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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. PRC on Korean War Peace Treaty

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "CHINA VOWS TO SUPPORT NEW PEACE REGIME ON KOREAN PENINSULA ", Singapore, 2007/11/20) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun, PRC Premier Wen Jiabao and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda met in Singapore on Tuesday and agreed to institutionalize and widen three-way cooperation for peace and stability in Northeast Asia, Roh's office said. Notably, Wen said the PRC would fully support the two Koreas' effort to hold an international summit meeting for discussion of a new peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. "China will support negotiations on a Korean Peninsula peace regime. As a signatory to the cease-fire of the (1950-53) Korean War, China will actively participate in negotiations on a Korean Peninsula peace regime," Wen was quoted as saying.

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2. US Aid to the DPRK

Yonhap ("U.S. PLEDGES US$4 MILLION TO PROVIDE ELECTRICITY FOR N. KOREAN MEDICAL FACILITIES ", Seoul, 2007/11/20) reported that the US has pledged US$4 million to help provide electricity for DPRK hospitals, a U.S. government broadcaster said. Citing an unidentified source in Washington, the Voice of America said the US State Department will provide the aid through four global aid agencies -- EugeneBell Foundation, Mercy Corps, Samaritan's Purse and Global Resource Action Center for Environment. The state fund will keep the project alive for up to one year and a half, the report said. The four agencies were also now in talks with DPRK officials concerning their three-year plan to support DPRK medical facilities, said.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("NO VISIT FROM N.KOREA'S NO.2 LEADER THIS YEAR ", 2007/11/20) reported that Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung indicated that a visit to Seoul by the DPRK’s no. 2 leader Kim

Yong-nam, which some had expected, is unlikely to happen this year. The minister also hinted that Seoul has abandoned an "equal distance, equal size" principle for a joint fishing zone to be set up around the Northern Limit Line, the de facto border in the West Sea. Asked if inter-Korean defense ministers' talks slated for Nov. 27-29 in Pyongyang would discuss the fishing zone based on the principle, he said, "The projected zone around the NLL seen from the North would be too close to North Korea's coast."

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL PREFERS CZECH MODEL FOR N.KOREA TO GERMANY'S ", 2007/11/20) reported that Finance and Economy Minister Kwon O-kyu said the ROK should benchmark the Czech model rather than Germany's for the unification of the two Koreas. A Finance and Economy Ministry official said, "After unification, East Germany received huge aid from West Germany. The Czech Republic, however, was successful in adopting a market economic system on its own." It said Kwon prefers the Czech model given the advantage of lesser costs for unification.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("PACKAGE TOURS TO PYONGYANG 'LIKELY IN 2009' ", 2007/11/20) reported that South Koreans may be able to go on package tours to Pyongyang from as early as 2009, while tours to the historic city of Kaesong on the DPRK side of the border will start on Dec. 5. Meeting the press at the DPRK's Mt. Kumgang on Sunday afternoon on the ninth anniversary of tours to the mountain resort, Hyundai Asan CEO Yoon Man-joon said, "We are pushing for tour packages of Mt. Baekdu and Pyongyang. Mt. Baekdu tours will start in May next year." Yoon said Asan has already asked the governments in Seoul and Pyongyang to include Pyongyang as a tourist destination. "We'll focus first on Mt. Baekdu tours as agreed by the leaders of the two Koreas" at their summit in early October. "Then we'll talk to the North about package tours to Pyongyang, depending on how those talks go."

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5. DPRK Leadership

Yonhap ("N. KOREA'S EX-NO. 2 LEADER PROMOTED TO SENIOR POST AFTER YEARS IN SECLUSION: SOURCES", Seoul, 2007/11/21) reported that Jang Song-thaek, the DPRK's former No. 2 leader who was removed from his post in early 2004 following his criticism of the country's economic policy, has been appointed the country's chief internal security supervisor, sources here said Wednesday. The 61-year-old technocrat married Kim Jong-il's younger sister, Kyong-hui, in 1972, and wielded considerable clout until he was reportedly purged three years ago by Kim, who was said to have feel threatened by sympathy for Jang among a large group of officials. The sources suggested that Jang has been reinserted to rein in power enjoyed by Ri Je-gang, who took over Jang's previous position and is said to have augmented his influence following the purported purge three years ago.

