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I. NAPSNet

1. US on Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("RICE SAYS N.K. CAN STOP BEING ENEMY", Washington, 2008/01/24) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the U.S. "can imagine" a better relationship with the DPRK, pressing the DPRK to provide a full accounting of its nuclear activities. "It is because America desires no permanent enemies that we can imagine a better relationship with North Korea, and we are working to build it through the six-party talks," she said. "Still, we continue to believe that we can use the six-party talks for even larger purposes," said Rice. Those goals include an official end to the Korean War, forging a regional security mechanism, and improving the DPRK's relations with the international community, she said. This, she said, "would benefit no one more than the North Korean people themselves."

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2. DPRK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("N. KOREA BASHES U.S. HARDLINERS FOR STALLED NUKE TALKS", Seoul, 2008/01/24) reported that the DPRK blamed U.S. hardliners for the stalled multilateral talks on the DPRK's nuclear disarmament, amid reports hawkish U.S. officials are trying to take advantage of the hiccup to derail the talks. "The U.S. conservative hardliners are ceaselessly staging military rackets against the DPRK even under the situation where the implementation of the agreements made at the six-party talks is going on," Rodong Sinmun, propaganda newspaper of the DPRK's powerful Workers' Party said. The DPRK lambasted what it claims is Washington's "anachronistic hostile policy,"

alluding to the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Experts

Kyodo ("U.S. EYES HELPING FIND JOBS FOR N. KOREAN NUKE EXPERTS: OFFICIAL", Washington, 2008/01/24) reported that the US is willing to help DPRK nuclear experts land jobs at US and other foreign companies if the process of scrapping Pyongyang's nuclear programs makes headway, a government official said. Adam Scheinman, assistant deputy administrator for nonproliferation and international security at the Energy Department's National Nuclear Security Administration, signaled this readiness during a congressional hearing.

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4. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("KIM JONG IL SITE VISITS INDICATE DPRK'S FOCUS ON ECONOMY", 2008/01/24) reported that the DPRK leader Kim Jong Il has started the new year by visiting a series of facilities and locations important to the economy in order to stimulate 'Economic Revival'. DPRK media outlets reported on January 21 that Kim had examined the 18th national program performance and exhibition which opened last year, and that on the 6th, he visited the Ryesung Power Plant in North Hwanghae Province and dispensed on-location directives. In the DPRK, Kim's new year's traveling is indicative of the country's national goals for the year, and Kim's trip to economic facilities appears to indicate that DPRK authorities are focusing on rebuilding the economy this year.

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5. Inter-Korean Talks

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "KOREAS HOLD FIRST TALKS FOR 2008", Seoul, 2008/01/25) reported that the two Koreas began working-level military talks Friday, the first dialogue between the two countries this year. The one-day meeting between officers with the rank of colonel at the truce village of Panmunjom was to discuss security issues related to cargo rail service launched last month across their border. A Defense Ministry official, who spoke on customary condition of anonymity citing office policy, said the talks started as scheduled, but could not offer details.

Yonhap (Shim Sun-ah, "KOREAS TO HOLD RAILWAY TALKS NEXT WEEK", Seoul, 2008/01/25) reported that the two Koreas will hold this year's first working-level talks on railway cooperation early next week, the Unification Ministry said Friday. The DPRK proposed in a letter to hold the railway talks from Jan. 29 to 30 in Kaesong, the ministry said in a statement. "Since the transition team classified the repair work as one of the long-term businesses requiring a feasibility study, the transporting of the joint cheering team is likely to be the main issue," a senior ministry official said, requesting anonymity.

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6. ROK Policy Toward the DPRK

Donga Ilbo ("UNIFICATION MINISTRY EVALUATES 'SUNSHINE POLICY'", 2008/01/24) reported that the Unification Ministry has launched its first official evaluation of the results of the engagement policy towards DPRK, better known as the "sunshine policy." The ministry acknowledged that the Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun administrations unilaterally pushed for aid to the DPRK without public consensus, and is planning to propose alternative policies to the new administration. "We will conduct a comprehensive evaluation to assess how effective the engagement policy towards the North has been over the past 10 years in easing tension and changing the communist regime for peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula, and if each policy was properly carried out," a ministry official said.

