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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK on Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA SNUBS SEOUL'S DENIAL OF ITS NUCLEAR STATUS ", Seoul, 2008/12/23) reported that the DPRK renewed its claim that it is already a nuclear power, snubbing the ROK's denial of the status as a useless attempt to change the reality. Seoul maintains that the DPRK will never be recognized as a nuclear state, as the term only refers to nations who already possessed nuclear capabilities when the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was adopted in 1970. "The fact that the U.S. announced our republic as a nuclear power reflected the irrefutable reality. The color red cannot become black even if the color blind say it's black," the DPRK's commentary said.

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2. EU on DPRK Nuclear Program

Xinhua News ("EU REITERATES SUPPORT TO SIX-PARTY TALKS ON DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUE ", Brussels, 2008/12/23) reported that the European Union (EU) reiterated its support to the six-party talks. The EU also repeated its position that its aim remains the complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantling of the DPRK nuclear programs in order to achieve a verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and maintain peace and stability on the peninsula and in northeast Asia.

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3. DPRK Relations with the US, ROK

Xinhua News ("DPRK WARNS OF "KOREAN-STYLE PREEMPTIVE ATTACK" AGAINST U.S., S KOREA ", Pyongyang, 2008/12/23) reported that the DPRK will counter the US and ROK with "a more rapid and powerful advanced preemptive strike in the Korean style," a senior DPRK official said. "A grave situation is prevailing on the Korean Peninsula" due to the US hostile policy and its frantic moves to wage a war of aggression against the DPRK, the official KCNA news agency quoted Kim Il Chol, minister of the People's Armed Forces, as saying. The "Korean-style preemptive attack" will be more powerful than nuclear weapons, reduce everything "treacherous and anti-reunification" to debris and build an independent reunified country on it, he said.

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4. US Food Aid to the DPRK

Yonhap News (Hwang Doo-hyong, "U.S. TO SHIP 21,000 TONS IN FOOD AID TO N. KOREA BY YEAR-END: STATE DEPT.", Washington, 2008/12/23) reported that the US said it will ship 21,000 tons of food aid to the DPRK by the end of the year as part of 500,000 tons in humanitarian aid promised earlier this year. "Our humanitarian program will continue," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said. "The 21,000 metric tons will arrive at the end of this month." McCormack said the food aid will be delivered through the World Food Program and other nongovernmental organizations.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Agence France Press ("DPRK CALLS ROK'S MINISTER LUNATIC", Seoul, 2008/12/23) reported that DPRK Tuesday upbraided ROK Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong. "The hooligans of Lee Myung-bak are with no exception confrontational fanatics with their bones filled with hostility against their brethren. Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong is their leader," said the paper, monitored by Seoul's Yonhap news agency. "The people around the traitor Lee Myung-bak are crowded with lunatics mad for blood and extreme hostility toward their own brethren."

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6. DPRK Leadership

Yonhap (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA SAYS LEADER INCREASED PUBLIC APPEARANCES IN 2008 AMID HEALTH RUMORS", Seoul, 2008/12/24) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il made a total of 91 public appearances this year as of Wednesday, slightly up from the 86 appearances he made in 2007, according to monitored reports from the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). "He has continued on-the-spot guidance without interruption defying the intense cold of the midwinter and the blazing sunlight and rainy days of midsummer," the KCNA said on Tuesday.

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7. ROK-US Military Cooperation

Yonhap News Service (Lee Chi-dong, "ROK TO PAY 760 BILLION WON FOR U.S. TROOPS IN 2009", 2008/12/23) reported that ROK will pay 760 billion won (US\$571 million) for the stationing of 28,500 American troops here next year under a new deal on their defense cost sharing, the foreign ministry said Tuesday. The agreement, reached after five rounds of talks since July, calls for ROK to increase its share each year until 2013, in accordance with the consumer price index.

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8. ROK Defense

Korea Herald ("ROK REMAINS 5TH BIGGEST BUYER OF U.S. DEFENSE GOODS: REPORT ", 2008/12/23) reported that ROK was the fifth biggest client of U.S. defense goods on a government-to-government contact basis in 2007, Yonhap News Agency reported citing a congressional report. ROK purchased \$1 billion worth of defense products from the U.S. last year, according to a Congressional Research Service report, "U.S. Arms Sales: Agreements with and Deliveries to Major clients 2000-2007," released on Nov. 26. ROK follows Israel (\$1.4 billion), Poland (\$1.3 billion), Egypt (\$1.2 billion) and Saudi Arabia (\$1 billion), the report said.

