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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US-DPRK Sanctions Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA, US MAY HOLD SANCTIONS TALKS: REPORT", Seoul, 2007/11/13) reported that the US and DPRK may meet this weekend to discuss financial sanctions imposed on the DPRK for alleged counterfeiting, a report said. The meeting may take place in New York when DPRK financial officials take part in an international conference from Friday, Yonhap news agency quoted government sources as saying. The agenda includes Pyongyang's demand that Washington ease the sanctions, it said.

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2. ROK on Korean War Peace Treaty

Joongang Ilbo (Brian Lee, "ROH CALLS FOR 'DECLARATION' OF PEACE", 2007/11/13) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun has called for a landmark meeting involving the leaders of the PRC, the US and the DPRK to finally put an end to the Korean War by replacing the existing armistice with a peace treaty. Roh spoke at a forum sponsored by the Hankyoreh newspaper. "In order to push for the prompt nuclear dismantlement of North Korea and the conclusion of a peace treaty, the leaders of the concerned countries need to make a joint declaration and set up a definite milestone," Roh said in a speech at the forum. Both Washington and Beijing have said a peace summit would only be appropriate after DPRK denuclearization is completed.

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3. Northern Limit Line Issue

Chosun Ilbo ("S.KOREA 'WAVERING' OVER JOINT FISHING ZONE", 2007/11/13) reported that the ROK government is apparently wavering in its insistence that a planned joint fishing zone in the West Sea should cover two equal areas north and south of the Northern Limit Line, which has functioned as the de facto sea border with the DPRK. A government source on Monday said Seoul tried to keep the "same distance" principle intact but is wavering since the DPRK will not hear of it

and current fishing areas bulge in irregular patterns around the NLL. Another government official said maintaining the "same size" principle would be also difficult, because there is little room for a joint fishing zone in the DPRK. He predicted that joint fishing zones could be scattered across several areas where fish are abundant.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong , "GAESEONG TOPS AGENDA OF PRIME MINISTERS' TALKS", 2007/11/13) reported that the ROK and DPRK prime ministers will today begin discussions on follow-up measures to the agreement reached in the October summit between President Roh Moo-hyun and DPRK leader Kim Jong-il. In three days of talks through Friday, the prime ministers are expected to focus on cooperation in the economic and construction sectors, rather than military issues. Leading the agenda is a proposal to boost activities in the Gaeseong Industrial Complex near the border. The delegations are expected to agree on launching internet and cellular phone services in the area.

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5. Japan-DPRK Relations

The Financial Times (David Pilling , "TOKYO TO SOFTEN LINE ON N KOREA", 2007/11/13) reported that when Yasuo Fukuda, Japanese prime minister, meets George W. Bush, US president, in Washington on Friday, he will offer a slightly more conciliatory approach on the DPRK and a promise to do his best to pass anti-terror legislation. "We certainly do not think that the US is engaging in its discussions over nuclear disarmament with North Korea in a lax manner. The North Korean nuclear weapons are a major threat to Japan," he said. He added that he hoped the abduction issue could be resolved at "more or less the same time", through separate discussions between Tokyo and Pyongyang.

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6. PRC Investment in the DPRK

Bloomberg News (Bomi Lim, "NORTH KOREA, CHINA WILL START $10 BILLION FUND, YONHAP REPORTS", 2007/11/13) reported that the DPRK's Daepung Investment Group will set up a $10 billion fund with China Development Bank to help PRC firms operating in the DPRK, Yonhap News reported, citing the company's vice president. The fund will be used to help PRC companies build roads, railways and ports in the DPRK, Daepung Vice President Bae Kyeong Hwan was quoted as saying. Bae didn't say how much each country will contribute the fund.

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7. Private Investment in the DPRK

Bloomberg (Bradley K. Martin, "IGNORING BUFFETT, FABIEN PICTET EYES NORTH KOREA FUND", 2007/11/13) reported that Fabien Pictet & Partners Ltd., a British money manager that specializes in emerging markets, plans to establish a fund focused on joint ventures in the DPRK, Chief Executive Officer Richard Yarlott said in an interview. The closely held firm initially would buy into ROK companies doing business in the north, he said. "It would be very difficult to put more than $50 million directly into North Korea," said Yarlott, 47, who helps manage $750 million of bonds and equities. "But it would be very easy to put $500 million into listed South Korean companies and then later, as we see specific private equity opportunities, go with them."

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8. Sino-Japanese East Sea Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("CHINA SAYS OPEN TO CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS FROM JAPAN IN GAS ROW", Beijing, 2007/11/13) reported that the PRC is open to any constructive suggestions from Japan for solving their dispute over gas exploration rights in the East China Sea, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said ahead of talks on the topic to be held Wednesday in Tokyo. The comments by Liu Jianchao came at a time when the two countries are stalled over the question of how to jointly develop the area, raising questions about whether they can achieve their goal of compiling a plan by the end of autumn.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters (Andrea Shalal-Esa, "U.S. EYES $939 MILLION MISSILE SALE TO TAIWAN ", Washington, 2007/11/13) reported that the U.S. Defense Department on Tuesday informed lawmakers about a possible sale to Taiwan of Patriot missile system upgrades valued at $939 million and supplied by US defense contractor Raytheon Co . The sale, likely to irritate the PRC , comes just a week after Defense Secretary Robert Gates appealed to PRC for help in curbing Iran's nuclear program, arguing that a stable Gulf was in the interests of Beijing 's energy security.

