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I. Napsnet

1. Six-Party Talks

Korea Times ("NK THREATENS TO DERAIL SIX-WAY TALKS", Seoul, 2008/02/08) reported that the DPRK threatened Friday to block progress in the six-party talks over its nuclear programs, claiming efforts by U.S. hardliners to disrupt dialogue with Pyongyang could aggravate the current standoff. "If U.S. hardliners drive the political situation on the Korean Peninsula and DPRK-U.S. relationship to the worst condition opposing to settlement through dialogue and negotiations till the last moment, achievements so far made can become nothing," said the Rodong Shinmun, organ of the Workers' Party. "The United States will have to assume the full responsibility in that case," the newspaper said.

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2. ROK on Japan Role in Six-Party Talks

Korea Times (Yoon Won-sup, "PRESIDENT-ELECT CALLS FOR FUTURE-ORIENTED RELATIONS WITH JAPAN", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that ROK President-elect Lee Myung-bak called for Japan's support to solve the DPRK nuclear weapons problem. "Though relevant nations deal with the nuclear issues through the six-party talks, we hope that Japan plays its role more actively," Lee said in a meeting Monday with a group of 10 Japanese lawmakers led by Koichi Kato, the former secretary general of the Liberal Democratic Party. Lee hinted that Japan needs to focus more on the international effort to denuclearize the DPRK than on bilateral issues.

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3. ROK Aid to DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA MAY HAVE DIVERTED CASH AID", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that although the ROK in March last year gave US\$3.8 million worth of aid, including \$400,000 in cash and building materials, to the DPRK to build a center for inter-Korean video-link family reunions in Pyongyang, the DPRK has not even started construction on the site. Explaining the cash aid at the time, the ROK government said the money was to be used to purchase LCD monitors and computers which are needed for the video reunion center but cannot be shipped to the DPRK according to U.S. Export Administration Regulations. Song Dae-sung, a senior researcher at the Sejong Institute, said, "The cash aid sent to the North may have been used for three purposes -- slush funds for North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, funding for the North Korean Army or funding for the North Korean Workers Party. It may also have been used to fund clandestine North Korean operations in South Korea or for military purposes."

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4. PRC-DPRK Relations

Yomiuri Shimbun (Tetsuya Suetsugu, "CHINA-DPRK BRIDGE EXPEDITED", 2008/02/09) reported that municipal authorities in Dandong, Liaoning Province, PRC announced in a January activities report that the city will "accelerate the plan to construct a large bridge across the Yalu River." The Dandong authorities plan to connect with the DPRK a 97-square-kilometer industrial park that is being built in the city. The new bridge will become the main artery for the PRC to import minerals and other resources from the DPRK. However, a source close to the Dandong authorities said: "The construction of the bridge depends on the future relationship between China and North Korea."

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5. DPRK Leadership

Donga Ilbo ("KIM JONG IL HAS COMPLETE CONTROL OVER AIDES, MEDIA", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that, according to DPRK defectors who used to be top officials, DPRK National Defense Committee Chairman Kim Jong-il invites outstanding elites to official events or feasts to see their personalities and abilities after conducting multi-dimensional verification on them beforehand. Once these elites pass this test, they become part of the "inner-circle politics." Chief researcher Hyun Seong-il at the Institute for National Security Strategy, who was formerly an official of the Workers' Party of North Korea, defined the "inner-circle politics" as a "form of politics where Kim relies on his unofficial close aides to run national affairs rather than on official governing or decision-making bodies." Lee Joo-cheol, an expert on the DPRK media, said, "North Korea's media is more of a political device to penetrate Kim's message to the public and realize his ideals rather than a news reporting organization."

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6. ROK Military

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "S. KOREA CONSIDERS BUILDING MORE AEGIS SHIPS", Seoul,

2008/02/11) reported that the ROK Navy is considering building three more Aegis destroyers by 2020 to counter threats posed by the DPRK's advanced missile systems and potential maritime disputes with neighboring countries, a report said Monday. The Navy plans to submit the acquisition plan to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the first half of the year, Yonhap News Agency reported, quoting an unidentified military source. The Navy has already reported the plan to the National Assembly's National Defense Committee, Yonhap said. Lt. Cmdr. Yoo Young-shik of the Navy's public affairs office in Seoul, however, told The Korea Times that nothing has been fixed at the moment.

