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I.NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Associated Press ("OBAMA: IRAN, NKOREA HAVE CHOICES ON NUKE PROGRAMS", Beijing, 2009/11/17) reported that US President Barack Obama said Tuesday he and PRC President Hu Jintao discussed the verifiable elimination of the DPRK's nuclear weapons program . He said Pyongyang has a choice between engagement and isolation. Obama said the DPRK people would benefit from Pyongyang complying with international demands over its nuclear program.

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2. Alleged DPRK Kidnappings

Agence-France Presse ("N.KOREA KIDNAPPED CHINESE IN REFUGEE CRACKDOWN: REPORT", Seoul, 2009/11/17) reported that Pyongyang's agents over the past decade abducted about 200 PRC citizens as part of a campaign to stop people from fleeing the DPRK, a news report said Tuesday. The Chinese of ethnic Korean descent had been helping refugees who had fled across the border, Chosun Ilbo newspaper said, adding they were abducted to the DPRK and jailed there. Beijing had never officially sought the repatriation of its citizens because of its "special relationship" with Pyongyang, the paper said. Chosun said the kidnappings occurred mostly in PRC frontier towns beginning in the late 1990s. It said the figure was based on data that a support group for refugees, the Committee for Democratisation of North Korea, had secured from the government of Changbai prefecture in PRC's northeastern province of Jilin.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA EXTENDS OLIVE BRANCH TO SOUTH AHEAD OF OBAMA'S VISIT", Seoul, 2009/11/17) reported that the DPRK in an editorial in the Rodong Sinmun on Tuesday vowed to improve relations with the ROK. "We will continue to make active efforts for the improvement of North-South relations," the paper said. "We have taken a number of bold actions for reconciliation and cooperation between the Koreans," the paper said, citing the lifting of border traffic rules and cross-border reunions of separated families. "But the situation in South Korea grows increasingly dubious and completely opposite to the directions and demands of the Korean people."

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4. Inter-Korea Economic Cooperation

Joong Ang Ilbo (Yoo Jee-ho, "SOUTH'S KAESONG FIRMS PROMISED AID", 2009/11/17) reported that the ROK government announced Sunday it will provide financial aid for struggling ROK firms in the DPRK'S Kaesong Industrial Complex and will give companies more time to repay loans. Ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung said 20 companies will receive about 6 billion won (\$5.2 million) in grants. All 20 companies began operating in Kaesong in the latter half of 2008 or later, Chun added. In another move to assist ROK firms, Chun said 28 companies that have had difficulty repaying their debts due to financial difficulties will receive a six-month grace period.

Yonhap (Kim Hyun, "EXPORTS FROM KAESONG PARK EDGE UP ", Seoul, 2009/11/17) reported that exports from a joint park in the DPRK continued to rise for a second month in September, government data showed Tuesday, a sign that the DPRK's lifting of traffic rules is spawning business recovery there. The ministry cited improved sales in machinery and electronics goods. Several more firms moved in, bringing the total number of ROK businesses there to 116 employing a total of 40,848 DPRK workers.

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5. ROK on US-DPRK Relations

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "S. KOREAN FM EXPECTS PYONGYANG-WASHINGTON DIALOGUE TO BEAR FRUIT ", Seoul, 2009/11/17) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan expressed hope Tuesday that the upcoming talks between DPRK and the United States will lead to the resumption of the long-stalled process of denuclearizing the communist neighbor. The minister, however, said there was no sign of Pyongyang changing its decades-old pursuit of nuclear weapons while bent on one-on-one negotiations with Washington.

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6. US-ROK Relations

Joong Ang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "NORTH KOREA, FTA WILL DOMINATE OBAMA SUMMIT", 2009/11/17) reported that topping the agenda for the summit this week between U.S. President Barack Obama, on his first visit to the ROK, and President Lee Myung-bak will be finding ways to break through the nuclear impasse with the DPRK and the stalled ratification process for the free trade deal between Seoul and Washington. But the most important topic will be the DPRK and its nuclear arms program, a senior foreign affairs official at the Blue House said, noting that Lee's "grand bargain" proposal will be discussed in detail between the two leaders at their summit. The official said that discussions will also concentrate on the ROK-U.S. alliance and other global issues such as climate change and world economic problems, but Afghanistan would not be on the agenda, contrary to previous comments from White House aides.

