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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("RICE SAYS NKOREA MUST COME CLEAN ON NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES", Washington, 2007/12/10) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice pressed the DPRK to declare all its nuclear activities amid doubts that Pyongyang will acknowledge any past or present program to enrich uranium. "We await a complete and accurate declaration from North Korea on all of its nuclear activities," Rice said, appearing at a women's forum in Washington. "And that's extremely important, because that becomes, then, the launching pad for the next step toward dismantlement of those activities, programs and facilities and the beginning of the true denuclearization of the Korean peninsula," she said.

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "ROH SAYS N. KOREAN URANIUM DISPUTE MUST BE SOLVED THROUGH MUTUAL TRUST", Seoul, 2007/12/10) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun said that there is no evidence of the DPRK having a uranium enrichment project, but that the international dispute over the DPRK's suspected uranium program must be resolved through mutual trust. In an interview with CNN Roh said that the DPRK's pledge made at the six-nation denuclearization forum to fully declare and disable its nuclear program should be trusted to help solve the dispute. "I've never said North Korea possesses uranium but I also haven't said it doesn't have uranium. Regarding the uranium issue, I've said there's no evidence of North Korea possessing uranium but I've never confirmed that North Korea doesn't possess it," Roh said in the interview.

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3. ROK-PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France-Presse ("SKOREA PM ARRIVES IN CHINA FOR NKOREA NUKE TALKS: OFFICIALS", Beijing, 2007/12/10) reported that ROK Prime Minister Han Duck-Soo arrived in

Beijing Monday for talks with the PRC's leaders on the DPRK's nuclear weapons programmes and expanding economic ties, officials said. Han "will explain the latest developments in inter-Korean relations, including the result of the recent inter-Korean prime ministerial talks, and ask for continued Chinese support for a peaceful settlement of the North Korean nuclear problem," an aide to Han told Yonhap news agency.

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4. DPRK Economy

Yonhap ("N KOREA PRODUCES FAKE FOREIGN-BRAND CIGARETTES TO EARN HARD CURRENCY: SANKEI", Tokyo, 2007/12/10) reported that the DPRK has produced about 41 billion cigarettes for illicit sale under foreign brands every year for the past several years, earning up to US\$700 million annually, Japan's Sankei Shimbun reported. The DPRK has been accused of producing counterfeit greenbacks and narcotics to earn badly needed hard currency. The DPRK, however, has shifted to foreign-brand cigarettes in recent years as the cigarettes are cheaper to make and harder to detect.

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5. ROK Afghanistan Withdrawal

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "AFGHAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL TO BE COMPLETED NEXT WEEK", 2007/12/10) reported that ROK forces stationed in Afghanistan will return home next week, ending their five-year-long humanitarian operations in the war-torn Middle East nation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The 200-strong non-combatant troops will return Dec. 14 on chartered airplanes, JCS officials said. The ROK plans to contribute to the security of Afghanistan by joining the NATO-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) after the troop pullout.

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6. ROK Nuclear Power

Korea.Net ("KOREA BECOMES MEMBER OF PEACEFUL NUCLEAR ENERGY PARTNERSHIP", 2007/12/10) reported that the ROK has become a member of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP) that can allow the country to acquire the latest atomic power know-how and help the export of its indigenous reactors, the government said Monday (Dec. 10). The Ministry of Science and Technology said it signed the statement of principles earlier in the day making the ROK the 19th member of the partnership that aims to expand the peaceful and safe use of atomic power. "By joining the GNEP, Korea can maximize its interest in critical decision making processes related to atomic energy issues, and can use its membership to bolster exports to countries interested in nuclear power generation," said Kim Young-sik, head of the ministry's atomic energy bureau said.

