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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREA FAILS TO HONOR ACCORDS AND DODGES NUCLEAR TALKS", 2005-12-15) reported that the ROK criticized the DPRK at high-level talks for failing to honor inter-Korean accords while the DPRK dodged calls to return to nuclear disarmament dialogue. During sometimes tense exchanges, the ROK repeatedly urged the DPRK to return to six party talks but its delegates refused to respond. The DPRK insisted that it would talk only with the US about the nuclear standoff and blamed Washington for the stalemate, said Kim Chun-Sig, spokesman for ROK's delegation.

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2. Inter-Korean Summit

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH STRESSES KINSHIP WITH SOUTH AT MEETING ", 2005-12-14) reported that amid mounting tension between the US and the DPRK over Washington's financial sanctions against Pyongyang, the DPRK's envoy stressed the bond between the two Koreas at the inter-Korean cabinet-level talks, which began on the South's Jeju Island yesterday. At a welcome dinner hosted by the ROK Prime Minister Lee Hae-chan, Kwon Ho-ung, chief delegate for the DPRK, urged that both Koreas trust and cooperate with each other for their joint future. "When the two Koreas live in harmony and put their power together, the fate of Korea will advance smoothly," he said. "We share one blood and destiny."

[\(return to top\)](#) Korea Herald ("NORTH REQUESTS REMOVAL OF POLITICAL, MILITARY 'BARRIERS' ", 2005-12-15) reported that the ROK and the DPRK have struggled to hammer out a joint press statement as they failed to respond to each other's demands yesterday during inter-Korean Cabinet-level talks on Jeju Island. The DPRK has raised issues such as the removal of a law that bans ROK tourists or delegates from visiting certain places in the DPRK such as the birthplace of the state's late founder Kim Il-sung. Pyongyang also requested an end to the joint ROK-US military drills. Kim Chun-sig spokesman for the ROK delegates said discussions on the countries' bilateral issues also remain at an "initial" stage, but other officials said they are likely to reach agreement on various issues, including exchanges between separated families and inter-Korean Red Cross meetings before the end of next February. [\(return to top\)](#)

3. Inter-Korean Gross National Income Disparity

The Korea Times ("WEALTH GAP WIDENS FOR SOUTH, NORTH", 2005-12-15) reported that the gross national incomes (GNI) of the ROK and the DPRK showed the widest gap ever in 2004. The National Statistical Office (NSO) said that the ROK's GNI, the nation's real purchasing power, was 32.8 times larger than that of the DPRK last year. The widening gap is attributed to a recent surge in the ROK's per capita national income, which jumped to \$12,720 in 2003 from \$11,499 in 2002, and the dwindling income of the DPRK.

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4. ROK on DPRK-US Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL TELLS U.S. OF CONCERN OVER ENVOY'S REMARKS", 2005-12-15) reported that the ROK has told the US of its concern at recent remarks by the US ambassador to Seoul in which he labeled the DPRK a "criminal regime," Japan's Sankei Shimbun reported Thursday. The daily said Wie Sung-rak, the minister for political affairs at the ROK Embassy in Washington, met Joseph DeTrani, the US special envoy for the DPRK, on Monday and warned Ambassador Alexander Vershbow's rhetoric was not helpful for the progress of six party talks.

[\(return to top\)](#) The Korea Times ("SPEAKER SLAMS US ENVOY FOR ANTI-NK REMARKS", 2005-12-15) reported that according to National Assembly Speaker Kim Won-ki, the US Ambassador Alexander Vershbow's recent labeling of the DPRK as a "criminal regime" went beyond the bounds. It is the second remark to come from parliament in a week, criticizing the US envoy to Seoul for his "provocative" definition of the Pyongyang regime. "It is regrettable that Ambassador Vershbow's statements went too far," the speaker said during an interview with a KBS radio program. "His remarks were not appropriate for an ambassador to South Korea, which is endeavoring to stabilize peace on the Korean Peninsula." [\(return to top\)](#)

5. DPRK on Counterfeiting

Reuters ("N.KOREA DENIES FORGING CASH, BLAMES US FOR TENSION", 2005-12-15) reported that the DPRK denied US accusations it issued fake currency and said on Thursday that Washington's financial crackdown on Pyongyang firms was an attempt to divert attention from domestic problems rather than tackle forgery. "Such illegal activities are unimaginable," said the official KCNA news agency. "The DPRK has never issued counterfeit notes nor had ever been engaged in any illegal dealings."

[\(return to top\)](#) The Korea Times ("NK CHANGES BANKING CHANNEL TO AUSTRIA", 2005-12-15) reported that the DPRK has changed its main channel for financial transactions to Austria in October as its Macau route became unavailable due to Washington's continued sanctions, sources in the ROK said on Thursday. The Pyongyang regime asked Hyundai Asan, which manages the Mt. Kumgang tourism project, to transmit the sightseeing fees to a bank in Austria, they said. Hyundai Asan officials, however, declined to comment on the change of banks, saying that they have to "respect" their business partners. [\(return to top\)](#)

6. WFP Food Aid to DPRK

Reuters ("WFP TO STOP FEEDING NORTH KOREANS THIS MONTH", 2005-12-15) reported that the WFP will stop feeding DPR Koreans by the end of this month and has yet to reach an agreement that will allow it to stay on in the country, the agency said on Thursday. "The government has concluded it no longer needs emergency humanitarian assistance," WFP executive director James Morris told a news conference in Beijing after two days of talks in Pyongyang. Morris met government officials, including the agriculture and foreign ministers, for talks he described as "cordial" but which failed to yield a breakthrough. "It's clear that they want us to stay and we want to stay but we have to be able to stay in a context that will give us a chance to be successful," Morris said.

