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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

The New York Times (Choe Sang-Hun, "N. KOREA WARNED OF REACTOR WORK ", 2008/09/04) reported that before hauling disabled parts of its nuclear reactor out of warehouses this week, the DPRK told the US that it planned to reassemble the plant, the ROK's foreign minister said. So much of the essential equipment had been removed that it would take at least a year to put back together the old Soviet-era reactor and its auxiliary facilities, they said. The DPRK notified American personnel at Yongbyon on Tuesday of its decision to restore the complex to its operational state and started moving disassembled equipment out of sheds to the nuclear reactor there, said Yu Myung-hwan, the ROK's foreign minister.

Kyodo News ("IAEA INFORMED OF N. KOREA SUSPENDING NUCLEAR DISABLEMENT AUG. 18 ", Vienna, 2008/09/04) reported that the International Atomic Energy Agency has said it was informed Aug. 18 that the DPRK has suspended its activities to disable a reactor at the Yongbyon nuclear complex and the agency is continuing its monitoring activities in the country. In a report on the DPRK nuclear issue, the U.N. nuclear watchdog did not mention any particular changes in other nuclear facilities under its watch, suggesting that the DPRK's move to restore nuclear facilities following the mid-August suspension of disablement centers on the graphite experimental reactor at Yongbyon.

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2. Meeting on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse (Jun Kwanwoo, "ENVOYS TO MEET AFTER NKOREA RESTARTS WORK AT NUKE COMPLEX", Seoul, 2008/09/04) reported that the DPRK's negotiating partners will meet in

Beijing Friday to discuss the state's initial steps to restart its plutonium-producing nuclear reactor, officials said. The ROK's foreign ministry expressed "serious concern" at the move, which comes amid a deadlock in long-running six-nation disarmament talks. Seoul said its nuclear negotiator Kim Sook would hold talks in Beijing with his US and PRC counterparts, Christopher Hill and Wu Dawei, and would contact Russia's envoy to the talks at some stage. Officials in Tokyo confirmed that Japanese negotiator Akitaka Saiki will also head to Beijing.

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3. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Xinhua ("CHINA CALLS FOR JOINT EFFORTS FOR RESOLVING KOREAN PENINSULA NUCLEAR ISSUE", Beijing, 2008/09/04) reported that the PRC urged all parties concerned to make joint efforts to resolve the current problem facing the six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. "For the current problem, China believes that all parties concerned should strengthen contacts and show flexibility to jointly devote to the early resolving of the problem," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu at a regular press conference. Jiang said that the goals set in the September 19 joint statement was the consensus of all the six parties, which were in the common interests of all parties concerned.

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4. Japan-DPRK Relations

Mainichi Shimbun ("NORTH KOREA'S PLANNED REINVESTIGATION INTO ABDUCTEES UNLIKELY FOR NOW", 2008/09/04) reported that the DPRK's reinvestigation into missing Japanese abduction victims is unlikely to be completed by this autumn, as initially agreed on, following Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's abrupt announcement of his intention to resign, a senior Foreign Ministry official said. The Foreign Ministry official said the DPRK will wait and see what direction the next administration will take. "It's unavoidable that the results of the reinvestigation won't be released until after autumn," the official said.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "'N. KOREA DAM THREATENS WATER SUPPLY'", 2008/09/04) reported that a second-term lawmaker of the main opposition Democratic Party (DP) urged the government to take immediate action to curb negative fallout from the DPRK's self-serving use of water resources. In 2003, the DPRK completed building the Imnam Dam in Wonsan near the North Han River, which was designed to generate power and increase its water supply. A Korea Water Resources Corporation (K-Water) report found that the amount of water reaching the Hwacheon Dam in the ROK has decreased by 43 percent following the completion of the Imnam Dam. The lawmaker also asked the government to sit down with their DPRK counterparts to discuss mutually beneficial use of water resources.

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6. DPRK Defectors in the ROK

Yonhap ("LAWMAKER PUSHES TO EXTEND TRAINING PERIOD FOR N.K. DEFECTORS", Seoul, 2008/09/04) reported that a lawmaker of the ROK's liberal main opposition party submitted a motion Thursday seeking to extend and reinforce the existing training program for the growing number of DPRK defectors to Seoul. The proposed revisions to the DPRK refugee protection law would set up a one-year education program for DPRK defectors which would include reinforced job training, said former foreign minister Song Min-soon of the Democratic Party. North Koreans currently undergo an eight-week training session shortly after arriving in the ROK.

Yonhap News ("DOZENS OF N. KOREAN DEFECTORS CHARGED WITH INSURANCE FRAUD ", Daejeon, 2008/09/04) reported that dozens of DPRK defectors have been charged in an insurance fraud scheme, police said. Police charged 41 DPRK defectors, two ethnic Koreans from the PRC and four DPRK family members with setting up the scam to make it look as if they have been hospitalized to collect on false insurance claims. A 26-year old female, identified only by her last name Hwang, took out nine insurance policies in October 2004 from eight different companies, copying after other DPRK defectors who had profited from similar schemes.