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7. US-Japan Security Relations

Reuters ("JAPAN AGREES NOT TO CUT U.S. BASE FUNDING: REPORT", Tokyo, 2007/12/10) reported that Japan has abandoned an attempt to slash its funding of US bases on its soil because of concerns about ties after Tokyo ended support for Washington-led military activities in Afghanistan, a report said. Japan and the United States have agreed to fix "host nation support" at this financial year's level of 140.9 billion yen for the next three years, Kyodo news agency said. Kyodo said there were concerns in Tokyo that cutting back on funding of U.S. bases in the country would further strain ties.

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8. Cross Strait Relations

The Financial Times (Kathrin Hille, "TAIWAN TYCOON IN POLITICAL CHALLENGE", Taipei, 2007/12/10) reported that Robert Tsao, one of Taiwan's most prominent technology tycoons, is challenging the island's politicians to develop creative solutions to the standoff with the PRC, in a rare example of political dissent by an entrepreneur. The combative founder of United Microelectronics, the chipmaker, is making his battle with the government political following his prosecution for alleged illegal investment in the PRC. His key recommendation is for Taiwan to commit itself to hold off from any referendum on formal independence and to put any offer by the PRC for unification to a referendum. "There are friendly and hostile takeovers in business, but in the end all takeovers need to be agreed upon by shareholders," Mr Tsao said.

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9. US-PRC Trade Relations

Reuters ("CHINA TELLS U.S. NOT TO POLITICIZE TRADE ROWS", Beijing, 2007/12/10) reported that the US should resolve trade rows with the PRC through dialogue on an equal footing and should not politicize them, a senior Commerce Ministry official said in remarks. The warning by Chen Deming came a day after Finance Minister Xie Xuren said legislation being considered by the US Congress could seriously harm trade ties with the PRC. The comments put down a marker for two rounds of cabinet-level talks in Beijing this week.

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "U.S. CONCILIATORY ON SAFETY AHEAD OF CHINA SUMMIT", Beijing, 2007/12/10) reported that a senior US official struck a conciliatory tone on product safety on Monday ahead of high-level talks with the PRC likely to be dominated by US fears of substandard PRC-made food and drugs. Insisting that Washington and Beijing were working well on safety issues, Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt said this was a question of improving the monitoring of imports not only from the PRC but from the rest of the world. Later in the day, however, other Washington officials said the talks with the PRC would also cover US worries about intellectual property protection, market access and Beijing's efforts to nurture champion companies through industrial policy -- areas where room for quick, tangible progress is less clear.

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10. Sino-Indian Territorial Dispute

BBC News (Subir Bhaumik, "CHINESE 'BORDER GESTURE' TO INDIA ", Calcutta , 2007/12/10)

reported that the PRC appears to have reversed its long-held policy of refusing to give visas to Indians from the disputed Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. It has emerged that this week the PRC embassy in Delhi granted a visa to Marpe Sora, a professor in computer science at the Rajiv Gandhi university in Arunachal's capital, Itanagar. Diplomats and analysts feel this gesture may be a prelude to the PRC ultimately accepting Arunachal Pradesh as part of India.

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11. Sino-Vietnamese Territorial Dispute

Agence France-Presse ("VIETNAMESE RALLY OUTSIDE CHINA EMBASSY OVER DISPUTED ISLANDS", Hanoi, 2007/12/10) reported that several hundred Vietnamese protesters staged a rare demonstration outside the PRC embassy in Hanoi on Sunday to defend the national claim of sovereignty over the disputed Spratly and Paracel islands. The protest came after the PRC last month set up the county-level Sansha administrative unit on Hainan island, which covers 2.6 million square kilometres (1 million square miles), mostly ocean, including the disputed isles.

