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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Problem

Korea Times ("N. KOREA SAYS IT WILL NOT SIGN VERIFICATION REGIME NOW: HILL", 2008/12/17) reported that the DPRK has said that it will sign an agreement on a verification protocol for its nuclear facilities but not now, the chief US nuclear envoy was quoted as saying. "North Koreans have never said they cannot agree to what is in the written instrument or what was (made) in oral assurances, but they don't want to do the verification protocol now, whether because they are waiting for the next administration, or whether just because they don't want to do it now, or whether they should do it in phase three," Christopher Hill told a forum.

Reuters (Paul Eckert, "NO BETTER NUCLEAR DEAL FOR N. KOREA AFTER BUSH - ENVOY", Washington DC, 2008/12/17) reported that the DPRK, should not expect the incoming Obama administration to offer easier terms, the top U.S. nuclear negotiator said on Tuesday. "I would be frankly surprised if they're going to get some better deal from the next administration," Hill said in remarks to the Asia Society in Washington.

Economist ("SIX-PARTY STANDSTILL", 2008/12/17) reported that after years of negotiations, it appears that the entire nuclear disarnmnent process has been futile. “From Kim Jong Il’s view, the moment that he gives up the nuclear weapons, he becomes the Congo without the diamonds. And nobody will ever talk with him again, and he knows that,” explains Art Brown, who was director of the East Asia desk at America’s Central Intelligence Agency until he retired in 2005.

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2. US on DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo News ("OBAMA WON'T NEGLECT NORTH ABDUCTEES ISSUE", Washington, 2008/12/17) reported that U.S. President-elect Barack Obama's administration will maintain the goal of trying to help Japan resolve the abduction dispute with the DPRK, a State Department official said. "There is no doubt that the new Obama administration will begin with a very clear understanding of what has gone before, what the issues are, what the objectives are, and what the concerns and the interests of Japan are in the context of North Korea," said Daniel Russel, director of the Office of Japanese Affairs.

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3. Russia on Energy Aid to the DPRK

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIA'S LAVROV URGES PARTIES TO FULFILL N. KOREA COMMITMENTS", Moscow, 2008/12/17) reported that Russia's foreign minister has urged all parties involved in six-nation talks on the DPRK's denuclearization to fulfill their commitments and called for transparency in bilateral contacts. "The agreement that was reached must be implemented, and this also concerns the North Korean side. Work should be done preferably in the six-party format, without looking for a by-pass," Sergei Lavrov said on his way back from a UN Security Council meeting.

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4. ROK on Energy Aid to the DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("WHY ENERGY AID IS TRUMP CARD IN DEALING WITH N. KOREA", 2008/12/17) reported that a threat to stop energy aid to the DPRK appears to be gaining ground. "It's enough to put pressure on North Korea, which is undergoing a serious shortage of energy during the winter," said a government official. Energy aid represents roughly 10% of the total energy consumed annually by the DPRK.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREAN OFFICIAL BLAMES SOUTH IN RARE INSPECTION OF KAESONG COMPLEX", Seoul, 2008/12/17) reported that senior DPRK defense official Lt. Gen. Kim Yong-chol said Wednesday that Pyongyang's sanctions on the joint industrial complex in Kaesong are "not temporary," but did not warn of more actions as he made a rare inspection of the inter-Korean

zone, Seoul officials said. After the DPRK has reduced the number of ROK citizens allowed at Kaesong, there are now currently 88 ROK companies employing around 36,000 DPRK citizens at the complex.

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6. DPRK Food Aid

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA NEEDS US$346 MILLION IN FOOD AID FOR 2009: WFP", Seoul, 2008/12/17) reported that the DPRK needs urgent food aid worth US$346 million to help millions of people get through the new year, the World Food Program said on Wednesday in an appeal for worldwide donations. The U.N. food agency said in a report that the requested donation is necessary to help feed 5.6 million DPRK citizens, nearly a quarter of the country's population, who need outside assistance next year.

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7. DPRK Economy

Institute for Far Eastern Studies ("DPRK PUSHES TO MEET YEARLY PRODUCTION PLANS", Pyongyang, 2008/12/17) reported that the DPRK has launched a 'Year-end Battle' in order to encourage every sector of the economy to meet annual production targets, without exception. On December 1, the DPRK Central Broadcasting announced, "workers, laborers and technicians of the harvesting industry sector overcome difficulties and barriers with indomitable moral strength, while thoroughly accomplishing the (New Year) Joint Editorial's fighting tasks, focusing all strengths on the struggle to brightly wrap up the deeply meaningful year,"while also reporting on the production innovation of the nation's mining and smelting facilities. Work was also being done on improving the country's hydroelectric power plants to expand electrical production.

