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I. NAPSnet

1. US on DPRK Peace Treaty

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. MULLS TEAM TO DISCUSS KOREA PEACE TREATY", 2005-11-02) reported that the US government could form a working-level team that would discuss a permanent peace treaty with the DPRK to replace the armistice that halted the Korean War, Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun reported. The Yomiuri said Washington wanted Tokyo, which was not a party to the Korean War, to become more actively involved in discussions on the peace framework, but Seoul strongly opposed this.

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2. APEC Role in DPRK Nuclear Accord

Yonghap News ("MINISTER WISHES APEC TO RECONFIRM N.K. NUKE ACCORD", 2005-11-02) reported that the ROK's point man on the DPRK expressed hope Wednesday that the upcoming meeting of APEC leaders, including the heads of five nations involved in multilateral negotiations over the DPRK's nuclear programs, will help reconfirm the countries' backing of a nuclear accord with the DPRK. "I hope to see the APEC's role in providing and guaranteeing peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the (Northeast Asian) region as well as cooperation in the region," the unification minister said.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("CHUNG LAUDS SEOUL'S ROLE IN WARM CROSS-DMZ TIES", 2005-11-03) reported that Unification Minister Chung Dong-young asserted yesterday that improved communications between the DPRK and ROK was the basis of a recent international accord under which Pyongyang agreed to get rid of its nuclear weapons and programs, and reiterated the need for DPRK-ROK reconciliation and cooperation. He was speaking at a forum organized by the Joongang Ilbo and the Hyundai Research Institute. The minister defended Seoul's generosity to the DPRK, for example by food and fertilizer shipments and investments in the Kaesong Industrial Complex, against critics who contend that the generosity has not been reciprocated. He said that Seoul's support has led to increases in the number and the quality of cross-border exchanges. He said Seoul would continue providing such support.

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4. Inter-Korean Cooperation

Yonhap News ("SEOUL AIMS TO DOUBLE BUDGET FOR RAPPROCHEMENT PROJECTS ", 2005-1--02) reported that ROK's Unification Ministry on Wednesday asked the National Assembly to approve doubling the government budget for joint economic and social projects with the DPRK next year, a report submitted to the National Assembly revealed Wednesday. The requested increase in next

year's inter-Korean funds mainly comes from an increase in the special account for the construction of nuclear light-water reactors in the DPRK's Shinpo area, according to the report. The government also requested a total of some 1.26 trillion won in its special account for inter-Korean cooperation, which provides funds for various joint economic projects as well as humanitarian aid to the poverty-stricken DPRK. The report said the government will provide fertilizer along with 32 billion won of aid via international organizations and 37.6 billion won of food to the DPRK.

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5. DPRK-US Relations

Bloomberg.com ("NORTH KOREA SAYS U.S. FREEZING ASSETS MAY HARM NUCLEAR TALKS", 2005-11-02) reported that the DPRK said the US government's decision to freeze assets of companies suspected of trading in weapons of mass destruction is a “hostile” act that may jeopardize talks about the DPRK's nuclear program. “The US behavior is little short of hamstringing the sincere efforts made by the DPRK for the success of the fifth round of the six-party talks,” the DPRK’s party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in a report carried on the official Korea Central News Agency. “Dialogue and sanctions can never go together. Such US behavior can not be construed otherwise than an act of backtracking from the spirit of the joint statement of the fourth round of the six-party talks.''

(return to top) Kyodo News ("RUMSFELD BLASTS NORTH KOREA AS 'REPRESSIVE' STATE STARVING PEOPLE", 2005-11-02) reported that US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld speaking at a press conference, made comments in comparing the ROK and the DPRK after his recent visit to the ROK and the PRC. Rumsfeld said "no" when asked if he has received any concrete indication during the visits that the DPRK is willing to back down and implement its agreement at the six party talks to abandon all its nuclear weapons and programs. "Same people, north and south; same resources, north and south; the only differences is, the North has a repressive political regime and a command economy, and people are starving," he said. "And in the South, the free economic system and free political system have created an economic miracle." Rumsfeld took up the DPRK issue in seeking understanding over the continued deployment of US troops in Iraq. (return to top) Xinhuanet ("DPRK SLAMS US FOR DETERIORATING SITUATION IN PANMUNJOM", 2005-11-02) reported that the DPRK on Wednesday accused US troops of inciting inter-Korean confrontation and deteriorating situation in the conference area in truce village of Panmunjom and the area along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). "Both sides have already agreed upon and specified the order of conduct to be observed by the servicemen and visitors in the area and the order regarding the use and management and maintenance of the buildings. But the US forces side has undisguisedly ignored such agreed points," a spokesman for the Panmunjom Mission of the Korean People's Army (KPA) said in a statement. His remarks referred to the US side's closure of the north door of the conference house, which forbids the entrance of visitors from the north side. (return to top)