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, "KEEP THE UNIFICATION MINISTRY, SAYS KIM", 2008/01/24) reported that Former President Kim Dae-jung has added his voice to a rising chorus of dissent over the incoming administration's plan to abolish the Unification Ministry. The Unification Ministry is a symbol of passion for reunification, he said. Some political observers think Lee intends to use the threat to shut down the ministry as a negotiating tool in the National Assembly session in February when his supporters will try to pass the reform package into law. Lee has denied the speculation. But the backlash is real. Some 140 local experts on the DPRK, including respected university professors of DPRK studies, yesterday released a joint statement to denounce the decision.

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7. UN on Aid to the DPRK

Korea Times (Yoon Won-sup, "UN RENEWS CALLS FOR AID TO N.KOREA", 2008/01/24) reported that a U.N. human rights envoy said that the ROK needs to provide humanitarian aid to the DPRK without conditions based on effective monitoring of its use. Vitit Muntarbhorn, the special rapporteur on human rights in the DPRK of the United Nations, said in a press conference in Seoul that it is a general principle to give emergency aid without reciprocity.

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8. UN on DPRK Human Rights

Agence France Presse ("UN ENVOY URGES SPECIAL HELP FOR NKOREA TORTURE VICTIMS", Seoul, 2008/01/24) reported that many DPRK refugees who escape to the ROK were repeatedly tortured in their homeland and need special help to adjust to their new country, a United Nations rights envoy said. Vitit Muntarbhorn, the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in the DPRK, was speaking after a six-day fact-finding trip to the South, where he interviewed refugees from the DPRK. Vitit also highlighted the difficulties in reuniting refugees with family members left behind in the DPRK, saying they may face intimidation by authorities if the identity of refugees is disclosed.

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9. Canadian Detained in the DPRK

Agence France Presse ("CANADIAN DETAINED IN NORTH KOREA: REPORT", Ottawa, 2008/01/24) reported that a Canadian businessman providing dental aid to impoverished DPRKoreans has been detained for more than two months in the reclusive state, a newspaper reported. Je Yell Kim, a Korean-born Canadian aged in his fifties, was detained in the remote northeast of the country on November 3, the Toronto Star daily reported on its website, citing Kim's family and aid groups. The news had not been announced earlier pending diplomat efforts to have him freed, it said. It cited the humanitarian group he worked for, Christian Aid, as saying he was held on charges related to "national security."

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10. DPRK UNDP Fraud

Washington Post (Colum Lynch, "REPORT: N. KOREA EXPLOITED U.N. ACCOUNT", United Nations, 2008/01/24) reported that DPRK officials channeled at least \$2.7 million through a bank account normally used to process United Nations development projects because of fears that the US would block its ability to transfer money outside the country, according to a Senate subcommittee report. The report supports U.S. assertions that the DPRK government routinely manipulated the U.N. Development Program to move cash around the world. But UNDP insisted that Wednesday's report "contains nothing" to substantiate persistent allegations that it transferred tens of millions of dollars to the DPRK or that its funds were diverted to a clandestine DPRK nuclear or missile program.

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11. DPRK Abductions Issue

Asahi Shimbun (Kazuto Tsukamoto, "CAMBODIA PRODDING N. KOREA ON ABDUCTIONS", Tokyo, 2008/01/24) reported that Cambodia Foreign Minister Hor Namhong said during an interview with The Asahi Shimbun in Tokyo on Jan. 16 that Cambodia has been working behind the scenes to encourage the DPRK to resolve the abduction issue with Japan. Hor said that during a meeting of high-ranking Cambodian government officials and their DPRK counterparts in November, one Cambodian official suggested that solving the abduction issue would cause Japan to reconsider its relations with the DPRK in the economic field. "For the sake of world peace, we want Japan and North Korea to become friendly and normalize their diplomatic relations," Hor Namhong said in the interview. "Cambodia is in a position where it can hold high-level meetings with North Korea, and it has the ability to persuade North Korea," he added.

