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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Food Supply

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA WANTS BIG HARVEST AMID FOOD SHORTAGE", Seoul, 2008/09/15) reported that the DPRK urged its people to make all-out efforts to reap a big harvest this autumn, saying it wants to resolve the country's chronic food shortage on its own. On Monday, the DPRK's main newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, said in its editorial that "all workers should take part in the autumn-harvesting battle," saying it is the most urgent task facing the DPRK. The paper's report, carried by the Korean Central News Agency, said the security and strength of the DPRK's socialist system depends on whether it can resolve its food shortage on its own.

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2. Russo-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("KIM SENDS GREETINGS TO RUSSIAN LEADER AMID HEALTH SPECULATION", Seoul, 2008/09/15) reported that DPRK state media reported official activities by leader Kim Jong-Il but a new report indicated his health may be worse than earlier believed following a stroke. Kim, 66, sent birthday greetings to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, said the Korean Central News Agency, which has not reported any public appearances by the "Dear Leader" since around mid-August.

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3. DPRK Leadership

JoongAng Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja and Jin Se-keun, "NORTH PAPER REPORTS KIM'S NO-SHOW", 2008/09/15) reported that a DPRK newspaper published the first confirmed report about the absence of Kim Jong-il at the Tuesday's public ceremony to celebrate the DPRK's 60th birthday. Chosun Sinbo, a newspaper based in Japan published by the pro-DPRK General Association of Korean Residents, reported from Pyongyang that Kim was a no-show for the Sept. 9 celebration event, which

began at 5 p.m. in the DPRK's capital city. "The commander-in-chief of the North Korea's People's Army was not there, but a participant said 'the image of General Kim Jong-il is engraved on the hearts of the troops'," the report said.

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4. PRC and DPRK Leadership

Yonhap News ("KIM'S DEATH WON'T TRIGGER UPHEAVAL IN N. KOREA: FORMER PARTY SEC'Y", Seoul, 2008/09/15) reported that the DPRK is unlikely to be thrown into chaos even if its leader, Kim Jong-il, dies in the near future, a Seoul-based Web site said Monday, quoting Hwang Jang-yop, a former secretary of the DPRK's Workers' Party. "China would never remain a mere spectator to a possible political upheaval in North Korea," Hwang was quoted by www.chogabje.com as saying. "It doesn't seem that China is intervening in North Korea by sending military troops to the North. But China may change its attitude if North Korea is thrown into chaos, and the U.S. is moving to intervene," said Hwang.

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5. ROK and DPRK Leadership

The Financial Times (Song Jung-a and Andrew Wood, "SEOUL FEARS BURDEN OF NORTH'S IMPLOSION", 2008/09/13) reported that rumours have spread this week about the health of Kim Jong-il, the reclusive ruler of the DPRK, who is variously reported to have suffered brain convulsions, had open heart surgery or been paralysed by a stroke. No one knows what would happen if Mr Kim were to die suddenly, and without an agreed succession. If that were to happen, the only way to avoid a humanitarian disaster would be for the DPRK's 23m inhabitants to be absorbed rapidly by the ROK. But while the ROK talks about reunification, and even have a government ministry dedicated to it, there seems to have been little preparation for what could prove a crushing burden.

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6. US-ROK Military Exercise

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "S. KOREA, US PLANNING MASSIVE MARINE EXERCISE", 2008/09/15) reported that the ROK and the US are considering holding a large-scale amphibious exercise using their Marines later this year to demonstrate their joint military capability, a military source said. The exact date and scale for the exercise have yet to be decided, but, if held, it is expected to test the allies' division-level landing capability, said the source. If held, the exercise is expected to take place early November as part of the annual "Hoguk Exercise," he added.

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7. PSI Drill

Korea Herald ("S. KOREA TO OBSERVE ANTI-PROLIFERATION DRILLS", 2008/09/15) reported that the ROK will participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) interdiction training exercise to

be held in New Zealand this week as an observer, officials said Sunday, according to Yonhap News. The ROK's role in the PSI is a sensitive geopolitical issue, because the DPRK is a prime target of the US-led campaign aimed at tackling the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and related delivery equipment.

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8. ROK-Japan Relations

Yonhap News (Shin Hae-in, "PRESIDENT LEE'S BROTHER TO LEAD KOREA-JAPAN LAWMAKERS' GROUP", Seoul, 2008/09/15) reported that a senior ruling party lawmaker who is also the elder brother of President Lee Myung-bak has been named to co-chair a group of ROK and Japanese legislators, officials here said Monday. The Korea-Japan Parliamentarians' Union has been working on promoting friendship among lawmakers and supporting their respective government's diplomacy toward the other. "Rep. Lee Sang-deuk has been named as co-chairman of the union recently," said ruling Grand National Party lawmaker Kim Tae-hwan. "Many expect him to play an important role in thawing the relations between the two countries, especially on the issue of sovereignty over Dokdo."

