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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. US, DPRK, ROK on Nuclear Issue

Korea Times ("TWO KOREAS, US HOLD INFORMAL NUKE TALKS IN NY", 2004-08-10) reported that envoys from the US, the ROK and the DPRK were set to hold informal talks in New York on Tuesday in search of a solution to the protracted standoff over the DPRK's nuclear development programs, according to a foreign ministry official in the ROK. The meeting was scheduled during a closed-door session of an international seminar on the nuclear issue hosted by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, a private think tank based in New York. Participants included Ri Gun, deputy director-general of American affairs at the DPRK's Foreign Ministry; Joseph DeTrani, U.S. special envoy to the DPRK; and Han Seung-joo, the ROK's ambassador to Washington. "A number of officials from both North Korea and the U.S., including Ri and DeTrani, came to attend the event," Han confirmed. "Besides the official exchange of views in the seminar, I expect there will be a one-on-one meeting between Ri and myself on the sidelines," he added.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Donga Ilbo ("SECRET ACTION TO SUSPEND NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM IS BEING CONSIDERED ", 2004-08-10) reported that US' National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice announced on August 8, "The United States will take various means including secret actions to suspend North Korea's nuclear program." National Security Advisor Rice also appeared on NBC's "Meet the Press" and responded to the point that the U.S.' political effort to suspend the nuclear program of the DPRK and Iran has failed by emphasizing, "The United States has established a foundation for a six-nation conference, and in order for North Korea to join the international society within that boundary, it has to abandon its nuclear program." On the question of whether the U.S.' methods for suspending the DPRK's nuclear program include "secret actions," she suggested a possibility of others ways to be examined, replying, "President George W. Bush will examine all possible means."

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3. DPRK Flooding

Kyodo News ("N KOREA FLOODS KILL 24; 40,000 FAMILIES HOMELESS", 2004-08-10) reported that floods in parts of the DPRK along the PRC border killed 24 people and left 39,851 families homeless last month, Red Cross officials said Tuesday, Kyodo News reported. Heavy rains that normally reach the DPRK in August flooded parts of seven provinces on July 24 and 25, according to a statement from the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Beijing. The affected provinces are North Pyongan, South Pyongan, Jagang, North Hwanghae, South Hwanghae, Kangwon and Ryanggang, Kyodo said.

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4. DPRK Food Aid

Yonhap ("SEOUL TO BUY RICE FROM VIETNAM, THAILAND FOR DELIVERY TO N.K", 2004-08-10) reported that the ROK will purchase 200,000 tons of rice from Vietnam and Thailand and send them directly to the DPRK beginning next month to help ease its chronic food shortage, officials said Tuesday. The shipment is part of 300,000 tons of rice the ROK plans to buy overseas for delivery to the impoverished DPRK by ship.

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5. Inter Korean Relations

The Associated Press ("KOREAS TO MARCH TOGETHER AT OLYMPICS", 2004-08-10) reported that in a show of reconciliation between two old foes, the ROK and DPRK Olympic teams will march together again at the opening ceremony of the Summer Olympics. The two teams will enter the Olympic Stadium on Friday under the same flag -- a blue image of the Korean Peninsula on a white background -- and to the tune of the Korean folk song "Arirang," the ROK's Olympic committee said. The official name of the teams during the march will be "Korea," although the DPRK and ROK will compete separately for medals.

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6. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("LARGE GROUP OF N. KOREAN DEFECTORS IN CHINA FACES REPATRIATION: CIVIC GROUP ", 2004-08-10) reported that a large number of DPRK defectors in the PRC may be on the verge of being sent back to their communist homeland to face prosecution, a ROK civic organization working for DPRK defectors said Tuesday. Chun Ki-won, head of Durihana, a Christian organization, claimed that at least 50 DPRK defectors were recently deported to the PRC from a Southeast Asian country to be send back to the DPRK. "The deported North Korean defectors are being kept at a detention center in Nanning, China, Chun said. "We estimate there are more than 100 (North Korean defectors) at the camp and there are possibilities that they might be forcibly deported back to North Korea." Chun claimed the country from which the defectors were expelled was the same unnamed one that allowed a group of 468 DPRK defectors to come to the ROK last month.