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12. US-ROK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("BUSH APPOINTS NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR TO SEOUL", 2008/01/24) reported that Kathleen Stephens, an advisor at the State Department on East Asia and Pacific Affairs, has been appointed the next U.S. ambassador to the ROK. Stephens will leave for her new post as soon as the U.S. Senate's Foreign Relations Committee confirms her appointment. Diplomatic sources in Washington expect her to get the confirmation easily. Stephens taught English to ROK students in Buyeo, South Chungcheong Province, in the 1970s as a member of the Peace Corps. Since joining the State Department in 1978, she has worked at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul and the U.S. Consulate

in Busan.

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13. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, "EXPECTATIONS LOW FOR NEXT ROUND OF EU FTA TALKS", 2008/01/24) reported that there are three primary issues left to be hammered out in the ROK-European Union free trade agreement. None of them will be negotiated during next week's talks, according to the ROK's Trade Ministry. "After five rounds of negotiations, the core issues have been boiled down to tariff concessions, auto industrial standards [on European-made cars] and rule of origin [on goods from Kaesong Industrial Complex]," Kim Han-soo, the ROK's chief negotiator for the Korea-EU free trade agreement, said in a statement. "It is hard to expect major progress in next week's talks because it is taking longer than expected to tackle those core issues."

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14. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo ("MSDF SHIP LEAVES JAPAN TO RESUME REFUELING MISSION NEXT MONTH", Yokosuka, 2008/01/24) reported that a Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer left its base in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, on Thursday for the Indian Ocean where it and an MSDF support ship will resume next month Japan's refueling mission in support of U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in and near Afghanistan after a three-month hiatus. Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba said at a ceremony held on a pier at the Yokosuka base that the resumption of logistical support is "indispensable for Japan to fulfill its duty in the international community" and help make Afghanistan more stable.

Kyodo ("SUPPORT SHIP LEAVES JAPAN TO JOIN REFUELING MISSION", Nagasaki, 2008/01/25) reported that a Maritime Self-Defense Force support ship left a base in Sasebo on Friday to join a destroyer that departed from a different port the previous day for refueling operations in the Indian Ocean. The 13,500-ton Oumi will rendezvous with the MSDF destroyer Murasame to form a two-vessel task force after leaving the base in Nagasaki Prefecture, southwestern Japan.

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15. Japan SDF Role

Kyodo ("FOREIGN MINISTER KOMURA SEES PEACE-BUILDING ROLE FOR DEFENSE FORCES", Tokyo, 2008/01/24) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura reiterated his calls for a permanent law for overseas dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces, citing the importance of mobilizing them for peace-building missions. "Japan ranked 82nd in a U.N. tally of manpower dispatched to peacekeeping operations," Komura said in addressing a symposium on peace-building in Tokyo. "Is this what we should be achieving as the world's second largest economy, whose contribution to the U.N. budget is second only to the United States?"

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16. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("MINSHUTO THREATENS TO CENSURE FUKUDA", 2008/01/24) reported that Opposition Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) on Tuesday threatened to submit a censure motion against Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda if the ruling coalition tries to ram budget-related bills through the Diet. "Should the ruling camp make light of us again during the ordinary Diet session, we are prepared even to submit (to the Upper House) a censure motion against the prime minister," Minshuto Upper House member Azuma Koshiishi said during Tuesday's session in the Diet chamber.

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17. Japan Environment

The Financial Times (David Pilling , "JAPAN LEADS FIELD IN GREEN TECHNOLOGY", 2008/01/24) reported that Japan wants to put technology at the centre of the fight against global warming. To critics, stressing the potential of technology removes some pressure to make real sacrifices now. But there is another practical reason for Japan to stress technology. It has lots of it. After the first oil shock of 1973, bureaucrats encouraged business to cut down on energy use. As Japanese business stresses, Japan is already at the cutting edge of energy-saving technology, even if environmentalists say it has lost some ground in recent years. Even today, in spite of its opposition to mandatory emissions targets, Japanese industry remains alive to the potential of energy-saving technology as a business strategy.

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18. Sino-Japanese Trade Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("CHINA TOP JAPAN TRADE PARTNER IN '07", Tokyo, 2008/01/25) reported that for the first time the PRC, excluding Hong Kong, ousted the United States as Japan's top trading partner in 2007, Japanese government statistics showed Thursday. Exports and imports between Japan and the PRC, excluding Hong Kong, totaled 27.8 trillion yen, compared with 25.2 trillion yen in Japan-U.S. trade. Japan's exports to the PRC grew 19 percent from a year earlier, while those to the United States slid 0.2 percent.