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6. DPRK Media Control

The Financial Times (Anna Fifield , "ILLICIT TV GIVES LIE TO KIM'S PARADISE ", 2007/11/20)

reported that watching, copying or distributing ROK films is a political crime and “offenders” make up as many as 10 per cent of inmates in DPRK prisons, according to escapees from the country. To try to keep DPRK isolated from the outside world, Mr Kim’s regime bans anything other than state TV and radio and tries to jam ROK broadcasts. Foreign newspapers are illegal and the internet is simply unavailable to all but a handful of the elite. However, news has seeped around the restriction and into the DPRK for years. North Koreans who have fled the country indicated the flow of information is becoming significantly stronger as economic hardships force Mr Kim’s regime to tolerate more trade with the outside world. The increasing trade between the PRC and DPRK is landing not only clothes and goods in DPRK markets but also DVDs from the ROK and news about vibrant PRC.

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7. DPRK Economy

Newsweek (Christian Caryl, "EVEN HERMITS CAN GET RICH", 2007/11/20) reported that some people in the DPRK are actually getting rich. Reliable statistics are hard to come by, of course, given the obsessive secrecy of the DPRK state. Still, when a ROK university polled 500 defectors from the North in 2005, 58 percent of them said that the biggest change in their home country over the previous three years was the widening gap between rich and poor; another 28 percent cited the increase in personal wealth. Last year the ROK aid organization Good Friends, which boasts a broad range of sources in the DPRK, published a revealing study of its own. It concluded that the DPRK's wealthy now spend 10 times as much on food as those less privileged, live in homes equipped with modern conveniences like refrigerators and washing machines (largely unknown to their countrymen), and can even afford maids and private tutors for their children.

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8. ROK on DPRK Human Rights

Joongang Ilbo (Brian Lee, "SEOUL PONDERS UN RESOLUTION ON NORTH KOREA", 2007/11/20) reported that a vote is expected on a UN General Assembly resolution on DPRK human rights violations Tuesday in New York. Foreign Ministry Spokesman Cho Hee-yong said yesterday that Seoul had yet to decide how it would vote on the sensitive resolution. The dilemma of how to vote on a resolution involving a country with one of the most dismal human rights records in the world, has provoked a debate in the government as the Blue House and the Unification Ministry are arguing that a yes vote could derail sensitive negotiations with the DPRK over denuclearization.

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9. ROK Space Program

Korea Herald (Choi He-suk , "KOREA AIMS TO LAND ON MOON BY 2025 ", 2007/11/20) reported that the Ministry of Science and Technology said yesterday that the government plans to launch a moon landing craft by 2025. The plans to develop and launch space vehicles to explore the moon were included in the space development roadmap released by the Ministry of Science and Technology yesterday. According to the plans, the launch of the moon landing craft will be preceded by the launch of the country's first moon explorer that will orbit the moon in 2020.

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10. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("FUKUDA, WEN SEE STRATEGIC TIES AT TURNING POINT, EYE DEC. CHINA VISIT ", Singapore, 2007/11/20) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and PRC Premier Wen Jiabao agreed in their first bilateral talks Tuesday that the two nations have entered a new stage of deepening strategic ties, with Fukuda eying a PRC visit as early as next month and Wen promising efforts to resolve a long-running gas exploration dispute in the East China Sea. Meeting in Singapore, Fukuda told Wen he hopes to visit the PRC ''if possible by the end of the year, or early next year,'' pending developments in the Japanese parliament which is currently in a political gridlock.

Associated Press (Anita Chang, "CHINA NAVAL SHIP MAKING JAPAN PORT CALL", Beijing, 2007/11/21) reported that a PRC naval ship left Wednesday for a port call to Japan for the first time since World War II. The guided missile destroyer Shenzhen departed from its base in the southern port of Zhanjiang and was scheduled to arrive in Japan next Wednesday for a four-day visit, the Xinhua News Agency reported. The Shenzhen's crew is also scheduled to visit Japan's naval headquarters in Tokyo, and then the ship will make a call at Yokosuka, a port at the entrance to Tokyo Bay which also has the largest U.S. naval base outside the United States.