Xinhua News ("DPRK'S KIM JONG IL CALLS FOR IT DEV'T ", Pyongyang, 2008/12/17) reported that developing information technology (IT) should be the most important task for the DPRK, the official Rodong Sinmun daily quoted the country's top leader as saying Wednesday. During his recent inspection tour of an electronics institute, a library and a pharmaceutical factory in Kanggye city of Jagang province, Kim Jong Il said it was necessary to work out a plan for developing IT to realize informatization of all national economic sectors.

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8. DPRK Leadership

The Financial Times ("N KOREA RELEASES 'EVIDENCE' OF RECOVERED KIM", 2008/12/16) reported that the DPRK stepped up its campaign to prove leader Kim Jong-il is well and in control by showing him looking at an electronic copy of a newspaper dated in a series of photos released through its official media. In the series of photographs released by KCNA news agency, Mr Kim is seen inspecting a library in the northern Jagang province and looking at a computer monitor displaying an electronic copy of the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper dated December 16.

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9. ROK Energy

Bloomberg (Sungwoo Park, "SOUTH KOREA MAY BUY STAKES IN AFRICAN COAL ASSETS ", 2008/12/17) reported that the ROK may acquire stakes in coal assets in Southern Africa to bolster future supplies, taking advantage of lower energy prices. State-owned Korea Resources Corp. is seeking coal assets in South Africa and Mozambique, Kim Shin Jong, 58, president and chief executive officer of the minerals explorer, said in an interview in Seoul today. The focus is "very much" on developing coal deposits, he said. The ROK, which imports 97 percent of its energy and minerals, is increasing spending on oil and gas fields abroad by 40 percent as falling crude-oil prices make energy assets cheaper. "We are also interested in the coal gasification and liquefaction business as part of our long-term vision," said Kim, who visited resources companies in South Africa last month. "I believe oil will be depleted in the current century, and coal is likely to replace it."

Korea Times ("NUCLEAR REACTOR ON DEVELOPMENT FAST TRACK ", 2008/12/16) reported that the ROK will accelerate development of an advanced indigenous nuclear reactor to enhance the country's competitiveness in the international market, the government said. The Ministry of Knowledge Economy said the development of the Advanced Power Reactor, or APR, will be complete by 2012, three years ahead of schedule. The reactor has greater power output than current models along with enhanced safety features. It could start commercial operation in 2022.

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10. ROK Textbook Issue

Korea Times (Bae Ji-sook, "HISTORY TEXTBOOK REVISION COMPLETED", 2008/12/17) reported that high school students will learn more about DPRK society and regime but less about pro-Japanese traitors during Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) and business tycoons from next year. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology made public its final revised version of its high-school history textbook, in which 206 changes were made.

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11. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

Yonhap News (Yoo Cheong-mo, "JAPAN SAID TO GIVE UP CLAIM TO DOKDO IN HIGH SCHOOL GUIDEBOOK", Seoul, 2008/12/17) reported that the Japanese government has decided not to include any territorial description of Dokdo in a high school teachers' guidebook scheduled for revision early next year, a diplomatic source in Seoul said Wednesday. The reported decision apparently reflects Tokyo's intention not to strain the ROK-Japanese relationship amid growing signs of its normalization, said the source.

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "VANK WEB SITE ATTACKED BY JAPANESE NET USERS", 2008/12/17) reported that a non-profit group that has been a vocal advocate of Korea's sovereignty over Dokdo islets said its Web site has become the target of cyber attacks from Japan. The Voluntary Agency Network of Korea (VANK) said Tuesday that its computer servers were temporarily shut down Sunday night when some Japanese Web users started a coordinated cyber-attack against the group's homepage.

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12. Japan-US Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("34% OF JAPANESE THINK JAPAN-U.S. TIES GOOD", 2008/12/17) reported that a decreasing number of Japanese think Japan-US relations are good, a new Yomiuri Shimbun/Gallup survey shows. The number who said relations between the two countries were "very good" or "good" was 34 percent, down from 39 percent last year, while 53 percent of Americans polled said they thought relations were good. The results indicate significant differences between Japanese and Americans on changes in their perceptions of bilateral relations, analysts said.

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13. Japan Climate Change

Kyodo News (Ko Hirano , "JAPAN EYES PROACTIVE CLIMATE DIPLOMACY IN 2009", Ponzan, 2008/12/17) reported that Japan is expected to pursue proactive yet balanced climate diplomacy in 2009 to ensure the involvement of the US, PRC and India — responsible for nearly half the world's greenhouse gas emissions — in a new treaty to fight global warming. Saito said he acknowledges that the PRC, India and other emerging economies won't join a post-2012 regime unless industrial nations set ambitious midterm targets based on science. Saito said the US won't accept a deal unless it involves the PRC and other emerging economies that will produce the bulk of the increase in emissions in the coming decades.

