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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. IAEA on DPRK Nuclear Program

Associated Press ("IAEA CHIEF URGES DPRK TO RETURN TO NPT SOON", New York, 2008/10/27) reported that International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei urged the DPRK on Monday to return to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty at an early time. He made the appeal in the agency's annual report on its activities to the U.N . General Assembly "I naturally still hope that conditions can be created for the DPRK to return to the NPT soon and for the resumption of the agency of comprehensive safeguards," ElBaradei said.

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2. EU Energy Aid to the DPRK

JoongAng Ilbo ("EUROPE PREPARES AID FOR PYONGYANG", 2008/10/27) reported that the European Union will give economic aid to the DPRK if Pyongyang observes a verification protocol for its nuclear declaration, the EU Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula said.

“The European Union expects positive results from the six-party talks aimed to denuclearize North Korea and we will fully support the denuclearization process and the related inter-Korean dialogue as a neutral partner,” Hubert Pirker, leader of the EU delegation, said in a press conference held yesterday at the Lotte Hotel in downtown Seoul.

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3. DPRK Leadership

Agence France-Presse (Hiroshi Hiyama , "DPRK'S KIM JONG IL SICK BUT IN CONTROL: JAPAN", Tokyo, 2008/10/28) reported that Japan's prime minister said on Tuesday that DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il is likely in hospital but able to make decisions. "Anyway, his condition isn't good. But we don't think that he's in a state where he's incapable of making any decisions at all," Aso said. "Although not completely fit, he appears well enough to perform his daily duties," ROK National Intelligence Service director Kim Sung-Ho was quoted by a legislator as telling a closed-door parliamentary session.

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4. US-DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("U.S. PROPOSES ACTION PLAN IN CASE OF N. KOREA COLLAPSE: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/10/27) reported that the United States has proposed setting up a detailed action plan in case of the collapse of the DPRK, Yonhap News Agency reported. The proposal was made at a meeting on Oct. 16 in Washington between the heads of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the ROK and the US, known as the Military Committee Meeting, Yonhap quoted a source as saying.

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5. Inter-Korea Relations

Yonhap News Agency ("LEFT-WINGERS TO HEAD TO PYONGYANG", 2008/10/28) reported that ROK’s Democratic Labor Party will visit Pyongyang next month to discuss ways of thawing inter-Korean ties, officials said Tuesday. The DLP had initially intended to make a visit in August, but was forbidden by the ROK government. The planned trip, which is the third since the party’s establishment in 2000, comes at the request of DPRK’s Social Democratic Party, which invited the DLP for the first time in 2005. “About 25 legislators and party officials, including Chairman Kang Ki-kab, will visit Pyongyang from Nov. 15 through Nov. 19,” a party official said.

Reuters (Jack Kim, Kim Junghyun, "DPRK THREATENS TO REDUCE ROK TO DEBRIS", Seoul, 2008/10/28) reported that the DPRK's military threatened on Tuesday to reduce the ROK to rubble unless Seoul stops civic groups from sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets into the country. "We clarify our stand that should the ROK puppet authorities continue scattering leaflets and conducting a smear campaign with sheer fabrications, our army will take a resolute practical action as we have already warned," the official KCNA news agency quoted the military spokesman as saying."The puppet authorities had better bear in mind that the advanced pre-emptive strike of our own style will reduce everything opposed to the nation and reunification to debris, not just setting them on fire," the spokesman said.

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, Hyung-Jin Kim , "DPRK SOLDIER DEFECTS TO ROK THROUGH DMZ", Seoul, 2008/10/28) reported that a DPRK soldier has defected to ROK through the DMZ, an official from the ROK's spy agency said Tuesday, in only the second such defection in a decade. The soldier recently approached an ROK guard post in a central part of the Demilitarized Zone asking for asylum in the ROK, the NIS official said. The soldier told ROK officials he was frustrated by life in DPRK and concerned about his future.

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6. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap News (Shim Sun-ah, "N. KOREA INTENSIFIES CONTROL OF S. KOREAN DAILIES SENT TO KAESONG", Seoul, 2008/10/27) reported that the DPRK has begun to more harshly censor ROK newspapers subscribed to by firms operating in the inter-Korean Kaesong industrial complex, apparently to prevent workers there from reading reports on their leader Kim Jong-il's health, officials said. "The North began to allow South Korean dailies to pass through customs only after cutting out articles critical of the country as of Oct. 20," a Unification Ministry official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

The Korea Times (Kim Sue-young , "INTER-KOREAN BUSINESS PROCEDURES SIMPLIFIED", 2008/10/27) reported that the ROK government abolished a system under which companies must receive a permit to do business in the DPRK. As a result, companies would see simplified procedures when they start inter-Korean projects.