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7. Russia-East Asian Relations

The Vladivostok News ("PRIMORYE GOVERNOR ATTENDS ASEAN SUMMIT", 2005-12-13) reported that Primorye Governor Sergei Darkin and the newly appointed presidential envoy to the Russian Far East Kamil Iskhakov were both invited to accompany Russian President Vladimir Putin in his meeting with Southeast Asian leaders at the first Russia-ASEAN summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Tuesday.

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8. Japan Diplomacy

Japan Today ("KOIZUMI PLEDGES AID TO CAMBODIA, LAOS, VIETNAM", 2005-12-15) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged Tuesday to provide fresh financial assistance to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam to help them fight poverty and tackle the outbreak of avian influenza.

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9. Japan & the UN

Japan Today ("ABE SAYS NEXT U.N. CHIEF SHOULD REPRESENT ASIA", 2005-12-15) reported that the next secretary general of the United Nations should represent Asia after Kofi Annan's current term expires at the end of next year, Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said Tuesday in a meeting with a Sri Lankan nominee for the post.

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10. Japan-US Defense Cooperation

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN TO PAY ONE-THIRD OF MISSILE COST", 2005-12-15) reported that the Japanese and US governments have agreed that Tokyo will shoulder about one-third of the total cost of jointly developing the next-generation interceptor missile that is part of the missile defense system.

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11. Japan-PRC Relations

Japan Today ("MAEHARA CONCERNED OVER CHINESE MILITARY STRENGTH", 2005-12-15) reported that Japanese opposition leader Seiji Maehara said Tuesday that he will continue to voice concern over the PRC's growing military strength.

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12. Japan Wartime Past

The China Post ("WW2 S. KOREAN LABORERS LOSE JAPAN COURT FIGHT", 2005-12-15) reported that relatives of four deceased RO Koreans who were forced laborers at a steel mill in northern Japan during World War II failed on Wednesday to overturn a Japanese court decision refusing

compensation for unpaid wages.

[\(return to top\)](#) Japan Today ("KOIZUMI AGAIN BLAMES CHINA, S KOREA FOR LACK OF SUMMIT TALKS", 2005-12-15) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi again put the blame on the PRC and ROK on Wednesday for refusing to hold a bilateral or trilateral summit with him because of his visits to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine. [\(return to top\)](#)

13. PRC Diplomacy

Xinhua ("PREMIER WEN RETURNS HOME AFTER VISITS TO EUROPE, ASIA", 2005-12-15) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao returned to Beijing Thursday night after his official visits to France, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Portugal, Malaysia and the ninth Summit between the PRC and ASEAN.

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14. PRC Human Trafficking

The Globe and Mail ("CHINESE STONEWALL ON BABY SMUGGLING", 2005-12-15) reported that PRC officials have imposed a wall of silence on a baby-trafficking scandal in which orphanages and child-welfare agencies were implicated in a scheme to buy and sell at least 100 children.

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15. PRC Economy

Xinhua ("CHINA SEES 2% DECLINE IN FOREIGN INVESTMENT ", 2005-12-15) reported that realized foreign direct investment in the PRC dropped about 2 per cent year-on-year in the first 11 months this year while contracted foreign investment grew about a quarter over the previous year.

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16. Hong Kong Democracy

Xinhua ("400,000 HK PEOPLE SUPPORT GOVT'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM", 2005-12-15) reported that more than 400,000 Hong Kong people have signed in a campaign to support the government's constitutional reform package to be voted on Dec. 21.

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17. PRC Bird Flu

Xinhua ("CHINA REPORTS ONE MORE BIRD FLU OUTBREAK IN JIANGXI", 2005-12-15) reported that 1,640 ducks raised by a villager in Shangxi Village of Quanjiang Township, died recently. The provincial veterinarian department suspected the H5N1 strain of highly pathogenic bird flu was the killer and a state avian flu lab confirmed the suspicion on Thursday.

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18. WTO Parliamentary Conference

The International Herald Tribune ("CHINA A SPECTATOR AT WTO TALKS", 2005-12-15) reported that rather than play a leading role at the WTO ministerial talks this week, the 100-strong delegation from Beijing, led by the trade minister, Bo Xilai, has carefully avoided taking a strong stand along any of the fault lines on market access that divide the developed and developing world.

[\(return to top\)](#) Xinhua ("WTO'S PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ENDS WITH DECLARATION", 2005-12-15) reported that the Hong Kong session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO ended on Thursday with a declaration urging all the WTO members to advance the Doha Round trade talks. [\(return to top\)](#)

19. PRC Commitments to WTO

Xinhua ("CHINA'S WTO ACHIEVEMENTS RECOGNIZED", 2005-12-15) reported that the US has acknowledged the PRC's achievements in implementing its commitment to the WTO, according to the latest report published by the US Trade Representative.

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20. East Asian Community

Xinhua ("CHINA URGES TRANSPARENCY OF E. ASIA COOPERATION", 2005-12-14) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao Wednesday emphasized that East Asian countries should join hands in turning their cooperation into a transparent and open process so as to achieve progress for all countries and development in all regions.

[\(return to top\)](#) The China Post ("ASIA PAPERS OVER CRACKS, EDGES TOWARDS COMMUNITY", 2005-12-15) reported that East Asian leaders resolved on Wednesday to hold annual talks on strategic issues like trade and security, but even a rare handshake between leaders of Japan and the PRC failed to conceal cracks in the new grouping. [\(return to top\)](#) The Washington Post ("ASIAN LEADERS ESTABLISH NEW GROUP", 2005-12-14) reported that Asian leaders agreed Wednesday to create a new, loosely united regional grouping, including India and Australia, to work together on combating Asia's economic, security and political problems. [\(return to top\)](#)

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