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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo (Brian Lee, "NORTH IS HESITANT ON FULL NUCLEAR DISCLOSURE: OFFICIAL", 2007/12/18) reported that PRC Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei is scheduled to visit the DPRK this week. Above all, the visit is intended to persuade the DPRK to provide the US with a precise account of its use of the plutonium that it has produced so far, a ROK government official said, requesting anonymity. “Washington wants the nuclear devices for which the plutonium was used to be listed along with the amount of plutonium produced,” the official said, explaining that the DPRK feared doing so as it could reveal the level of sophistication of their nuclear technology. “Pyongyang only wants to own up to the total amount of plutonium produced. That gives them leeway to be ambiguous on what happened to everything produced so far,” the official said. “Without knowing for sure their technological level, any discrepancies on the total amount of plutonium produced can be explained and blamed on the technology level.”

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("DIVIDED KOREAS MOVE CLOSER TO SETTING UP JOINT FISHING AREA IN EAST SEA, STATEMENT SAYS", Seoul, 2007/12/16) reported that the ROK and DPRK are still far apart over setting up joint fishing areas along their disputed western sea border but they have made some progress in establishing similar zones off their shared eastern sea border, a ROK government report said. In a statement posted on its Website, the ROK's Unification Ministry said working officials of both Koreas made some meaningful headway on a proposal to open their shared eastern sea border to fishing boats from both sides. "The South and the North agreed to actively cooperate to allow South Korean ships begin fishing at designated areas in the North Korean side of the East Sea within 2008," the ministry said.

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3. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

IFES NK Brief ("WIRELESS COMMS, INTERNET IN KAESONG INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AND KUMGANG MOUNTAIN TOURIST RESORT", 2007/12/17) reported that the DPRK and ROK reached an agreement regarding communications, transportation, and customs. are poised to allow Internet, telephone, and cellular services to be available in the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) and at the Kumgang Mountain Tourist Resort beginning next year. The 7th Defense Ministerial Talks opened on December 12 at the 'Peace House' on the ROK side of Panmunjum. According to the agreement, Pyongyang has given permission for the use of Internet landlines and cellular phones in the two largest inter-Korean cooperative projects. However, while the ROK pushed for the inclusion of "mobile phones" in the agreement, the DPRK insisted on "wireless telephone communications", suggesting that they hope to use dual-use wired telephones rather than mobile cellular phones.

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4. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("NORTH KOREA AIMING TO BECOME A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COUNTRY BY 2012", 2007/12/13) reported that the DPRK has paved the way to achieve its goal of becoming a strong and prosperous country by 2012, the one-hundred year anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung. This goal of reaching such a status in only five years was announced at the recent nationwide open assembly of intellectuals, the first such meeting in 15 years. Choi Tae-bok, secretary of the political department of the Workers' Party central committee, stated in the closing speech of the recent intellectual's assembly that the 100-year anniversary of the birth of Kim Il Sung was deeply significant, and stressed that "every intellectual must open the doors to [the era of] a strong and prosperous country" by the 100th anniversary of the birth of the nation's founder.

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5. US-ROK Relations

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "NEW TONE BUT SAME WORK FOR U.S. AND S.KOREA AFTER VOTE ", Washington, 2007/12/17) reported that barring a dramatic upset, main conservative party candidate Lee Myung-bak will win the presidency on his 66th birthday and take office in February, replacing a figure whose rhetoric alienated South Koreans and mystified foreign allies. Lee, a celebrated business executive, has said he will review outgoing President Roh Moo-hyun's policy of giving the DPRK aid without question, linking future help to progress Pyongyang makes in shedding its nuclear weapons programs. Lee also wants to draw Seoul's traditional allies Japan and the US closer. Tokyo and Washington often were put off by what one former US official called Roh's penchant for "talking to the media before thinking" about foreign policy.

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6. US-Japan-DPRK Relations

Washington Post (Akiko Yamamoto and Blaine Harden, "30 YEARS AFTER ABDUCTIONS, QUESTIONS HAUNT JAPANESE", Niigata, 2007/12/17) reported that with the DPRK emerging from

its shell and acceding to US demands to disable its nuclear facilities, Japan's enduring anger over the decades-old abductions is not only blocking improved ties with the DPRK but also straining relations with Japan's most important ally, the United States. Japanese officials express concern about the Bush administration's apparent willingness to remove the DPRK from the U.S. list of states that sponsor terrorism -- without explicitly linking that removal to progress on the abduction issue. "The U.S.-Japan relationship is changing because of the abduction issue," said Toshimitsu Shigemura, professor of North Korea studies at Tokyo's Waseda University. "Japan is thinking the United States doesn't think the abductions are important and that we are losing our common values."

