. Inter-Korean Maritime Border

The New York Times (Choe Sang-Hun, "ONE EYE ON THE FISH, THE OTHER ON NORTH KOREA", Baengnyeong Island, 2008/01/31) reported that on a clear day, one can stand on this island and see the coast of DPRK, pale and milky on the horizon, 10 miles away. The channel could be crossed in just half an hour by boat. Since their leaders met in October, the DPRK and ROK have been trying something unprecedented: creating joint fishing zones in long-disputed waters near Baengnyeong and four other ROK islands near the DPRK coast. But subsequent talks on the issue have made little progress because of the DPRK's refusal to accept a sea bounday between those islands and the DPRK, drawn unilaterally by the United Nations at the end of the fighting.

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15. Taiwan UN Membership

Agence France-Presse ("TOKYO TO HOLD UN REFERENDUM ON DAY OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION", Taipei, 2008/02/01) reported said Friday the island would hold a referendum on joining the United Nations under the name "Taiwan" on March 22, the same day as presidential elections. The referendum will ask whether voters "agree that the government should seek to join the UN in the name of Taiwan to express Taiwanese people's will and enhance Taiwan's international status and participation," the Central Election Commission said in a notice on its website.

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16. Japanese Nuclear Power

Associated Press (Carl Freire, "IAEA: NO MAJOR DAMAGE TO QUAKE-HIT PLANT", Tokyo, 2008/02/01) reported that a 12-member team from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said Friday that there was no significant damage to the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant in northern Japan after it was hit by a strong earthquakelast summer. "The first objective of the team has been to confirm that there appears to be no significant damage to the integrity of the plant," team leader Phillipe Jamet said in a statement. The team was able to view key internal components in the plant inaccessible during its first visit last August and meet with regulatory officials, the plant's operators, and other experts, the statement said.

Yomiuri Shimbun (Michio Hayashi, "JAPAN, FRANCE EYE MORE COOPERATION ON N-POWER", Paris, 2008/02/01) reported that Japan and France are expected to agree to expand the scope of

their cooperation in nuclear power utilization during a tour of Japan by French Prime Minister Francois Fillon in early April, according to diplomatic sources. The two nations have a common interest in expanding the use of nuclear energy because they rely on other countries for carbon-based energy resources and find it increasingly difficult to secure a stable supply in the face of the hard-line resource-based diplomacy practiced by Russia and China, the sources said.

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17. Japan Whaling Issue

Agence France-Presse (Kyoko Hasegawa, "AUSTRALIA, JAPAN POLITELY DISAGREE IN WHALE TALKS", Tokyo, 2008/01/31) reported that Australia and Japan agreed to disagree on a bitter feud over whaling as their foreign ministers tried to show that the countries' close relationship was otherwise intact. Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith held talks in Japan after a visit to mutual ally the United States on his first foreign trip since his left-leaning government took office in December. In closed-door talks and a working dinner, the two sides were said to disagree over Japan's controversial annual whaling expedition in the Antarctic Ocean.

Agence France-Presse (Harumi Ozawa, "AUSTRALIA MINISTER WARNS JAPAN OF WHALE ACTION", Tokyo, 2008/02/01) reported that Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith warned Friday of tougher action to stop Japan whaling. "Australia very strongly believes that Japan should cease whaling in the Southern Ocean," he told a news conference during his trip to Tokyo. "We are giving very careful consideration to the possibility of taking international legal action in respect of this matter," he added. "Whereas we have a strong disagreement, this is not an issue which in my view is or can or will adversely impact upon the fundamentals about the partnership with Japan," he said. "The whaling issue is a matter of each country's circumstances," Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda told reporters after meeting with Smith. "It's important to address the whaling issue in a calm manner."

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18. Sino-Japanese Environmental Cooperation

Xinhua ("JAPAN SEEKS COOPERATION WITH CHINA TO DEAL WITH CLIMATE CHANGE", Honolulu, 2008/01/31) reported that a top Japanese delegate attending the climate meeting said that Japan appreciates the PRC's engagement in the climate talks under UN framework and the two neighboring nations have great potential to cooperate on related issues. "Officials from the two countries are working closely on the issue, and I believe there is a lot of potential in cooperation and coordination between the two sides in order to have a new climate framework after 2012, " Koji Tsuruoka, a director-general from Japan's foreign ministry told Xinhua on the sideline of the 2nd major economies meeting on energy security and climate change.

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19. US-PRC Trade Relations

The Associated Press (Bradley S. Klapper, "US HINTS AT NEW WTO CHALLENGE VS. CHINA", Geneva, 2008/01/31) reported that the US has told the PRC to get serious about relaxing the

restraints on financial information providers in a letter that could represent a final warning before the U.S. asks the WTO to intervene in the matter, the Associated Press learned. In the letter to PRC trade officials, the office of the U.S. Trade Representative signaled it has run out of patience with the PRC's refusal to change rules introduced two years ago that appeared to boost the official Xinhua News Agency at the expense of financial information companies such as Reuters Group PLC and Bloomberg LP.

The New York Times (Keith Bradsher, "KEEPING AN EYE ON CHINA'S SECURITY", Hong Kong, 2008/01/31) reported that since Imperial times, Chinese governments have relied on neighbors to inform on each other as a way to preserve social control. But with the PRC now becoming wealthier and its citizens more mobile, the government is now embracing the extensive use of street-by-street surveillance technology — and the US government is becoming less sure that US companies should be playing a central role in the effort. The Commerce Department is drafting new rules on what security equipment US companies can sell to the PRC. The move comes in response to rapid advances in surveillance technology and the increasing involvement of US companies in the PRC market as the Olympics approach.

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20. PRC Agriculture

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA WARNS OF SERIOUS IMPACT ON CROPS", Beijing, 2008/01/31) reported that snow battering central PRC has dealt an "extremely serious" blow to winter crops, a top agriculture official warned, raising the likelihood that future shortages would exaggerate already surging food prices. Regions hit by the worst winter storms in 50 years provide the bulk of the PRC's winter fruit and vegetables, Chen Xiwen, deputy director of the Communist Party's leading financial team, told reporters. The full magnitude of the losses was unclear and much depended on the weather in the coming days, he said.

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21. PRC Weather Modification

The Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "CHINA PLANS TO HALT RAIN FOR OLYMPICS", Beijing, 2008/01/31) reported that determined not to let anything spoil their party, organizers of the 2008 Summer Olympics said Wednesday that they will take control over the most unpredictable element of all -- the weather. While the PRC's Olympic athletes are getting ready to compete on the fields, its meteorologists are working the skies, attempting the difficult feat of making sure it doesn't rain on the Aug. 8 opening ceremonies. The PRC are among the world's leaders in what is called "weather modification," but they have more experience creating rain than preventing it. In fact, the techniques are virtually the same.

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II. CanKor

22. Report #301

CanKor ("DPRK RELEASES EDMONTON BUSINESSMAN", 2008/01/31) A Korean-Canadian businessman from Edmonton who was detained for more than two months in North Korea has been released. Je Yell Kim, 61, was arrested on unspecified charges on Nov. 3 when he tried to cross the border from North Korea to China. He had been overseeing the operation of a dental clinic and two hospitals in a particularly impoverished part of North Korea.

CanKor ("CONVERSATION WITH THE PATRIOT", 2008/01/31) Erich Weingartner continues his conversation with the fictional "patriot" Pak Kim Li (a combination of the three most popular family names in Korea), based on real conversations and events during many visits and almost three years residency in the DPRK as Head of the Food Aid Liaison Unit (FALU) of the UN World Food Programme (WFP). In this issue are episodes 2 and 3.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org