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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Wall Street Journal (Jay Solomon, Krishna Pokharel and Peter Wonacott, "NORTH KOREAN PLANE WAS GROUNDED AT U.S. REQUEST ", 2008/11/02) reported that India blocked a DPRK plane from delivering cargo to Iran in August, responding to a US request based on fears about the spread of weapons of mass destruction. According to the Western and Asian officials, the DPRK plane, an Ilyushin-62 long-range jet owned by the DPRK state airline, made a stop in Myanmar on Aug. 7 and sought permission from Indian air-traffic controllers to fly over Indian airspace. India eventually blocked the flight at Washington's behest, the officials said. Officials familiar with the matter said the move was part of the Bush administration's Proliferation Security Initiative, which aims to block the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Any action under the initiative would be ordered only if the plane was suspected of carrying nuclear materials, long-range missile components or other potentially lethal cargo, they said.

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2. US-DPRK Relations

Xinhua ("REPORT: DPRK TO STRENGTHEN WAR DETERRENT AGAINST U.S. NUCLEAR THREAT", Pyongyang, 2008/11/03) reported that the DPRK will further strengthen war deterrent against the nuclear threat from the United States, said a commentary published by the official Rodong Sinmun daily on Monday. The US Air Force announced it would create a nuclear command on October 24, which was an "extremely dangerous" move, said the commentary, adding that it revealed the U.S.'s true purpose of deterring other countries by nuclear weapons and controlling the whole world.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News (Yoo Cheong-mo, "PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE DENIES HARD-LINE STANCE AGAINST N. KOREA", 2008/11/03) reported that the ROK's presidential office, Cheong Wa Dae, denied any intention to pursue a hard-line policy toward the DPRK. "The government of President Lee Myung-bak remains unchanged in its stance toward North Korea. Basically, we pursue co-existence and co-prosperity with the North," presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan told reporters. "The ultimate goal of the Lee government's North Korea policy is to make North Korea a regular member of international society and enhance the level of freedom and peace enjoyed by the North Korean people."

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4. DPRK-Japan Relations

Kyodo news ("DPJ TO PROPOSE TOTAL BAN OF EXPORTS, TRAVEL TO N. KOREA", Tokyo, 2008/11/03) reported that the Democratic Party of Japan has compiled a draft proposal for additional economic sanctions against the DPRK, featuring a total ban on exports and travel to the country, informed sources said Sunday. The main opposition party responded to Pyongyang's reluctance to set up a responsible reinvestigation committee over its past abductions of Japanese citizens, as promised.

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5. DPRK Economy

The Wall Street Journal ("NORTH KOREA FEELS EFFECTS OF THE CRISIS", 2008/11/03) reported that in recent weeks, the PRC companies that buy DPRK ores and minerals like zinc, which are some of its biggest exports, have slashed the prices they're willing to pay. That's forced some DPRK mining firms to halt production and even produced a drop in the smuggling of ore and scrap, trade that's illegal in the DPRK but is believed to play an important role in supporting the country.

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA HEAPS BLAME ON US FOR GLOBAL FINANCIAL TURMOIL", Seoul, 2008/11/03) reported that the DPRK on Sunday accused Washington of turning to warfare to resolve economic concerns. "Troubled by the deepening economic crisis in the new century, the United States started its war in Iraq and Afghanistan under the pretext of anti-terrorism," the Rodong Sinmun, a newspaper run by the ruling Workers' Party, said in a commentary carried by the DPRK Web site, uriminzokkiri. "The move has only sparked an unprecedented storm of financial crisis." The paper maintained that the economic trouble is "a natural consequence of an ill-advised policy"

and fundamentally arises from the capitalist system the U.S. economy is based on.

IFES NK Brief ("BICYCLE BUSINESS GROWING IN NORTH KOREA", 2008/11/03) reported that the Daily NK has reported that the use of bicycles for business and transportation around the city of Pyongyang is becoming more and more commonplace, with 7 out of 10 households owning a bike, despite the fact that the cost of a bicycle in the capital city has doubled in the last twelve months alone. The source explained that the growing use of bicycles is not due to improvements in the lives of the people, but rather, due to a shift in mentality. In the past, someone wishing to purchase a bike would first have to save up money for it, while today they think they can borrow the money, even at high interest rates, and then repay the loan through business profits.

