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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Agence France Presse ("S.KOREA URGES N.KOREA TO RETURN TO NUCLEAR TALKS", Seoul, 2010/01/06) reported that the ROK on Wednesday urged the DPRK to return to nuclear disarmament talks and called on the PRC to step up efforts to bring Pyongyang back to the table. "I think the North has now secured all face-saving measures (it needed) to return to the six-party talks," Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan said. "Now is the time for the North and China to respond more actively (to calls for resuming the talks)," he said. "My personal expectation is that North Korea will return to the talks at an early date but I am cautious in predicting in more precise terms -- whether it will do so in February or in March," Yu said.

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2. Inter-Korea Relations

Xinhua News Agency ("REPATRIATION OF TWO DPRK FISHERMEN COMPLETED", Seoul, 2010/01/06) reported that the repatriation of the two fishermen from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) who drifted south of the sea border has been completed Wednesday, local media reported. The two were sent back at 2:00 p.m. local time through the truce village of Panmunjum as previously scheduled by authorities, according to Seoul's Yonhap News Agency.

Yonhap News ("TWO KOREAS CAN COOPERATE IN CHEMISTRY, BIOTECH AND NANO SCIENCE: REPORT", Seoul, 2010/01/06) reported that inter-Korean cooperation is possible in the chemistry, biotech and nano science arenas, where the technology gap separating the two countries is the smallest, a report by a state-run think tank said Wednesday. The latest "Issue and Policy" report by the Science and Technology Policy Institute said the DPRK has traditionally been strong in the polymer chemistry and single carbon material sectors, as well as in such biotech areas as animal

cloning. "Cooperation can take place in relatively new fields such as nanotech, biology and chemistry where North Korea has traditionally been strong," the report said.

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3. Sino-DPRK Relations

United Press International ("CHINA STRESSES CLOSER TIES WITH N. KOREA ", Pyongyang, 2010/01/06) reported that the PRC's friendship with the DPRK will reach new heights this year, its ambassador to Pyongyang said. Speaking at a reception for journalists from the two countries, PRC Ambassador Liu Xiaoming said cooperative relations helped boost the friendship between the two countries. Liu also said the PRC would continue to boost bilateral exchanges and work for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. On the denuclearization issue, Liu said there was some progress toward restarting the six-party talks, and said it should be realized through dialogue and negotiation.

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4. DPRK Plane Interdiction

Agence France Presse ("THAI DETENTION OF ALLEGED ARMS TRAFFICKERS EXTENDED", Bangkok, 2010/01/06) reported that Thailand's criminal court Wednesday extended by 12 days the detention of five suspected arms traffickers, as police continue to investigate their sanctions-busting cache from the DPRK. They have been held since they were arrested at Don Mueang airport on December 11 and the third extension to their detention will last until January 18, said police investigator Major Mingmontri Siripong. "We told the court that police need more time to interrogate a few more witnesses and verify the suspects' passports, and the court agreed," he said.

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5. DPRK Leadership

Chosun Ilbo ("BIRTHDAY OF KIM JONG-IL HEIR 'TO BECOME NATIONAL HOLIDAY'", 2010/01/06) reported that the DPRK has reportedly designated Jan. 8, the birthday of leader Kim Jong-il's third son and heir apparent, as a national holiday, according to a group of North Korean defectors. "The Secretariat of the North Korean Workers Party's Central Committee has sent instructions to nationwide party organizations to 'meaningfully commemorate Comrade Kim Jong-un's birthday,'" DPRK Intellectuals Solidarity quoted a DPRK source as saying. "In the instructions, the secretariat stressed the need to formally designate Jan. 8 as a national day to celebrate Kim junior's birthday and called him 'our eternal future' and 'another leader who has perfectly inherited the Baekdu lineage.'" Kim senior's birthday on Feb. 16 became a national holiday in 1975, the year after he was chosen as the heir apparent.

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6. DPRK Economy

Agence France Presse ("N.KOREA TO CLOSE MAJOR WHOLESALE MARKET: REPORT", Seoul, 2010/01/06) reported that the DPRK has ordered the closure of a major wholesale market in the latest of a series of measures to reassert government control over the faltering economy, a Seoul-based welfare group said Wednesday. The DPRK will close the Soonam wholesale market in Chongjin, a port city in the northeastern province of North Hamgyong, by the end of March, it said. "Soonam is one of the country's two biggest wholesale markets, which have played a significant role in distribution of commodities through free markets," group director Lee Seung-Yong told AFP. "The closure will have a great impact on many traders and residents who rely on free markets," he said.