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7. ROK-US Military Relations

Arirang News ("KOREA, US TO HOLD AMMO TALKS", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that in Hawaii officials from Seoul and Washington are expected to discuss handling of U.S. ammunition reserves stockpiled in the ROK over the past decades. The talks are part of an ongoing plan to end a U.S. program dating from the 1970s that allowed Washington to keep ammunition and other equipment in the ROK in the interest of quick wartime response. Seoul is requesting additional tests and data because it plans to purchase some of the ammunition.

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8. US-ROK Free Trade Agreement

Korea Herald ("KOREAN, U.S. UNIONS TO DISCUSS ACTION AGAINST FTA", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that Lee Suk-haeng, president of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, on Sunday embarked on a four-day trip to the United States to discuss joint action with U.S. labor groups on blocking the ratification of a free trade agreement between the two countries. KTCU spokesperson Woo Moon-sook stated, "The U.S. labor unions are also against the Korea-U.S. free trade pact, and we have been closely planning joint actions with our U.S. counterpart to nullify the deal ever since the launch of free trade agreement negotiations with the U.S. in February 2006." Lee is scheduled to meet with Sander Levin, Democrat chairman of the House Trade subcommittee, John Sweeney, president of the American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, and Anna Burger, Change to Win Federation president, during his visit.

Yonhap (Shin Hae-in, "LIBERAL PARTY BLOCKS TALKS ON KOREA-U.S. FTA RATIFICATION", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that A scheduled parliamentary discussion on the ratification of an ROK-U.S. free trade deal was called off Monday as members the progressive Democratic Labor Party blockaded the meeting venue to thwart submission of the bill. The committee meeting was postponed without further notice.

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9. ROK Government Reorganization

Korea Times (Kim Yon-se, "UNIFICATION MINISTRY WILL BE RETAINED", Seoul, 2008/02/10) reported that the the United New Democratic Party (UNDP) and the Grand National Party (GNP) have agreed to retain the Ministry of Unification under the incoming Lee Myung-bak administration. Under the bipartisan agreement, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea will remain

independent. The transition team had initially planned to put the commission under the control of the presidential office. But the two parties have yet to agree on whether to retain the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family.

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10. ROK-PRC Relations

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "SEOUL-BEIJING TIES AT NEW STARTING POINT: ENVOY", Seoul, 2008/02/09) reported that Ning Fukui, Beijing's ambassador to Seoul, said that the advent of a new ROK government signals a fresh starting point for the country's relations with the PRC. The advent of a new South Korean government signals a fresh starting point for the country's relations with China, and both nations should use the occasion to bring their ties to a higher level," he added.

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11. Cross Strait Relations

China Post ("BIGGEST-EVER CHINESE TOURIST GROUP TO VISIT TAIWAN TODAY", Taipei, 2008/02/10) reported that nearly 700 PRC tourists were expected to visit Taiwan Sunday aboard the Rhapsody of the Sea, making them the biggest PRC tourist group ever to be allowed to visit Taiwan, according to a local press report. In order to welcome the tourists, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) eased the government's restriction of "no more than 1,000 inbound Chinese visitors per day" and will offer the tourists rapid customs clearance, the United Daily News reported. Based on MAC regulations, the two Taiwan travel agencies authorized to sponsor the visits face a fine of NT\$200,000 (US\$6,211) for each PRC tourist who runs away.

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12. PRC Weather

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA WARNS OF BLIZZARDS IN WEST", Beijing,) reported that the PRC warned snow, sleet, and icy rain were expected through midweek in Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, and Sichuan provinces, along with parts of Tibet. However, warmer temperatures were expected in the normally temperate central regions battered last month by the worst storms in more than 50 years. Power lines snapped and pylons were toppled in numerous places under the weight of accumulated snow and ice, cutting power from the Three Gorges Dam hydroelectric project to the national grid.