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7. ROK Role in Afghanistan

Yonhap (Sam Kim, "S. KOREA DID NOT PROMISE TALIBAN TO KEEP TROOPS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN: OFFICIAL", Seoul, 2009/11/17) reported that the ROK did not offer to refrain from redeploying troops to Afghanistan when it engaged in negotiations to secure the release of civilians

held hostage by the Taliban in 2007, a senior official told reporters Tuesday. His comment rebuts a statement on Monday by Defense Minister Kim Tae-young, who said he understood that such an offer was made when the negotiations were conducted.

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8. ROK Emissions

Agence-France Presse ("SOUTH KOREA DECIDES ON EMISSIONS CUT", Seoul, 2009/11/17) reported that the ROK on Tuesday approved a cut in carbon emissions, saying it wants to set an example for the world's developing countries. Under a plan approved by the cabinet, emissions by 2020 will be reduced by four percent from the 2005 level, according to the presidential office. The country is not required to set targets under the existing United Nations convention on climate change. "South Korea's announcement of its voluntary reduction plan will be a chance to urge the international community to act responsibly, even though there are doubts about the Copenhagen meeting slated for the end of the year," Lee told the meeting.

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9. ROK Economy

Joong Ang Ilbo (Moon Gwang-lip, "TRADE SURPLUS COULD FALL AS MUCH AS 75% IN 2010", 2009/11/17) reported that the government two months ago projected that ROK's trade surplus for 2010 could be less than half or even a quarter of this year's, according to analysts and data from the Ministry of Strategy and Finance yesterday. The figures in question, though submitted by the ministry to the National Assembly in September, were disclosed to the public just yesterday. They forecast that the ROK's exports for 2010 would amount to \$393.5 billion, a rise of 11 percent from the ministry's estimated export total for this year, \$354.5 billion. But the report added that imports would rise even more quickly next year, 16 percent from \$330.8 billion, the report's estimate for this year, to \$383.7 billion. The ministry said it plans to revise upward its estimate of the trade surplus in 2010 to reflect improvements in the global economy over the last few months.

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10. ROK-PRC Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO CHINA", 2009/11/17) reported that Seoul is paying "more careful attention" to the PRC, a senior government official said after President Lee Myung-bak last week named his former chief of staff Yu Woo-ik as Seoul's new ambassador to Beijing. It was an implicit admission that the Lee administration has been somewhat neglectful of PRC by giving top priority to relations with the U.S.

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11. Japan Politics

Yomiuri Shimbun ("JUNIOR DPJ PARTNER 'PLANS TO LAUNCH NEW PARTY'", 2009/11/17)

reported that the People's New Party, a junior partner in the ruling Democratic Party of Japan-led coalition, is seeking to launch a new party with New Party Nippon and a group led by former Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Takeo Hiranuma. The PNP, led by Shizuka Kamei, state minister in charge of financial services and postal reform, likely would stay in the coalition, even if the envisaged party was created. Kamei is leading the negotiations on the possible merger in an attempt to demonstrate to the public that the new party would spearhead conservative forces with a view to fighting next year's upper house election. Kamei reportedly is keen to expand the envisaged party's clout by inviting some Liberal Democratic Party members to join it.

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12. Japan Climate Change

Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVERNMENT RELEASES PLAN FOR 'GREEN TAX'", 2009/11/17) reported that the Environment Ministry has unveiled a plan to impose a new tax on fossil fuels, indicating that each household would see an annual increase of 1,127 yen in what would effectively be an environmental tax. Under the envisaged system, the government expects to generate gasoline tax revenues worth 1 trillion yen--in addition to more than 1 trillion yen to be raised from other fossil fuel taxes, depending on the amount of carbon dioxide emissions. Such taxes would be considered as general revenue, use of which is not limited to fixed purposes. However, the ministry suggested that income from environmental taxes should be preferentially used for efforts to combat global warming.