Chosun Ilbo ("NEW N.KOREAN CURRENCY SEES RUNAWAY INFLATION", 2010/01/06) reported that the DPRK's currency reform has apparently failed to tame inflation. The state has paid the first salaries since the shock currency reform late last year, with the State Security Department and the Ministry of Public Security paying soldiers 6,000 won each -- 3,000 won in average monthly pay plus a 3,000 won bonus. Soldiers usually received about 3,000 won in the old currency. That this effectively doubled means the currency reform has not been able to stop inflation. Money is also apparently being distributed to workers on collective farms, who had a hard time last year because they failed to raise vegetables and other produce from their own patches to scrape a living for their families due to the "150-day struggle".

Institute for Far Eastern Studies ("DPRK FOCUSES ON ECONOMY IN 2010: AIMS TO IMPROVE THE STANDARD OF LIVING BY BOOSTING AGRICULTURAL AND LIGHT INDUSTRY OUTPUT ", 2010/01/06) reported that on January 1, the DPRK published its annual New Year’s Joint Editorial. The editorial introduces the DPRK’s general policy direction for 2010. In the international realm, the editorial highlights the establishment of a peace regime between Pyongyang and Washington, as well as improving inter-Korean relations. Domestically, the editorial focused on improving the standard of living for the people by improving agriculture and light industries. This was highlighted in the editorial’s title, “Bring about a radical turn in the people’s standard of living by accelerating the development of light industry and agriculture once again this year that marks the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Workers’ Party of Korea,” and was a consistent theme throughout the article.

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7. DPRK Refugee Issue

Yonhap News (Sam Kim, "ACTIVIST RELEASES PURPORTED PHOTOS OF REPATRIATED N. KOREAN WOMEN ", 2010/01/06) reported that a leading ROK human rights activist on Wednesday released photos of two young DPRK women whom he claimed the PRC repatriated in 2008 despite concern they may face harsh persecution at home. The ROK's Unification Ministry, which handles affairs involving the DPRK, said it had yet to confirm the validity of the photos, which showed two women apparently in their twenties each standing in front of a board measuring their height and holding a piece of paper denoting a name, a presumed birth date and a number. "The numbers tell us how many North Koreans have so far been deported by China," Choi Seong-yong, who leads a group of ROK citizens whose relatives had allegedly been kidnapped by the DPRK said, referring to their numbers, "08099" and "08097."

Yonhap (Sam Kim, "N. KOREAN DEFECTORS IN CHINA DECREASING: U.S. EXPERT", Seoul,

2010/01/07) reported that the number of DPRK defectors hiding in the PRC is estimated to have shrunken in recent years to almost one tenth the level seen in the late 1990's, Courtland Robinson at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health said Thursday. Robinson said the number may have dropped to between 6,000 and 16,000 as of 2007. "About a decade ago, people were literally being starved to death and fleeing to China," Robinson said in an interview, putting the 1998 figure between 50,000 and 130,000. An official at the ROK Unification Ministry said he could not support the figures given by either activists or Robinson, arguing it was impossible to determine the exact number of those defectors in hiding.

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8. ROK Defense

Yonhap News (Shin Hae-in, "PRODUCTION OF MAJOR WEAPONS SUFFERS BUDGET CUT ", Seoul, 2010/01/06) reported that the ROK's planned development of homegrown fighter jets and attack helicopters this year is suffering a major setback due to a reduction in the related budget, defense officials here said Wednesday. The ROK parliament recently passed its 292 trillion won, or US$250 billion, spending plan for 2010, which includes a 29.5 trillion won in funding for defense, curtailing 4.4 billion won for development of the jets and helicopters.

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9. ROK Nuclear Energy

Yonhap News ("S. KOREA TO SPEED UP DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS NUCLEAR REACTOR", Seoul, 2010/01/06) reported that the ROK plans to speed up the development of key components and design know-how to build a wholly indigenous nuclear reactor, its state-run power company said Wednesday. Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co. (KHNP) said it is revising its Nu-Tech program so the country can design and manufacture its own fission reactor unit by October 2012, six months ahead of the original schedule.

Korea Herald ("OPPOSITION LEADER REQUESTS REVISION OF NUCLEAR PACT", 2010/01/06) reported that a former ROK presidential candidate on Wednesday urged Seoul to step up efforts to revise its nuclear pact with Washington to secure rights to pursue a broader commercial nuclear program, according to Yonhap News. "The South Korea-U.S. nuclear pact must be amended for South Korea to become a nuclear powerhouse and acquire core technology for commercial nuclear energy," said Lee. The ROK, currently operating 20 nuclear power plants, is banned from reprocessing spent fuel under a 1974 agreement with the United States, which is to expire in 2014.