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13. Sino-Japanese Relations

Agence France-Presse ("DUMPLING SCARE SHOULD NOT HARM JAPAN-CHINA TIES: MINISTERS", Tokyo, 2008/02/10) reported that the contaminated Chinese dumplings found in Japan should not harm warming Sino-Japanese ties, the finance ministers of both countries agreed on Sunday. Japanese Fukushima Nukaga and his PRC counterpart Xie Xuren also agreed during talks

that both nations should work to prevent a similar food safety scare in future. Nukaga agreed to Xie's proposal to hold another such meeting in Tokyo in late March, the official said.

Kyodo ("75.9% OF JAPANESE SAY THEY WILL NOT USE CHINESE FOOD: POLL", Tokyo, 2008/02/10) reported that 75.9 percent of consumers in Japan said they "will not use Chinese food from now on" due to the recent food poisoning incident involving Chinese-made dumplings, according to a Kyodo News telephone survey conducted nationwide Saturday and Sunday. Surveys show that Japanese consumers using Chinese food stood at 57.9 percent until before the incident came to light in late January, but plunged to 21.6 percent after the incident.

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14. US Military in Japan

Associated Press (Chisaki Watanabe, "US MARINE ACCUSED OF RAPE IN JAPAN", Tokyo, 2008/02/11) reported that Japanese police on Monday arrested a U.S. Marine accused of raping a 14-year-old girl in Okinawa, but the suspect denied the allegation, police said. Officials of U.S. Forces in Japan could not immediately confirm the latest case.

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15. Japan-Russia Relations

Vladivostock Times ("RF AIR FORCES: RUSSIAN FORCES DID NOT PENETRATE AIR SPACE OF JAPAN", Vladivostock, 2008/02/11) reported that Colonel Alexander Drobyshevsky, the assistant on information of the Commander-in-chief of the Russian Air Forces, refuted Japan's claim that a Russian bomber made an unwarranted intrusion into Japanese air space. "The airplanes of the Russian Air Forces flew in accordance with their task. They did not perpetrate the Japanese air space. Strategic airplanes were flying according to the schedule and in compliance with the International Rules of Using the Air Space above Neutral Waters and they did not cross the air border of other states," he told RIA Novosti. According to the Ministry of Defence of Japan, at 7.30 a.m. (1.30 a.m. Moscow time) on Saturday the Russian plane perpetrated the air space above the Idzu Archipelago (Prefecture of Tokyo). Twenty-four airplanes of the Japanese Self-Defence Forces were scrambled.

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16. Japan-Russia Carbon Trading

Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN, RUSSIA IN TALKS FOR EMISSION CREDITS TRADING", Tokyo, 2008/02/11) reported that the Japanese government plans to begin talks with Russia to buy greenhouse gas emissions credits that will help Tokyo reach its target emissions cuts pledged under the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, officials said over the weekend. Japan hopes to buy emissions quotas from Russia, whose quotas far exceed the level it actually generates.

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II. ROK Report

17. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("DPRK NUCLEAR 2.13 AGREEMENT'S ACHIEVEMENT AND LIMITATION FOR THE PAST ONE YEAR", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that a year has passed since the 2.13 agreement was first signed. It is possible to say that the abandonment of the nuclear equipment, the denuclearization of the DPRK has been processing quite radically as well as building trust between the US and the DPRK. However, due to their dissenting opinions on reporting nuclear weapons, it is difficult to reach the final step, namely denuclearization. Experts warned that there is a possibility that the treaty could be dead if it takes more time merely waiting for the matter to be solved. The US removal of the DPRK from the terrorist-support nations list represents that they had decided to improve their relationship with the DPRK. Since there is only a year left for Bush administration to be in the office, a few days for Roh Moo-hyun's, and the PRC is concentrating on the coming Olympic Games, it is difficult for the countries to put their diplomatic efforts on the nuclear problem. Therefore, it is necessary to prepare more creative solutions to maintain the current momentum.