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7. Japanese - DPRK Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPANESE, NORTH KOREAN OFFICIALS ARRIVE FOR TALKS", 2004-08-10) reported that Japanese and DPRK representatives arrived in Beijing Tuesday ahead of working-level talks being held Wednesday, the Kyodo news agency reported. The talks will focus on the DPRK's promised reinvestigation into 10 Japanese citizens Tokyo believes were abducted by the DPRK. According to Kyodo, Japan hopes the DPRK will disclose fresh information on some or all of the 10 following DPRK leader Kim Jong Il's promise to reinvestigate the cases from scratch during talks with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in May in Pyongyang. Kyodo said Japan will also call for the DPRK to hand over four Japanese Red Army Faction members who hijacked a Japan Airlines plane to the DPRK in 1970.

Kyodo News ("JAPAN MAY USE SANCTIONS IF N KOREA TALKS FAIL", 2004-08-10) reported that Japan may consider imposing sanctions against the DPRK if Pyongyang gives Japan insufficient information on the fates of 10 Japanese citizens following their reinvestigation into their whereabouts, Kyodo news agency, citing a government source, said Tuesday. "If (North Korea) gives insufficient information, the public sentiment (in Japan) may become tough, which could lead to sanctions," Kyodo quoted the source saying ahead of a two-day working-level meeting between Japan and the DPRK.

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8. Russian - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN LEADER SENDS MESSAGE TO RUSSIAN PRESIDENT AHEAD OF LIBERATION DAY: REP ", 2004-08-10) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il sent a message to Russian President Vladimir Putin just before the anniversary of the two Koreas' liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, a news report said Tuesday. The message was carried by DPRK Ambassador to Russia Pak Ui-chun to Russia's ambassador-at-large Alexander Alexeyev, according to Moscow-based radio broadcaster Voice of Russia, monitored in Seoul.

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9. ROK Capital Relocation

Yonhap ("GOV'T TO PUSH AHEAD WITH CAPITAL RELOCATION AS SCHEDULED: PREMIER", 2004-08-10) reported that Prime Minister Lee Hai-chan on Tuesday reiterated that the government will proceed with the administrative capital relocation project as scheduled. "It is a legal matter for the government to proceed with the capital relocation plan," Lee told reporters just before attending a weekly Cabinet meeting presided over by President Roh Moo-hyun. "If we do not do that, we are not abiding by the law on capital relocation," he said. The National Assembly passed the law on the capital relocation late last year, but the major opposition Grand National Party recently demanded the government reconsider the costly project.

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10. ROK on Koguryo Revisionism

Yonhap ("S. KOREA WARNS CHINA AGAINST DISTORTING HISTORY TEXTBOOKS ", 2004-08-10) reported that the ROK has strongly warned the PRC that any attempt to distort the history of an ancient Korean kingdom in textbooks would precipitate a crisis in their 12-year diplomatic ties, an

official said Tuesday. The ROK delivered the warning when a senior Foreign Ministry official visited Beijing last week to protest the PRC's apparent attempt to lay claim to the ancient Korean kingdom of Koguryo (37 B.C.-A.D. 668). Park Joon-woo, the chief of the ministry's Asia-Pacific Affairs Bureau, was quoted as telling PRC officials that the ROK is "determined to risk anything" if the PRC attempts to distort the history of Koguryo through textbook revisions.

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11. Japanese Nuclear Accident

Reuters ("JAPAN SAYS NUKE PLANTS WON'T BE HALTED FOR CHECKS", 2004-08-10) reported that the Japanese government has not ordered nuclear power utilities to carry out inspections of their plants that would require stopping the reactors, a government official said on Tuesday. Kyodo news agency reported that utility companies had been told to conduct inspections in the wake of an accident that killed four workers, including ultra-sound checks on piping. "We have not ordered the companies to carry out physical inspections which would require that the operation of the plants be halted," an official at the Nuclear and Industry Safety Agency told Reuters.

Reuters ("JAPAN NUKE ACCIDENT HIGHLIGHTS LAXITY, AGING PLANTS", 2004-08-10) reported that an accident at a Japanese nuclear plant that killed four workers occurred in an area that was to be inspected this week for the first time in 28 years, and months after a warning of potential problems, the plant's operator said on Tuesday. The admission by Kansai Electric Power Co. is likely to further dent public confidence in Japan's nuclear policy, raising questions about the condition of some of Japan's aging plants and management's apparent laxity on safety matters. "The pipe was to have been checked at an upcoming regular inspection," said a Kansai Electric official. He said the pipe had not been checked since 1976 because it was not on an inspection list -- something Kansai Electric was notified of in November by a maintenance sub-contractor.