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14. Japan Iraq Dispatch

Kyodo News ("LAST OF 3 ASDF CARGO PLANES INVOLVED IN IRAQ MISSION HEADS HOME", 2008/12/17) reported that the last of three C-130H cargo planes of a Japanese Air Self-Defense Force unit that is pulling out of its nearly five-year airlift mission in Iraq departed from Kuwait for home Wednesday. At a ceremony held before the departure of the plane, the ASDF troops gathered at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait, the unit's base for the mission. A US Air Force officer read a statement expressing gratitude for the Japanese mission.

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15. PRC on African Piracy

Xinhua ("CHINA CONSIDERS SENDING NAVAL SHIPS TO SOMALIA", 2008/12/17) reported that vice Foreign Minister He Yafei said yesterday that the PRC is "seriously considering sending naval ships" to the waters off the Somali coast for escort operations in the near future to fight rampant piracy. Speaking at a ministerial meeting of the United Nations Security Council on Somali piracy, He said that the PRC welcomes international cooperation to help stop pirates off the coast of Somalia. He added that the PRC supports sending warships to the region to crack down on pirates based on international law and Security Council resolutions.

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16. Cross Strait Relations

Bloomberg (James Peng, "CHINA MAY LET TAIWAN JOIN WORLD BODIES THROUGH TALKS", 2008/12/17) reported that the PRC may allow Taiwan to join world bodies including the World Health Organization through a process of talks, an official said. Any attempt for Taiwan to join international bodies should be done through “a process of consultation, negotiation and mutual understanding,” the Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Li Weiyi said today at a televised press briefing in Beijing. “That’s the overall direction that we’re progressing toward.” Li said the “specifics of the matter are to be discussed on a case-by-case basis.”

Xinhua ("OFFICIAL: MAINLAND PANDA PAIR TO TRAVEL TO TAIWAN ON DEC. 23", Beijing, 2008/12/17) reported that the pair of giant pandas offered by the PRC to Taiwan will travel to the island on Dec. 23, a mainland official announced here on Wednesday. The bears, Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan, whose names together mean "reunion," will be housed at the Taipei city zoo. Their departure has been delayed for more than three years. The warming cross-Straits ties make their journey to Taiwan possible.

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17. Sino-Russian Military Cooperation

United Press International (Andrei Chang, "RUSSIA HELPS CHINA BUILD NEW AIRCRAFT CARRIER", Hong Kong, 2008/12/17) reported that Russia, India and the PRC will be building aircraft carriers for their navies almost simultaneously over the next five years or so, using many of the same design concepts, technologies and equipment. This is unprecedented in the history of shipbuilding. Multiple authoritative sources from the Russian shipbuilding industry have confirmed in recent interviews that the PRC has candidly informed Russia of its intentions. After all, the technology and subsystems for the PRC's aircraft carrier are largely from Russia.

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIA DELAYS DELIVERY OF 38 MILITARY PLANES TO CHINA TILL 2010", Moscow, 2008/12/17) reported that Russia will deliver 38 military planes to the PRC, when a new aircraft production line is up and running, but not before 2010, the head of the federal military cooperation service said on Wednesday. Russia has run into problems over its $1.5 billion contract with the PRC, signed in 2005, to supply 34 Il-76 cargo planes and four Il-78 fuel tankers.

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18. PRC Foreign Investment

International Herald Tribune (Bettina Wassener, "FOREIGN COMPANIES STILL FLOCK TO CHINA, STUDY FINDS", Hong Kong, 2008/12/17) reported that Hong Kong may be in a recession, and the PRC's fast-paced growth is rapidly slowing, but that has not diminished the attractiveness of the PRC to foreign companies, according to InvestHK, the Hong Kong department that promotes the city as a place to do business. The agency said Wednesday that it had advised 257 companies setting up business in Hong Kong this year, more than in any other year. "Business is holding up," said Mark

Michelson at InvestHK. "We get approached by many U.S. and European companies that feel there is not much of a future where they are, but that this is the place to be."

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19. PRC Internet Users

Xinhua ("CHINA'S NETIZENS TOTAL 290 MLN BY NOVEMBER", Beijing, 2008/12/17) reported that the number of netizens in the PRC totaled 290 million by the end of November, up 14.6 percent from the figure for the end of June, according to the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT). The country had now replaced the United States as the world's number one in terms of numbers of Internet users. "Recent years have seen a rapid increase in Internet users in the country. China has stepped into the age of broadband connection," said MIIT vice head Lou Qinjian.