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7. Sino-DPRK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("CHINA CONFIRMS N. KOREA AS TOURIST DESTINATION ", 2008/09/04) reported that the PRC government has designated the DPRK a tourist destination, said the Xinhua News agency. According to Xinhua, in a recent meeting in Pyongyang, China National Tourism Administration notified DPRK authorities of its decision. After a follow-up negotiation, China will sign a formal agreement on this issue, Xinhua added. It will also establish a tourism office in Shenyang, Liaoning Province.

Xinhua ("CHINA DONATES METEOROLOGICAL EQUIPMENT TO DPRK ", 2008/09/04) reported that the Meteorological Bureau of the PRC handed over some meteorological equipment to the Meteorological and Hydrological Bureau of the DPRK. The equipment, provided under an emergency disaster cooperation program and another cooperation program of the World Meteorological Organization, included pluviometers and fluviographs. The donation will be helpful to boosting the level of weather forecasting of the DPRK, said Kao Il Hun, director of the DPRK Meteorological and Hydrological Bureau.

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8. ROK on DPRK Espionage

Korea Herald (Hwang Jang-jin, "SPY AGENCY ENHANCES N.K. OPERATIONS", 2008/09/04) reported that the National Intelligence Service has recently replaced key officials in charge of DPRK affairs and anti-espionage operations, a source said. The agency has been seeking to enhance intelligence gathering related to the DPRK. Anti-DPRK operation is said to have been weakened during the previous government which focused more on cooperation with Pyongyang. "The reshuffle is aimed at enhancing competitiveness and efficiency of the NIS," the source told The Korea Herald.

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9. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("PRIVATE SECTOR REAL ESTATE ACTIVITY BOOMING IN THE DPRK", 2008/09/04) reported that professional 'housing trade mediators' (real estate agents) facilitating less-than official housing transactions have emerged in the DPRK, with a wide range of real estate opportunities popping up, including not only sales but even rooms rented out by the month. Lately it has become common for North Koreans seeking housing take their money to the black market and either directly or indirectly purchase housing. In addition, as the black market grows, so too, does the linkage of it with the ruling class. On one hand, as these housing sales in the DPRK are illegal, disputes and trouble continue to arise, but on the other hand, because of their illegality, the DPRK government has no official apparatus in place through which to resolve the issues.

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10. DPRK Cultural Exchanges

Yonhap News (Kim Boram, "N.KOREAN ORCHESTRA DELAYS BRITAIN TOUR DUE TO FUNDING: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/09/04) reported that a concert tour to Britain by the DPRK's orchestra scheduled for this month has been postponed because of funding problems, a US radio report said. The DPRK's State Symphony Orchestra had planned to perform in London and Middlesbrough, a mid-sized city in northeast Britain, on Sept. 17 and 19 in what appeared to be a sign of the DPRK reaching out to the world. But the trip was postponed indefinitely after an English bank retracted its sponsorship of the tour citing a current credit crunch, the Washington-based Radio Free Asia reported.

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11. Russo-ROK Relations

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT RUSSIA NEXT WEEK", 2008/09/04) reported that Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Yu Myung-hwan will visit Russia next week for talks on bilateral ties, a ministry official said Wednesday. "Minister Yu will leave for Russia Tuesday and is considering visiting Mongolia before returning to Seoul on the weekend'' said the official. Yu and Lavrov will also discuss ways to resolve the DPRK's nuclear issue as well as promote bilateral ties, he added.

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12. US-Japan Security Alliance

Reuters (Linda Sieg, "U.S. GENERAL REASSURES JAPAN OVER NUCLEAR CARRIER", Tokyo, 2008/09/04) reported that a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to be stationed in Japan will send a "strong signal" of Washington's commitment to defend its close ally, the commander of the US military in Japan said. The USS George Washington is heading for a controversial berth south of Tokyo amid renewed concerns over the DPRK's nuclear ambitions. The US has been trying to allay

fears over the planned stationing of the aircraft carrier in Japan. A fire on board the warship in May and news last month that water containing a small amount of radiation had leaked from a US nuclear-powered submarine that had stopped in Japan have renewed concerns.

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13. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo News ("DEFENSE CHIEF TELLS MSDF PERSONNEL OF IMPORTANCE OF ANTITERROR MISSION ", Yokosuka, 2008/09/04) reported that Defense Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi told Maritime Self-Defense Force personnel who returned from the Indian Ocean on Thursday that it is important for Japan to continue its refueling mission in support of U.S.-led antiterrorism operations. ''This is the most suitable mission Japan can engage in and you have been highly appreciated by those inside and outside Japan,'' Hayashi told a homecoming ceremony for the crew of the MSDF destroyer Ikazuchi at an MSDF base in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, south of Tokyo.

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14. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("ASAHI POLL: 56% OF VOTERS FAVOR EARLY GENERAL ELECTION", 2008/09/04) reported that fifty-six percent of voters favor an early Lower House dissolution and a snap election compared with 33 percent who said there is no need to rush into such a situation, an Asahi Shimbun survey showed. The percentage of people seeking an early election was significantly higher than that in a similar survey conducted last weekend, when only 43 percent said they believed the election should be called as soon as possible. The outcome reflects a drastic change in voters' attitude following the surprise resignation of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda.