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12. Japanese Relations with the PRC and ROK

Donga Ilbo ("KOIZUMI TO "VISIT SHRINE NEXT YEAR AGAIN" ", 2004-08-10) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro said that he would visit the Yasukumi Shrine next year again despite strong opposition from the ROK and PRC. The shrine honors Japan`s war dead, including several class-A criminals of the World War II. The prime minister said so when he was asked about his opinion on the controversial visit to the shrine in regard to a recent PRC-Japan soccer match where PRC spectators expressed their antipathy against Japan. The conflict between the PRC and Japan, which seemed impulsive in some ways, is not expected to be settled soon after Koizumi's remarks. Summit diplomacy between the two nations has been suspended since October 2001 when the PRC government rejected the Japanese prime minister's visit to the PRC, citing Koizumi's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine.

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13. Sino - Japanese Relations

Donga Ilbo ("CHINA, "NOT LENDING ANY YEN" ", 2004-08-10) reported that the Business communities of Japan are paying special attention to whether the PRC government's abandonment of their plan to raise funds in yen from the Japanese financial market during this summer has anything to do with the relations of the two nations, which grew worse with the effect of the "soccer war."

Although there is a small possibility that the economic exchange will suddenly dwindle since both countries are desperate in terms of economic cooperation, the views are dominant that this delicate atmosphere will continue for a while. A Japanese corporate associate from Chongqing, where the booing for the Japan team was especially intense during the Asian Cup, said, "It may be likely for some of Japanese companies to give up branching out to China if this situation continues."

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14. US and EU on PRC Arms Embargo

Donga Ilbo ("U.S. AND E.U. AT ODDS OVER ARMS EMBARGO ON CHINA", 2004-08-10) reported that the U.S. and the E.U., frequently conflicting with each other since the Iraqi war, are waging psychological warfare again over lifting the arms embargo on the PRC. The measure of the arms embargo on the PRC dates back the Tienanmen Square uprising in 1989. At that time, the U.S. and the E.U. declared, "We cannot sell arms unless the Chinese government takes epoch-making measures to improve human rights." Fifteen years later, the E.U. is showing its intention to resuming exports. Presently, PRC unofficial national defense annual expenditures are around $70 billion, ranking third in the world. This is a market in which defense companies in the E.U. could be covetous as they have been hit hard due to reduced war expenditures of the E.U. members. But U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell clarified the lifting of the embargo as premature by saying, "Has there been any improvement in Chinese human rights?"

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15. Sino - Vietnamese Relations

United Press International ("CHINA, VIETNAM DISCUSS BOUNDARY ISSUES", 2004-08-10) reported that China Daily reports ministerial meetings between the PRC and Vietnam on implementing a border agreement on the Gulf of Tonkin. A PRC delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi, exchanged views with Vietnamese counterpart Vu Dung. The two met in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in southern PRC. Discussions centered on ways to implement a consensus reached by heads of state from the two countries when they met in Beijing this May. A joint statement said a hotline and diplomatic mechanisms should be set up to deal with land border issues. Both sides promised not take provocative in carrying out the agreement on demarcation and fishing cooperation in the Beibu Gulf, which took effect on July 30.

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16. PRC AIDS Issue

Agence France-Presse ("ONLY 8.7 PERCENT OF CHINESE UP TO SPEED ON AIDS: SURVEY", 2004-08-10) reported that just 8.7 percent of PRC people are fully knowledgeable about transmission and prevention of AIDS -- a problem that is fuelling the spread of the disease, according to a study. Some 25 percent of rural residents have never even heard of the virus. "The depth of knowledge about HIV/AIDS among Chinese residents is not sufficient to prevent its spread in the country," said the survey conducted by Futures Group Europe and Beijing-based Horizon Research Group. "People's care and acceptance for AIDS patients or people living with AIDS has been circumscribed by lack of knowledge," it added. The PRC says it has about 840,000 HIV patients, although the United Nations has warned it could have 10 million cases by the end of the decade if the problem is not urgently tackled.