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9. Japan Politics

Kyodo News ("ASO TO INSTALL RIVAL CANDIDATES AS CABINET MEMBERS, LDP EXECS", Tokyo, 2008/09/15) reported that Liberal Democratic Party Secretary General Taro Aso, the front-runner in the LDP presidential race, suggested Sunday he may appoint his rival candidates as Cabinet members or party executives if he wins the Sept. 22 election and assumes the premiership. "Successive prime ministers installed capable persons following the LDP leadership election," Aso said in an NHK program, apparently referring to the other four candidates.

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10. Sino-US Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse (Veronica Smith, "US, CHINA TO HOLD TOP-LEVEL TRADE TALKS TUESDAY ", Washington, 2008/09/15) reported that the US and PRC hold cabinet-level trade talks in California this week amid tensions over the PRC's massive export surplus and worries about the slowing global economy. The talks come in the sunset of George W. Bush's Republican presidency that has seen trade disputes with the PRC over a host of issues, ranging from copyright infringement, automobile parts and investment barriers to toxic toys and pet food. The talks will focus on three main issues -- "market access, intellectual property rights and transparency," Commerce Department spokeswoman Ann Marie Hauser told AFP.

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11. Sino-Indian Relations

Agence France-Presse (Elizabeth Roche, "INDIA WARY OF BEING US CARD IN CHINA PLAY:

ANALYSTS", New Delhi, 2008/09/15) reported that the US push to end India's status as a nuclear pariah was partly motivated by a desire to counter the PRC's rise, but New Delhi does not want to get sucked into a US-Sino power play, analysts say. "India does share many US concerns regarding China," said Anupam Srivastava, director at the Center for International Trade and Security at the University of Georgia. But New Delhi has conveyed "in very clear terms from the outset that it is not interested in being drawn into any such balance of power games in Asia or outside," Srivastava told AFP.

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12. PRC Earthquake

China Dialogue (Tang Hao, "THE ECOLOGICAL COSTS OF A HUMAN TRAGEDY", 2008/09/12) reported that the shock of the many deaths caused by the May 12 earthquake that shook the PRC's southwest Sichuan province has begun to subside, and attention is now turning to the plight of the survivors. Over 1,550 kilometres of forest roads, 26,670 hectares of forest, and vegetation covering 10,000 hectares of the Baishui River Nature Reserve have been damaged or destroyed. At the same time, there are environmental risks associated with the methods used to shelter quake victims. Many are still living in tents without proper shelter. The quality of the prefabricated buildings that have been erected is poor due to the haste with which they were constructed.

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13. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

Yomiuri Shimbun (Tetsuya Suetsugu, "CHINA NGO STEPS IN TO SAVE RARE GULL", 2008/09/15) reported that in a bid to protect the endangered Saunder's Gull, a nongovernmental organization is promoting the world's largest breeding wetland for the bird, in Liaoning Province, PRC, as a bird-watching spot. The Saunder's Gull Protection Association of Panjin is hosting an eight-day international event at the wetland in Panjin in the province through Sunday to publicize the area as a tourist spot. Local residents formed the NGO, the first of many that now exist in the PRC, to protect the bird and its marshland habitat in Panjin, which has faced threats in the past due to environmental degradation caused by development.

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14. PRC Space Program

Reuters ("CHINA COUNTS DOWN TO SPACE LAUNCH", Beijing, 2008/09/15) reported that the PRC is counting down to 9.10 p.m. (9:10 a.m. EDT) on September 25 for its third manned space flight that will include a space walk, local media reported. "We will check the weather conditions to decide whether to launch as planned," Huang Chunping, rocket systems consultant for the PRC Manned Space Program, was quoted as saying by the Oriental Morning Post. "The space walk will take place after the craft has made five orbits," he added.

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15. Next Generation Safeguards Initiative

National Nuclear Security Administration ("NNSA KICKS OFF NEXT GENERATION SAFEGUARDS INITIATIVE", Washington, 2008/09/09) reported that the Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) announced today the kickoff of the Next Generation Safeguards Initiative (NGSI), which will promote the strengthening of nuclear safeguards worldwide to help ensure the safe, secure and peaceful implementation of civil nuclear energy programs. NGSI will help the IAEA address its complex and evolving mission by focusing on the revitalization and strengthening of the US technology base. The initiative will promote the development of new and more efficient safeguards tools and technologies and will work to attract new experts to the field from a variety of technical disciplines.