Agence France-Presse (Hiroshi Hiyama, "JAPAN PM FRONT-RUNNER ASO MEETS RESISTANCE", Tokyo, 2008/09/04) reported that Japan's flamboyant former foreign minister Taro Aso, the front-runner to be the country's new prime minister, met resistance Thursday as two economic reformists vowed to give him a fight. Aso, who supports government spending to boost the troubled economy, led opinion polls on who the public wants the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) to pick on September 22.

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15. US-PRC Military Relations

The Washington Times (Bill Gertz , "INSIDE THE RING: CHINA'S NUCLEAR CAPABILITY", 2008/09/04) reported that the PRC continues to resist disclosing details of its strategic nuclear weapons programs despite exchanges and discussions with the United States during the past two years, defense officials say. "For more than two years, the Chinese have stalled [on nuclear talks]," said one defense official frustrated by what he called excessive secrecy and lack of dialogue. One indicator of the problems has been that Gen. Jing Zhiyan, commander of the PRC's nuclear forces, has not visited the US Strategic Command or the US despite a promise in 2006 from PRC President Hu Jintao to President Bush that the general would lead a delegation for talks.

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16. PRC Earthquake

The Associated Press (Gillian Wong, "CHINA SAYS FLAWS CAUSED QUAKE SCHOOLS TO COLLAPSE ", Beijing, 2008/09/04) reported that the PRC said a rush to build schools in recent years could have led to construction flaws that caused so many of them to collapse during May's massive earthquake. Thousands of students died in the buildings in Sichuan province in the PRC's southwest, and questions about lax construction methods have become a flashpoint for government critics. Ma Zongjin, the chairman of an official expert committee on the May 12 earthquake, said poor quality construction materials were one possible reason more than a thousand schools were damaged in the quake.

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17. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

The Christian Science Monitor (Christina Larson, "CHINESE ECO-DETECTIVE TREADS LIGHTLY ", Harbin, 2008/09/02) reported that for the past several years, Zhang, the head of an independent environmental group in Harbin called Green Longjiang, has organized groups of volunteers – mostly young people and university students – to be eyes and ears on the ground, monitoring how the government's green policies are working in practice. These investigative trips cover a range of topics – gathering information about pesticide use, disposal of household waste, and industrial pollution. There are no national independent watchdogs to verify official statistics or claims, which can turn out to be wrong.

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18. PRC, Japan, ROK Space Program

People's Daily Online ("CHINA, JAPAN AND S KOREA TO BUILD LARGE-SCALE SPACE OBSERVATION NETWORKS", 2008/09/04) reported that the PRC, Japan and the ROK have decided to build transnational Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI) network. The network consists of 20 radio telescopes that form a 6,000 km diameter network for a more sophisticated observation of black holes and galaxies. VLBI network is the technology to use more than one telescope at the same time to observe the same celestial bodies. To connect telescopes in different locations is like to form a large aperture telescope. This VLBI Network by the PRC, Japan and the ROK has two main observation missions: draw accurate star map of stars in the galaxy and study black holes.

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19. PRC, Russia, ROK, Japan Joint Sea Routes

Xinhua ("FOUR NE ASIAN COUNTRIES TO START TRIAL OPERATIONS OF JOINT SEA ROUTE NEXT MONTH", Changchun, 2008/09/04) reported that the PRC, Russia, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan signed an agreement establishing a joint venture that will operate a joint sea route. The service, which is expected to start trial operations next month, will run 800 nautical miles from

Huichun, a key port in Jilin, to Niigata in Japan via the Russian port of Zarubino and the ROK's Sokcho port. The sailing time will be about 36 hours, or one-eighth the current time.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

National Business Daily (Su Su, "ENGOS WRITE AGAIN TO PROVIDE NEW EVIDENCE OF JIDONG PAPER COMPANY'S POLLUTION", 2008/09/04) reported that yesterday, Greenpeace, Friends of Nature and other four environmental NGOs jointly wrote again to the National Environmental Protection Bureau to ask for putting off environmental protection check approve of Jidong Paper Co.,Ltd. This is the second joint letter after the one turned over on 12 th of last month. The letter said that another company belonging to Jindong Paper Co.,Ltd was found having environmental pollution problems on large scale of emissions of waste water and gas, and this brought a seriously bad impact on the local residents' life.

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21. PRC Environment

Xinhua News online (Wang Pan, "8 CITIES OF PEARL DELTA AREA HAVE HEAVIER ACID RAIN", 2008/09/04) reported that according to the environmental report from Guangdong provincial environmental protection bureau of the last half year, air quality of the whole province maintains good, part regions turning better. But the acid rain affecting 70% of the province's total area is still heavy, 8 of 9 Pearl Delta Area cities are listed as "heavy acid rain area". The acid rain frequency is 53.4%, increasing 7.1% than the same period of last year.

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