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17. PRC Earthquake

The Associated Press ("STRONG EARTHQUAKE KILLS THREE IN CHINA", 2004-08-10) reported that a strong earthquake rumbled through southwest PRC on Tuesday, killing three people and injuring another 200, the national seismological bureau said. The magnitude-5.6 quake struck at 6:26 p.m. and was centered in Ludian, a county in Yunnan province, the official Xinhua News Agency said. There were many residents in the area although the number of dead and injured and the extent of damage was not immediately clear, said Sun Xiong, a seismologist at the bureau.

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18. Bird Flu

The Associated Press ("SCIENTIST WARNS OF BIRD FLU PANDEMIC", 2004-08-10) reported that a lesser-known strain of bird flu common among poultry in Asia is becoming deadlier and could set off a pandemic by mixing with human viruses, a Hong Kong scientist warned Tuesday. The H9N2 strain of bird flu is less lethal than the H5N1 strain that ravaged poultry farms in Asia earlier this year and crossed over to humans, killing 24 people. However, it's more widespread and a recent study said it has become more virulent, said Leo Poon, a microbiologist at the University of Hong Kong. It found that a higher percentage of mice infected with the H9N2 virus from the 2001-2003 period died compared to those infected with a 1997 version of the virus, said Poon. He said it wasn't clear why H9N2 had increased in virulence but warned of a pandemic if the strain mixed with a human virus.

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19. Nagasaki Bombing Anniversary

Yomiuri Shimbun ("NAGASAKI REMEMBERS A-BOMBING", 2004-08-10) reported that marking the 59th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Nagasaki, about 5,400 people on Monday attended an annual peace ceremony at the Peace Park in the city located near ground zero. In his peace declaration, Nagasaki Mayor Itcho Ito for the first time made a direct appeal to the people of the US to look squarely at the realities of atomic bombings and work toward abolishing nuclear weapons. Moreover, he also proposed a "convergence among the citizens of the world" to pave the way for the abolition of nuclear weapons prior to the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombings and next year's review of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

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20. Fischer Case

Reuters ("FISCHER COULD FACE LONG DETENTION IN JAPAN -LAWYER", 2004-08-10) reported that Japanese immigration authorities moved former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, wanted by the US for defying its sanctions, to a different detention center in a move that may signal his stay in Japan could be prolonged, his lawyer said on Tuesday. Fischer, one of the chess world's great eccentrics, was detained and had been held at Tokyo's Narita airport since last month, when he tried to leave for Manila on a passport US officials say was invalid.

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21. Japan Constitutional Revision

The Asahi Shimbun ("OKADA EYES SDF FORCE ON U.N. BASIS", 2004-07-30) reported that the opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is prepared to revise the Constitution to allow the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to use military force overseas. DPJ leader Katsuya Okada was to lay down the framework for the party's national security position in a speech in Washington. In his speech, Okada was to recognize the spirit of Article 9 of the Constitution which prohibits the use of force. However, according to a draft of his speech, Okada was to say, "The Constitution should be revised to allow the SDF to use force overseas as long as there is a UN Security Council resolution." While Okada was to stress the importance of the Japan-US alliance, he was also to voice concerns about an increasingly unilateralist attitude in Washington. He was to urge the US to take a "more tolerant and humble attitude" and to learn the lessons from the war in Iraq.

The Japan Times ("DPJ FORMS POLICY BODY AMID MOOD TO AMEND ARTICLE 9", 2004-08-03) reported that, alarmed by ever-louder calls within political circles to revise the Constitution, some 50 Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) lawmakers set up a study group on foreign and security policy. "Liberaru no Kai (Group of Liberals)" said it hopes to present policy proposals by the end of an extraordinary Diet session that will probably be held in the fall. The group was formed by relatively junior members of the opposition party. "We are not saying that we should not touch any single word of (the war-renouncing) Article 9," said Yukio Ubukata, a House of Representatives member who is one of the dozen lawmakers collectively leading the group. "What we are saying is we should try to maintain (the position of) peaceful diplomacy stipulated in Article 9," the journalist-turned-politician said. The group's charter says the group supports a foreign policy centered on the United Nations and opposes the idea of Japan exercising the right to collective defense, which the charter says could make enemies of certain countries.

The Japan Times ("BILL TO ENABLE OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENT", 2004-08-01) reported that the Japanese government has decided to compile a bill to enable it to deploy the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) overseas any time it deems necessary, aiming to submit it to the Diet next year. The government has already enacted a series of laws, including the antiterrorism law and the special law to support Iraqi reconstruction, to dispatch SDF troops overseas. But enacting the planned law would exempt the government from submitting bills to the Diet before sending the troops to foreign countries.