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19. Taiwan Nuclear Waste

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN MAY SHIP NUCLEAR WASTE TO FRANCE", Taipei, 2008/01/20) reported that Taiwan is mulling transporting its nuclear waste to France for reprocessing as two of the island's radioactive waste storage sites will reach capacity by 2011, a report said on Sunday. State-run Taiwan Power Company (Taipower) last year applied to expand the storage facilities but has so far not received approval from the Atomic Energy Council over environmental impact considerations, the China Times said. If Taipower fails to win approval to expand storage, it will have to shut down the two plants, which jointly supply about 4.8 per cent of the island's electricity, it said. However, when asked to comment on the report, Chou Yi-yueh, a Taipower spokesman, said he was not aware of the plan.

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20. Cross Straits Military Balance

Yomiuri Shimbun (Toshinao Ishii, "MILITARY BALANCE TILTING TOWARD CHINA", Taipei, 2008/01/25) reported that the military balance between the PRC and Taiwan is turning in the PRC's favor due to its huge defense spending that showed double-digit growth for the nine consecutive years from 1989. According to the defense white paper for 2007, the PRC possesses 70 frigates and destroyers as against 30 held by Taiwan, and 60 submarines to Taiwan's four. "Chinese warplanes have been flying into the airspace over the Taiwan Strait frequently and their flight technique has improved," a high-ranking Taiwan Air Force officer said. The PRC China has deployed 1,328 ballistic missiles targeted at Taiwan, about seven times more than in 2000,

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21. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

Dow Jones (Abhrajit Gangopadhyay, "INDIA TRADE MIN: DELHI STUDYING OPTIONS FOR PACTS WITH CHINA", New Delhi, 2008/01/24) reported that India is studying the possibilities of long-term trade and economic cooperation agreements with bigger neighbor the PRC, a local government statement quoting Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath said Thursday. The minister was speaking at a business meeting in Davos. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's recent visit to the PRC has boosted the possibilities of the early signing of trade pacts with the neighboring nation, Nath said.

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22. PRC Land Use

The Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "DOZENS HOLD LAND PROTEST IN BEIJING", Beijing, 2008/01/24) reported that protesters staged a rare public demonstration in the PRC's capital Thursday over what they said were illegal property seizures and compensation packages that fell far short of that needed to buy new homes. The protest underscored how galloping urban redevelopment is leaving many people behind and worsening an already yawning gap between rich and poor. The protesters from the city of Tianjin said government land seizures left them with no hope of buying new homes in the booming port city, 75 miles east of Beijing. Wearing white headbands emblazoned with the slogan, "It's illegal to forcefully demolish one's house," the group marched in a tight circle chanting, "We want to see the bureau head."

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23. PRC Toxic Spill

The Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "CHEMICALS TAINT WATER IN CHINA, 26 ILL", Beijing, 2008/01/24) reported that sulfuric acid leaked into the water supply from a chemical factory in central PRC, poisoning at least 26 villagers, authorities said. An underground pipe broke at the factory — part of the Xiaoping coal mine complex in Banqiao town in Hunan province's Chenxi

county — causing the chemical leak into groundwater supplies, said Yang Changyou of the Chenxi information office. "There are 26 people seriously poisoned and hospitalized, and more than 200 villagers are receiving free medical checkups, but no one died in the accident," Yang said. The government was providing free bottled water and water from four fire engines, he said, adding that authorities were trying to track and contain the leak.

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24. PRC Environment

The New York Times (Jim Yardley, "SMOGGY BEIJING PLANS TO CUT TRAFFIC BY HALF FOR OLYMPICS, PAPER SAYS", Beijing, 2008/01/24) reported that faced with persistent air pollution despite promises to stage a green Olympics, Beijing is planning to reduce its motor traffic by half during the Games to improve air quality and ease traffic flow, according to a newspaper report. The article, in The Beijing News, said the number of vehicles in the city was expected to reach 3.3 million by August, meaning that roughly 1.65 million cars and trucks would be pulled off roads each day. The city will dedicate lanes to Olympic traffic and increase public transportation with new shuttle buses to accommodate visitors and local residents, the article said.

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