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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Kyodo News ("U.S. ENVOY HINTS AT TIMELINE DEAL OVER N. KOREA ", Singapore, 2008/12/04) reported that top US nuclear negotiator Christopher Hill hinted that a deal was nearing with the DPRK over a timeline for completing disablement of the country's key nuclear facility. But Hill, who met earlier in the day with his DPRK counterpart Kim Kye Gwan, declined to discuss details of their conversation on ways to verify Pyongyang's nuclear information.

Xinhua News ("U.S. NUCLEAR ENVOY SAYS SUBSTANTIVE TALKS HELD WITH DPRK IN SINGAPORE", Singapore, 2008/12/04) reported that U.S. chief nuclear envoy Christopher Hill met with his DPRK counterpart Kim Kye-gwan in Singapore on Thursday, saying they had substantive talks focused on verification of the DPRK's nuclear activities. "We have reviewed the major issues that we have all been working on. It is disablement, the fuel oil and the issue of verification of their declaration," Hill, US Assistant Secretary of State, told reporters after their meeting.

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2. US Policy Toward the DPRK

CMSNews ("COMMISSION RECOMMENDS U.S. USE 'DIRECT FORCE' - IF NEEDED - TO STOP IRAN, N.KOREA NUKE PROGRAMS ", Washington , 2008/12/04) reported that the bipartisan Commission on the Prevention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) Proliferation appointed by Congress is warning the incoming Obama administration that it must not rule out the use of "direct force" against Iran and DPRK, if diplomatic negotiations fail to stop their nuclear weapons programs. The report contains a series of recommendations to the incoming Obama administration on how to deal with the threat of weapons of mass destruction. "In the case of North Korea, this requires the complete abandonment and dismantlement of all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs."

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Hankyoreh ("HYUNDAI ASAN SEEKS RESUMPTION OF MOUNT GEUMGANG TOURS ", 2008/12/04) reported that Hyundai Asan CEO Cho Kun-sik urged the government to make a priority of the unconditional resumption of Mount Kumgang tourism to prevent further deterioration of inter-Korean relations and resume dialogue. In an interview Tuesday evening with The Hankyoreh, Cho said, "Currently, not only Hyundai's inter-Korean economic cooperation projects but all inter-Korean relations are in an overall state of crisis, and as such there need to be historic and bold measures from the government to find a solution."

Chosun Ilbo ("INTER-KOREAN NAVAL HOTLINE DEAD IN THE WATER ", 2008/12/04) reported that a key agreement between ROK and DPRK militaries to diffuse border tension along the western part of the maritime demarcation line may be on the verge of becoming obsolete. A briefing by the Defense Ministry to the National Assembly's special committee on inter-Korean relations indicates a cross-border communication hotline set up in 2004 between the two Korean navies is not functioning properly due to the DPRK's failure to comply.

Yonhap News ("RULING PARTY TO ASK ACTIVISTS TO HALT FLYING ANTI-N.K. LEAFLETS ", Seoul, 2008/12/04) reported that the ROK's ruling party said it will ask activists to stop sending anti-Pyongyang leaflets across the inter-Korean border. "Party leader Park Hee-tae will try to dissuade civic leaders from sending any more flyers in a meeting with them later today," said Rep. Kim Hyo-jae of the ruling Grand National Party. "Although these people have the right to express their thoughts, Chairman Park will try to convince them of the urgency of mending ties with North Korea."

Yonhap News (Byun Duk-kun, "SEOUL MULLS COMPENSATION TO N. KOREA FOR RETURN OF POWS", Seoul, 2008/12/04) reported that the ROK is considering "incentives" that include financial compensation to the DPRK for the return of ROK soldiers held prisoner since the end of the Korean War, an official at the defense ministry said Friday. At least 560 former ROK soldiers are still believed to be held in the DPRK since they were taken prisoner during the three-year Korean War, the official said, asking not to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue.

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4. Japan-DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN EYES BILATERAL TALKS WITH N. KOREA IN BEIJING NEXT WEEK ", Tokyo, 2008/12/04) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone expressed hope for bilateral dialogue with the DPRK between the two sides' chief nuclear negotiators when they are expected to meet in Beijing next week for six-party talks on the DPRK's denuclearization. Nakasone also told reporters he hopes the top nuclear envoys from the United States and DPRK will reach agreement on putting in writing their October accord on a protocol for verifying the DPRK's declared nuclear facilities and programs.

