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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters (Sue Pleming, "U.S. DIPLOMAT SEEKS TO SALVAGE N.KOREA DEAL BY TRIP", New York, 2008/09/28) reported that US diplomat Chris Hill will try to re-engage the DPRK on how to verify its nuclear claims and rescue a crumbling disarmament-for-aid deal in Pyongyang this week, U.S. officials said. Hill's trip to Pyongyang on the invitation of the North Koreans is a concerted effort by the Bush administration in its waning months to revive a six-nation deal after Pyongyang reversed its promises and said it would restart its Soviet-era Yongbyon nuclear plant. "This is a last-ditch effort to get things on track," said a senior U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

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2. ROK, Russia on DPRK Nuclear Issue

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIAN, S. KOREAN LEADERS WORRIED BY STALLED DENUCLEARIZATION ", 2008/09/28) reported that the presidents of Russia and the ROK expressed concern over the DPRK's decision to suspend dismantling its nuclear facilities agreed on as part of a six-nation deal. "Mr. President and I expressed concerns over North Korea's measures to suspend the dismantling of its nuclear facilities and agreed to maintain close cooperation to find a peaceful solution to the nuclear problem and establish stability and peace on the Korean peninsula," ROK President Lee Myung-bak said. "Russia has consistently sought to ensure a nuclear free status for the peninsula and progress at the six-party talks," the Russian president said.

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3. US Presidential Candidates on DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE TOUCHES ON TWO KOREAS", 2008/09/28) reported that during Friday's presidential debate, Democrat candidate Barack Obama cited the DPRK as an example of the US administration's diplomatic failure. "In North Korea, we cut off talks. They're a member of the axis of evil. We can't deal with them. And you know what happened? They went -- they quadrupled their nuclear capacity. They tested a nuke. They tested missiles." Republican candidate John McCain said that it would be dangerous for the US president to attempt to hold talks with the leaders of hostile nations without any preconditions. "As far as North Korea is concerned, our secretary of state, Madeleine Albright (not former president Clinton himself), went to North Korea. By the way, North Korea: most repressive and brutal regime probably on Earth."

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4. DPRK Leadership

Yonhap News (Kim Boram, "KIM'S HEALTH WILL HAVE NO EFFECT ON PYONGYANG: FORMER NK OFFICIAL", Seoul, 2008/09/28) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's illness, or even his death, will not significantly change the reclusive regime, a former high-ranking DPRK official was quoted as saying. "Anyone who replaces Kim can govern the regime," Hwang Jang-yop, former secretary of Pyongyang's ruling Workers' Party, told ruling party lawmakers Monday. "Kim's death will never lead to its collapse." Hwang, who defected to the South in 1997, also argued that the ROK should not be misled by the DPRK's "fake gesture" of disabling its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon. "The facilities at the Yongbyon nuclear complex are merely pieces of scrap metal as the North has long been in possession of nuclear arms," he said.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News (Shim Sun-ah, "UNIFICATION MINISTER WON'T ATTEND SUMMIT ANNIVERSARY", Seoul, 2008/09/28) reported that the ROK's top official in charge of DPRK policy will not attend a civilian celebration marking the first anniversary of last October's inter-Korean summit, which the current administration has yet to fully endorse. Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong was invited to the event set to be held on Wednesday at a Seoul hotel but decided not to attend due to his busy schedule, officials said.

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "SEOUL OFFERS OCTOBER MILITARY TALKS ", 2008/09/28) reported that the ROK has officially asked the DPRK to meet for working-level military talks in early October at Panmunjeom. This comes in response to the DPRK's latest proposal to confer at the end of this month, government sources said. The ROK is reportedly considering Oct. 2-3 for the talks. "Neither the date nor the agenda has been fixed yet," Won Tae-jae, a Defense Ministry spokesman, said.

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6. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap News ("NEWLY APPOINTED HYUNDAI ASAN CHIEF VISITS N. KOREA", Goseong, 2008/09/28) reported that Cho Kun-shik, head of Hyundai subsidiary Hyundai Asan which heads a tour project in the DPRK, visited the project site for the first time since tours were halted after the July shooting death of a ROK tourist at the DPRK's mountain resort. Cho crossed the border separating the two Korea's by car at around 11:10 a.m. local time on his way to the Mount Kumgang site to encourage employees there and to have a look around the resort, Hyundai Asan officials said.

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7. Japanese Sanctions on the DPRK

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO EXTEND SANCTIONS ON N. KOREA FOR NEXT 6 MONTHS", Tokyo, 2008/09/28) reported that the Japanese government is planning to extend its sanctions on the DPRK for another six months beyond the Oct. 13 expiration as it sees no progress in resolving issues relating to the DPRK's abductions of Japanese nationals, government sources said Monday. Maintaining pressure against the DPRK is also necessary in light of Pyongyang's recent moves to reactivate a nuclear reprocessing facility in Yongbyon, the sources said.