6. DPRK-Japanese Bilateral Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("JAPAN AND NORTH START TALKS ON RECOGNITION", 2005-11-03) reported that after a month of deadlocked procedural negotiations, the DPRK and Japan resume talks here today to establish diplomatic relations. The two sides agreed to begin a new push toward diplomatic recognition at the recent six party talks. Song Il-ho, the deputy director of the DPRK Foreign Ministry's Asian bureau, will represent Pyongyang. Akitaka Saiki, deputy director-general for Asian affairs at Japan's Foreign Ministry, is leading the Japanese delegation. High on Japan's list of priorities is the return of its citizens that the DPRK has admitted abducting. The DPRK will be interested in a reparations package Tokyo would presumably offer in compensation for its colonial

rule of Korea in the first half of the 20th century.

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7. DPRK Humanitarian Aid

Yonhap News ("N.K. NEGOTIATING WITH EU, U.N. ON AID PROGRAMS: CATHOLIC AGENCY", 2005-11-02) reported that there is still room for negotiations on continuing humanitarian operations in the DPRK, a Catholic aid agency says, although the country has ordered the halting of international aid by the end of this year. An EU delegation travelled to the DPRK last month on the issue, MacLaren said. Along with Kathi Zellweger, director of Caritas Hong Kong, the secretary general based in Rome was visiting Seoul after traveling to Tokyo for meetings with Caritas branches there this week. "The door is not closed for Caritas. It is just that we have to make some adjustments."

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8. DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap News ("U.N. RAPPORTEUR ON N.K. HUMAN RIGHTS TO MEET WITH DEFECTORS", 2005-11-02) reported that a United Nations investigator of human rights conditions in the DPRK will meet with DPR Korean defectors during his 10-day visit to the ROK, a UN official said Wednesday. "Muntarbhorn will visit Hanawon on Nov. 8 to meet with about 10 North Korean defectors currently residing there," said Lee Hyun-shin, a director at UNDP's Seoul office. Hanawon is a resettlement center for DPRK defectors located in Anseong, about 80 kilometers south of Seoul. The UN Special Rapporteur on DPRK human rights is to start his official schedule here by attending a closed-door symposium held by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea on Thursday.

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9. DPRK Defections

Chosun Ilbo ("MORE WOMEN WILL FLEE N.KOREA FOR UNCERTAIN FUTURE", 2005-11-02) reported that according to Vitit Muntarbhorn, the UN's special Rapporteur on DPRK human rights, DPRK women are fleeing starvation in the DPRK in even greater numbers after the country announced it wants no more food aid from the international community from Jan.1 next year. He said women defectors outnumber men for a number of reasons. One is that human traffickers prefer to smuggle women out because they are more reliable in paying their fees, which can be as high as US$3,000. Women also usually get lighter punishments than men when they are caught.

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10. EU Visitors to Kaesong

Yonhap News ("EUROPEAN AMBASSADORS, FOREIGN INVESTORS TOUR KAESONG COMPLEX", 2005-11-02) reported that scores of European ambassadors to the ROK and foreign investors toured the Kaesong Industrial Complex in the DPRK on Wednesday, according to the European Union Chamber of Commerce in Korea (EUCCK). The 70-member delegation, including Norweigian Ambassador to the ROK Arild Braastad and 70 foreign investors, visited the complex.

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11. ROK Nuclear Waste Dumpsite

Korea Times ("KYONGJU TO HOST NUCLEAR DUMPSITE", 2005-11-02) reported that Kyongju City's bid to accommodate the ROK's first nuclear waste dumpsite was overwhelmingly approved by city residents, beating out three other candidates. The local government to build the site will also receive a commission estimated to be 5 to 10 billion won a year, depending on the amount of nuclear waste deposited at the site.