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5. ROK History Textbooks

JoongAng Daily (Limb Jae-un , "HIGH SCHOOLS SWITCH HISTORY TEXTBOOKS ", 2008/12/04) reported that according to the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, 30 to 40 high schools withdrew their order for Kumsung Publishing's history textbook for the coming year. That textbook was deemed the most leftist by the government. Textbook authors criticized the government and local education offices for pressuring schools to switch texts.

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6. ROK-Japan Relations

Korea Herald (Bae Hyun-jung , "KOREA-JAPAN POLICE SET UP HOTLINE TO FIGHT CYBER CRIMES ", 2008/12/04) reported that the police chiefs of ROK and Japan yesterday agreed to set up a hotline to promote mutual cooperation in fighting cyber crimes, said the Korean police agency. Kim Seok-ki, commissioner of the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, reached the agreement with Toshiro Yonemura, head of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police Department, who is on a visit to Seoul. The hotline will enable the two police agencies to efficiently take collaborative countermeasures against cyber crimes, which usually occur on international levels, through direct exchanges of emails and phone calls, a police official said. "We shall extend such police cooperation systems to China and other countries to take active control on cyber crimes," said the official.

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7. Japan, ROK, PRC Disaster Coordination

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, CHINA, S. KOREA EYE MINISTERIAL TALKS ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS", Tokyo, 2008/12/04) reported that Japan, the PRC and the ROK will agree at their upcoming trilateral summit to inaugurate ministerial meetings on disaster preparedness and hold the first such gathering in Japan next year, according to a draft joint statement to be issued at the summit. The document, recently obtained by Kyodo News, also notes that the three East Asian nations will enhance cooperation with relevant emergency relief organizations and envisions a framework for swift joint relief operations if a disaster strikes one of the three countries.

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8. Japan Politics

Yomiuri Shinbun ("OZAWA'S CALL FOR 'ELECTION CABINET' CAUSES STIR ", 2008/12/04) reported that Democratic Party of Japan leader Ichiro Ozawa, at a dinner meeting Friday with DPJ Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama and New Party Nippon leader Yasuo Tanaka, remarked that it would be good if an election administration cabinet composed of members of all parties were formed after the resignation of the current Cabinet, referring to this idea as a "super-grand coalition." As Ozawa has not described the details of the "election administration cabinet," some DPJ members speculate it might be Ozawa's intention to jolt the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and to court anti-Taro Aso members in the LDP in hope of convincing them to join an opposition-led cabinet.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

Taiwan News ("AIRFARES FOR CROSS-STRAIT CHARTER FLIHTS TO BE CUT BY 10% :CAA", 2008/12/04 19:00:00 GMT+0) reported that Airfares for northbound flights on direct cross-Taiwan Strait charter planes will be cut by an average of 10 percent after such services are expanded to a daily basis, the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) said Thursday. CAA Director-General Lee Lung-wen made the remarks in response to recent appeals by the Consumers Foundation which said ticket prices for direct cross-strait charter flights should be lowered to reflect the shortened flight time once such services are expanded to a daily basis from the current weekend basis.

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10. PRC Tibet Issue

Tibetan Review ("CHINESE RAILWAY TO CONNECT TIBET MORE BY 2020 ", 2008/12/04) reported that PRC said it will have built and opened by 2020 six new main railway lines and some branches connecting Tibet Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province with other parts of the PRC. Its online Tibet news service eng.tibet.cn Dec 3 cited Li Li, principal of Qinghai-Tibet Railway Company, as saying the new lines will tie up with the existing Qinghai-Tibet Railway. The report also said construction of the ongoing 2nd Line of Xining-Golmud Section of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway would be finished in 2012.

AFP ("CHINA LACKS MORAL AUTHORITY TO BE A SUPERPOWER ", Brussels , 2008/12/04) reported that PRC lacks the moral authority to be a true superpower, the Dalai Lama said Thursday during a European tour. "Because of its very poor record on human rights and religious freedom and freedom of expression and freedom of the press -- too much censorship -- the image of China in the field of moral authority is very, very poor," he said. He cited the problems of Tibet and separatist factions in the southwestern PRC province of Xinjiang as areas where such a moral authority should be displayed. He also named Hong Kong and reunification with Taiwan.

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11. US-PRC Strategic Economic Dialogue

Associated Press ("CHINA TELLS US TO GET ECONOMY IN ORDER ", Beijing , 2008/12/04) reported that PRC promised more currency reform to ease trade tensions but told Washington to get its own economy in order as the two sides opened high-level economic talks Thursday amid a global financial crisis. Officials said both sides stressed the importance of cooperation to combat a potential rise in trade protectionism.