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7. Inter-Korean Environmental Cooperation

Yonhap News Agency (Yoo Cheong-mo, "LEE PROPOSES INTER-KOREAN ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION ", Seoul, 2008/10/28) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak said Tuesday that he is ready to cooperate with DPRK in protecting wetlands and forests on the Korean Peninsula. "South and North Korea will be able to conduct a joint probe into the ecosystem of the Korean Peninsula if they agree on the need to protect forests and wetlands in the North," Lee said in an address to the 10th meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Ramsar Convention. "We're willing to push for various environmental cooperation projects with North Korea. We wish such an effort would lead to the unification of the two Koreas' ecosystems, paving the ground for a 'healthy' Korean Peninsula," he said.

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8. Sino-DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("DPRK RULING PARTY DELEGATION ARRIVES IN PRC", Beijing, 2008/10/28) reported that a delegation of the DPRK's Workers' Party arrived in Beijing on Tuesday. The delegation led by Ri Sung Ho, vice director of the party's department that supervises police, judges and prosecutors, held talks with Chinese Communist Party officials following their arrival.

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9. ROK-Africa Trade

JoonAng Daily (Lee Ho-jeong, "ROK-AFRICA MEETING TO START TODAY", 2008/10/28) reported that a three-day ministerial-level economic conference between the ROK government and African countries will begin today in Seoul. The ROK administration expects the Korea-Africa Economic Cooperation Conference (Koafec) to provide an opportunity to get access to Africa's abundant natural resources as competition over natural resources heats up around the world. Under the title "Fostering synergy between Korea and Africa," the conference will see Korea and African ministers discussing economic cooperation in the energy and IT industries, strengthening human networks and aid to ROK companies advancing into the African market.

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10. ROK-EU Trade

Yonhap News Agency (Lee Chi-dong, "ROK, EU LIKELY TO SIGN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT THIS YEAR: EU OFFICIAL ", Seoul, 2008/10/28) reported that ROK and the European Union (EU) are expected to reach a free trade agreement (FTA) within the year, as the two sides have narrowed differences on all major sticking points, Hubert Pirker, chairman of the European Parliament's foreign affairs committee said Tuesday. "We have had clear information (from the ROK) that we will come to an end to the free trade agreement before the end of 2008," Pirker told a press conference here. "We have compromises in all the key issues. Some small points should be solved on a technical level during the next weeks. So we can be really optimistic of the free trade agreement."

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11. Japan, DPRK, PRC Freedom of Press

Mainichi Daily Times Japan ("JAPAN CLIMBS TO 29TH ON 2008 PRESS FREEDOM INDEX", Paris, 2008/10/28) reported that Japan ranked 29th in terms of press freedom in this year's index released by Reporters Without Borders, eight spots higher than its position last year. DPRK ranked second to last, repeating its position from last year. China ranked 167th. The report said China "continues to have a low ranking despite the efforts of many news media to elude the straightjacket of censorship and police controls," adding that arrests and cases of news surveillance and control were still high. Asia representative for Reporters Without Borders, Vincent Brossel, said that Japan had too many press clubs, and it has been difficult for small media outlets to gain access to report on the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit. He added that attacks against reporters by right-wing groups had decreased, and noted the arrest of a person suspected of an arson attack on a newspaper.

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12. Japan SDF Afghanistan Role

Kyodo News ("ASO NEGATIVE ABOUT SDF DISPATCH TO AFGHANISTAN", Tokyo, 2008/10/27) reported that Prime Minister Taro Aso struck a negative note on a possible dispatch of Japan's Self-Defense Forces to Afghanistan, citing legal restrictions on their activities in the event of conflict overseas. ''We cannot dismiss the possibility that the SDF could be sucked into warfare. There are

differences of opinion on whether the Constitution allows us to fight back by firing guns,'' Aso told a House of Councillors committee session.

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13. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("SURVEY: 57% SAY EARLY ELECTION NOT NEEDED", 2008/10/27) reported that more than half of voters feel an early Lower House election is unnecessary, as concerns seem more focused on dealing with the global financial crisis, an Asahi Shimbun survey showed. According to the survey on randomly selected voters conducted by phone on Saturday and Sunday, 57 percent said the Lower House does not have to be dissolved soon for a snap election, while only 33 percent said it should be.

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14. Japan-US Relations

Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "JAPAN NAVY OFFICER CONVICTED IN DATA LEAK SCANDAL", Tokyo, 2008/10/28) reported that a Japanese court on Tuesday convicted Sumitaka Matsuuchi, a 35-year-old lieutenant commander in the Maritime Self-Defense Force, of leaking classified U.S.-developed missile technology data, sentencing him to a 2 1/2 years prison term, court spokeswoman Yoshie Ueki said. The sentence was suspended, and Matsuuchi was placed on four years of probation. Matsuuchi was found guilty of leaking the data to an instructor at a Japanese naval academy in western Japan in 2002, in violation of a Japan-U.S. security pact.