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6. ROK Government

JoonAng Ilbo (Namkoong Wook , "DEBATE RAGES ON CONSTITUTION CHANGE ", 2008/11/03) reported that questions over whether a president can serve two terms or have some of his power shifted to the prime minister were issues under a microscope during debate yesterday at the National Assembly. Lawmakers contended some of the constitutional power structure of the government needs a serious makeover aimed at better responding to a national crisis in line with the changed political and social landscape. “There has been constant criticism that a role for the prime minister is missing at times of crisis,” lawmaker Gong Sung-jin of the Grand National Party said.

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7. ROK Gender Gap

Korea Times (Kim Rahn, "GENDER GAP STILL WIDE IN ROK ", 2008/11/03) reported that women get more education and the number of them engaged in employment has increased. But the number is still far behind that of men, and the disparity in income between males and females is high, according to a report by the Ministry of Gender Equality and the ROK Women's Development Institute. In 1970, 38.2 percent of women were employed, while 48.9 percent of females were in 2007. Despite the growing number of working women, they do not earn as much as men ? the average annual salary for men increased to 41 million won in 2007, but that for women was almost half ? 21 million won in 2007.

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8. Japan Missile Defense Program

The Associated Press ("JAPANESE NAVY SHIP TO INTERCEPT MISSILE OFF HAWAII", 2008/11/03) reported that a Japanese navy ship is due to intercept a separating missile target in a bilateral ballistic missile defense test off Hawaii next month. The US Missile Defense Agency said Thursday the target will be fired from the Pacific Missile Range Facility on Kauai. The Chokai will shoot it down over the Pacific Ocean. The agency didn't say when the test would be held.

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9. US-Japan Relations

Mainichi Shimbun ("NEW RESTRICTIONS ON U.S. MARINES IN OKINAWA", 2008/11/03) reported that US Marines stationed in Okinawa have been ordered to stay away from areas including residential districts, schools and graveyards, as part of efforts to maintain "propriety and the safety of personnel," it was recently announced on the US Marines in Japan Web site. Servicemen and women will not be allowed to enter schools unless they are students or parents of students, and must have written permission from schools to speak to pupils on the premises.

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10. Japan Politics

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("ASO CABINET APPROVAL FALLS TO 40.5% / DISAPPROVAL NOW ABOVE SUPPORT RATING", 2008/11/03) reported that the approval rating for Prime Minister Taro Aso's Cabinet has slipped below its disapproval rating for the first time--barely a month after he formed his first Cabinet, according to a Yomiuri Shimbun opinion poll. The approval rating dropped 5.4 percentage points from last month's survey to 40.5 percent, while the disapproval rating rose 3.3 percentage points to 41.9 percent, according to the latest poll. Of those who said they approved of the Cabinet, 27 percent, down 4 points, said they thought the "prime minister is a capable leader"--the joint top reason.

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11. Japan, PRC, ROK Public Health Cooperation

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, CHINA, SOUTH KOREA TO COOPERATE IN FIGHTING NEW FLU STRAINS", Beijing, 2008/11/03) reported that health ministers from Japan, the PRC and the ROK agreed on an action plan to fight a potential pandemic of avian flu or new strains of influenza. The plan calls for sharing information about new strains that could cause a global pandemic and holding joint exercises to limit damage from a virulent flu attack.

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12. Cross Strait Relations

Taiwan News ("PRC TOURISTS GIVE TAIWAN 91% APPROVAL ", 2008/11/02) reported that PRC tourists who have visited Taiwan since July 4 have given an average approval rating of 91 percent to tourism in Taiwan, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC) reported yesterday. Although flights run at an 85% capacity, the number of PRC tourists visiting Taiwan has been less than expected by Taiwanese officials. Taiwan's Central News Agency reported that the Minister of Transportation and Communications Mao Chi-kuo stated that: "This could be seen as quite successful, although only between 20 per cent and 30 per cent of the passengers have been Chinese tourists, a ratio lower than the original expectations." The MOTC believes that the lower expectations are a result of legal and political barriers.

Deutsche Presse Agentur ("BEIJING TO ALLOW FLYOVERS OF PRC BY TAIWAN AIRLINES", Taipei, 2008/11/03) reported that Beijing has agreed in principle to allow Taiwan airlines to fly over PRC to other countries, which will boost Taiwan airlines' international competitiveness, a newspaper reported Monday. The Commercial Times, quoting an unnamed source, said that PRC has agreed in principle to approve Taiwan airlines' requests to fly over the PRC's airspace en route to other countries. PRC has also agreed in principle to grant Taiwan airlines so- called fifth freedom rights, specified in the Chicago international aviation convention as privileges granted to international carriers to pick up passengers and cargo on a government's territory en route to other destinations.

