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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

China Daily ("REPORT: 6-PARTY TALK MAY RESUME IN FEBRUARY", 2006-01-21) reported that six party talks could resume as early as February, Japan's Kyodo News agency reported Saturday, citing a US State Department official in Washington. "I think that there was a suggestion. The Chinese had talked about early February," the official said, according to Kyodo's Washington bureau.

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2. ROK, US on Six Party Talks

Reuters ("US, S.KOREA PROD NORTH TO RETURN TO NUCLEAR TALKS", 2006-01-19) reported that the US and the ROK on Thursday urged the DPRK to return promptly to stalled nuclear disarmament talks as the two allies took steps to bolster their 50-year-old security alliance. US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon used the launch of a new bilateral strategic dialogue to press the DPRK to end its boycott of six party talks.

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3. US on Six Party Talks

Bloomberg ("RICE TELLS NORTH KOREA TO RETURN TO NUCLEAR TALKS ", 2006-01-20) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the DPRK should return without conditions to the six party talks. “North Korea is being told by the international community that it has to be a Korean Peninsula that is free of nuclear weapons and that North Korea must dismantle its nuclear programs,'' Rice said.

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4. DPRK Counterfeiting

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. INVESTIGATORS SMASH HOPES OF N.KOREA COMPROMISE ", 2006-01-23) reported that a US investigation team headed by the Treasury Department’s deputy assistant secretary for terrorist financing and financial crimes, Daniel Glaser, on Monday presented ROK officials with its evidence that the DPRK is engaged in counterfeiting US dollars. The team was met by Kim Sook, the director-general of the North American affairs bureau in the Foreign Ministry. ROK officials said the evidence offered by the US team was “pretty convincing.”

(return to top) The Korea Times ("US BRIEFS SEOUL ON NK COUNTERFEITING", 2006-01-23)

reported that the ROK described a US briefing on DPRK financial illegalities as “informative,” but said it will keep a close eye on the developing situation as the US investigation is not over yet. “There was some information we can refer to (regarding the counterfeiting),” the Seoul official told reporters on condition of anonymity. (return to top)

5. ROK on DPRK Counterfeiting

The Korea Times ("SEOUL WORRIED OVER NK COUNTERFEITING", 2006-01-22) reported that Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki-moon returned to Seoul on Sunday after a six-day visit to the US, where he said Seoul had delivered its concerns to Pyongyang over the DPRK’s alleged counterfeiting of US dollars. But he expressed hope that the on-going controversy over Pyongyang's money laundering and other illicit activities would not block the resumption of the six party talks. “We have conveyed our concerns to North Korean authorities,” he said in an interview with CNN's Late Edition, which was aired on Sunday. “At the same time, we hope that this kind of counterfeiting or illicit activities by North Korea will not stand in the way of six-party talks.”

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6. Inter-Korean Trade

The Korea Times ("INTER-KOREAN TRADE TOPS $1 BILLION", 2006-01-23) reported that inter-Korean trade volume broke $1 billion for the first time last year since the DPRK began to import ROK products in 1988, the Korea Investment-Trade Association (KITA) said Sunday. “As companies in the North’s Kaesong industrial complex are expected to put themselves into a full gear this year, inter-Korean trade will surely surmount last year’s trade volume,” a KITA official said.

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7. ROK Aid to DPRK

The Korea Times ("NORTH BOTCHES PAVING, REQUESTS MORE AID ", 2006-01-20) reported that the DPRK’s poor construction skills have seen up to 3,000 tons of asphalt pitch, provided by the ROK, being wasted, according to the Unification Ministry. The waste comes after the ROK’s hasty provision of 8,000 tons of the pitch, worth some $4.8 million (5 billion won), to the DPRK, the ministry said. In an effort to pave roads and an airport landing strip at Mt. Paektu, the ROK supplied the asphalt last year out of its state fund for inter-Korean cooperation.

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8. DPRK Human Rights

Joongang Ilbo ("AMBASSADOR SLAPS UN FOR POLITICIZING RIGHTS ISSUES", 2006-01-21) reported that ROK’s ambassador-at-large for human rights, Park Kyung-seo, caused controversy at a religious forum Thursday by saying the DPRK human rights issue was being used politically at the UN. Mr. Park was speaking about remarks made at the UN Human Rights Commission held in April last year in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was ROK’s representative. "I witnessed member countries [Japan and the European Union] taking an offensive attitude, while ignoring the core issue on how they can serve constructive roles to promote human rights issues [in North Korea]," he said.