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11. Sino-Indian Military Exercises

IANS ("INDIA, CHINA WAR GAMES' DATES NEXT WEEK ", New Delhi,) reported that military officers of India and the PRC will meet in Kolkata next week to fix the dates of their first war games to be held in the PRC in December, an official said. 'Military officers from the two countries will meet at (the Indian Army's) Eastern Command headquarters (in Kolkata) next week to fix the dates for the joint drill,' the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The war games will see the participation of about 100 troops from each army and will be conducted in the vicinity of Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province. They have been themed on an 'anti-terror scenario in a mountainous region'.

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12. PRC on US-India Nuclear Deal

Reuters (Y.P. Rajesh, "CHINA SIGNALS SUPPORT FOR INDIA-U.S. NUCLEAR DEAL", New Delhi, 2007/11/21) reported that the PRC has indicated it will not stand in the way of an Indian nuclear energy deal with the United States, the Indian government said on Wednesday. The PRC's comments came at talks between Premier Wen Jiabao and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of the 16-nation East Asia Summit in Singapore

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13. ASEAN-PRC Relations

Bloomberg (Allen T. Cheng, "CHINA VOWS TO STEP UP MILITARY TIES WITH NEIGHBORS ", 2007/11/20) reported that the PRC promised to resolve all disputes over claims for oil and gas in the South China Sea with its Southeast Asian neighbors and to strengthen military ties as part of an effort to accelerate the formation of an economic East Asian Community. The PRC's commitment, made by Premier Wen Jiabao today at a summit of Asian nations being held in Singapore, is a sign that the world's fastest growing major economy is willing to spearhead the building of East Asia into a trading bloc. "We should increase military exchanges and cooperation, pursue institutionalized defense cooperation, strengthen dialogue on defense policy and promote more cooperation between our militaries in non-traditional security areas,'' Wen said in a speech.

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14. PRC on US Security Report

The Associated Press ("CHINA BLASTS US SECURITY REPORT ", Beijing, 2007/11/20) reported that Beijing on Monday attacked a U.S. congressional panel's warning about PRC spying, calling it "brazen interference" in the PRC's internal affairs. The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission said in its annual report to Congress last week that PRC espionage represents the greatest threat to U.S. technology. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao, in a statement posted on the ministry's Web site, said the report "ignores the fact of China's progress in the areas of politics, economics, and society, is rooted in prejudice, and brazenly interferes in China's internal affairs."

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15. PRC Land Rights

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA STATE PRESS SAYS OFFICIALS UNCOVER THOUSANDS OF ILLEGAL LAND GRABS ", Beijing, 2007/11/20) reported that authorities in the PRC have uncovered 32,000 more cases of illegal land grabs during a crackdown on one of the major factors behind rising social unrest across the country, state press reported Tuesday. The amount of land unlawfully seized from its rightful owners totalled 233,000 hectares (575,500 acres), Xinhua news agency cited the Minister of Land and Resources, Xu Shaoshi, as saying on Monday. The seizures reflect a widespread problem that sees local government authorities collude with businessmen to force people off their property to make way for lucrative developments.

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16. PRC Space Program

The Associated Press ("CHINA MANNED MISSION TO FOLLOW OLYMPICS ", Beijing, 2007/11/20) reported that the PRC will launch its third manned space mission after next year's Beijing Olympics, a newspaper reported Tuesday. The Shenzhou 7 launch is on track for October 2008, the China Daily newspaper said on its Web site, citing Pang Zhihao, a researcher with the China Academy of Space Technology. The trip is to carry three astronauts and will feature the PRC's first space walk.

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II. ROK Report

17. DPRK Human Rights

DongA Ilbo (Ha Tea-won, "ABSTAINING FROM VOTING ON THE DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS RESOLUTION", Seoul, 2007/11/21) reported that the ROK government decided to abstain from voting for the DPRK human rights resolution at the U.N general assembly on Wednesday. The ROK supported it last year for the first time after the government had abstained from voting on it for three years. However, one ROK government official said, "Considering the special circumstances which the two Koreas face, the ROK decided to abstain." The two Koreas promised not to interfere in each other's domestic affairs at the inter-Korean summit meeting last month.

Yon-hap News ("THE ABSTENTION WOULD BRING CONTROVERSY", Seoul, 2007/11/21) wrote that the the ROK government's decision not to vote for the DPRK human rights resolution is going to spark numerous controversies. Even though it could be a strategic decision based on the circumstances the two Koreas have faced, ignoring human rights will be criticized harshly. Also, the ROK government is showing policy consistency because it has changed the position just in one year from approval to abstention.

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