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13. Sino-Japanese Relations

Associated Press ("PRC APPLAUDS JAPAN AIR FORCE CHIEF'S DISMISSAL", Beijing, 2008/11/03) reported that an official PRC newspaper has applauded the dismissal of Japan's air force chief over an essay he wrote that claimed Japan had not been an "aggressor" in World War II. On Monday, the government's English-language China Daily called the essay "an element of disharmony" and said Beijing felt "relieved" over Toshio's removal. "Yet as long as the Japanese government has a right attitude to this question, the smooth development of ties between the two neighbors will not be derailed," the paper said in an unsigned editorial.

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14. Sino-Indian Relations

Asian News International ("IAF CHIEF IN PRC TO STRENGTHEN UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN TWO ARMED FORCES ", New Delhi, 2008/11/02) reported that to deepen understanding and strengthen mutual confidence between the armed forces of India and PRC, Air Chief Marshal FH Major is in PRC for strengthening Air Force to Air Force cooperation. Air Chief Marshal Major arrived in Beijing, at the invitation of General Xu Qiliang, Commander of the PRC Peoples Liberation Army Air Force (PLA AF), for a visit to PRC from November 2-6.

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15. PRC Tibet Issue

Bloomberg (Stuart Biggs, "DALAI LAMA SAYS TIBETANS MUST CHOOSE STRATEGY FOR PRC TALKS", 2008/11/03) reported that the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, said he is handing responsibility for negotiations with PRC to the Tibetan government-in-exile after losing hope he can bring autonomy to the region. Tibetan groups will meet in Dharamsala, north India, to discuss strategy from Nov. 17 while overseas supporters were invited to a meeting in New Delhi later this month to express their views, the Dalai Lama said. ``I will still be senior adviser but I cannot take full political responsibility,'' the Dalai Lama said.

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16. PRC Economy

Los Angeles Times (Don Lee, "SOME OWNERS DESERTING FACTORIES IN PRC", Shaoxing, China , 2008/11/03) reported that financially troubled plants are being abandoned by the boss, leaving behind unpaid workers and debts. PRC's biggest textile dye operation -- with four factories, a campus the size of 31 football fields, 4,000 workers and debts of at least $200 million – recently closed. Government statistics show that 67,000 factories of various sizes were shuttered in PRC in the first half of the year.

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17. PRC Protest

Associated Press ("VIOLENCE ERUPTS DURING TAXI DRIVERS' STRIKE IN PRC'S FOURTH-LARGEST CITY", Beijing,) reported that hundreds of angry taxi drivers went on strike and smashed vehicles in PRC's fourth-largest city Monday in a rare public protest, state media reported. The official Xinhua News Agency said the cab drivers in Chongqing in southwestern PRC were protesting shortages of fuel, competition from unlicensed cabs and high fines for traffic violations.

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18. PRC Energy

Asia Times Inter Press Service (Marwaan Macan-Markar, "MYANMAR'S FARMERS PAY FOR PRC'S OIL THIRST", Bangkok, 2008/11/04) reported that the largest island off Myanmar's west coast is emerging as another frontier for PRC's expanding plans to extract the rich oil and gas reserves of military-ruled Myanmar. Initial explorations by a consortium, led by PRC National Offshore Oil Company (CNOOC), has left a deep scar on Ramree Island. ''They have destroyed rice fields and plantations when conducting the seismic surveys and mining the island in search of oil,'' says Jockai Khaing, director of Arakan Oil Watch (AOW), an environmental group of Myanmar people living in exile. ''Hundreds of people have been forced to relocate as a result of the drilling conducted near their communities. The locals hate the Chinese; their world has become crazy after the Chinese arrived.''

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19. PRC AIDS Issue

Reuters (Emma Graham-Harrison, "CHINA AIDS PATIENTS DYING BECAUSE OF "TRAGIC STIGMA"", Beijing, 2008/11/03) reported that PRC AIDS victims are dying needlessly because a "tragic stigma" prevents them seeking help in a country where one fifth of people think the disease can be passed on by sharing a toilet, a top activist said. The government has promised to hand out free, PRC-made drugs to anyone infected with the disease and the country's leaders have met those living with HIV/AIDS but there is still widespread ignorance about how it is spread.