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12. PRC Food Safety

New York Times (David Barboza , "HONG KONG FINDS MORE TAINED EGGS " , Shanghai , 2008/12/03) reported that Hong Kong food safety authorities said late Tuesday that for the fourth time in less than two months they had found a batch of eggs imported from PRC that were contaminated with illegal levels of melamine. The agency said the tainted eggs were imported from a company based in Jilin Province in northern PRC and were being sold to bakeries in Hong Kong. The agency asked that the eggs be withdrawn from the market. It said the eggs contained 4.7 parts per million of melamine, nearly twice the level allowable in food products sold in the U.S., Hong Kong and PRC.

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13. PRC Space Program

The Associated Press ("CHINA TO SEND SCIENTISTS INTO SPACE", 2008/12/04) reported that the PRC's military-backed space program will send scientists on future manned missions as its demand for technical expertise rises, state media reported Friday. Plans call for the program to begin setting up space laboratories after 2012, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Thursday.

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14. PRC AIDS Issue

The Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "CHINESE AIDS ACTIVIST TAKEN HOME BY POLICE", 2008/12/04) reported that a PRC AIDS activist said Wednesday that she was forcibly taken back to her rural home after participating in World AIDS Day in Beijing. Li Xige, who is HIV positive, said she had managed to escape house arrest in her rural town, but that local police tracked her to Beijing. Li, who campaigns for compensation for victims of infected blood transfusions, said she was taken from her hotel by police early Tuesday, two days after participating in an official event at the Olympic Bird's Nest stadium for World AIDS Day.

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II. PRC Report

15. PRC Civil Society

People's Daily online (Li Haiyan, Zhao Jinhe, "TIANJIN CHARITIES JOINTLY HELP 4000 DESTITUTE FAMILIES", 2008/12/03) reported that Tianjin municipal and county charities have jointly launched 2009 Charity Campaign for the celebration of Spring Festival today. This campaign aims to help the lonely aged, orphans, disabled persons and people in destitute families of Tianjin city. This time a total of 4000 destitute families will get help, among which 2200 from the municipal charity and 1800 from the county charities. Each one will get relief fund, flour, edible oil worth of 500 yuan. The total fund is expected to be about 2 million yuan.

China Radio Network (Deng Wenhua, Chen Jianguang, "LEADERS OF OVER 100 ORGANIZATIONS

GET TOGETHER IN GUANGDONG", 2008/12/03) reported that on November 28, Organization Leaders Innovation and Building Harmonious Chinese Overseas Communities Symposium was held in Guangdong. Over 250 Chinese overseas representatives from 28 countries and regions came to the symposium. Vice president of French Chaozhou Club said we should enhance culture and art communication to better integrate into local mainstream society. For example, we can hold traditional Chinese Concert and Food Festival to attract foreign fans to participate. Many other good suggestions have been put forward during the symposium.

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16. Tibet Livestock

Tibet Daily ("TIBET LEIWUQI COUNTY ESTABLISHES YAK FATTENING ASSOCIATION", 2008/12/03) reported that recently Tibet Leiwuqi county has established a Yak Fattening Association. It has absorbed 69 yak culturists, and hopes to explore experience of the specialization and regionalization for yak fattening. Members send their yaks to the Association for centralized cultivation. 60% of profits will be given to members as dividend, and the rest 40% will be used to expand reproduction. Now the fattening house has been completed.

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III. ROK Report

17. DPRK Human Rights

PSPD ("INEFFICIENT DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS LAW", 2008/12/05) said in a column that the law about the DPRK human rights which the Grand National Party is preparing has no efficiency or practicality. The law will only result in bringing serious conflicts. Utilizing the law upon improving the inter-Korean relationship which requires the government to react responsively to improve the DPRK human rights will be a better way instead.

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18. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Hankyoreh ("GIVING UP GAESONG COMPLEX, WHAT'S NEXT?", 2008/12/05) reported that there is only two scenarios left for the Lee Myung-bak Administration after losing the Gaesong Complex. One is to wait for the DPRK regime to break down, while assuming the attitude of an onlooker toward the issues on the Korean Peninsula. Since the government has very weak influence on the DPRK, US, and PRC, the only choice is to watch how it goes. Another is to acknowledge fault and shift the DPRK policy. Either way is shameful. This means that they should not drive the situation to avoid making such choices. This is why the government should take the lead of the inter-Korean relationship by shifting its DPRK policy as soon as possible.

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