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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Kyodo ("JAPAN'S TOP DIPLOMAT SAYS 6-WAY NUCLEAR TALKS ON THURS. UNLIKELY", Tokyo, 2007/12/03) reported that Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi indicated that it is unlikely that a six-party chief delegates meeting on denuclearizing the DPRK will be held Thursday as reported by the media. "The U.S.-North Korea talks have just begun and right now I don't feel that we're in a situation where what is being reported, such as it being held from Thursday, will be realized," Yachi told a news conference. "We are not in a situation where we can immediately enter discussions if it were held on Thursday."

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2. DPRK Nuclear Program

The Financial Times (Anna Fifield, "N KOREA TO LIST ALL ATOMIC PROGRAMMES", Seoul, 2007/12/03) reported that talks to convince the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons will enter a crucial phase this week, as Pyongyang prepares to supply a list of all its atomic programmes and Washington offers lucrative rewards if the task is satisfactorily completed. The DPRK is due to provide the other parties with a full list of its nuclear facilities, materials and programmes - both plutonium and uranium - and allow its Yongbyon reactor to be disabled by December 31. If both steps are taken, the US has offered to inform Congress this month of its intention to remove the DPRK from its list of state sponsors of terrorism, the FT understands. Congress cannot veto the move.

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "US ENVOY VISITS NORTH KOREAN REACTOR", Seoul, 2007/12/04) reported that US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill inspected disablement work at the Yongbyon nuclear complex on Monday afternoon, said Max Kwak, a spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Seoul. On Tuesday, Hill met with DPRK Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun, the Korean Central News Agency said in a one-sentence dispatch. He also toured Pyongyang and rode a subway with other members of the U.S. delegation, including Sung Kim, the State Department's top Korea

expert, according to footage from broadcaster APTN.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Brian Lee, "VISIT BY NORTH'S TOP SPY STILL CLOUDED IN MYSTERY", 2007/12/03) reported that there were no agreements. No tangible results. So why did the head of the DPRK's spy agency, Kim Yang-gon, pay a visit? It's still a mystery. Still, the diplomatic frenzy by senior officials here suggests that Seoul sees Kim's visit here as a signal to Washington that the DPRK is sincere about denuclearizing and normalizing ties. Government sources familiar with Kim's visit said he voiced the DPRK's support for a summit meeting between nations involved in the Korean War even before a complete dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear programs.

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4. DPRK Economy

Yonhap ("N.K. REQUIRES INDUSTRY OWNERS RESEMBLING THE SOUTH'S CHAEBOLS: EXPERT", Washington, 2007/12/03) reported that reforming the DPRK's economy requires creating a class of industry owners similar to those who run ROK conglomerates, a Russian diplomat said in his paper released last week. He said the new industry owners would most likely come from current military and security service leaders. Progress in six-party denuclearization talks provides an opportunity to influence the DPRK's economic policy selection and implementation process, according to Georgy Toloraya, in Washington as a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution. "Therefore, economic assistance to the DPRK...should be aimed at assisting system transformation, not at conservation of the outdated model by uncritically satisfying North Korean requests," Toloraya wrote in the paper presented through the Korea Economic Institute, a Washington-based think tank.

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5. DPRK Media

IFES NK Brief ("FIRST UNDERGROUND DPRK JOURNAL LAUNCHED", 2007/12/03) reported that the first bi-monthly magazine reporting internal news directly through DPRK undercover journalists was launched on November 20th. The Korean language magazine, "Rimjingang," is also expected to launch in English and Japanese by the end of this year. The inaugural issue contains interviews with staff members of the central state enterprise on current DPRK economic issues, public sentiment following the DPRK missile launch last year, interpretations of the DPRK internal image, as well as reports on local occurrences and accidents.

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6. DPRK Flood Recovery

Yonhap ("N. KOREA SAYS 90 PCT OF FLOOD-DAMAGED ROADS REPAIRED", Seoul, 2007/12/03)

reported that the DPRK has nearly finished repairing roads and bridges that were destroyed by floods earlier this year, a pro-DPRK newspaper reported. According to the Chosun Sinbo, a newspaper published in Japan, the impoverished North has also built new roads and bridges while repairing severed routes.

