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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap (Byun Duk-kun, "TOP NUCLEAR ENVOYS OF SEOUL, BEIJING MEET OVER 'BUMP' IN N. KOREA TALKS", Seoul, 2007/12/13) reported that the chief nuclear negotiators of the ROK and PRC met in Beijing to hammer out a joint message to the DPRK, urging Pyongyang to come clean on all its nuclear programs and activities. The DPRK is reportedly refusing to acknowledge its long-suspected uranium enrichment program, creating what Foreign Minister Song Min-soon has called a new "bump" in six-way nuclear disarmament talks. The meeting between the ROK's Chun Yung-woo and the chief PRC envoy in the nuclear talks, Wu Dawei, came as Wu is scheduled to visit the DPRK next week. "As Vice Minister Wu will visit North Korea next week and the North's disclosure of its nuclear programs is becoming a key issue. Ambassador Chun and Vice Minister Wu will try to reach a joint message for North Korea regarding its nuclear declaration," an official said, asking that he remain unidentified.

Yomiuri Shimbun (Takashi Sakamoto and Takeo Miyazaki, "HILL: NORTH KOREA REFUSED NUCLEAR DECLARATION", 2007/12/14) reported that Christopher Hill told the U.S. Congress on Wednesday that the DPRK had refused to declare its past uranium enrichment programs and nuclear technology transfers, according to sources close to Congress. Speaking during a closed-door hearing at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Hill made clear that negotiations at the six-party talks have degenerated into a standoff, the sources said.

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2. US-DPRK Relations

Associated Press ("REPORT: NKOREA REPLIES TO BUSH LETTER", Seoul, 2007/12/14) reported that the DPRK has replied to a personal letter from US President George W. Bush by pledging to dismantle its nuclear program but calling on Washington to fulfill promises under an international disarmament-for-aid deal, a news report said Friday. The DPRK said through their U.N. delegation in New York that the DPRK "appreciates President Bush's letter, will fulfill its obligations and expects the U.S. to perform what it has to do," the Yonhap News Agency reported from Washington, citing an unnamed diplomatic source there.

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3. Sino-DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("CHINA, N. KOREA SIGN AGREEMENT ON COOPERATION IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY: REPORT", Seoul, 2007/12/13) reported that the PRC and DPRK signed an agreement to enhance bilateral cooperation in science that includes the launch of joint projects in various fields, including agriculture and power generation, the PRC's official news agency reported. The agreement, inked by the PRC's Ministry of Science and Technology and the DPRK's National Academy of Science, also calls for cooperation in developing software and medicine, Xinhua News agency reported.

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Herald (Yoo Cheong-mo, "TWO KOREAS AGREE ON CROSS-BORDER SAFETY ASSURANCES", 2007/12/13) reported that the ROK and DPRK militaries agreed on ensuring cross-border security that will serve to boost business in the Gaeseong Industrial Complex and tourism to Mount Geumgang, Seoul's Defense Ministry said yesterday. General-level officers from the two sides signed an agreement late Wednesday night to provide safety assurances for people and equipment which pass through the heavily-fortified inter-Korean border, the ministry said. They also adopted a set of new rules for cross-border travel, communications, and customs inspections, which are relaxed in comparison to the past, it said.

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "KOREAS END TALKS WITHOUT FISHING DEAL", 2007/12/14) reported that the two Koreas ended three days of talks Friday without an agreement on creating a shared fishing zone. "We couldn't agree with the North's opinion so we couldn't reach a settlement today," said Col. Moon Sung-mook, spokesman for the ROK delegation. The DPRK agreed to allow ROK citizens to use the Internet and cell phones while inside the DPRK for two joint industrial and tourism ventures

Yonhap ("S. KOREANS EVENLY DIVIDED OVER NEW PRESIDENT'S N. KOREA POLICY ", Seoul, 2007/12/13) reported that South Koreans are evenly divided over whether their next president should follow up on inter-Korean agreements sealed between President Roh Moo-hyun and DPRK leader Kim Jong-il at their summit in early October, a poll showed. In a survey of 1,015 adults by the presidential National Unification Advisory Council, 44.6 percent said the incoming ROK administration has to implement the inter-Korean agreements reached during the Roh presidency. By contrast, 44.2 percent said the existing inter-Korean agreements should be reviewed by the next president, with the remaining 11.2 percent refusing to give an answer, the poll said.