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8. Sino-DPRK Maritime Incident

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA LIKELY FIRED AT CHINESE TRAWLER: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/09/28) reported that the DPRK's coast guard is suspected of firing at a PRC trawler for illegally fishing in its waters, seriously injuring one Chinese sailor, the ROK's Yonhap news agency said, quoting military officials. "North Korean coast guards often fire at Chinese boats trespassing in North Korean waters and illegally fishing," the unnamed official told Yonhap. The PRC trawler was suspected of taking fire on Saturday and eventually ended up in a ROK port.

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9. ROK, Russia, DPRK Energy Cooperation

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIAN, SOUTH KOREAN LEADERS AGREE ON GAS, RAIL LINKS", Moscow, 2008/09/28) reported that the presidents of Russia and the ROK agreed to work on a range of joint projects, including a pipeline to pump Russian gas via the DPRK, and the linking of the Russian and Korean rail networks. Lee Myung-bak's office issued a statement saying: "Korea Gas Corp. and Gazprom will soon start a joint study on the construction of a Russian-South Korean natural gas pipeline passing through North Korea." A joint statement released after the talks said: "The sides, acknowledging the importance to the international transport and logistics market of the project to link the Trans-Korean rail line with the Trans-Siberian railroad, including the reconstruction of the Khasan-Rajin line."

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "LEE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT TRIPARTITE COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA, N. KOREA", Moscow, 2008/09/30) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak said Tuesday that his ongoing official visit to Russia has resulted in important diplomatic achievements in terms of energy resources, economics and security diplomacy. Lee said his summit agreements with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev will help the ROK drastically reduce its international logistics costs. Lee

also said the ROK's strategic cooperative partnerships with both Russia and the PRC will be very advantageous to the nation's national security in case of an emergency on the Korean Peninsula.

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10. US-ROK Security Alliance

Donga Ilbo ("TROOP CONTROL TRANSFER COULD CUT U.S. FORCES IN KOREA ", 2008/09/28) reported that certain experts warn that if the Combined Forces Command is abolished along with the ROK's takeover of wartime operational control in April 2012 as scheduled, the US Congress could question the role of US forces in the ROK and eventually cut their number. Bruce Klingner, a senior research fellow for Northeast Asia at the Heritage Foundation, said that if unified leadership disappears, combat capabilities of the two nations could be significantly damaged. Also, the idea supporting the purpose and justice of US forces stationed in Korea will be shaken, he said.

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11. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("ASO LIGHTS A FIRE UNDER MINSHUTO", 2008/09/26) reported that trying to get a jump on the opposition in the Lower House election expected this fall, Prime Minister Taro Aso turned his first Diet policy speech into a string of questions challenging Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan). By demanding Minshuto declare its policy positions on five key issues, Aso was in effect trying to frame the agenda for the Lower House election in a manner beneficial to his ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

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12. Japan, Australia, Non-Proliferation Commission

Australian Broadcasting Corporation ("AUSTRALIA, JAPAN LAUNCH NUCLEAR COMMISSION", 2008/09/28) reported that the leaders of Australia and Japan have launched a commission to press for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament ahead of a review of a key international atomic treaty. The International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament was unveiled by Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and new Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. It will seek to shape a global consensus in the lead-up to the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference and beyond, Mr Rudd said.

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13. Sino-Indian Territorial Dispute

Times of India ("CHINA SHOWING 'FLEXIBILITY' ON BORDER TALKS WITH INDIA", Marseilles, 2008/09/28) reported that Buffeted by the strong Indian reaction to its failed bid to stop the NSG waiver for India, the PRC has been showing flexibility on boundary talks. Sources said the PRC leadership appears to have instructed its negotiators not to get bogged down on the boundary dispute while promoting the strategic partnership between the two countries. The new approach

was evident during Indian National Security Advisor MK Narayanan's recent visit to Beijing for the new round of boundary talks with his counterpart Dai Bingguo. The PRC, sources said, was showing signs of shedding the rigid approach it has used for one informed by larger strategic considerations of a relationship between the two Asian giants.

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14. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN, CHINA EYE FLIGHTS TALKS IN OCTOBER - REPORT", Taipei , 2008/09/28) reported that Taiwan and the PRC are expected to hold a second round of negotiations next month following historic talks in June, a newspaper reported Monday. The discussions will focus on direct cargo flights and shipping links as well as the shortening of the existing flight routes across the Strait, the PRC newspaper United Daily News said, without identifying its sources.

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15. PRC Space Program

Agence France-Presse (Peter Harmsen, "CHINA HAILS SPACEWALK 'HEROES' AND SETS EYES ON MOON ", Beijing, 2008/09/28) reported that the first PRC man to walk in space was hailed as a national hero Monday, as the emerging space power gave one of its clearest indications yet that it is now reaching for the moon. Mission commander Zhai Zhigang, 41, and his two fellow astronauts arrived in Beijing to mass-circulation papers filled with praise for their historic 68-hour voyage on board the Shenzhou VII spacecraft. "Shenzhou VII has touched down. The heroes have returned successfully," a typical headline read in the popular tabloid Beijing Times stretching across the front page.

