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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. Inter-Korea Relations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "FORMER PRES. AIDE URGES BOLD ACTION ON INTER-KOREAN TIES", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that lawmaker Park Jie-won, a close aide to former President Kim Dae-jung, said Monday ROK President Lee Myung-bak should dispatch a special envoy to the DPRK to help thaw inter-Korean tension. "Lee should first pledge to fulfill the commitments in the 2000 and 2007 joint declarations made between former Presidents Kim and Roh Moo-hyun and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il,'' Park said. ''After this, Lee should ask the North Korean leader to fully collaborate with Seoul in the investigation of the tourist killing.''

Korea Herald (Hwang Jang-jin, "LEE WARNS OF N.K. PROVOCATIONS", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak on Monday directed the government to prepare for a DPRK attempt to deepen ideological split in the ROK. "North Korea will continue to try to divide the society ideologically to hinder the national unity. We have to prepare measures to cope with this," Lee said during a special Cabinet meeting as part of an annual ROK-U.S. military exercise. He also stressed the need for military readiness against provocations by the DPRK saying, "There always exists the possibility of limited conflict."

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "LEE RENEWS CALL FOR DIALOGUE WITH NORTH KOREA", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak said Monday that he will deal flexibly with the DPRK in pursuing serious dialogue under the principle of co-prosperity for the two Koreas. In an interview with global Internet portal Yahoo!, Lee said inter-Korean relations would eventually be restored if the DPRK came to understand his deep affection towards the DPRK people. "Both South and North Korean people yearn for reunification of the Korean peninsula. But if you really look closely at the reality, nobody knows with certainty when the two Koreas will be able to be united. Perhaps we'll need a lot of time. Perhaps not," said Lee. "I think during my lifetime, I will see the

reunification of the two Koreas. It can happen anyday and it can happen suddenly. We must be very much prepared for that."

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2. DPRK IFI Membership

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "PYONGYANG SEEKS MEMBERSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL LENDERS", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the DPRK asked the United States to fully support its joining international financial organizations during recent negotiations, Radio Free Asia said Monday. The report quoted an unidentified U.S. expert on DPRK affairs as saying that Pyongyang has asked Washington to help it become a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In return, the DPRK promised to accept a U.S.-proposed protocol aimed at examining its nuclear programs declared.

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3. US-ROK Military Exercises

Chosun Ilbo ("NEW-LOOK KOREA-U.S. JOINT EXERCISE STARTS MONDAY", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the ROK and the U.S. conduct a joint exercise dubbed Ulchi Freedom Guardian from Monday through Friday. The annual joint military exercise will for the first time be controlled by the ROK army with support from U.S. forces in preparation for the transfer of full operational control over the ROK troops to Seoul in April 2012. The UFG replaces the old Ulchi Focus Lens and will be the first of its kind aimed at maintaining the ROK-U.S. combined defense posture in case of war on the Korean Peninsula. The key feature of this year's joint military exercise is that the ROK and U.S. troops will set up their respective commands and carry out operations independently or jointly depending on circumstances.

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4. DPRK on US-ROK Exercises

Yonhap ("N. KOREA RAPS S. KOREA-U.S. JOINT MILITARY DRILLS", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the DPRK criticized the ROK and the United States on Monday for starting their annual joint military drills as scheduled. "The U.S. military ignored our justifiable demand and started the joint military drills," a spokesman for the DPRK military mission to Panmunjom said in a statement. The unidentified spokesman said the DPRK's military can't sit idly by while the "exercise by bellicose forces in the U.S. and South Korea" are being conducted. The Rodong Sinmun also said in a signed article that neo-conservatives in the U.S. "are seeking to use south Korea as a forefront base for an offensive and a forward operational base for implementing their policy of aggression toward the DPRK." "They would be well advised to stop the reckless anti-DPRK military racket, well aware that their policy of aggression toward the DPRK would only entail catastrophic consequences," the newspaper added.

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5. DPRK-Syria Relations

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA ANNOUNCES AMBASSADOR TO SYRIA", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the DPRK has named an ambassador to Syria, the country's official media said Monday. "Choe Su Hon was appointed as DPRK ambassador to Syria, according to a decree of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly," the official Korean Central News Agency said in a one sentence dispatch from Pyongyang. Yonhap news agency reported that Choe has been a deputy foreign minister since 1986, mainly responsible for diplomacy with the United Nations.