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5. Japan-DPRK Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN OFFICIAL CALLS FOR INT'L UNITY TO SETTLE N. KOREA ABDUCTIONS", Tokyo, 2007/12/13) reported that Kyoko Nakayama, special adviser to the Japanese prime minister on the issue of the DPRK's abductions, called at a symposium in Tokyo for international unity to resolve the

problem, which involves not only Japanese nationals but the nationals of other countries. ''I hope this symposium will help more people in Japan to become aware of the abduction problem...and I believe strengthening international cooperation further will lead to a settlement of the problem of the abductions,'' Nakayama told the event organized by the Japanese government.

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6. ROK-PRC Military Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA, CHINA TO OPEN MILITARY HOTLINES NEXT WEEK", 2007/12/13) reported that the ROK and PRC are set to open military hotlines between their navies and air forces some time next week. The launch was originally scheduled for August in time for the 15th anniversary of normalizing diplomatic ties. But it has been delayed after the PRC demanded that hotline locations be changed. Officials in both countries expect the opening of the two-way communication lines to pave the way for military cooperation and predict it will also help prevent clashes between the two countries over fishing rights in the West Sea.

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7. ROK Afghanistan Withdrawal

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN SET TO RETURN", Seoul, 2007/12/13) reported that about 200 ROK troops in Afghanistan will return home Friday, ending their six-year mission in the war-ravaged nation as part of the US-led coalition forces against war on terrorism, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said. The ROK has opted to completely withdraw its troops from Afghanistan, despite a U.S. request to keep them there. The ROK, however, will continue its contribution to stabilize Afghanistan through a civilian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT).

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8. ROK Politics

Agence France-Presse (Lim Chang-Won, "NUCLEAR-ARMED NKOREA FAILS TO SWAY SOUTH'S VOTERS", Seoul, 2007/12/13) reported that the DPRK is eager to sway the ROK's upcoming presidential election, staging a series of reconciliation events to boost support for the liberal camp and heaping abuse on a rightwing candidate. But in contrast to previous elections, most voters in the ROK just don't seem especially interested in their nuclear-armed neighbour. "Many voters here do not regard North Korea as an important election topic," Sungkyunkwan University political science professor Mah Insub told AFP.

The Financial Times (Anna Fifield, "S KOREA RISKS TURNING BACK POLITICAL CLOCK", Seoul, 2007/12/13) reported that twenty years ago, a generation of dogged university students realised their dream to bring democracy to the ROK, the result of a long and bloody struggle against military leaders. Five years ago, that same group – known as the “386” generation for being in their 30s, educated in the 1980s and born in the 1960s – rallied behind the maverick presidential candidate they hoped would further promote democratic principles in the ROK. Today, though, many are disillusioned. The candidate they backed, Roh Moo-hyun, turned out to be too centrist a president for many 386ers’ liking and too radical for most of the population. “In the last election, the

progressive forces supported Roh Moo-hyun but now they feel betrayed by his policies and the way he has sometimes tried to appeal to more conservative forces in Korean society," saìd Choi Jang-jip, a renowned political scientist and democracy expert who advised former president Kim Dae-jung.

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9. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Agence France-Presse ("NATO CHIEF URGES JAPAN TO SUPPORT AFGHAN EFFORTS", Tokyo, 2007/12/13) reported that the head of NATO called for Japan's support for efforts to quell insurgency in Afghanistan amid intense debate in this pacifist nation about how to contribute to global security. NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer urged closer ties between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Japan, the world's second largest economy. Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda told the NATO chief in a meeting his government was working to push through legislation to resume an Indian Ocean naval refuelling mission in support of US-led operations in Afghanistan.

BBC News (Chris Hogg, "JAPANESE PARLIAMENT IN DEADLOCK", Tokyo, 2007/12/14) reported that Japan's government has extended the parliamentary session into the New Year for the first time in 14 years in an effort to pass a bill to renew Japan's refuelling operation in the Indian Ocean in support of US-led operations in Afghanistan. The opposition can only delay the bill for a 60-day period, which runs out in mid-January. After that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda intends to force it through parliament with a rarely used procedure that will ensure it becomes law.

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10. Japan Missile Defense Program

The Asahi Shimbun ("MSDF OFFICER ARRESTED OVER INFORMATION LEAK ON AEGIS DEFENSE SYSTEM", Yokohama, 2007/12/13) reported that a lieutenant commander of the Maritime Self-Defense Force was arrested Thursday on suspicion of leaking confidential information, including top secret data of the U.S. Aegis missile defense system. Sumitaka Matsuuchi, 34, is the first person arrested on suspicion of violating the Secrets Protection Law, which is based on the Japan-U.S. Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement (MDA) signed in 1954, police said. Matsuuchi has admitted to the allegations, according to the Kanagawa prefectural police and the Maritime Self-Defense Force's police unit. Police plan to seek charges against other MSDF members who received the information and distributed it to others.