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7. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MAKES SUGGESTIONS TO KOREA-EU FTA TALKS", 2007/12/17) reported that the European Parliament has issued recommendations to EU negotiators in free trade talks with the ROK. Saying an FTA that simply reduces tariffs would have only short-term benefits, the assembly suggests further non-tariff barriers be removed. The recommendations call for greater transparency in the ROK health care system, safeguards in phasing out EU auto-import tariffs and special care given to the shipbuilding sector in which the ROK and Europe have clashed in the past.

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8. Russo-Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN CONCERNED RUSSIA'S SEIZURE OF BOATS WILL AFFECT TIES", Tokyo, 2007/12/17) reported that Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura expressed concerns that prolonged seizure of four Japanese fishing boats by Russia will negatively impact bilateral relations and reiterated Tokyo's call for the early release of the crew and boats. ''Something like this will affect Japan-Russia relations,'' Komura said in response to reporters' questions. ''I don't think this is good for the Russian side either.''

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9. Japan Missile Defense Program

Reuters (Jim Wolf, "JAPAN INTERCEPTS MISSILE IN MILESTONE TEST", Washington, 2007/12/17) reported that a Japanese navy destroyer shot down a ballistic missile in space on Monday in a test over the Pacific, a first for a U.S. ally, a witness said. "They got it. It's an historic moment for Japan," Riki Ellison, a prominent U.S. missile-defense advocate, told Reuters by telephone. The shootdown marked a success for a shipboard detection and tracking tool called Aegis built by Lockheed Martin Corp and the Standard Missile-3 interceptor, produced by Raytheon Co.

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10. Japan Defense

Reuters (Isabel Reynolds, "JAPAN DELAYS BUYING NEW FIGHTER AIRCRAFT - REPORT", Tokyo, 2007/12/17) reported that Japan plans to postpone buying next-generation fighter aircraft to replace part of its aging air force fleet because the US is unwilling to export its state-of-the-art F-22 stealth fighter, a newspaper said. The Lockheed Martin Corp fighter, also known as the Raptor, boasts stealth capabilities far superior to any of its rivals, but the U.S. Congress has opposed its export, even to allies such as Japan, for security reasons. Japan's Defence Minister Shigeru Ishiba told Reuters in October the ministry was considering other options, in particular the Eurofighter, built by a consortium including BAE Systems.

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11. Japan Politics

Agence France-Presse ("SUPPORT FOR JAPAN PM FUKUDA PLUMMETS: POLLS", Tokyo, 2007/12/17) reported that voter support for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's cabinet has fallen by more than 10 percent from November amid a series of government scandals, according to polls published Monday. Support for Fukuda's cabinet dropped 12 points from November to 43 percent, while his disapproval rating increased 13 points to 46 percent, the Nikkei economic daily reported. Kyodo News agency reported Sunday that its weekend survey of 1,477 households found cabinet approval had dropped about 12 points from early November to 35 percent this month. The Nikkei said the fall in support appears to have stemmed from public anger over the government's handling of missing pension records, a sensitive issue in a rapidly aging nation, and a scandal at the defense ministry.

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12. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters (Chris Buckley, "CHINA URGES TAIWAN MILITARY: RESIST INDEPENDENCE MOVES", Beijing, 2007/12/17) reported that a PRC military expert has urged Taiwan's military to resist moves towards independence, pressing the island's soldiers to "join hands" with mainland forces to avoid possible war. The director of a research centre on Taiwan's military at the People's Liberation Army College of Military Sciences in Beijing, Wang Weixing, wrote in state media that Taiwan's armed forces traditionally favored stronger ties with the PRC. Writing in the latest issue of Outlook Weekly, run by the PRC's official Xinhua news agency, Wang said Taiwan's military could serve as a bulwark against "Taiwanese independence."

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN'S VICE PRESIDENT LU RAPS CHINA OVER AIR SPACE MOVE", Taipei, 2007/12/17) reported that Taiwan's Vice President Annette Lu on Sunday accused the PRC of interfering with the island's upcoming parliamentary and presidential polls by trying to squeeze its air space. Lu said that on November 26 the PRC, via Hong Kong's aviation authorities, added a new flight route in the Taiwan Strait that is 42 miles (67.2 kilometres) closer to the centre of the strait -- a "middle line" that has been observed for decades by Taiwan and the PRC to prevent unexpected clashes. In so doing, the Taiwan air force's two existing bombing practice areas in the Strait will be cut and their training capacity reduced, she said in Taipei while campaigning for a legislative election candidate of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

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13. PRC-India-Russia Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA, RUSSIA, CHINA TO BOOST ECONOMIC TIES", New Dehli, 2007/12/17) reported that India, Russia and the PRC vowed to boost trade and investment with each other after a one-day meeting that saw officials and businessmen from the three countries gather in New Delhi this weekend. A top Indian foreign official admitted that the three countries needed to do much more to further economic links. "India, China and Russia have huge raw material and energy reserves. All three of us should come together to form a India-China-Russia business partnership."