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7. ROK Politics

Chosun Ilbo ("LEE MYUNG-BAK LIKELY TO BE CLEARED OF INVESTMENT SCAM", 2007/12/03) reported that the Seoul Central District Prosecutors' Office is likely to clear Grand National Party presidential candidate Lee Myung-bak of involvement in the stock price manipulation of a firm called Optional Ventures Korea, it emerged on Sunday. Prosecutors have reportedly found no evidence corroborating the charge. They are also about to wrap up their investigation of Lee's relationship with DAS, a firm ostensibly owned by his brother and brother-in-law that was heavily invested in an earlier venture of Kim's called BBK. But investigators have also apparently found no evidence that Lee is the actual owner of DAS.

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8. ROK-Mexico Trade Relations

Korea Herald (Yoo Soh-jung, "KOREA AND MEXICO TO BEGIN FTA TALKS", 2007/12/03) reported that the ROK and Mexico will begin their first round of free trade agreement talks tomorrow, seeking a more ambitious deal than the agreement both were initially pursuing. "Both sides agreed on Aug. 8 this year to elevate the strategic economic complementation agreement talks, which have been stalled since the third round held in June 2006, and begin FTA negotiations," Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said yesterday. Experts have cited worries over a possible widening of Mexico's trade deficit as the reason for its reluctance to form an FTA with Korea. Mexico already has a trade pact with Japan.

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9. USFJ Base Realignment

The Asahi Shimbun ("BRIBE PROBE EXTENDS TO U.S. BASES", 2007/12/03) reported that prosecutors are delving into the possibility that a Defense Ministry bribery scandal may have involved two mammoth projects in the plan to realign U.S. military facilities in Japan, sources said. Defense Ministry officials have been questioned in connection with bribery suspicions that have led to the arrests of former Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya, 63, and Motonobu Miyazaki, 69, formerly an executive of defense equipment trading house Yamada Corp. The Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office has been looking into details of plans to relocate the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture's Ginowan to Nago in the prefecture and to transfer about 8,000 U.S. Marines stationed in Okinawa to Guam.

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10. US, Japan, Australia Security Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, U.S. TO HOLD SUBCABINET-LEVEL SECURITY TALKS", Tokyo, 2007/12/03) reported that Senior Japanese, Australian and U.S. officials will meet in Canberra to discuss regional security and other matters when they hold bilateral and trilateral strategic talks on Tuesday and Wednesday, the Japanese Foreign Ministry said Monday. Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Mitoji Yabunaka will meet with Australian Foreign Secretary Michael L'Estrange and U.S. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, the ministry said.

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11. Sino-Japanese Relations

The Financial Times (Jamil Anderlini, "CHINA-JAPAN TALKS A SIGN OF WARMING TIES", Beijing, 2007/12/03) reported that the PRC and Japan held their most comprehensive talks in 35 years over the weekend in Beijing in a sign of the thawing relationship between Asia's two largest economies. But the discussions achieved few concrete results and the two sides were unable to make any progress on the most pressing bilateral issue - a long-running dispute over oil and gas resources in the East China Sea which both countries claim as part of their territory. The "high-level economic dialogue" involved six Japanese cabinet ministers and eight senior Chinese leaders, including Premier Wen Jiabao, with discussion ranging from climate change to bilateral trade ties and the PRC's currency.

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12. PRC-EU Climate Change Cooperation

Xinhua ("CHINA, EU SIGN JOINT STATEMENT, TO JOINTLY FACE CLIMATE CHANGE", 2007/12/03) reported that according to a China-EU joint statement, the PRC and the European Union will continue to strengthen cooperation on responding to climate change. The leaders reviewed the bilateral cooperation under the China-EU Partnership on Climate Change and called for progress to be made, including on research of near-zero emissions of coal power generation technology through carbon capture and storage, as well as development of concrete cooperation projects to strengthen the PRC's participation in the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism.