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9. ROK Military Service

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "SKOREA STALLS ON ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY SERVICE", Seoul, 2008/12/24) reported that the ROK is not ready to allow conscientious objectors to perform a humanitarian alternative to compulsory military service because the public does not like the idea, the Defense Ministry said Wednesday. A survey commissioned by the Defense Ministry and conducted by an independent polling company last month found that 68 percent of respondents oppose the introduction of an alternative system.

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10. ROK Climate Change

Chosun Ilbo (Yi So-yeon, "ROK ASTRONAUT NAMED CLIMATE CHANGE SPOKESWOMAN", 2008/12/22) reported that ROK's first astronaut Yi So-yeon will act as public relations ambassador for a global warming and climate change campaign. The Ministry of Environment on Sunday said Yi was appointed because she has been vocal in calling for preventing global warming by reducing greenhouse gases in daily life. She will appear in online video clips to promote climate change policies and give lectures on climate change to university students.

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11. Japanese Politics

Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "JAPAN'S PM SAYS HE IS NOT PLANNING SNAP ELECTION", Tokyo, 2008/12/24) reported that Japan's Prime Minister Taro Aso said Wednesday he would not call a snap election despite opposition demands. Aso said that it was not the right time to call elections as he needs to monitor the economy to make sure it does not weaken further. "We are not in a situation in which we can discuss such things," he said at a news conference.

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12. Japanese Military Deployments

Associated Press ("JAPAN MULLS SENDING SHIPS TO SOMALIA COAST", Tokyo, 2008/12/24) reported that Japan is considering sending military ships to fight pirates off the coast of Somalia, officials said Wednesday. "We have to do something against pirates. We are considering various options, including sending Self-Defense Force ships or patrol vessels," said Foreign Ministry official Mitsuhiro Kobayashi.

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13. Japan Environment

Auto Central ("HONDA'S HYDROGEN CAR NOW LEASING IN JAPAN", 2008/12/23) reported that following its successful launch in the US, Honda has begun leasing the Honda FCX Clarity fuel cell car in Japan, delivering the first vehicle to the Ministry of the Environment. While Honda plans to lease the FCX Clarity to government agencies and selected corporate entities, the roll out is part of the company's broader commitment to lease the FCX Clarity to at least 200 customers in the United States and Japan over the next three years.

Jakarta Post (Evi Mariani, "JAPAN, A FIRM BELIEVER IN GOING GREEN", 2008/12/23) reported that Japan is going green. Both the public and private sectors are working to develop environmentally friendly practices. They clean the air and the rivers, reduce, reuse and recycle waste, plant more greenery, reduce fossil-based energy use and create innovations that make their job easier. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government (TMG) is part of this effort. "Addressing climate change impact is our top priority. We want Tokyo to be a city with a lot of greenery," said Yasuhiro Nomura, Director for Public Relations of Environmental Policy Division at the TMG. TMG wants to host the 2016 Olympics. It still has eight years to go -- not to build megaprojects like China did -- but to make Tokyo an "exemplary city which highlights the environment".

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14. Cross Strait Relations

BBC News ("CHINESE PANDAS ARRIVE IN TAIWAN", 2008/12/23) reported that two giant pandas have arrived in Taiwan from the PRC, a gift from Beijing to a self-governing island it considers part of PRC territory. together their names (Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan) mean reunion, underscoring hopes that their arrival in Taiwan will spur unity between the two sides. But the gesture is not welcomed by everyone in Taiwan.

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15. PRC Military

Associated Press ("PRC TO CONSIDER BUILDING AIRCRAFT CARRIER", Beijing, 2008/12/23) reported that PRC will "seriously consider" building its first aircraft carrier, the Ministry of National Defense said Tuesday in another sign of Beijing's expanding military ambitions. An aircraft carrier is "a symbol of a country's overall national strength as well as the competitiveness of the country's naval force," said ministry spokesman Senior Col. Huang Xueping. He said PRC must ensure its maritime security and sovereignty but gave no timetable for launching such a vessel.