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12. Japan Leadership

Agence France Presse ("HAWK ABE FAVORITE AS JAPAN'S NEXT PM: POLL ", 2005-11-02) reported that Shinzo Abe, the Japanese hawk promoted this week to the powerful chief cabinet secretary's post, is the public's overwhelming favorite to succeed Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi next year, polls said. Abe, 51 was backed by half the respondents in a poll by the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper when asked who would be the most appropriate next premier.

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13. PRC Migrant Labor

Reuters ("RURAL MIGRANTS TO GET MORE RIGHTS IN CHINA ", 2005-11-02) reported that the PRC plans to abolish the legal division between urban and rural residents in 11 provinces to protect the rights of migrants needed for labor in booming cities, though a similar experiment failed four years ago, the official media said Wednesday. The new policy would drop the decades-old "hukou," or residence permit, system that has denied millions of rural migrants in PRC cities the same rights to health care, education and social security as granted to native city dwellers.

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14. PRC Dissident Freed

The Associated Press ("REPORT: CHINA DISSIDENT FREED FROM ASYLUM ", 2005-11-02) reported that a PRC dissident committed to a psychiatric hospital after displaying a banner in Tiananmen Square commemorating the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations has been freed after 13 years, a human rights group said. The New York-based Human Rights Watch said it has learned that Wang Wanxing, 56, was released from the police-run Ankang Hospital in August, and put on a flight to Frankfurt, Germany, to join his wife and daughter. The release was timed ahead of a visit to the PRC in late August by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, the group said.

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15. PRC on Legacy of Hu Yaobang

Agence France Presse ("CALL FOR REVIVAL OF OUSTED CHINESE LEADER HU YAOBANG'S SPIRIT ", 2005-11-02) reported that a former top PRC official called for a return of the spirit of a late Communist Party chief associated with a push for political change that eventually led to the Tiananmen disaster. In the run-up to the 90th birthday on November 20 of former party head Hu Yaobang, who died in 1989, speculation in Beijing has mounted that the government will honor him

in a cautious manner.

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16. PRC Bird Flu Outbreak

BBC News ("CHINA STEPS UP ITS BIRD FLU FIGHT ", 2005-11-02) reported that bird flu fears have led the PRC to suspend imports of poultry from 14 countries which have seen outbreaks. In addition, Shanghai Pharmaceutical, the PRC's largest drugmaker, is seeking a licence to make the drug Tamiflu.

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17. PRC-Venezuelan Space Program Cooperation

Agence France Presse ("VENEZUELA AND CHINA TO BUILD SATELLITE ", 2005-11-02) reported that Venezuela has signed an accord with the PRC to build a satellite, to be named Simon Bolivar after the South American revolutionary, President Hugo Chavez' office announced. Venezuela said it hopes to launch the satellite into space in July 2008.

(return to top) Agence France Presse ("CHINA'S WATER CRISIS WORST IN THE WORLD: GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL ", 2005-11-02) reported that the PRC's water crisis -- from severe shortages to heavy pollution -- is the worst in the world and requires urgent action, a top government official says. Its per capita water availability is about a quarter of the world average and it is expected to get worse, partly due to falling groundwater tables, the report said. In addition, among the PRC's seven major rivers, five are seriously polluted. (return to top) The Guardian ("SATELLITE DATA REVEALS BEIJING AS AIR POLLUTION CAPITAL OF WORLD ", 2005-11-02) reported that according to the European Space Agency, Beijing and its neighbouring north-east PRC provinces have the planet's worst levels of nitrogen dioxide, which can cause fatal damage to the lungs. According to the European satellite data, pollutants in the sky over the PRC have increased by about 50% during the past 10 years. Senior officials warn that worse is still to come. (return to top)

18. PRC Mine Accidents

Agence France Presse ("CHINA'S COAL MINE DEATHS UP 8.5 PERCENT DESPITE SAFETY CAMPAIGN ", 2005-11-02) reported that fatal coal mine accidents in the PRC rose by 8.5 percent in the first eight months of this year, with thousands dying despite stepped-up efforts to make the industry safer. The government earlier this year began forcing officials to withdraw investments in mines to reduce the number of accidents.

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