Yomiuri Shimbun ("BUYING EMISSIONS QUOTAS 'WILL LESSEN BURDEN'", 2009/11/17) reported that pursuing the government's goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent from 1990 levels by 2020 through a combination of emission-cutting efforts at home and the purchase of emissions quotas abroad will impose less of a burden on the average household than trying to achieve the goal through domestic efforts alone, according to an estimate presented to a governmental task force on Monday. However, observers say a purchase of emissions quotas abroad likely will be controversial as it could mean a delay in domestic energy-saving efforts.

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13. US, PRC on Climate Change

Agence France-Presse (Stephen Collinson, "OBAMA VOWS 'POSITIVE, COOPERATIVE' TIES WITH CHINA", Beijing, 2009/11/17) reported that the United States and the PRC on Tuesday agreed to cooperate on a host of issues from climate change. Obama said the two countries had "agreed to work toward a successful outcome" at climate change talks in Copenhagen next month. "Our aim there is... not a partial accord or a political declaration, but rather an accord that covers all the issues in the negotiations and one that has immediate operational effect," the US leader said. "As the two largest consumers and producers of energy, there can be no solution to this challenge without the efforts of both China and the United States ," he said.

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14. US-PRC Relations

Reuters (Caren Bohan and Patricia Zengerle, "OBAMA MEETS CHINA'S HU; FOCUS ON

ECONOMIC STRAINS", Beijing, 2009/11/17) reported that U.S. President Barack Obama held much-anticipated talks with his PRC counterpart Hu Jintao on Tuesday, with trade friction, the yuan currency and diplomatic headaches such as Iran and the DPRK high on the agenda. A senior U.S. administration official said Obama and Hu would discuss pursuing a "strategy for more balanced growth that would lead to more jobs in the United States and higher living standards in Asia." Beyond the economic linkages, Washington and Beijing are key players in frustrated efforts to end the DPRK's nuclear weapons program and Obama will be looking for more support from the PRC to press Iran over its nuclear activities. Obama was also likely to raise human rights in the PRC, as well as efforts to forge a new climate pact, the U.S. administration official said, following acknowledgement that a legally binding agreement will not emerge from negotiations in Copenhagen next month.

Associated Press (Jennifer Loven, "OBAMA, HU STRESS COOPERATION", Beijing, 2009/11/17) reported that President Barack Obama and PRC President Hu Jintao emerged from hours of intense talks Tuesday determined to marshal their combined clout on crucial issues, but still divided over economic, security and human rights issues that have long bedeviled the two powers. Both leaders spoke in bold terms of the growing relationship between the countries and emphasized cooperation on the economy, climate change, energy and the nuclear threats of Iran and the DPRK.

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15. US on PRC Tibet Issue

Agence-France Presse ("OBAMA URGES EARLY CHINA TALKS WITH DALAI LAMA REPS", Beijing, 2009/11/17) reported that US President Barack Obama said Tuesday he told his PRC counterpart Hu Jintao that he backs an early resumption of talks between Beijing and representatives of the Dalai Lama.

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16. Cross-Straight Relations

Reuters (Chris Buckley and Lucy Hornby, "CHINA HAILS U.S. REITERATION OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER TAIWAN", Beijing, 2009/11/17) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao hailed U.S. President Barack Obama's recognition of sovereignty issues dear to the PRC, after a bilateral meeting in Beijing on Tuesday. "China approves of President Obama's repeated reiteration of the one-China principle," Hu told reporters.

Associated Press ("OBAMA: NO NEED TO CHANGE 'ONE-CHINA' POLICY", Beijing, 2009/11/16) reported that US President Barack Obama says he sees no need to change Washington's "one-China" policy. "I have been clear in the past that my administration fully supports a one-China policy," Obama said Monday. "...We don't want to change that policy and that approach." Obama says he is "very pleased" with the reduction in tensions between the PRC and Taiwan.

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Nautilus Institute

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

nautilus@nautilus.org