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA DISMISSES US BILL BACKING UN MEMBERSHIP FOR TAIWAN ", Beijing, 2007/11/13) reported that the PRC dismissed a bill introduced in the US Congress that backs Taiwan 's entry into the United Nations , reiterating its long-held view that the island territory is part of the PRC . "As everyone knows, there is only one China in the world and Taiwan is an inseparable part of China," foreign ministry Liu Jianchao told journalists when asked about the bill.

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10. Sino-Indian Relations

PTI ("INDIA, CHINA HOLD 1ST SECURITY AND DEFENCE CONSULTATIONS", Beijing, 2007/11/13)

reported that India and the PRC today held their first-ever defence and security consultations with both sides emphasising on enhanced military cooperation and exchanges to increase mutual trust. Chief of Staff of the Chinese People's Liberation Army Chen Bingde met Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Defence Bimal Julka at the consultation held in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding on enhancing defence cooperation signed between the two countries in May 2006.

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11. PRC Agriculture

The Beijing News (He Bing, "LOOKING FOR FARMERS OF THE FUTURE", 2007/11/13) reported that aging among the the population of working farmers is a nationwide phenomenon. In the better situations, the average age is above forty; in the worse, it's above fifty--there are only white-haired people living beside the mountains and streams. In a decade, the average age of China's population of working farmers will be over fifty, or even over sixty. As the "grandpa farmers" and "grandma farmers" pass away, the number of working farmers will decrease dramatically. We cannot blindly hope that in a decade, the migrant workers who have come to the cities will return to their fields to take up once again their lives of "face to the ground, back to the sky." Land and agriculture have long been the root of a nation; we must tread carefully. So we must be bold with our answer to this question: in ten years, who will farm the land?

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12. PRC Media

The Associated Press (Stephen Wade, "CHINA OFFICIALS DENY MEDIA FILE REPORTS ", Beijing, 2007/11/13) reported that the PRC government and Beijing Olympics officials tried to back away from newspaper reports that PRC authorities are assembling a database to monitor foreign journalists covering the games. The story in Monday's China Daily raised questions about the country's pledge of increased media freedom, part of a successful campaign in landing the Olympics six years ago. "The report you mentioned is incorrect," Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said. "There is no such database... I have confirmed that it was a mistake by the reporter."

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13. PRC Environment

Reuters (Chen Aizhu, "CHINA RAISES POLLUTION CHARGES TO CLEAN UP LAKE", Beijing, 2007/11/13) reported that more than 1,000 chemical plants will be forced to close around the shores of the PRC's third-largest lake due to an increase in pollution charges following an outbreak of algae bloom earlier this year. In late May and early June, the giant Taihu Lake was covered in a thick foul-smelling canopy of green algae that left tap water undrinkable for more than 2.3 million residents of Wuxi city and prompted a run on bottled water for days. From next year, plants around the lake in the eastern province of Jiangsu will have to pay 10.5 yuan ($1.4) for the discharge of each kilogram of COD, chemical oxygen demand, a measure for pollution, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

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14. PRC Gender Imbalance

Reuters (Lindsay Beck, "CHINA HOME TO 18 MILLION SURPLUS MEN: REPORT", Beijing, 2007/11/13) reported that the PRC has 18 million more men of marriageable age than women, the result of sex-selective abortions in a country that has traditionally placed more value on boys, state media reported. The PRC has about 119 boys born for every 100 girls, but that figure rises to about 122 in rural areas, Xinhua news agency quoted Zhang Weiqing , director of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, as saying.

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II. Republic of Korea

15. Inter-Korean Ministers' Talks

Ohmynews ("THE FIRST INTER-KOREAN PRIME MINISTER TALKS ARE HELD IN SEOUL", Seoul, 2007/11/14) reported that the prime ministers of the two Koreas meet Wednesday through Friday in Seoul. The purpose of this talk is to make good a promise made during the inter-Korean summit in October. This round is the first in 15 years. The ROK is focusing on three issues -- the establishment of a joint fishing zone around the Northern Limit Line, the three (communication, entry, passing) problems of the Kaesong Industrial Complex, and the expansion of separated family reunions. However, the DPRK is most concerned with issues such as the construction of the cooperation complex and the renovation of railroads and roads.

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16. Inter-Korean Relations

DongA Ilbo ("REMOVE THE COOPERATION FANTASY", Seoul, 2007/11/14) reported that the ROK government has to be careful of not only giving support to the DPRK and should make relaxation of barriers the precondition of aid. Also the Roh Moo-hyun government, which has only three more months, should not try to get significant results from the talks just to improve its reputation. The most important thing to recognize is that cooperative prosperity while ignoring nuclear weapons is just a fantasy.

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