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20. PRC Civil Society

Xinhua News ("CHINA'S ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS' INFLUENCE INCREASES AS TOTAL DOUBLES IN 3 YEARS ", 2008/11/03) reported that the PRC's grassroot non-governmental organizations (NGO) dedicated to environment protection have more influence now with the doubling of their number in the past three years, according to a report. The PRC has 508 grassroot-level environment NGOs as of October this year, increasing by nearly 300 from 2005, the All-China Environment Federation said in an environment report here, which it took eight months to finish beginning January this year. And they are having an effect on the everyday lives of Chinese people.

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II. PRC Report

21. PRC Environment

Han Network (Wang Dannin, "29 CITIES SIGN YANGTZE RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DECLARATION", Daihongbing, 2008/10/31) reported that representatives of 29 key cities near the Yangtze River Valley singed an environmental protection declaration for the sustainable development of the Yangtze River. The declaration pointed out that the 29 cities should take the three national comprehensive test zones in Shanghan, Wuhan and Chongqing for examples and explore a new system and mechanism to conform to the economy of Yangtze River Valley and the practical environmental protection of the cities.

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22. PRC Civil Society

New People Evening News (Yao Liping, "REGULAR DONATION STATIONS TO SETTLE DOWN IN COMMUNITIES OF SHANGHAI", 2008/10/30) reported that the first regular donation station of Shanghai came out eight years ago. According to the municipal Charity Material Management Center, now there are already 300 regular donation stations, covering the streets or towns 19 districts. But the residential areas were not well covered, and a lot of citizens wanted the regular donation stations to be settled down in their own communities. “That needs the support from the property management association, and we think it is not far to make regular donation stations into residential areas”, said by the director of Charity Material Management Center.

Xinhua News Agency ("THE NATION’S FIRST OBSTACLE-FREE SCHOOL SET UP IN DUJIANGYAN", 2008/10/31) reported that the nation’s first obstacle-free school has been set up in Dujiangyan city of Sihcuan province recently. It is financially aided by China Welfare Fund for Disabled Persons joint with many enterprises. It is designed by a famous Canadian architectural design company with high aseismatic capacity and 12 elevators to facilitate the limb disabled students. The total investment reaches 80 million to 90 million yuan.

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III. ROK Report

23. ROK-U.S. Relations

Seoul Shinmun ("HOW TO RESPOND US POLICY CHANGE?", 2008/11/04) said in a column that the result of the U.S. Presidential election will function as a decisive variable for the Korean Peninsula. However, Cheongwadae (Blue House) and the Security department of the government do not seem to perceive the situation seriously. The government should prepare how they will deal with the new U.S. Administration's policy change. They should also endeavor to resume the dialogue channel with the DPRK, while working on establishing closer relationships with the PRC and Japan.

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24. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Hankyoreh ("PRESIDENT LEE'S IRRESPONSIBLE DPRK POLICY", 2008/11/04) said in a column that President Lee Myung-bak asserted on October 18 that the ROK should maintain firm attitude toward the DPRK. The worsening of the inter-Korean relationship does not have a negative influence on the economy, he added. His statement about the U.S. removal of the DPRK from the terrorism blacklist is also surprising. He said that being threatened by the DPRK, the U.S. made a wrong decision. Lee should reveal his true intention to the ROK people if he wants to pursue his thoughts about the DPRK.

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25. Inter-Korea Relations

Kookmin Ilbo ("ROK SHOULD NOT PAY TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO KIM JONG-IL'S 'PHOTO POLITICS'", 2008/11/04) said in a column that several media carried analytic articles about Kim Jong-il and his picture. However, the ROK paying too much attention to the reports, since they can be fooled by the DPRK's tricks. The ROK should also be cautious not to expose our ability to collect information about the DPRK.

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26. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Seoul Kyungje Shinmun ("HARSH LIFE IN CHINA AND GAESONG COMPLEX", 2008/11/04) reported that compared to the plants in the PRC, which take at least 15 days, the Gaesong Complex's production, delivery, and warehousing takes only three days, an official of a clothing enterprise said. Though the tension on the Korean Peninsula boosts the risk of the complex, there is no better place for the domestic clothing companies to work. That is why the completion ceremony of the first co-managing corporation is meaningful to our fashion industry, since it can facilitate inter-Korean economic cooperation.

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