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15. Sino-Russian Energy Trade

Agence France-Presse (Dario Thuburn, "RUSSIA, PRC SIGN LANDMARK OIL PIPELINE DEAL", Moscow, 2008/10/28) reported that Russia and PRC on Tuesday signed a deal to build an oil pipeline from Siberia to the PRC after talks between Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The pipeline would have a capacity of 15 million tons of oil per year and would be a branch of the main East Siberia-Pacific Ocean trunk pipeline, which is still under construction, officials said. Russian newspapers on Tuesday also reported that talks were underway for a multi-billion dollar credit from the PRC government to Transneft and Russian state-run oil company Rosneft that would help boost energy exports.

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16. PRC Climate Change

Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "PRC: RICH SHOULD PAY TO FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE", Beijing, 2008/10/28) reported that the PRC said Tuesday richer countries should help poorer nations fight global warming. "The funds that developed countries provide for developing countries to deal with climate change should represent approximately 1 percent of the GDP of the developed

countries," said Gao Guangsheng, who heads the climate change office at the National Development and Reform Commission, the PRC's top economic planning body.

Associated Press ("GREENPEACE: PRC'S COAL USE COST IT $248B", Beijing, 2008/10/28) reported that PRC's reliance on cheap coal to fuel its economy cost a hidden $248 billion last year,or the equivalent of 7.1 percent of PRC's gross domestic product, through damage to the environment, strain on the health care system and manipulation of the commodity's price, according to a report released Monday by Greenpeace and conducted in collaboration with the Energy Foundation and the conservation group WWF. The report did not take into account the economic costs of climate change caused by coal, however, which authors said was hard to quantify. If all the costs associated with coal use were reflected in its price, the commodity would cost 23 percent more, the study said. PRC's GDP would likely fall by less than a percent if coal's price rose to that level, it concluded. The report urged PRC to phase in taxes on energy use and emissions, ease price controls on coal and create insurance funds for those harmed by mining accidents.

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17. PRC-Sudan Relations

Reuters ("PRC CONDEMNS SUDAN KILLINGS AS TERRORIST CRIME", Beijing, 2008/10/28) reported that PRC Tuesday condemned the killing of five of its citizens in Sudan as a terrorist crime but said it would continue investing in the country. The five men killed Monday were among nine PRC oil workers kidnapped in central Sudan more than a week ago. They died in a failed rescue attempt, PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a news conference. "We express our strong outrage and condemnation of the terrorist crime of the bandits' cruel and inhuman murders of the unarmed Chinese personnel," Jiang said.

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18. PRC Food Safety

Associated Press (Gillian Wong, "PRC PULLS SOME EGGS AMID NEW FOOD SAFETY SCARE", Beijing, 2008/10/28) reported that Wal-Mart Stores Inc. said Tuesday it has removed the "Select" brand of eggs made by PRC's Dalian Hanwei Enterprise Group from all of its stores in the PRC, after Hong Kong food safety regulators found excessive levels of melamine in imported eggs of the same brand. So far, no illnesses have been reported.

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19. PRC Tibet Issue

Reuters ("PRC SAYS STILL LOOKING TO TALKS WITH TIBET ENVOYS", Beijing, 2008/10/28) reported that PRC remains in contact with the Dalai Lama's administration over proposed talks, an official said on Tuesday, despite the exiled Buddhist leader's claim that he had lost hope of agreement with Beijing over the future of Tibet."From what I understand, there is further communication underway on the arrangements for the contacts and consultations," PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said."China has an old saying: To listen to words and observe actions," she said. "If the Dalai's side truly wants to improve relations with the Chinese government,

it should resolutely observe the commitments made in the July bilateral discussions."

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20. PRC Environment

Bloomberg (Randall Hackley, Gareth Gore, "THREE GORGES DAM AREA FARMERS SHOULD AVOID FERTILIZER ", 2008/10/28) reported Ohio State University researchers said that if PRC farmersvin the flooded area that extends 410 miles (660 kilometers) behind the Three Gorges Dam don't avoid fertilizers, the waters will be fouled with excessive nutrients and cause algae blooms in standing water covering fields along the Yangtze River. "Fertilizers actually won't be needed,'' Mitsch said, because the sediment left behind by flooding will be rich in nutrients, especially phosphorus, beneficial to many crops. The group of scientists recommended building cascading terraces and wetlands along the border of the reservoir to trap water as it recedes and to reduce the loss of nutrients to the pulsing river system.