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10. USFJ Base Relocation

Mainichi ("DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR SUGGESTS RELOCATION OF FUTENMA TO NAGASAKI", 2010/01/06) reported that a retired high-ranking Foreign Ministry official has proposed that U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in Okinawa Prefecture be moved to two locations in Nagasaki Prefecture, officials said. Ukeru Magosaki, former director general of the ministry's Intelligence and Analysis Bureau, made the suggestion at a private study group for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama.

The proposal would involve the relocation of Futenma base in Ginowan to the Maritime Self-Defense Force Omura base in Omura, Nagasaki Prefecture, the Ground Self-Defense Force Ainoura post in Sasebo, Nagasaki Prefecture, and other locations.

Kyodo ("JAPAN'S MAY FUTENMA DEADLINE 'NOT PREFERRED': US", Washington, 2010/01/06) reported that Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said Wednesday the United States does not prefer the May deadline that Japan set for reaching a conclusion on relocating a U.S. military base in Okinawa. ''We've got a lot of work to do and not a lot of time," he said. Morrell urged Japan to reach a ''positive conclusion'' on the issue ''as soon as possible.''

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11. Japan-India Climate Cooperation

British Broadcasting System ("INDIA, JAPAN TO JOINTLY DEVELOP SOLAR CITY", 2010/01/06) reported that India and Japan will jointly develop a city in India as a “solar city”--one in which the government tries to reduce the demand for conventional energy by 10 per cent in five years through energy efficiency measures and generation from solar power projects. An agreement was reached at a meeting of New and Renewable Energy minister Farooq Abdullah with the Japanese minister for Internal Affairs and Communications Kazuhiro Haraguchi on Wednesday.

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12. Japan Politics

Agence France Presse (Shingo Ito , "JAPAN PM NAMES DEPUTY KAN AS NEW FINANCE MINISTER", Tokyo, 2010/01/06) reported that Japan's prime minister named his deputy Naoto Kan as finance minister Wednesday, replacing 77-year-old Hirohisa Fujii who is stepping down for health reasons in a blow to the three-month-old government. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, struggling to reverse a slump in his popularity, said Fujii's resignation was unavoidable due to exhaustion after months of hard work drawing up the national budget. "I believe Deputy Prime Minister Kan can fully handle the job," he added.

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13. Sino-Japan Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN SPECIALIST CHENG TAPPED AS NEXT CHINESE AMBASSADOR", Beijing, 2010/01/06) reported that the PRC has tapped Cheng Yonghua, its ambassador to the ROK who has a wealth of experience and connections in Japan, to head its diplomatic mission in Tokyo, sources said. The move to name Cheng ambassador to Japan is a "signal of the Hu Jintao administration's emphasis on Japanese relations and an attempt to establish stronger strategic ties with the Democratic Party of Japan-led government," a PRC government source said.

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14. Sino-Pakistan Relations

Xinhua News Agency (Imdad Hussain , "PAKISTAN'S FIRST CHINA THINK TANK SERVES TO PROMOTE BILATERAL TIES ", 2010/01/06) reported that the first think tank on the PRC in Pakistan has made efforts to promote the bilateral relations between Pakistan and the PRC, said Chairman of the Pakistan-China Institute Mushahid Hussain. Hussain, also former Information Minister, said that he will lead a 60 person friendship caravan from Gilgit area of Pakistan tothe PRC's Kashghar by road to attend the Kashghar Trade Fair to promote economic relations and cultural ties between the two countries. "I would lead the friendship delegation, consisting of businessmen, media men, think tank scholars, experts and cultural specialists, via the Silk Route to China. By traveling via the Silk Route we want to revive the traditional route and highlight its importance as well," he said.

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15. Cross Strait Relations

Associated Press (Annie Huang, "TAIWANESE COLLEGES TO ADMIT CHINESE STUDENTS", Taipei, 2010/01/07) reported that Taiwan Vice Education Minister Lin Chung-ming said Thursday students from 40 leading PRC universities can apply to study on the island, if — as expected — the Legislature approves. "We would like to provide the mainland students a better understanding of our democratic and pluralistic society," he said. "The new program can also spur welcome competition. The mainland students are known for their diligence and they can stimulate our students to study harder."