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12. Sino-Burmese Trade Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA-MYANMAR ECONOMIC TIES MAKE NEW PROGRESS", Yangon, 2007/12/10) reported that the bilateral economic and trade cooperative ties between the PRC and Myanmar has made new progress in 2007 with an incomplete Myanmar official statistics showing that the PRC was at least able to become Myanmar's second largest trading partner and the 6th in its foreign investment line-up. According to Tang Hai, PRC-Myanmar bilateral trade scored greater achievement in 2007 based on relatively fast growth of its volume. In the merely first three quarters of the year, the bilateral trade volume hit 1.435 billion U.S. dollars, increasing by 37.7 percent correspondingly. Of the total, the PRC's export to Myanmar stood 1.216 billion dollars, up 45.8 percent, while its import from Myanmar took 220 million dollars, up 5.2 percent compared with the same period.

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13. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua ("CHINA'S SINOPEC, IRAN SIGN OILFIELD DEVELOPMENT CONTRACT", Tehran, 2007/12/09) reported that China Petrochemical Corporation, better known as Sinopec Group, and the Iranian oil ministry signed a contract on the development of the Yadavaran oilfield in southwestern Iran. "The initial estimation of the project's cost is about 2 billion U.S. dollars," Iranian Oil Minister Gholam Hossein Nozari told reporters at the signing ceremony in Tehran. "The first phase to produce 85,000 barrels per day will be carried out in four years and the second phase to produce another 100,000 bpd will be carried out in another three years," Nozari said.

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14. PRC Bird Flu Outbreak

The Associated Press (Audra Ang, "NEW BIRD FLU CASE IN CHINA", Beijing, 2007/12/10) reported that the father of a PRC man who died of bird flu has been infected with the virus that causes the disease, the World Health Organization confirmed Friday, saying it could not rule out the possibility of human-to-human infection. Joanna Brent, a Beijing-based WHO spokeswoman, said the father began showing symptoms Monday and was confirmed as having the H5N1 virus on Wednesday. She said he has been hospitalized. Brent said there was no evidence the man had been infected by his 24-year-old son, who died on Dec. 2, but could not eliminate that possibility.

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15. PRC Environment

The New York Times (Keith Bradsher, "TRUCKS POWER CHINA'S ECONOMY, AT A SUFFOCATING COST", Guangzhou, 2007/12/10) reported that trucks are the mules of this country's spectacularly expanding economy — ubiquitous and essential, yet highly noxious. Trucks here burn diesel fuel contaminated with more than 130 times the pollution-causing sulfur that the United States allows in most diesel. While car sales in the PRC are now growing even faster than truck sales, trucks are by far the largest source of street-level pollution. Tiny particles of sulfur-laden soot penetrate deep into residents' lungs, interfering with the absorption of oxygen. The 10 million trucks on the PRC roads, more than a quarter of all vehicles in this country, are a major reason that the PRC accounts for half the world's annual increase in oil consumption.

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II. ROK Report

16. ROK Presidential Election

Yonhap News ("DPRK NATIONAL INSTITUTION OF UNIFICATION DEGRADED LEE HOI-CHANG", Seoul, 2007/12/10) reported that the DPRK National Institution of Unification criticized Lee Hoi-chang, the presidential candidate as anti-national and anti-unification, pointing to the negative remarks he made about the 2000 inter-Korean summit. They added that Lee is only interested in confrontations and separation, saying the reason why he declared the candidacy was because of the Grand National Party (GNP)'s noncommittal DPRK policy. The DPRK continued to criticize Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye during the GNP nomination race. However, since Lee Myung-bak was chosen as the candidate, they no longer mentioned him and started denouncing Lee Hoi-chang right after his declaration of candidacy.

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17. DPRK Human Rights

Kyunghyang Daily (Chang Kwan-soon, "NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION 'DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS, CRUCIAL MATTER FOR US'", Seoul, 2007/12/11) reported that An Kyung-hwan, the president of National Human Rights Commission of Korea, said on Dec. 10 that they are going to be actively involved in issues about the human rights of the DPRK, concerning their status in the

international society and domestic priorities. One official of the commission analyzed that this remark means that they are now ready to join the flow of international atmosphere around human rights. He also added that the involvement would only deal with matters that have drawn national empathy such as returning war prisoners, kidnapped fishermen, etc.

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