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20. PRC Reform Anniversary

Xinhua ("30 YEARS ON, CHINESE STILL CRAVE FOR REFORM, OPENING-UP", Beijing, 2008/12/17) reported that reform and opening-up is a natural choice for the PRC to handle challenges triggered by the world financial crisis, and sustain its economic miracle, a Chinese scholar said on Wednesday. Chi Fulin, the executive director of the China (Hainan) Reform and Development Research Institute, along with other members of Chinese society, and newspapers have voiced their support for extending reform and opening up, on the eve of the 30th anniversary of the country's reform and opening-up. The "People's Daily", a mouthpiece newspaper of the Communist Party of China (CPC), carried a bylined article on its front page on Wednesday "A historic chance awaits us". It stressed "the time demands that we propel reform and opening-up".

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II. PRC Report

21. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

Wenhui Daily (Yu Qimin, "WWF LAUNCHES “EARTH HOUR” IN BEIJING", 2008/12/16) reported that yesterday, the 2009 “Earth Hour” of World Wild Fund for Nature was formally launched in Beijing. The event encourages people around the world to switch off their lights for one hour during 20:30-21:30 on March 28, 2009, to support action on climate change. In the PRC, it also hopes to help support the national goal of 20% energy-saving and emission reduction by 2010. Many universities and communities have promised to participate in the event.

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22. PRC Development

People’s Daily online (Yu Lu, "TIANJIN ESTABLISHES INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING ASSOCIATION", 2008/12/16) reported that Tianjian Development Zone International Understanding Association was formally established recently. It is a non-private organization formed by public institutions and foreign-invested enterprises who registered in the development zone. It aims at enhancing the communication among the members and promoting the development of the zone.

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23. PRC Economy

Shanxi Daily (Li Aizhen, "INTANGIBLE ASSETS EVALUATION ASSOCIATION ESTABLISHED IN SHANXI", 2008/12/17) reported that what’s the value of an invention? How to compensate when unintentionally infringe other’s intellectual property? Facing these new economic problems, the newly established Shanxi Intangible Assets Evaluation Association will give us answers. The Association is a social organization formed by specialists of assets appraisal. It aims at guiding entrepreneurs and scientific and technical workers to effectively protect and properly use intangible assets.

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III. CanKor

24. Report # 313-314

Canada-Korea Electronic Information Service ("FOCUS: HUMAN RIGHTS STALEMATED", 2008/12/12) In keeping with the theme "Dignity and justice for all of us," announced by the United Nations for the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, CanKor presents this full-edition FOCUS on recent discussions surrounding human rights in the DPRK.

Canada-Korea Electronic Information Service (Erich Weingartner, "CONVERSATION WITH THE PATRIOT -- Part 11", 2008/12/12) CanKor editor Erich Weingartner continues his fictional conversation with the DPR Korean "patriot" Pak Kim Li. In Episode 11 Weingartner plumbs Pak's abiding faith in paradise.

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IV. ROK Report

25. DPRK Nuclear Program

Pressian ("LANEY, FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR TO KOREA, ‘OBAMA COULD SEND A SPECIAL ENVOY TO DPRK,’ DONGWON YIM, ‘NUCLEAR ISSUE, THE ONLY PROBLEM WITH A SOLUTION AMONG ALL THAT OBAMA FACES’”, ", 2008/12/17) says that James Laney, former U.S.

Ambassador to ROK, said that it is possible that a special envoy might be sent to DPRK. He added that Henry Kissinger, former secretary of state, William Perry, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, or Sam Nunn, former senator, might be chosen. Speaking at the "8 th Anniversary of Winning Nobel Peace Prize of former President Kim Daejung , " Laney stressed that "such kind of approach is indeed a more direct, creative, and powerful one."

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26. Inter-Korean Relations

Tongil News ("'NO HIGH EXPECTATIONS FROM OBAMA'S WIN'",) says that in an interview with Tongil News, Junghoon Park, the manager of Chosun615 Editing Company said that currently people's emotions are reaching a peak and if this kind of situation continues, he cannot imagine what might happen. Moreover, to a question what the red line for Kaesong Industrial District is, he said "I hope the current administration will wake up and be more thoughtful in North-South matters before it's too late." Park asked the Lee Myung-bak administration "to carry out what is stated in 6.15 and 10.4 Agreement" and stressed that "we don't want the current person in authority to turn out like Kim Young-sam."

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