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6. Korean Peninsula Military Balance

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "'N. KOREAN ATTACK WILL LEAD TO REUNIFICATION'", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that Lt. Gen. Joseph Fil Jr., he commander of the Eighth U.S. Army, said that if the DPRK attacked the ROK, the DPRK would be defeated and the two Koreas would be reunified eventually. "There is no doubt, if the North Koreans decide to cause trouble, what the outcome will be. No doubt at all,'' Fil was quoted by the Stars and Stripes as saying. Fil also said there would be no more reduction in the U.S. troop level on the Korean Peninsula. "In fact, we're going to pick up the force level a bit,'' he said.

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7. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "JAPAN HEIGHTENS TERRITORIAL CLAIM OVER EAST SEA ISLETS", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the Japanese government appears to be boosting its effort to claim Dokdo and is stepping up its publicity campaign over the territorial issue, according to the Korea Dokdo Research Center, part of the Korea Maritime Institute. "The Dokdo sovereignty issue is one of the most important bilateral issues concerning Korea and Japan," according to the group. ``We have to remember that this issue is not something that came up recently. The Japanese government has a long-term view on this topic and has been taking strategic steps in accordance with that view. We feel Koreans need to respond to that in a similar fashion, with an eye on a long-term strategy."

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8. ROK-PRC Relations

Korea Times (Na Jeong-ju, "SUMMIT TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP WITH CHINA", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that President Hu Jintao will visit Seoul Aug. 25-26 for a summit with President Lee Myung-bak, Cheong Wa Dae announced Monday. "The two countries will discuss specific measures to further develop bilateral relations,'' President Lee's spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said. Hu will reaffirm bilateral cooperation to peacefully settle the DPRK nuclear issue and prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the presidential office said.

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9. ROK-Thai Military Relations

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "KOREA, THAILAND HOLD MILITARY TALKS", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the ROK and Thailand Monday started their 13th annual military supplies talks to discuss ways for improving two-way defense trade, the Defense Acquisition Program Administration said. The two sides are expected to reach a decision on signing a memorandum of understanding on bilateral defense industry trade. The ROK also plans to promote its military vehicles, such as trucks, tanks and convoys.

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10. Bird Flu in ROK

Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA TO DECLARE ITSELF FREE OF BIRD FLU", Seoul, 2008/08/17) reported that the ROK plans to declare itself free of bird flu this week, Kim Chang-seob, the Agriculture Ministry's chief veterinary officer, said Sunday. Kim said the declaration will be reported Monday to the Paris-based animal health organization known as OIE. Under the OIE's regulations, a country can officially declare itself free of the disease if no new cases of bird flu have been found for three months.

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11. ROK Demonstrations

Joongang Ilbo (Park Sang-woo, "SUPPORT IS DWINDLING, BUT PROTESTS ARE PERSISTING", Seoul, 2008/08/18) reported that the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency said Sunday that they arrested 157 of around 5,000 people who attended the demonstration on Friday night near the Bank of Korea in central Seoul, on charges of staging an unauthorized protest. Another rally was planned for Saturday in front of Myeongdong Cathedral, but only 400 turned up. About 100 continued their protest with striking Kiryung Electronics employees Sunday in front of the firm’s building in Guro District.

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12. PRC Protests

BBC (Michael Bristow, "CHINA 'YET TO APPROVE PROTESTS'", Beijing , 2008/08/18) reported that the PRC has received a total of 77 applications to stage protests during the Olympic Games period, but none have been approved. Beijing's public security bureau said 74 applications were "withdrawn", two were "suspended" and one was "vetoed." The protest applications involved a total of 149 people, including three foreigners, according to a spokesperson from Beijing's public security bureau. The majority were withdrawn because the problems they raised could be better dealt with by "relevant authorities or departments through consultation".

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13. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Bloomberg (Dune Lawrence, "JAPAN ASKS CHINA TO MAKE PROGRESS ON JOINT GAS DEVELOPMENT DEAL", Beijing, 2008/08/18) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura concluded a three-day visit to Beijing Monday after calling on the PRC to move to the "next stage'' on an agreement to jointly develop gas fields in the East China Sea. "Two months have passed since the announcement of the basic agreement,'' ministry spokesman Kazuo Kodama said. "Now we should move forward to conclude an international agreement to put this accord into action.'' PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi called the East China agreement ``extremely sensitive'' in his meeting with Komura, Kodama said.