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22. US Bases in Japan Realignment

The Japan Times ("YOKOTA COMMAND FUNCTIONS MAY BE MOVED TO GUAM", 2004-07-30) reported that the US may relocate the command functions of the Yokota Air Force Base in western Tokyo to Guam, senior Self-Defense Forces officials said. While the plan would see the existing base in Yokota retained, it would also see the majority of personnel moved to Guam by October. The idea has been floated as a means of realizing a US proposal to integrate the functions of the 13th Air Force in Guam with the 5th Air Force at the Yokota base. The US initially proposed that the command functions be at the Yokota base. Japan stated, however, that the integrated headquarters would need to be located outside of Japan should it cover a region larger than that outlined in the Japan-US security agreement.

Kyodo ("ZUSHI TO SUE OVER U.S. MILITARY HOUSING", 2004-08-04) reported that the city of Zushi in Kanagawa Prefecture may file a lawsuit late this month seeking to force the Japanese government to end its plan to expand a US military housing complex in an area that extends into

both Yokohama and Zushi, municipal officials said. "We have decided to ask for a judicial decision because there is no prospect of a political solution to the issue," Zushi Mayor Kazuyoshi Nagashima said. Japan and the United States agreed in July 2003 to build an additional 800 housing units in the Yokohama part of the 288-hectare Ikego residential area for the US forces in exchange for the return of four military sites in Yokohama. Zushi opposes the decision to construct the five or more 20-story buildings, saying the central government broke a 1994 promise not to build additional facilities in the area. Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba said in July the plan cannot be called off because there are no other options, the officials said.

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23. Japan Plutonium Contamination

The Japan Times ("1950S-ERA PLUTONIUM SHOWING UP NEAR JAPAN", 2004-08-02) reported that plutonium particles scattered by a series of nuclear tests at Bikini Atoll in the 1950s have been accumulating in seas close to Japan, a research team has found. The research group of the National Institute of Radiological Science said the contamination level is too weak to cause serious immediate impact on humans or the environment. But the group said its findings could provide useful data in a study on how radioactive fallout produced by past atmospheric nuclear tests flows throughout the world's oceans. "If we could figure out how such plutonium particles are flowing around the world, it would be useful at a time of a nuclear accident," said Masatoshi Yamada, the research team's leader.

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24. Japan on DPRK Nukes

The Japan Times ("GOVERNMENT WORKING TO JOIN IAEA TEAM IN NORTH KOREA", 2004-08-01) reported that Japan has been working with the US to join a UN-led nuclear inspection team in the DPRK, assuming Pyongyang agrees to accept the inspectors, according to sources close to Japan-US relations. The government recognizes the need to be involved in the International Atomic Energy Agency's inspection of the Yongbyong nuclear complex because Japan faces a "nuclear threat," according to the sources. The move signals Tokyo's efforts in playing an active role in DPRK's denuclearization process, instead of just trusting the US and other global nuclear powers, they said. The government is considering sending government and private-sector nuclear experts.

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25. Japan-Sino Relations

The Japan Times ("DON'T ASSUME CHINA'S SOCCER BOOS ARE POLITICAL: HOSODA", 2004-0--04) reported that the recent heckling of Japanese by Chinese fans at the Asian Cup soccer tournament should not be linked to political issues between the two nations, the government said on Aug. 3, trying to calm tempers in Tokyo. Japan's national team was booed when the players took to the pitch for games in Chongqing, China, and Japanese fans were also verbally abused. But Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda said, "It's premature to associate soccer games with political issues between Japan and China." His response came after some senior members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, of which Hosoda is a member, demanded earlier in the day that the government lodge a protest with Beijing over the heckling.

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26. Japan-Russia Relations

The Japan Times ("KOIZUMI MAY VISIT RUSSIAN-HELD ISLES", 2004-08-04) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has asked officials of his administration and ruling bloc lawmakers to consider organizing a trip for him to one of the Russian-held islands claimed by Japan around the end of this year. It would be the first such trip by a prime minister to the disputed islands off Hokkaido. But Koizumi denied on Aug. 3 that such planning is under way. "I have not heard anything about it," he said, adding he is "not thinking about it."

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