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13. PRC Leadership

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA SHUFFLES LEADERS OF BOOMING PROVINCES: STATE MEDIA", Beijing, 2007/12/03) reported that the PRC has named new bosses of the booming regions of Guangdong and Chongqing, state media reported, as political reshuffling continues following a key Communist Party congress in October. Wang Yang was named party secretary of southern Guangdong province, the economic powerhouse and centre of the PRC's thriving manufacturing industry, Xinhua news agency reported. Replacing Wang will be Bo Xilai, China's commerce minister. The Xinhua report did not specify whether Bo, 58, will retain his ministerial post.

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14. PRC African Diplomacy

Xinhua ("CHINA PLEDGES TO GRANT MORE AID TO AFRICA", Beijing, 2007/12/03) reported that the PRC has signed agreements with 28 African countries to exempt their debts and offered 13 preferential loans to 10 countries on the continent. Wang Shichun, foreign aid department director of the Ministry of Commerce, made the remarks here in an online forum. He said that the country would soon dispatch the first group of 51 agricultural experts to Africa, an effort to improve local agricultural levels. At the same time, medicine and medical equipments for eight anti-malaria centers have been delivered, and the first group of experts will soon leave for the continent.

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15. Hong Kong Executive

The Associated Press ("PRO-DEMOCRACY ACTIVIST WINS ASSEMBLY SEAT IN HONG KONG", Hong Kong, 2007/12/03) reported that Anson Chan, a hugely popular former government official, won a seat in Hong Kong's legislature today, a victory she said was a call for greater political freedoms in the southern PRC territory. Chan, 67, dubbed "Hong Kong's conscience" for her championing of civil liberties, received 175,874 votes, or about 54.6% of the ballots cast in Sunday's poll, election officials said. Political analysts, who had said they expected Beijing to keep a close eye on the vote, doubted that the outcome would lead to any real change for Hong Kong.

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II. ROK Report

16. DPRK on US Policy

Yonhap News ("DPRK PRESS 'PREPARE FOR TALKS AND WAR AT THE SAME TIME'", Pyongyang, 2007/12/04) reported that the DPRK's Rodong Shinmun criticized the U.S. in its editorial for their consistent "scheming for war." Rodong pointed to the remarks made by some US pro-war people that their aim of producing special weapons and establishing military bases on the moon is to oppose "dangerous countries" such as the DPRK. The article explained that this is why they need to prepare both for the peaceful talks and war at the same time and emphasized the importance of strengthening national power. It added that it is one of the most obvious and essential rights to arm oneself against such "imprudent scheming of war."

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17. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Hankyoreh (Kwon Hyuk-chul, "INTER-KOREAN TALKS FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION COMMENCE ON 4TH", Seoul, 2007/12/03) reported that the inter-Korean economic cooperation

committee will meet December 4-6 at Grand Hilton Hotel, Seoul. This meeting is held in order to honor the committee's rise in its status from the vice-minister level to vice-premier level, which was done in order to facilitate inter-Korean economic cooperation. Kim Joong-tae, the spokesperson of the talks, said that they are going to specify the issues that had been dealt in the summit meeting and the talks between the prime ministers. Some of the issues that this meeting will be mainly discussing are "activation of Gaesong complex, establishing joint shipbuilding complex, repairing of railroads, etc." Kim added that they would also talk about establishing institutions to resolve economic conflicts smoothly, which was one of the strong requirements of some of the corporations participating in the cooperation.

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18. ROK Presidential Election

Kyunghyang Daily (Kim Kwang-ho, "PEACE ON PENINSULA UP TO PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION", Seoul, 2007/12/04) discussed how the coming presidential election will affect the peace status on Korean peninsula. Two of the most popular candidates, namely Lee Myung-bak and Lee Hoi-chang, have been insisting that they would reexamine the current government's one-sided support toward the DPRK, and may not implement what has been decided in the joint treaty. On the other hand, the U.S. and Japan, who have been constantly firm about the nuclear issue, changed their attitudes and are now trying to solve the matter peacefully through diplomacy. Hong Hyun-ik, the head investigator of Sejong Institute analyzed, that the ROK's opposition party and U.S. neo-cons are collaborating implicitly, which may only result in increasing tension on the peninsula. Other experts said that since there is only a year left for the Bush administration, the U.S. may not want to change their basic perspective, which can block the ROK's radical change in their attitude toward the inter-Korean relationship.

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