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16. PRC Territorial Dispute

Associated Press ("CHINA DOWNPLAYS CRITICISM OVER ISLAND DEVELOPMENT", 2010/01/06) reported that the PRC on Wednesday brushed off concerns that its plans to develop a southern island province would worsen a territorial dispute considered one of Asia's potential flash points. Beijing wants to transform Hainan province into a major tourism destination over the next decade and expand oil and natural gas exploration in the area. "We will only develop tourism and economic and social growth within our territory and territorial waters. I don't think our development will have any impact on others," Wei Liucheng, the Communist Party secretary of Hainan province, told reporters. Vietnamese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Nguyen Phuong Nga said the PRC plan "seriously violates Vietnam's sovereignty ... causes tension and further complicates the situation."

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17. PRC Energy

Reuters (Chris Buckley , "COLD SNAP SPURS POWER RATIONING IN CHINA", Beijing, 2010/01/06) reported that c ities across eastern and central PRC are rationing power for industry and urging residents to limit gas use after a wave of icy weather sent energy demand soaring while straining supplies of coal that were already tight. The harsh weather has pushed energy demand to new peaks, while transport snarls have slowed coal supplies, already low as power and coal companies

haggle over prices. The confluence of soaring demand, transport snarls and brinkmanship over coal prices could force power cuts and upset production in some big economic provinces, if conditions worsen. "Conditions for thermal coal supply and shipment do not allow for optimism," said the China Electric Power News, mouthpiece of the State Electricity Regulatory Commission.

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18. PRC Civil Unrest

Agence France Presse ("CHINA'S XINJIANG ISSUES NEW ANTI-TERROR RULES: STATE MEDIA", Beijing, 2010/01/06) reported that authorities in the PRC's troubled Xinjiang region will step up identity checks and monitor religious activities in a renewed bid to quash terrorism, separatism and extremism, state media said Wednesday. The announcement of new government regulations aimed at helping the police and judiciary stamp out the so-called "three forces" in the region comes six months after ethnic violence left nearly 200 people dead. The new rules provide forceful legal guarantees to step up the struggle against separatism," Jappa Abibulla, chairman of the Xinjiang People's Congress, told the China News Service.

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19. PRC Public Health

Xinhua News Agency ("A/H1N1 FLU CASES DECREASE IN CHINA", Beijing, 2010/01/06) reported that A/H1N1 flu cases in the PRC mainland decreased last week, said the Ministry of Health on Wednesday. According to the ministry's weekly report, 2,935 cases were confirmed in the PRC mainland from Dec. 28, 2009, to Jan. 3, 2010. The figure was down from 4,448 the previous week.As well, the people who died from A/H1N1 was down from 93 to 67. However, the ministry said that people should still take care to protect themselves from the A/H1N1. "We have seen an increasing number of expectant mothers who showed serious symptoms or died of A/H1N1 flu," the Ministry of Health stated. But the exact numbers were not given.

Cable News Network ("CHINESE FACTORY BLAMED FOR LEAD POISONING", 2010/01/06) reported that fifty-one children in southeast PRC have been found to have high levels of lead in their blood, and authorities have linked their illnesses to a battery factory, state-run media reported Wednesday. The incident occurred in Dafeng Economic Development area, Hekou Village in Jiangsu, where 110 of the village's 132 children were examined. Nearly half the exams -- 51 -- showed lead poisoning, the Xinhua News Agency said.

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II. PRC Report

20. PRC Social Welfare

Jinghua Times ("BEIJING SETTLES FIRST 80 ADULT ORPHANS", 2010/01/06) reported that by the end of 2009, settlement of the fist batch of over 80 adult orphans in Beijing has been basically completed, each districts/communities will take charge of their housing, employment and other related issues, according to the municipal bureau of civil affairs yesterday.

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21. PRC Civil Society and Earthquake Reconstruction

Beijing Times ("SICHUAN RED CROSS SOCIETY PUBLISHES USAGE OF DONATION", 2010/01/06) reported that Sichuan Red Cross Society published the usage of Wenchuan earthquake donation it received Monday. By the end of November 30, 2009, it has received Wenchuan earthquake disaster relief donation of 1,389,598,095.72 RMB, among which 1,383,784,199.93 has been arranged and 5813895.79 not arranged yet. The bulletin also showed category, amount, donation organization (individual), usage direction and explanation of the donation.

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22. PRC Environment

Xinhua Net ("150 MILLION RMB ALLOCATED ON QINGHAI LAKE TRAINING", 2010/01/06) reported that the central government has newly allocated 150 million RMN, for the eco-environment protection and comprehensive governance of Qinghai lake. Qinghai lake locates in eastern Qinghai & Tibet plateau, and is the key water system that maintains the eco-safety of northeast areas of Qinghai & Tibet plateau and is hailed as China’s eco-barrier.

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