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18. US-DPRK Relations

Donga Ilbo ("KIM SUNG-HAN, KOREA UNIV. PROF., US-DPRK 'ORCHESTRA DIPLOMACY'", Seoul, 2008/02/11) said in an editorial that the US and the DPRK are now engaging in so-called "orchestra diplomacy." The US strategy is to normalize the relationship between the two nations based on the denuclearization of the DPRK. However, it is likely that the DPRK sees the matter differently. The focus of the diplomatic procedure is not on the denuclearization of the nation, but rather on restraining the PRC through improving the relationship with the US. This means that the DPRK, unlike India, will not act positively even with the US if the nuclear power is thoroughly abandoned from the nation. This is why New York Philharmonic Orchestra's performance should not be viewed as a sheer romantic event. Lee Myung-bak's incoming government should work on the two tasks, namely the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the improvement of the US-DPRK relationship, simultaneously.

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19. ROK-US Relations

Kookmin Ilbo ("US CONGRESS ADOPTS RESOLUTION TO CONGRATULATE LEE'S VICTORY", Seoul, 2008/02/11) said in the editorial that the adoption of the resolution to congratulate Lee Myung-bak's victory in the ROK presidential election by the U.S. House of Representatives represents the importance of the US-ROK alliance. As the coming government has already announced that they would put more effort on building a even stronger alliance between the two nations, it is expected that some of the related issues could be solved through this strengthening. One of the most important criteria is to maintain the relationship based on mutual benefits, so that the peoples of the two nations support them sustainably. Moreover, both countries should focus more on how the incoming governments of the two nations work on making new strategies.

Segye Ilbo ("US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPECT US-ROK ALLIANCE STRENGTHENED", Seoul, 2008/02/11) said in an editorial that the adoption of the resolution on Lee Myung-bak's victory was done to demand that the incoming ROK government put more effort on reviving and strengthening the US-ROK alliance. Specifically for the ROK, strengthening the alliance with the US is one of the most urgent tasks in the diplomatic fields. Even so, President Roh Moo-hyun's consistent pursuit on self-reliant diplomacy and sunshine policy toward the DPRK only led to the weakening of the two nations' alliance. The incoming government should learn the lesson from the previous government and work on building a more solid relationship with the US based on mutual benefits. Two tasks that need immediate actions are the DPRK nuclear issue and the FTA matter.

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20. ROK-US FTA

DongA Ilbo ("US CONGRESS TO RATIFY FTA TO CELEBRATE LEE'S VICTORY", Seoul, 2008/02/11) said in an editorial that the U.S. House of Representatives' adoption of the resolution to celebrate the newly-elected ROK president Lee Myung-bak's victory will function effectively to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance. One of the most important tasks of the two countries is to ratify the U.S.-ROK FTA. The U.S. Congress should act before the Democrats come into office, which will make the ratification even more difficult.

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21. ROK-Japan Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("ROK ABANDONS WASTE IN JAPAN SEA", Seoul, 2008/02/11) reported that part of the ROK waste disposal area that was designated in the East Sea has remained for 15 years even though it has invaded some part of the sea area within Japan's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The Japanese government noticed the problem two or three years ago and urged the ROK Ministry of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries to correct the matter, but it has been delayed so far. This may lead to similar incidents as occurred in the East Sea when Russia dumped their nuclear waste for 30 years and polluted the area severely.

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22. PRC Food Exports

Asia Today ("PRC-JAPAN DUMPLINGS WITH PESTICIDE, GREAT LESSON FOR ROK", Seoul, 2008/02/11) said in an editorial that the problem of pesticides found on Chinese frozen dumplings imported to Japan also has implications for the ROK, which is importing more than 20 kinds of dumplings from 20 PRC companies. The rate of people purchasing other groceries from PRC, especially agricultural products, is going to increase due to the relatively lower prices. This means that the ROK government should operate the ROK-PRC Food Safety Cooperation Committee more effectively, so that we can prevent such incidents from happening in our nation.

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