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II. PRC Report

16. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua Net (Zhu Mingqi, "CHINA AND FRANCE MAGNATES OF ELECTRIC POWER TRANSMISSION AND DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRY SIGN STRATEGIC COOPERATION AGREEMENT", Shanghai, 2008/09/15) reported that one of the world's top 500 enterprises - the France AREVA Group Company recently signed an agreement with Shanghai Electric Group Company on the high-voltage transformer field. The two sides will jointly set up a new joint-venture company for the development and manufacturer of world-class extra high voltage (EHV) transformers, special high voltage transformers, and super-sized transformers. This programme is made up of three transformer factories: two in Shanghai and one in Wuhan. The invested money is estimated to be over 80 million yuan.

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17. PRC Public Health

Xinhua News Agency (Wang Yanming, Zhu Guoliang, "SANLU'S PARTNER PRODUCER SEIZED WITH TAINTED FORMULA", Lanzhou, 2008/09/13) reported that inspectors had found poisonous chemical in the Sanlu infant formula produced by one of its partner producers in northwestern PRC's Gansu province, an official said on Sunday. Two out of the 12 samples randomly selected from the Sanlu milk powder produced by the Haoniu Dairy Co Ltd had tested positive for melamine. The test was conducted after the Sanlu Group, a leading PRC dairy producer based in northern Hebei province, admitted that it had found some of its baby milk powder products were contaminated with melamine, a chemical raw material strictly forbidden by the country to be used in food processing. As of Saturday, a total of 432 babies throughout the nation have been sickened with kidney stones after drinking the contaminated milk powder.

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III. ROK Report

18. Inter-Korean Relations

Kyunghyang Shinmun ("MEDIA SHOULD STOP RELEASING RECKLESS REPORTS ABOUT KIM'S ILLNESS", 2008/09/16) reported that the U.S. media is rather focused at a wider picture such as six-party talks, DPRK regime breakdown etc, while the ROK media is obsessed with releasing reports about Kim Jong-il's illness. The ROK government's such response is problematic enough to make others misunderstand that they have a certain political intention. It seems that they are trying to show off their ability to gain information. The reason why such an analysis is quite persuasive is because the current government has been criticized for lacking a channel for dialogue with the DPRK, which brought tension on the peninsula. However, the government should realize that such a behavior might make the situation even worse and unpredictable.

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19. ROK Contingency Planning for DPRK

PRESSian ("CHUNG SE-HYUN, 'STOP MENTIONING CONTINGENCY AND GAIN DPRK PEOPLE'S SUPPORT!'", 2008/09/16) reported that Chung Se-hyun, former ROK Unification Minister, said that the government's being too hasty about public reports about Kim Jong-il's health as if they are waiting for mishap to happen is unhelpful for the inter-Korean relationship. Rather, the government should learn from the U.S., which is being patient, saying that they will wait until the DPRK releases an official announcement, he added. Even though OPlan 5029 is aimed at the DPRK on the surface, it may stimulate the PRC, which is deeply involved with the DPRK military, and justify their military intervention. The government should focus more on gaining the DPRK people's support by letting them know that ROK jurisdiction would not be applied to them automatically even in case of their regime breakdown.

JoongAng Ilbo ("ROK NEEDS TO PREPARE FOR DPRK CONTINGENCY", 2008/09/16) reported that the DPRK's collapse would possibly bring enormous shock to the peninsula and Northeast Asia. It is outrageous for some experts to say that the ROK should be cautious about preparing for what is going to happen. Currently, the ROK is incapable of interfering the DPRK unilaterally. This is why the ROK should cooperate with the U.S. OPLAN 5029 should be reviewed in this sense. Some experts' analysis that ROK-U.S. collaboration will cause the PRC's objection. But this rather seems to imply that the PRC hopes for the break-off of ROK-U.S. alliance.

Yonhap News ("KOREAN-PENINSULA'S FALL OF 2008", 2008/09/16) said in a column that the worst problem is that there is a possibility for the hardliners to take over in the DPRK during the absence of Kim Jong-il, in case his illness lasts longer than expected. Facts such as the DPRK's suspension of disabling the nuclear facilities and resurrecting them and saying that they are highly unsatisfied with the postponing of terrorism delisting prove this analysis. Moreover, the ROK has revealed their limitation to the DPRK by maintaining tension on the peninsula for a long time, while it is also difficult for the U.S. to respond actively to the DPRK due to their presidential election. The ROK should do their best to gather as much information about the DPRK as possible and retain a

close collaboration with neighboring countries.

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