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I. NAPSNet

1. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Herald (Lee Joo-hee, "N.K. PREMIER HERE FOR SUMMIT FOLLOW-UP", 2007/11/14) reported that the prime ministers of the two Koreas met in Seoul for the first time in 15 years to create a blueprint for implementing last month's agreements between two leaders regarding peace and economic cooperation. The plenary session opened with three top items named as priorities by the ROK: creating a peace zone in the disputed West Sea; opening internet and cell phone services in the inter-Korean Gaeseong Industrial Park, and having more reunions of separated families. The two sides are also likely to discuss operating the cross-border railway on Gyeongui Line linking from Munsan in the ROK to Gaeseong of the DPRK from next month. The DPRK's main topics, in the meantime, reportedly include modernizing its railways and roads, and constructing shipbuilding districts.

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "NKOREA AGREES TO START CARGO TRAINS", Seoul, 2007/11/15 19:00:00 GMT+0) reported that ROK Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Nam-shik said agreed in principle to formally open a reconnected railway for regular cargo service across its the Demilitarized Zone before the end of the year. "Both sides shared an understanding that it would be meaningful in further vitalizing the Kaesong Industrial Complex," Kim said.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("N. KOREA 'MAKING PROGRESS' ON RESOLVING OUTSTANDING NUCLEAR ISSUES: US", Vienna, 2007/11/14) reported that the DPRK is "making progress" in resolving allegations that it had been pursuing a covert programme to produce highly-enriched uranium for nuclear weapons, US envoy Christopher Hill said. "We've by no means resolved the issue up until now, but we're continuing to work with them," Hill said. Hill was responding to a Washington Post report that Pyongyang was seeking to prove that US accusations about the uranium-enrichment programme were wrong. The DPRK "understands well ... that this matter must be resolved to mutual satisfaction. We all need to be satisfied that this matter is behind us," Hill said.

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3. US on DPRK Human Rights

Donga Ilbo ("U.S. SPENT NO MONEY ON NORTH KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT", 2007/11/14) reported that the China Post Online reported yesterday that the U.S. federal budget earmarked to help DPRK refugees authorized through the North Korean Human Rights Acts has not been spent at all since 2004 when the act was passed. Christian Whiton, deputy to the US special envoy on human rights in the DPRK, said, "Millions of dollars earmarked by the U.S. government to help North Koreans are still tied up by red tape three years after they were first authorized."

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4. US-ROK Security Alliance

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "KOREA-US ALLIANCE WILL GROW STRONGER", 2007/11/14) reported that the planned transition of wartime operational control of ROK armed forces from the United States to the ROK will make their half-century alliance and joint defense posture stronger, the top US military officer said. USFK commander Gen. B. B. Bell, who concurrently serves as chief of the Combined Forces Command (CFC), stressed the alliance's "deep and bi-nationally intertwined roots" will remain firmly in place and grow stronger throughout the 21st Century and beyond.

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5. ROK Politics

Yonhap ("PRESIDENTIAL FRONT-RUNNER FACES BUMPY ROAD AHEAD WITH EX-BUSINESS PARTNER'S RETURN ", Seoul, 2007/11/14) reported that the ROK's presidential front-runner Lee Myung-bak faces a major hurdle from an upcoming investigation of one of his former business partners who is suspected of stock price manipulation and embezzlement. As U.S. and ROK officials prepare this week for the repatriation of Kim Gyeong-jun, alleged to have rigged stock prices with Lee Myung-bak, political parties have begun mulling over the extent of his involvement. A recent opinion survey sponsored by a group of provincial newspapers showed that about 25 percent of Lee's supporters will withdraw their backing if Lee is found to have been involved in the financial scam. As many as 63 percent said they would support Lee even if the allegations are confirmed.

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6. Japan Politics

Agence France-Presse (Miwa Suzuki, "JAPAN'S OPPOSITION SHOOTS DOWN GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS", Tokyo, 2007/11/14) reported that Japan's opposition-led upper house of parliament Wednesday voted down government appointments for the first time in 56 years, signalling confrontation amid a row over supporting the US-led "war on terror." The failed government-nominated appointments highlighted the political paralysis in Tokyo as Fukuda prepares to head this week to the United States, Japan's main ally, on his first foreign trip as premier. The upper house of the divided parliament refused to endorse three of 28 nominees for government posts due to objections from the opposition, a parliamentary official said.

