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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Associated Press (Hyung-Jin Kim, "OFFICIAL: NKOREAN NUKE DISABLEMENT CLOSE ", Seoul, 2007/10/24) reported that the DPRK will likely begin disabling its main nuclear facilities around the middle of next month, a ROK official said. "It's expected that a disablement implementation team will go to the North on Nov. 1 with actual disablement (beginning) in mid-November," Baek Jong-chun, senior presidential security adviser, said at a forum in Seoul. Baek's comments came two days after the ROK's Yonhap news agency quoted an official, whom it did not identify, as saying the DPRK could start disabling the facilities as early as next week.

Yonhap ("OTHER COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN N.K. DISABLEMENT TASK: U.S. ENVOY", Washington, 2007/10/24) reported that the US hopes other countries involved in the six-party denuclearization talks would also participate in disabling the DPRK's nuclear facilities starting next month, its top nuclear envoy said. Christopher Hill, assistant secretary of state, said he expects the disablement phase to begin Nov. 1. "We discussed the participation of not only the U.S., but also other members of the six-party process in the disablement phase," he told reporters after talks with his Japanese counterpart, Kenichiro Sasae.

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2. US on Korean War Peace Treaty

The Korea Times ("US SAYS 4 PARTIES, INCLUDING CHINA, SHOULD SIGN KOREAN PEACE TREATY", Washington, 2007/10/24) reported that the United States envisions a Korean peace treaty signed by four nations, including the PRC, that would formally end the war fought a half-century ago, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte said. "Clearly, the two most important parties are North and South Korea," he said in a luncheon address at the American Enterprise Institute. "But both China and the United States were involved in that conflict...And therefore, we think it would make sense for the four parties to discuss the ultimate peace arrangement in the Korean Peninsula," he said.

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3. DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("N. KOREA SLAMS JAPAN'S EXTENSION OF SANCTIONS", Beijing, 2007/10/24) reported that the DPRK's official media severely criticized Japan's recent extension of sanctions against the country, and urged the Japanese government under new Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to stop what it called a ''reckless farce.'' The extension of sanctions is ''a vivid manifestation'' of Japan's ''hostile policy'' against the DPRK, said a commentary by the Rodong Sinmun, a newspaper of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea, carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

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4. DPRK-Syrian Relations

The Financial Times (Julien Barnes-Dacey, "PYONGYANG CEMENTS TIES WITH SYRIA", Damascus, 2007/10/24) reported that a high-ranking DPRK official has concluded a visit to Syria just weeks after allegations of nuclear co-operation between the two countries emerged following the September 6 Israeli air strike on Syrian territory. Choe Thae Bok, the speaker of the DPRK's parliament, was in Damascus for high-level talks with Syrian officials including President Bashar al-Assad. Discussions focused on "relations of co-operation and friendship between the two countries", according to the Syrian News Agency.

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5. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("UNEMPLOYMENT GROWS AS DPRK BUSINESSES REJECT HIRING REGULATIONS", 2007/10/24) reported that DPRK authorities are quick to stress that not one single unemployed worker can be found in the DPRK. The truth is, however, unemployment has existed in the past, and now out-of-work laborers are taking on a new form. With the exception of a small minority, most citizens are assigned professions and dispatched to their place of employment by DPRK authorities with no regard to personal aptitude or skills. This has led to the refusal of some to take assignments in mines, shipyards, and other undesirable factories, creating a group of 'non-workers'.

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6. US on PRC Policy toward DPRK Refugees

Joongang Ilbo ("CHINA URGED NOT TO SEND NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES BACK", Washington, 2007/10/24) reported that a US House committee passed a resolution Tuesday calling on the PRC government to immediately stop forcibly sending DPRK refugees back and, instead, help them seek asylum. Submitted by Rep. Ed Royce (R-California), the resolution presented on Oct. 15 urges Beijing to honor its obligations under the UN Convention relating to the status of refugees. The obligations which apply to the PRC include halting the forced repatriation of DPRK refugees, who face persecution if they are returned, and making genuine efforts to identify and protect the refugees, including giving them the chance to request asylum.

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7. ROK on Iraq Role

Chosun Ilbo ("TROOPS IN IRAQ WILL HELP KOREA-U.S. COOPERATION: ROH", 2007/10/24) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun on Tuesday confirmed the government decided to reduce Korean troops in Iraq from 1,200 to 600 by year's end but extend their mandate for another year. In a statement on the issue, Roh touched on the progress of the six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear problem, development in the inter-Korean relations, and efforts to improve Pyongyang-Washington relations. "at this time we need close cooperation between South Korea and the U.S. more than ever before." He also cited a growing possibility of winning economic benefits in Iraq.

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8. US-ROK Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. CONGRESS TO APPROVE FTA WITH KOREA 'IN 2008'", 2007/10/24) reported that the ROK's ambassador to Washington Lee Tae-sik believes the free trade agreement between the ROK and the US will be ratified sometime next year. Ambassador Lee expects the U.S. Congress to first ratify FTAs with Peru, Columbia and Panama before the year's end and then focus on the pact with the ROK in 2008. The delayed settlement of the American beef issue between Seoul and Washington is reportedly the reason for this outlook.