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9. US-Japan Security Agreement

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN COMMITS 1.2 BILLION DOLLARS A YEAR FOR US FORCES", 2006-01-23) reported that Japan pledged to provide 1.2 billion dollars annually over the next two years to help the US station troops here amid fresh controversy over the US military presence. Local leaders are campaigning against a bilateral deal on the realignment of US forces, pushing for the pullout of more troops.

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10. Japan Defense Policy

Kyodo ("LDP TO STUDY FEASIBILITY OF DEFENSE USE OF SPACE DEVELOPMENT", 2006-01-23) reported that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party has decided to study the feasibility of relaxing Japan's restrictions on the use of the fruit of space development for defense purposes, party sources said Sunday. The LDP is expected to seek enabling defense-purpose use as long as it is not aimed at invading other countries and explore ways to enable the Defense Agency to develop and operate spy satellites that produce high-resolution images, they said.

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11. Taiwan PRC Policy

BBC News ("TAIWAN'S CHEN WARNED OVER CHINA", 2006-01-23) reported that Taiwan's outgoing Premier Frank Hsieh led his cabinet ministers in an expected mass resignation on Monday, paving the way for a planned reshuffle. Mr Hsieh, whose resignation was announced last week, warned President Chen Shui-bian over his PRC stance. He said some of Mr Chen's hardline policies on the PRC were not in tune with what Taiwanese people wanted.

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12. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWANESE AIRLINE BEGINS NEW YEAR FLIGHTS ", 2006-01-23) reported that Taiwan allowed students and tour groups to fly direct to the PRC for the first time Friday in the third annual installment of symbolic Chinese New Year flights aimed at warming tense relations with the mainland.

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13. PRC-Saudi Arabian Energy Cooperation

Agence France-Presse ("ENERGY DEAL EXPECTED ON SAUDI KING'S CHINA VISIT ", 2006-01-23) reported that the PRC and Saudi Arabia are expected to sign an agreement on energy cooperation during a milestone visit by Saudi King Abdullah that both sides hope will usher in a new chapter of closer relations. Abdullah, who arrived Sunday on his first official overseas visit since taking the throne in August, was due to meet PRC President Hu Jintao on Monday.

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14. PRC-Libyan Relations

China Daily ("CHINA, LIBYA LEADER VOW TO STRENGTHEN TIES", 2006-01-23) reported that the PRC is willing to continuously advance the development of its friendly relations with Libya, visiting PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said in Surt, Libyan leader Muammar Ghaddafi's hometown, on Wednesday. At a meeting with Ghaddafi, Li said the PRC will also boost the traditional friendship between the two peoples based on the principle of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit.

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15. PRC Oil Pipeline

The Vladivostok News ("PACIFIC PIPELINE COURT HEARINGS POSTPONED ", 2006-01-23) reported that Transneft's projected oil pipeline from Siberia to the Pacific provokes more law suits from environmentalists but court hearings are postponed. A court hearing provoked by Transneft's projected oil pipeline from Siberia to the Pacific and scheduled to be held on Wednesday in Vladivostok has been postponed due to the judge's illness.

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16. PRC Gas Pipeline

Agence France-Presse ("GE WINS 196-MILLION-DOLLAR BID TO HELP BUILD CHINA'S GAS PIPELINE ", 2006-01-23) reported that US-based General Electric has won an 196-million-dollar bid to help build the PRC's West-East Gas Pipeline. GE's oil and gas division signed an agreement with the West-East Gas Pipeline Company this week under which GE will provide gas turbines, compressors, installation and testing services to 12 newly-built compressor stations along the pipeline, the Xinhua news agency said.

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17. PRC Military

Jane's Defense Weekly ("CHINA DEVELOPS ANTI-SHIP MISSILE ", 2006-01-23) reported that the PRC People's Liberation Army (PLA) is in the advanced stages of developing a revolutionary anti-ship ballistic missile to supplement its well known Ying-Ji family of anti-ship cruise missiles. The development programme has been confirmed by both US government and Asian military sources, with the latter estimating that the PLA may be able to deploy the space targeting systems needed to make its anti-ship ballistic missile operational by 2009.

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18. PRC-Russian Far East Trade

The Vladivostok News ("PRIMORYE BOOSTS TRADE WITH CHINA ", 2006-01-23) reported that Primorye's trade volume with the PRC in 2005 amounted to 37 percent of the region's overall trade volume, a press statement from the regional administration reported Tuesday.