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21. PRC Military Drill

Xinhua News ("CHINA'S MILITARY EXERCISE VANGUARD-2008 CONCLUDES", 2008/10/27) reported that a military exercise code-named "Vanguard-2008" that partly opened to foreign students studying at the PRC's military academies concluded in the central Henan Province on Tuesday, winning applause from the foreign observers. The week-long exercise was performed by a 2,200-strong armored brigade from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Jinan Military Area Command, whose armaments are said to be among the best in the PLA land forces.

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II. PRC Report

22. Sino-Japanese Environmental Cooperation

People’s Daily (Yang Ye, "SINO-JAPAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION HIGH LEVEL FORUM HELD IN BEIJING", Beijing, 2008/10/27) reported that the Sino-Japan Environmental Protection High Level Forum was held in Beijing on Oct.26. More than 400 people from the governments, enterprises, and research institutes of the two sides participated in the Forum. The delegates mainly discussed “energy reduction policy and regulation”, “energy-saving measures of the enterprises”, “emission reduction activities of society” and “Sino-Japanese cooperation in energy saving and environmental protection”.

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23. PRC Civil Society

Foshan Daily (Liu Rong, "42 NGOS PROVIDE COUNSELING SERVICE FOR CITIZENS", Foshan, 2008/10/27) reported that yesterday 42 NGOs provided counseling service for citizens at Oriental Plaza of Foshan city, Guangdong province. The counseling service included public security, health care, family education, identification of counterfeit RMB, and so on. Deputy Director of the Municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs Lu Yongjun said that the large-scale convenience service launched by NGOs can become a bridge between the government and citizens and NGOs are an indispensable force for social service.

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24. PRC Civil Society and Public Health

China Radio Network (Zhang Yinglin, "LI KASHING FOUNDATION SETS THE FIRST HOSPICE AGENCY IN JILIN", Changchun, 2008/10/27) reported that the first hospice agency of Jilin province contributed by the Li Kashing Foundation was set up recently in Changchun, the provincial capital of Jilin province. This is also the 28 th hospice agency built by the Foundation in the PRC. In provides service to patients with terminal cancer from the urban area and its outskirts within a radius of 150 km. After identified as qualified, the patients can receive free medical care and treatment form the hospice agency, and also psychological counseling, grief counseling and other free home service.

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III. ROK Report

25. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Ohmynews ("GNP: 'MB, LEARN FROM DJ'", 2008/10/29) reported that Nam Kyung-pil, a lawmaker of Grand National Party (GNP) said, even though the illegal remittance to the DPRK was problematic, former President Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy contributed to establishing the foundation for peace and unification. Suh Byung-soo, another member of the GNP, argued that useless criticisms about the previous governments are unhelpful for members of the ruling party who only need to devote themselves to fulfill the affairs of the state at this point.

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26. DPRK Leadership

PRESSian (Park Hoo-kun, Professor, Kyungnam University, "WHERE IS KIM JONG-IL?", 2008/10/29) said in a column that Kim Jong-il disappeared from the public before a new policy was implemented due to the change in the DPRK's security situation. Kim is supposed to collect and analyze information about the national status when a security contingency happens or when they need new policies for the nation. Kim aims to eliminate the tension with the US, which means to end the military conflict. He also seeks to have the DPRK acknowledged as a ‘normal nation’ by establishing diplomatic relations with the US. Kim might not appear until the DPRK is assured that they finally entered an ‘irreversible path’ following diplomatic normalization with the US.

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27. Inter-Korea Relations

Tongilnews ("SPECIAL ENVOY NEEDED TO EASE INTER-KOREAN RELATIONSHIP", 2008/10/29) reported that a forum titled “Future of Korea for Peace, Prosperity, and Unification” in which the ROK citizens and Korean residents in Japan participated was held in Tokyo to honor the one year anniversary of the 10.4 declaration. Chung Chang-hyun, representative of a monthly magazine called "Minjok 21" (People 21) asserted that the Lee Myung-bak Administration should send a special envoy to the DPRK in order to improve the relationship. The ROK will struggle with the matter for the whole five years of his administration unless they send one by next spring, he added.

Hankyoreh ("SHOULD STOP SPREADING PROPAGANDA BILLS TO DPRK", 2008/10/29) said in a column that the Kaesong Industrial Complex Association urged a halt to spreading propaganda bills toward the DPRK. Such leaflets only result in worsening the inter-Korean relationship and cause a crisis in the Kaesong Complex, which will give enormous harm for ROK personnel there. The leaflets go against the inter-Korean agreement to halt propaganda even though they're sent by private organizations. However, the government does not seem to be active about stopping them. The government should stop their action as soon as possible if they want to maintain the relationship with the DPRK.

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