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9. ROK Politics

Chosun Ilbo ("NO REASON TO DELAY KIM EXTRADITION: LA PROSECUTORS ", 2007/10/24) reported that Los Angeles prosecutors say there is no reason to delay the extradition of Kim Kyung-jun, the ex-chief of the investment firm BBK linked to Grand National party presidential candidate Lee Myung-bak, who is in an LA jail. Lee’s legal representative, Kim Baek-joon, on Oct. 19 lodged a motion to delay the extradition. A senior LA prosecutor told the Chosun Ilbo over the phone on Monday that his office told the court there was no legal basis for Lee’s lawyer to intervene in procedures for the extradition, and that Kim must be deported to the ROK in accordance with a bilateral extradition treaty.

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10. ROK on Kim Dae Jung Abduction

The Asahi Shimbun (Yoshihiro Makino, "S. KOREA ADMITS KIM ABDUCTION ROLE", Seoul, 2007/10/25) reported that the ROK admitted that its spy agency carried out the brazen 1973 abduction from Tokyo of Kim Dae Jung, the pro-democracy leader who went on to become president and win the Nobel Peace Prize in 2000. A government-commissioned panel investigating the incident also concluded it must have had the implied approval of then authoritarian ruler Park Chung Hee although it said there was no direct evidence linking him to it. It is the first time Seoul has admitted to its involvement in Kim's abduction from a Tokyo hotel in broad daylight, which occurred two years

after Kim narrowly lost the presidential election to Park.

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11. US on Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Agence France-Presse (Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura, "US ASKS JAPAN TO KEEP INDIAN OCEAN MISSION ", Tokyo, 2007/10/24) reported that the US ambassador here called on Japan to maintain support for forces in Afghanistan, saying that ending the mission would hurt its alliance with Washington and send a bad message to the world. "If the mission stops, the impact on our bilateral relationship would be regrettable. It will be hard to make an argument that it's strengthened," US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer told reporters. "If Japan stopped doing this on a permanent basis, it would be sending a very bad message to the rest of the international community and to terrorists, because I think that it would be saying that Japan is opting out of the war on terror."

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12. Sino-Russian Relations

Itar-Tass ("RUSSIA HAS NO PLANS FOR MILITARY ALLIANCE WITH CHINA,INDIA", Harbin, 2007/10/24) reported that Russia has no plans for creating a military alliance with the PRC and India, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said after a meeting with his Chinese and Indian counterparts in Harbin. “We have no plans for creating a military alliance. We advance cooperation in the bilateral format, in the trilateral format, within the SCO framework and in other structures. We also seek to resolve key security issues through multi-lateral discussions by politicians in a diplomatic way,” Lavrov said.

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13. PRC Space Program

The Washington Post (Edward Cody, "CHINA LAUNCHES LUNAR PROBE", Beijing, 2007/10/24) reported that the PRC sent a satellite rocketing toward lunar orbit, the latest step in an ambitious national program to shoot more astronauts into space, build a space station and eventually land PRC astronauts on the moon. The satellite, called Chang'e after a goddess who flew to the moon in Chinese legend, was lifted into space atop a white-painted Long March 3A rocket that blasted off at 6:05 p.m. local time (6:05 a.m. in Washington) from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province in central PRC. The China National Space Administration said Chang'e was scheduled to enter a lunar orbit Nov. 5 and send back images and analyses of the moon's surface for about a year.

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14. PRC Environment

The New York Times (Keith Bradsher, "CHINA’S GREEN ENERGY GAP", Boxing, 2007/10/24) reported that coal-fired plants are quick and cheap to build and easy to run. While the PRC government has set goals for increasing the use of a long list of alternative energies — including

wind, biomass, hydroelectric, solar and nuclear — they all face obstacles, from bureaucracy to bottlenecks in manufacturing. The PRC built 114,000 megawatts of fossil-fuel-based generating capacity last year alone, almost all coal-fired, and is on course to complete 95,000 megawatts more this year.

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II. ROK Report

15. Inter-Korean Summit Agreements

Kyungyang Shinmun ("THE DECLARATION OF THE INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT SHOULD BE REPORTED TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY", Seoul, 2007/10/25) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun declared yesterday that he would not report the declaration of the second summit to the National Assembly. Although it is not constitutionally required for him to do so, reporting to the National Assembly is desirable because the contents of the declaration include large-scale projects like the construction of the economic special zone. It is recommended to report the contents to ensure the future.

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16. Korean Peninsula Peace Accord

Chosun Ilbo ("SILLY TALK ON THE DECLARATION FOR ENDING THE KOREAN WAR", Seoul, 2007/10/25) criticized the comment by National Security Advisor Baik Jong-cheon that, "The declaration for ending the Korean War means the start of peace regime on the Korean Peninsula." The Ministry of Foreign Affairs already mentioned that the declaration should be the last step of the negotiation for the peace regime. The declaration for ending the Korean War is possible only after the resolution of the DPRK nuclear issue, and the term of President Roh should not effect on it at all.

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17. DPRK-Vietnam Relations

Kookmin Ilbo ("THE DPRK LEARNS VIETNAM", Seoul, 2007/10/25) reported that the DPRK is quickly trying to learn the lessons from Vietnam. The fact that the leaders of the two countries have visited each other within ten days is enough to draw our attention. First of all, we can guess that the DPRK has started to study the development model of Vietnam. It would be more appropriate for DPRK to follow the track of Vietnam because it is gradual economic reform, rather than the PRC's model, which DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il once criticized.

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