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16. PRC Security

The New York Times (Edward Wong, "DOUBT ARISES IN ACCOUNT OF AN ATTACK IN CHINA", Kashgar, 2008/09/28) reported that just days before the Olympic Games began in August, a truck plowed into a large group of paramilitary officers jogging in western PRC, sending bodies flying, PRC officials said at the time. But fresh accounts told to The New York Times by three foreign tourists who happened to be in the area challenge central parts of the official PRC version of the events. Among other discrepancies, the witnesses said that they heard no loud explosions and that the men wielding the machetes appeared to be paramilitary officers who were attacking other uniformed men.

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17. PRC Labor

Christian Science Monitor (Peter Ford, "UNIONS IN CHINA STILL FEEBLE, BUT GAINING FOOTHOLD", Beijing, 2008/09/28) reported that almost all the Fortune 500 companies in the PRC

will allow unions to open in their factories, according to union leaders who are wrapping up this week a 100-day campaign to organize workers in some of the world's largest corporations. Many foreign firms see unions as an unnecessary hindrance, but even those that moved to the PRC to escape unions "should not assume that just because unions are coming here, the sky is falling," says Jim Leininger, Beijing head of the US management consulting firm Watson Wyatt. PRC enterprise-level unions, which have traditionally taken their cue from the government-controlled ACFTU, are among the most pliable in the world.

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18. SCO Trade Relations

Xinhua ("CLOSER ECONOMIC COOPERATION OF SCO MEMBERS", 2008/09/28) reported that the PRC will make joint efforts to step up closer economic and trade cooperation with other members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), PRC Vice Premier Wang Qishan said in Beijing. Wang made the remarks at his meeting with heads of delegations who attended the 7th session of the Economic and Trade Ministers' Meeting of SCO. As to improve regional economic and trade cooperation, Wang called on to "further implement trade and investment facilitation, forge cooperative network and encourage exchanges between companies of the member states."

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II. ROK Report

19. ROK-Russia Relations

DongA Ilbo ("ROK-RUSSIA SHOULD OVERCOME ENERGY-DPRK NUKE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP", 2008/09/30) reported that the ROK president’s visit to Russia concluded his first round of diplomatic circuit to forge stronger alliances with four countries, namely the U.S., Japan, PRC, and Russia. Lee has strengthened the alliance with the U.S. and broadened the relationship with the PRC so that the summits of the two nations could even deal with DPRK refugees issue. Since Russia is also one of countries along with the PRC who has the strongest influence on the DPRK, the ROK-Russia partnership will facilitate solving the DPRK problem. Concerning rumor about Kim Jong-il’s illness and nuclear crisis, improving the relationship with Russia is of great importance. Even though the DPRK has not agreed yet, it is one of the positive signs for the ROK to construct a pipeline which passes through the DPRK to import natural gas from Russia.

PRESSian ("GAS IMPORT VIA DPRK? ", 2008/09/29) reported that concerning the issue about railway construction, some pointed that it was nonsensical for the ROK government to construct TKR in collaboration with Russia, which has been delaying to implement what was dealt during two previous inter-Korean summit talks. The government has been talking about the railway issue for almost eight years with the DPRK. Experts analyzed that it was unrealistic to build a pipeline that passes through the DPRK, considering the current tension on the peninsula.

Hankyoreh ("RUSSIA’S RISING INFLUENCE ON TWO KOREA’S ECONOMY AND SECURITY", 2008/09/30) reported that the two Presidents of the ROK and Russia, namely Lee Myung-bak and

Dmitry Medvedev, agreed to elevate the two nations' constructive partnership to a strategic partnership. Strengthening the alliance with Russia will be beneficial in solving the DPRK nuclear issue and establishing peace on the peninsula and the area more creatively. Lee's visit to Russia concluded the first round of his diplomacy to forge relationships with four strongest neighboring countries. In comparison with three other nations, namely the U.S., Japan, and PRC, the relationship with the Russia relatively seems to be at ease.

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20. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Kyunghyang Shinmun ("ROK UNIFICATION MINISTER SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN 10.4 CEREMONY", 2008/09/29) wrote that it is outrageous for the ROK Unification Ministry to give no plausible reason for the Minister's absence at a ceremony to honor 10.4 agreement. Even though the Blue House has been uncomfortable with the 10.4 agreement at the beginning, they started expressing their willingness to talk with the DPRK. Kim Ha-joong, the Minister, is missing a good opportunity to prove the current government's aspiration to resume dialogue with the DPRK.

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21. DPRK Refugees

JoongAng Ilbo ("ISSUE OVER DPRK REFUGEES, NEEDS OVERALL COUNTERMEASURE", 2008/09/30) reported that the government has been negotiating with Mongolia and Thailand to establish organizations to accommodate DPRK refugees. However, since the PRC government does not consider people who fled from the DPRK as 'refugees' and views them as those who illegally cross the border for economic reasons, it seems difficult for the plan to be realized. Moreover, they even signed a joint agreement with the DPRK that they will send the DPRK people who are arrested back to the DPRK. The government must put all efforts to persuade the PRC government. The government not only should prepare facilities to accommodate DPRK refugees in third countries, but also in the ROK.

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