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16. Sino-US Trade Relations

Associated Press ("PRC URGES US TO PREVENT TRADE PROTECTIONISM", Beijing, 2008/12/23) reported that PRC and the U.S. should combat protectionism as the global economic crisis worsens, Beijing said Tuesday, in response to a trade case by Washington that accuses PRC of unfairly promoting goods for export. "Under the current circumstances with the deteriorating financial crisis, we should be alert to trade protectionism in any forms," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said at a news briefing.

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17. PRC Government

Agence France Press ("PRC TO MAKE MILLIONS MORE ELIGIBLE FOR POOR RELIEF ", Beijing, 2008/12/23) reported that the number of PRC residents eligible for special poor relief will triple to more than 43 million people after the government raises the official poverty line in 2009, state media reported Tuesday. Currently, 14.8 million Chinese are considered to earn below the poverty line, set at CNY785 (\$115) a year, but that number will soar once the government hikes the threshold to about CNY1,100. Raising the poverty line means more people will be covered by PRC's poverty relief schemes, according to the report. Liu Fuhe, a senior official with the poverty alleviation office under the State Council said PRC's poverty population probably exceeded one hundred million according to the World Bank's definition of extreme poverty - living on less than \$1 per day.

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18. PRC Development

China Daily ("MOVE TO MINIMIZE DISPUTES OVER LAND USE", 2008/12/23) reported that the PRC's first draft law on arbitration of disputes over land-use rights was tabled at a six-day, bi-monthly session of the National People's Congress (NPC) yesterday. The draft, submitted for first reading, says arbitration should be completed within five working days and proceedings of a case ought to end within 60 days. At least half of the arbitrators in a tribunal should be farmers or lawyers, and the rest, government representatives.

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19. PRC Unrest

The Financial Times (Jamil Anderlini, "CHINA BATTLES UNEMPLOYMENT TO DETER UNREST", Beijing, 2008/12/23) reported that tackling unemployment among university graduates will be the PRC's priority next year as the economy falters, Wen Jiabao, the prime minister, said at the weekend. The attention given by state media to Mr Wen's visit to a Beijing university was the latest sign of the government's increasing fear of widespread unrest as growth declines much faster than expected. "We have made finding jobs for university students our top priority and will come out with some measures to make sure all graduates have somewhere constructive to direct their energy," Mr Wen told students at the Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

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20. PRC Energy Supply

CCTV.com ("POWER CONSTRUCTION FAVORS NEW ENERGY", 2008/12/23) reported that the government is planning a massive investment in the construction of power facilities next year. Over half of the money is to be spent on building new energy projects, such as nuclear and wind power stations. Last year, investment in the nuclear power sector only took up less than five percent of the overall investment in power facilities, while wind power received a slightly higher share. The figures are expected to rise sharply next year, with both nuclear and wind power nearing a 15 percent share in the total investment in the power sector.

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21. PRC Environment

Agence France Press ("ADB LENDS 200 MLN DLRS TO PRC FOR RIVER BASIN POLLUTION PROJECT", Manila, 2008/12/23) reported that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said Tuesday it would lend 200 million dollars to China for a project to reduce pollution in the country's third largest river basin. The loan will go to clean up the Songhua River basin, improving the water supply and treatment of waste water and solid waste for 9.4 million residents. "Songhua River is heavily contaminated with chemicals, heavy metals, and other pollutants, with untreated wastewater being discharged directly into the river and its tributaries, posing a serious threat to public health," the ADB added.

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22. PRC Earthquake Reconstruction

Xinhua ("PRC REBUILDS 200,000 HOUSES FOR RURAL FAMILIES IN NORTHWESTERN QUAKE ZONE", Lanzhou, 2008/12/23) reported that Northwest PRCs Gansu Province has rebuilt houses for more than 200,000 rural families whose residences were destroyed by the May 12 earthquake, provincial governor Xu Shousheng said Tuesday. Another 85,000 homes are under reconstruction in the countryside. In addition, among 340,000 rural families whose houses were damaged, about 84 percent have been repaired and consolidated, he said. "We have also built prefab homes and provided cotton-padded tents for the rural residents to enable them to pass the winter safely," he said. "We are also stepping up efforts to rebuild infrastructure facilities, such as road, power, communication, water, school and hospital," he added.