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14. PRC Military

Washington Post (Maureen Fan, "CHINA SCOUTS COLLEGES TO FILL RANKS OF MODERN ARMY", Beijing, 2007/12/17) reported that the fliers circulating last month on the campuses of the PRC's most prestigious universities showed three soldiers positioned against a PRC flag and an appeal that read in part: "Carry Your Pen to the Army to Become More Accomplished." In ancient times, the phrase was "Throw Away Your Pen and Join the Army," a challenge to China's intellectuals to stop wasting time and help defend the country. Now, the People's Liberation Army is recruiting college students in an ambitious modernization program designed to attract smart soldiers who can handle sophisticated equipment and transform the 2.3 million-strong force into a high-tech adversary.

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15. PRC Environment

The New York Times (David Barboza, "IN CHINA, FARMING FISH IN TOXIC WATERS", Fuqing, 2007/12/17) reported that here in southern PRC, beneath the looming mountains of Fujian Province, lie dozens of enormous ponds filled with murky brown water and teeming with eels, shrimp and tilapia, much of it destined for markets in Japan and the West. Fuqing is one of the centers of a booming industry that over two decades has transformed this country into the biggest producer and exporter of seafood in the world, and the fastest-growing supplier to the US. But that growth is threatened by the two most glaring environmental weaknesses in the PRC: acute water shortages and water supplies contaminated by sewage, industrial waste and agricultural runoff that includes pesticides. The fish farms, in turn, are discharging wastewater that further pollutes the water supply.

China Daily (Wang Zhuoqiong , "GLOBAL GIANTS ON POLLUTION BLACKLIST", 2007/12/17) reported that forty multinationals are among some 4,000 firms on an air pollution blacklist released Thursday. Top companies such as Michelin China, Sina-Mars Group APP in China, the joint ventures of Toyota and Ford, and subsidiaries of Sinopec figure on the list of the China Air Pollution Map (http://air.ipe.org.cn), compiled by the Beijing-based non-governmental Institute of Public and Environment Affairs (IPEA). The air pollution map is the second such blacklist launched by the group. The China Water Pollution Map has made public details of about 9,400 water violations since last year, including those involving up to 280 foreign firms.

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16. PRC Economy

BBC News ("CHINA'S ECONOMIC MUSCLE 'SHRINKS'", 2007/12/17) reported that the PRC's economy, the world's second largest, is not as big as was thought, a report by the World Bank has claimed. According to the bank, previous calculations have overestimated the size of China's economy by about 40%. The revelation came after the bank updated the way it calculated the country's gross domestic product (GDP). The bank said the findings meant the PRC would not become the world's biggest economy in 2012 as forecast. It also meant the PRC was poorer than estimated.

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II. ROK Report

17. DPRK Communications

Yonhap News ("DPRK BUILDS INFO NETWORK AT MT.BAEKDU", Seoul, 2007/12/18) reported that the DPRK's Chosun Central Broadcast said that they established a "modern network" at the top of Mt. Baekdu. According to the report, the reason why they tried to expand the network was to modernize the Workers' Pary information network. The DPRK also changed old cable car facilities into new ones as Kim Jong-il has ordered. In addition, they built 150 residence complexes and a few plants. Also, according to the treaty made at the previous summit meeting, beginning in May next year the direct trip between between Seoul-Baekdu would be possible.

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18. Gaesong Complex Development

Hankyoreh (Kwon Hyuk-chul, "2nd STEP OF DEVELOPING GAESONG COMPLEX STARTED", Seoul, 2007/12/17) reported that Hyundai Asan and Korea Land Corporation made the second step on developing Gaesong complex on Dec. 17. The development was promised at the first talks between prime ministers and the inter-Korean economic committee. It will take about four years to complete the development. The government is not only planning to build plants, but also tourist attractions and business areas in the complex.

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19. DPRK on ROK Election

Joongang Sunday (Oh Young-hwan, "RODONG: EMPHASIS ON INTER-KOREAN RELATIONSHIP", Seoul, 2007/12/16) reported that when the DPRK's most famous newspaper, Rodong Shinmun, makes reports about the ROK, they mostly consist of editorials or quotations from the ROK media. This is basically why the readers of Rodong Shinmun are unaware of what is going on around the

ROK’s coming presidential election. They had no reports about the list of candidates who are running, nor about the state of affairs. However, one interesting thing is that they had reports about their subjective perspectives toward this election. Specifically, after Lee Hoi-chang declared his candidacy, they continued to criticize him for "pursuing separation and confrontation" between two Koreas. Instead, they showed expectations on the progressives. The reason why they keep on trying to denunciate Lee for his uncompromising stand is because they do not want to step backwards on inter-Korean economic cooperation.

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