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19. PRC Chemical Spill

The Los Angeles Times ("AMMONIA SPILL FORCES 1,500 TO EVACUATE", 2006-01-23) reported that an overturned truck that spilled 10 tons of liquid ammonia forced the evacuation of 1,500 residents, a state-run newspaper said. No injuries were reported. Rescue workers cordoned off the area near Zhongxing village in Guizhou province and were trying to neutralize the ammonia, the China Daily said.

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20. PRC Bird Flu

Reuters ("CHINA ANNOUNCES 10TH HUMAN CASE OF BIRD FLU ", 2006-01-23) reported that the PRC's Ministry of Health announced the country's 10th human case of bird flu infection on Monday after a 29-year-old woman from the southwest of the country was diagnosed with the H5N1 virus. The woman, surnamed Cao, ran a dry goods shop in a farm goods market in Jinhua Town in Sichuan Province, a notice on the ministry's website said.

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21. PRC Rural Unrest

The Associated Press ("CHINESE FACTORY WORKERS, POLICE CLASH ", 2006-01-23) reported that workers protesting the sale of a factory in southwestern PRC clashed for three days with baton-wielding police, according to a factory employee and a news Web site Monday, underscoring the country's growing social tensions. It was the latest in series of violent clashes between authorities and citizens angry over corruption, the widening gap between rich and poor and official attempts to seize land for allegedly inadequate compensation.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("WEN WARNS CHINA'S RURAL SITUATION UNSTABLE ", 2006-01-23) reported that land conflicts, fluctuating crop prices and backward conditions in the countryside are threatening the PRC's stability and its food supply, PRC Premier Wen Jiabao said in unusually blunt comments published Friday. Wen's warning underscored rising concerns over lagging economic growth in rural PRC, home to at least two of every three Chinese. (return to top) Agence France-Presse ("MASS LAND GRABS IN CHINA FUEL UNREST ", 2006-01-23) reported that Liang Fengying is only one of millions of poor and uneducated farmers across the PRC, particularly in the prosperous province of Guangdong, who have lost their only source of livelihood in the face of the PRC's speeding industrial growth. For many, the minuscule compensation they receive is simply not enough to keep them alive, and the farmers usually have little legal recourse to fight back. But their frustrations are increasingly boiling over into violent confrontations with authorities. (return to top)

22. PRC Protests

The New York Times ("PACE AND SCOPE OF PROTEST IN CHINA ACCELERATED IN '05", 2006-0--23) reported that PRC took to the streets to protest land seizures, corruption, pollution and unpaid wages in record numbers in 2005, the national police said Thursday, with mass incidents that involved violent confrontations or attacks on government property surging at the fastest rate. The number of "public order disturbances" rose 6.6 percent last year, to 87,000. Mass protests that involved "disturbing social order" jumped 13 percent, while those that "interfered with government

functions" surged 19 percent, the Public Security Bureau told Chinese reporters.

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II. CanKor

23. Report # 233

CanKor ("CURRENT EVENTS", 2006-01-20) Kim Jong Il's secretive visit to China is exposed to Chinese television viewers when he meets Chinese President Hu Jintao before returning to Pyongyang. Before the Chinese press, Kim states how deeply impressed he is by China's achievements in economic modernization and development, which "fully proves that China's reform and opening-up policy is correct." Hu promises China's support as the DPRK explores its own development path "conforming with the country's own conditions." After an apparently unscheduled return trip to Beijing at the tail end of a visit to the region, American chief negotiator to the Six Party Talks Christopher Hill declines to confirm whether he met DPRK chief negotiator Kim Kye Gwan, who was thought to be travelling with Kim Jong Il. China overtakes the USA as South Korea's largest trading partner, while the ROK takes the place of Taiwan as the second largest exporter to China. ROK exports to China rise 24 percent in 2005 to US$77 billion, while imports of Chinese goods rise 26 percent to $35 billion.

(return to top) CanKor ("FOCUS", 2006-01-20) This week's CanKor FOCUS presents excerpts from a November 2005 publication of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, entitled "Thank You Father Kim Il Sung: Eyewitness Accounts of Severe Violations of Freedom of Thought, Conscience, and Religion in North Korea." Although much of the publicity surrounding this document centred on sensational refugee- defector accounts of brutal religious persecution, the study also offers a sober and insightful analysis of the history of religion in Korea, attempting to distinguish between known facts and biased conjecture regarding the current religious experience. Based on extensive research and a wealth of first-person interviews, lead author David Hawk has assembled an authoritative summary of information about the status of contemporary religious practice. The first excerpt on existing religious life in the DPRK is taken from the summary "Findings" at the beginning of the document, while the second excerpt on Christianity! is taken from Chapter 8, on contemporary state policy and practice. (return to top)

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