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14. Cross Straits Relations

Weekly Telegraph (Richard Spencer, "TAIWAN SUCCUMBS TO PANDA DIPLOMACY", Beijing, 2008/08/15) reported that Taiwan Thursday said it would accept a pair of pandas offered as a token of friendship by the PRC. Taipei zoo was approved to receive the couple, who are currently refugees from the Sichuan earthquake, a statement from Taiwan's forestry bureau said. It was not clear when Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan - whose names taken together mean Unity - will head for the island, or if they will keep their names once they arrive.

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II. PRC Report

15. PRC Environment

People’s Daily (Zhao Yongping, "CHINA ANNUAL WATER CONSUMPTION RISES LESS THAN 1%", 2008/08/15) reported that learning from a PRC and foreign media conference held by Beijing International News Center, in recent years, through reasonable development and effective protection of the water resource, the PRC’s water security capacity is advancing a lot. At present, the practical water supply of the national Water Conservancy reaches 579.9 billion cubic meters. The annual water supply rose less than 1%.

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16. PRC-ASEAN Relations

China Economy Network, http://www.ce.cn/ ("CHINA AND ASEAN HAVE GREAT COOPERATIVE POTENTIAL", 2008/08/15) reported that Deputy Director-general of the National Energy Bureau Sun Qin said at the ASEAN Energy Ministers Meeting that the PRC and ASEAN countries have complementarity in energy field. Energy Cooperation has become the main content of Sino-ASEAN economic and trade cooperation. ASEAN not only supplies energy to the PRC but also is an important energy channel of the PRC. The PRC hopes to cooperate in the exploration of oil and

nature gas. Sun also said that the PRC supports Asian countries or developing countries peacefully using nuclear energy and establishing a safe and clear energy system.

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17. PRC Poverty Alleviation

Northeast Network, http://www.northeast.cn/ (Guan Xin, "3 COMBINATION CONTRIBUTES TO POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN HEILONGJIANG", 2008/08/13) reported that Vice-chairman of China Association for Poverty Alleviation said at an interview that "the combination of tourism industry, cultural industry and agricultural industry will contribute to the poverty alleviation work in Heilongjiang province. Heilongjiang is a big agricultural province. New variety introduction is the key issue of the development from traditional agriculture to eco-efficient agriculture. Nowadays, people all like to go to rural areas or the farmhouse to experience rural life. This is a good opportunity for the development of rural tourism. Heilongjiang has many minorities and their attractive cultures can be an economic bright spot by an effective commercial operation.

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III. ROK Report

18. DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap News ("US ELECTION, TO AFFECT DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUE?", 2008/08/18) reported that as the U.S. presidential election approaches nearer, experts concern that it might affect six-party nuclear talks negatively which still await for the verification mechanism to be completed. As a matter of fact, the DPRK did not show any enthusiasm for the verification negotiation. Nor did they endeavor to undo the matter. In order to strengthen the power of negotiation aimed at disabling nuclear power which might become invalid during Bush administration's lame duck session, the ROK is planning on holding the six-party talks after the verification mechanism is established completely. However, the only thing that can be done at the moment is to wait for the DPRK's reaction.

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19. ROK Policy toward DPRK

Kyunghyang ("DREAM OF INTER-KOREAN UNIFICATION, LACKS STRATEGY AND PRACTICALITY", 2008/08/16) said in an op-ed that Lee Myung-bak urged to work on conversation and economic cooperation with the DPRK while mentioning the dream of unified Korea during his address to celebrate the 60 th anniversary of the establishment of the ROK. However, since 'the dream' in his sense lacks any detailed plans, what he meant is interpreted as a literal 'dream'. Due to the fact that the DPRK nuclear issue cannot be resolved in such a short period, it is better to support the nuclear resolution by improving inter-Korean relationship. Further, doing so is also one of the most effective ways to strengthen ROK's right to speak upon Korean-peninsula matter.

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20. ROK Energy Policy

Pressian (Woo Suk-hoon, adjunct professor of Sungkonghoe University , "MB'S 'GREEN GROWTH'? TO BUILD NUCLEAR POWER PLANT?", 2008/08/16) said in a column that so-called 'green growth' mentioned by President Lee Myung-bak which is supposed to be the government's new vision to guide the nation's long-term development, is likely to be equivalent to strengthening nuclear power. Also, it may end up putting more focus on somewhat dangerous energy diplomacy, which is to guarantee the reliability upon overseas resources. The actual purpose of establishing a carbon-free economy is to establish the system itself or to set goals for reduction. In this sense, the so-called 'green growth', without these two notions, regardless of its philosophy, means nothing. It only sounds like Lee will construct several nuclear power plants while in office.

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