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23. PRC Human Rights

New York Times (Edward Wong, "PETITION URGES PRC TO FREE DISSIDENT", Beijing, 2008/12/23) reported that more than 160 prominent writers, scholars and human rights advocates outside mainland PRC have signed an open letter to President Hu Jintao asking him to release a well-known intellectual and dissident who was detained this month. The letter was posted on the Internet on Tuesday. The letter to Mr. Hu indicates that the case of the intellectual, Liu Xiaobo — one of the driving forces behind a bold manifesto demanding democratic reforms that has received worldwide attention — is quickly turning into the latest human rights cause célèbre in PRC.

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24. PRC Space Program

Xinhua News ("CHINA TO LAUNCH NEW GEOSTATIONARY WEATHER SATELLITE ", Beijing, 2008/12/23) reported that the PRC is scheduled to launch its third geostationary meteorological satellite, the Fengyun-2-06, announced sources with the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in southwestern Sichuan Province Tuesday. It is designed to replace Fengyun-2-C, which has outlived its service. The PRC launched two satellites Fengyun-2-C and Fengyun-2-D in 2004 and 2006 respectively for meteorological observation. Both captured high-quality data for weather forecasting, climate change prediction and natural disaster supervision.

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25. Russia Missile Program

RIA Novosti ("TEST LAUNCH OF RUSSIAN BULAVA ICBM UNSUCCESSFUL-DEFENSE OFFICIAL", Severodvinsk, 2008/12/23) reported that the test launch of a Bulava intercontinental ballistic missile, capable of breaching anti-missile defense systems, from a submarine was unsuccessful, a source at the Belomorsk naval base said on Tuesday. The submerged launch took place from the Dmitry Donskoi strategic nuclear-powered submarine in the White Sea, off Russia's northwest coast,

targeting the Kura firing ground in Kamchatka, the Far East. "The launch was a failure," the official said. "The crew performed well. The missile left the tube, but went off course due to a malfunction after the first stage separation."

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II. PRC Report

26. PRC Environment

Xinhua Net (Sun Yubo, "CHINA TO INVEST OVER TEN BILLION YUAN ON WATER POLLUTION CONTROL", 2008/12/22) reported that according to PRC Ministry of Housing and Rural-Urban Construction, the nation's 11th five-year plan of water pollution control and governance has been authorized. In accordance with the plan, the total investing fund is 11.266 billion yuan. The PRC has increased the investment on comprehensive technology research and demonstration of water pollution control, focusing on the areas of Huaihe river, Haihe river, Liaohe river, Taihu lake, Chaohu lake, Dianchi lake, Songhuajiang river, and Three Gorges reservoir.

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27. PRC Civil Society and the 512 Earthquake

Gansu Economic Daily (Wang Yao, "GANSU CHARITY FEDERATION PUT 50 MILLION YUAN ON EARTHQUAKE RECONSTRUCTION", 2008/12/22) reported that Gansu Charity Federation plans to put 50 million to construct 100 nursing homes at the earthquake disaster areas. Each of the nursing home will be full-equipped and can accommodate at least 30 elder people. After the 512 Earthquake, Gansu Charity Federation has received donation fund of over 70 million yuan. According to the wish of most donors, the Federation decided to put the fund on the construction of nursing home.

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28. PRC Civil Society

Xinhua Net (Tanhao, "ALL CHINA PATENT ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION BECOMES PERMANENT OBSERVER OF WIPO", 2008/12/22) reported that just before the 20th founding anniversary of All China Patent Attorneys Association, over 5000 patent attorneys received a big present: as a notional NGO, All China Patent Attorneys Association has been absorbed by World Intellectual Property Organization as a permanent observer. This plays a positive role for the PRC's patent agency service to go into international society and integrate into the globalization process of intellectual property.

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III. NAPSNet Schedule

29. NAPSNet Schedule

("HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM THE NAUTILUS INSTITUTE", 2008/12/24) The Nautilus Institute will be closed until January 2nd, 2009 in observance of the Winter Holidays in the United States. The next NAPSNet will be published on the 2nd of January, 2009.

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