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11. US Military in Japan

Asahi Shimbun (Takashi Watanabe, "ZAMA SOON MAIN REGIONAL BASE FOR ASIA, PACIFIC", Zama, 2007/12/13) reported that Camp Zama, known for its recreational facilities, will be upgraded next week to frontline military base status. The transformation of Camp Zama into a forward headquarters for the U.S. Army's I Corps is seen as a first step toward creating a new symbol of growing cooperation between the Japanese Self-Defense Forces and the U.S. Army.

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12. Comfort Women Issue

Yonhap (Kim Young-gyo, "FORMER COMFORT WOMEN WELCOME RESOLUTION BY EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT", Seoul, 2007/12/14) reported that former Korean sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II Friday welcomed the passage of a motion by the European Parliament the previous day calling on the Japanese government to officially apologize and compensate the victims. "We warmly welcome the adoption of the resolution by European Parliament calling for the Japanese government to give an official apology and legal reparation to victims of Military Sexual Slavery and strongly urge the Japanese government to adopt this resolution immediately," four former sex slaves said in a statement.

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13. Sino-Japanese Relations

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINESE REMEMBER 'NANKING MASSACRE'", Beijing, 2007/12/13) reported that sirens sounded and students stood at attention Thursday to mark the 70th anniversary of Japan's wartime massacre of civilians in the Chinese city of Nanjing. "The Chinese government hopes that on the basis of taking history as a mirror for the benefit of the future, to develop long-term good neighborliness and cooperation with Japan," Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang told a regular news briefing.

Asahi Shimbun (Kenji Minemura, "ACTIVISTS IN CHINA FIND IT HARDER TO STAGE ANTI-JAPAN PROTESTS", Beijing, 2007/12/13) reported that the PRC it is cracking down on anti-Japan protests around the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. One Hong Kong group received a letter from the PRC government's liaison office in Hong Kong before it tried to depart for the islands. The letter read: "Relations between China and Japan are improving. On the other hand, the Taiwan Strait (located between China and Taiwan) is facing a dangerous time. You must have a broad perspective." A member of the group said: "Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian is intensifying moves toward independence. In such a situation, the government is trying to contain the moves by maintaining good relations with the United States and Japan."

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14. US-PRC Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse (Dan Martin, "US VOWS TO KEEP UP TRADE PRESSURE ON CHINA", 2007/12/13) reported that the United States vowed to maintain pressure on the PRC over alleged unfair trade practices, as the world powers wrapped up two days of tense economic talks. Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson, who urged the PRC at the start of their Strategic Economic Dialogue on Wednesday to let its yuan currency rise, said the United States would continue to press Beijing on the issue. "China isn't ready to have a market-determined currency yet but they need to move in that direction and they're going to continue to hear about it until they get a market-determined currency," he told reporters at the close of the talks outside Beijing.

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15. Sino-Indian Relations

India Express ("INDIA MOVES OVER 6,000 TROOPS TO BORDER WITH CHINA", 2007/12/13) reported that the army has moved more than 6,000 troops to Sino-Indian border close to tri-junction of India, Bhutan and the PRC even as Army Chief Deepak Kapooor said reports of intrusions of PRC forces in Bhutan was a 'matter between the two countries'. The movement of troops from Jammu and Kashmir has been termed by army officials as 'routine move back of troops to their original locations'.

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16. Hong Kong Government

The New York Times (Donald Greenlees, "HONG KONG LEADER PRESSES CHINA FOR VOTE", Hong Kong, 2007/12/13) reported that facing widespread demands from the public for full democracy to be introduced within five years, the Hong Kong government urged the PRC government to set a firm timetable for direct elections for the region’s leader and legislature. Hong Kong’s chief executive, Donald Tsang, said an early agreement on a date for carrying out the promise of universal suffrage would help “ultimately resolve” a deadlock between democrats and the conservatives who are loyal to the government in Beijing over how and when to achieve democracy. But Mr. Tsang balked at recommending dates for democratic elections, effectively leaving the central government to decide.

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17. US-PRC Environmental Cooperation

Agence France-Presse ("US, CHINA COOPERATE TO STOP ILLEGAL LOGGING ", Washington, 2007/12/13) reported that the United States and the PRC sealed their first deal to stop illegal logging in a bid to ease deforestation, fight climate change and preserve wildlife, the US State Department said. The US and PRC governments reached a memorandum of understanding on illegal logging and associated trade at a meeting this week of the US-China Strategic Economic Dialogue, it said in a statement. "This is the first-ever commitment between the two countries to focus on addressing the devastating problem of illegal logging and the trade in illegally harvested timber," the State Department said.

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