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7. Sino-Japanese East Sea Gas Dispute

Agence France-Presse (Harumi Ozawa, "CHINA, JAPAN STILL STUCK ON ENERGY SEA SPAT", Tokyo, 2007/11/14) reported that Japan and the PRC failed to break an impasse in a spat over lucrative gas fields in the East China Sea but agreed to keep talking amid a recent easing of tension between the countries. The two nations earlier eyed a goal of working out concrete measures for joint development by late this year but the chances of a deal look slim.

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8. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA RETURNS TAIWAN MAIL OVER UN SLOGAN ", Beijing, 2007/11/14) reported that the PRC is stamping return to sender on mail from Taiwan postmarked with a slogan supporting the island's bid to join the United Nations. Taiwan's post office began putting a "U.N. for Taiwan" postmark on selected items of outgoing mail six weeks ago. Letters and parcels bearing that slogan and one saying "Taiwan joining the United Nations" were being returned as a protest against alleged independence activities by the government of Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian, according to Fan Liqing of the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Council.

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9. Sino-Indian Relations

IANAS ("INDIA, CHINA WILL CROSS \$30 BN TRADE THIS YEAR: ENVOY ", New Delhi, 2007/11/14) reported that India and the PRC are set to surpass \$30 billion in bilateral trade this year, PRC ambassador Sun Yuxi said. 'Bilateral trade has already crossed \$27 billion. We will easily cross \$30 billion trade this year,' he told reporters while stressing that the two countries would achieve the 2010 target of \$40 billion much before that date. The PRC envoy, however, sounded ambivalent about Beijing's position on the India-US nuclear deal in the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

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10. Hong Kong Media

The Associated Press (Dikky Sinn, "HONG KONG PRESS PRACTICING SELF-CENSORSHIP", Hong Kong, 2007/11/14) reported that Journalists and newspapers in Hong Kong are increasingly practicing self-censorship to prevent upsetting the PRC, one of the territory's most outspoken pro-democracy activists said. Anson Chan, formerly a top government official under both British and PRC rule, said press freedom was being eroded in Hong Kong. "You see increasing signs of self-censorship, and this is not healthy in terms of protecting press freedom," Chan said in a speech at the Hong Kong Foreign Correspondent Club.

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11. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("RECORD POLLUTION DUMPED IN CHINA RIVER ", Beijing, 2007/11/14) reported that the amount of sewage dumped into the PRC's Yangtze River rose 3 percent last year to a record level, state media said. Some 30.5 billion tons of domestic and industrial sewage were dumped into the river in 2006, according to water authorities, Xinhua News Agency said. That was an increase of 3.1 percent, or 900 million tons, from the year before and a new record, according to Hu Jiajun, a spokesman for the Yangtze River Water Resources Commission, Xinhua said.

Reuters (Chris Buckley, "AS CHINA'S MEGA DAM RISES, SO DO STRAINS AND FEAR", Badong, 2007/11/14) reported that the slopes of Chenjialing Village have shuddered and groaned lately, cracking and warping homes and fields, and making residents fear the banks of the PRC's swelling Three Gorges Dam may hold deadly perils. The vast hydro scheme is meant to subdue the Yangtze River, but as the water levels rise, parts of its shores have strained and cracked, dismaying scientists and officials and alarming villages such as Chenjialing in Badong County. While authorities have vowed to contain geological aftershocks from the dam, poor farmers worry about being swallowed up by landslides. The resulting tensions threaten to rekindle the bitter clashes that long dogged the project.

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II. Republic of Korea

12. ROK Aid to DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (Kim Min-cheol, "SECRET NEGOTIATION OUTCOMES WITH DPRK ON NUCLEARIZATION", Seoul, 2007/11/15) reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared that the ROK will provide parts for power plants this year in response to the DPRK's denuclearization statement. However, the ministry just said that the parts are mainly iron products, stating, "The DPRK does not want us to reveal the concrete contents such as price and amounts of products." Even though the negotiation with the DPRK can be not open to the public, the government should try to inform the public of the process to some degree.

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13. Inter-Korean Ministers' Talks

Pressian ("FIRST MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAN PRIME MINISTERS ", Seoul, 2007/11/15) reported that the negotiation between the Prime Ministers of two Koreas began in Seoul to fulfill the declaration of the 2007 summit. The two Prime Ministers started the meeting emphasizing the practice of the declaration. Although it was entirely harmonious because it was the first high-ranking meeting between two Koreas since the summit, each put an emphasis on different issues. This shows that the meeting would not be just peaceful.

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