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I. NAPSNet

1. PRC on Six Party Talks

Reuters ("KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS FACE 'COMPLICATIONS': CHINA ", 2006-01-05) reported that according to the PRC, the six party talks face "some new and complicated factors", and continued to urge the DPRK and US to work out their problems. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang told a regular news conference in Beijing on Thursday that the six party talks were confronted with some new and complicated factors. Referring to the latest face-off between Pyongyang and Washington, Qin added: "China hopes each party can take the overall situation into consideration and handle properly issues that both sides are concerned about.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

The Korea Times ("SEOUL TO EXPAND ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH PYONGYANG ", 2006-0--05) reported that ROK Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo said Thursday that the ROK will seek to advance inter-Korean relations in accordance with the peaceful resolution of the DPRK's nuclear programs issue this year. The six party talks is touching on the issues of improvement in bilateral relations and economic cooperation of participating parties as well as the resolution of the nuclear issue,'' Rhee said in a briefing, when asked whether the phase of the inter-Korean economic cooperation could be influenced by the progress in the six party talks.

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3. Inter-Koean Trade

Chosun Ilbo ("INTER-KOREAN TRADE REACHES US$1 BILLION ", 2006-01-05) reported that inter-Korean trade amounted to more than US$1 billion last year, up from $700 million in 2004. The latest figures put the total aggregated trade between the ROK and the DPRK since 2000 at over $6 billion. Seoul's Unification Ministry said ROK imports from the DPRK increased 32-percent year-on-year to $340 million in 2005 while its exports to the DPRK jumped to $710 million, up 63 percent.

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4. ROK Aid to DPRK

The Korea Times ("SEOUL SENDS FIRST AID SHIPMENT OF YEAR TO N. KOREA ", 2006-01-05) reported that the first batch of RO Korean aid for the DPRK this year set sail here on Wednesday after a brief ceremony. The Korean Foundation for World Aid is sending 540 million won ($539,460) worth of powdered milk, baby food, running shoes and wheat flour. The aid is a part of cooperation in agriculture, public hygiene and children's nutrition that the foundation and the National Reconciliation Council of North Korea agreed to on Dec. 8.

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5. DPRK-US Relations

Agence France Presse ("RICE CALLS STALINIST NORTH KOREA 'DANGEROUS REGIME'", 2006-01-05) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice the DPRK "dangerous regime" and defended financial sanctions imposed on Pyongyang for alleged counterfeiting and money laundering

activities. "In terms of danger, of course you know they are a dangerous regime but we should also not misinterpret the security situation on the Korean peninsula, where there is a significant deterrent towards North Korean activity there," she told reporters.

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6. DPRK Defectors Achieve Refugee Status

The Korea Times ("NORWAY GRANTS REFUGEE STATUS TO 2 NK DEFECTORS: REPORT ", 2006-01-04) reported that the Norwegian government has recently allowed two DPRK defectors to seek asylum in its country, a report said Wednesday. Quoting an official from a Bergen-based human rights group, Radio Free Asia reported that the European country granted refugee status to two DPR Koreans who made their way there after defecting from their communist homeland. ”Only the United States has received several North Korean defectors, but it is still not clear whether they were given refugee status or the status of immigrants," said the official from the ministry's division for helping to re-settle defectors in the country.

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7. Japan on UNSC Reform

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN TO PROPOSE FRESH REFORM PLAN FOR UN SECURITY COUNCIL", 2006-01-05) reported that Japan is drawing up new proposals to reform the United Nations Security Council in its efforts to secure permanent membership by winning the support of the US. Japan's foreign ministry is currently working on a revised plan that is acceptable to the US, its primary ally, said Toshihiro Kitamura, principal deputy director at the ministry's UN policy division.

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8. Japan on Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Kyodo ("NO WAY FOR KOIZUMI TO STOP YASUKUNI VISITS AS CHINA WISHES: ASO", 2006-0--05) reported that Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Aso said Thursday it is not possible for Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine as the PRC wishes. Aso also chastised Beijing for holding up progress in bilateral dialogue by "focusing only on Yasukuni Shrine".

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9. PRC on Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Kyodo ("CHINA SAYS NO HIGH-LEVEL VISITS UNLESS KOIZUMI CHANGES ", 2006-01-05) reported that the PRC on Thursday rejected Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's statement Wednesday that Sino-Japanese diplomatic dialogue should continue unimpeded by his controversial visits to Yasukuni Shrine, which the PRC views as glorifying Japan's militaristic past. High-level dialogue requires a proper atmosphere, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang told reporters, adding that the PRC hopes Japan will consider the feelings of the Chinese people and take "practical" steps to heal the bilateral relationship.

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10. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN SEEKS SINCERE CHINESE RESPONSE OVER DIPLOMAT'S SUICIDE", 2006-01-05) reported that Japan's top government spokesman on Thursday urged the PRC to give a "sincere response" over the suicide of a Japanese consulate general staff member in 2004 in Shanghai. "We want to see a sincere response from the Chinese side," Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said in a press conference following a diplomatic spat between the countries over the case.

(return to top) Kyodo ("CHINA SAYS JAPAN'S CLAIMS ABOUT DIPLOMAT SUICIDE 'LACKS REASON'", 2006-01-05) reported that a spat between Japan and the PRC over the suicide of a Japanese Consulate General staff member in Shanghai continued on Thursday, with Beijing saying Tokyo's claim that PRC agents were linked to the death lacks reason. "We urge Japan to deal with this problem in a calm and appropriate manner, and refrain from creating new problems for Sino-Japanese relations," Qin said. (return to top)

11. PRC African Diplomacy

Kyodo ("CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT 6 AFRICAN COUNTRIES THIS MONTH", 2006-01-05) reported that PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing will visit six African countries this month to discuss energy cooperation and their pledge to support Beijing over Taipei, a ministry spokesman said Thursday. From Jan. 11-19, Li will visit government leaders in Cape Verde, Liberia, Libya, Mali, Nigeria and Senegal on invitations from the host nations, spokesman Qin Gang said at a press briefing.

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12. PRC Mine Safety

The Associated Press ("CHINA BEGINS COAL MINE SAFETY CRACKDOWN ", 2006-01-05) reported that the PRC is closing 5,290 coal mines in a safety crackdown on the world's deadliest mining industry, the government announced Thursday. The figure is higher than a previously reported estimate of 4,000 mines that would be closed after safety inspections in 2005, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

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13. PRC Privacy Laws

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE POLICE ANGRY OVER NEW PRIVACY LAWS ", 2006-01-05) reported that police in one of the PRC's major cities are up in arms over a new order to disclose many details of their private lives as part of efforts to fight corruption. The 70,000 police officers in Nanjing, the capital of eastern Jiangsu province, will now be required to report to their superiors matters such as marriage or divorce and the purchase of houses and cars, the China Daily said.

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14. PRC Environment

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA PUSHES SMALLER CARS AS ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS GROW ", 2006-01-05) reported that the PRC has begun a push to promote small, low-emission cars

as oil prices remain high and environmental concerns grow over the nation's fast-rising auto culture. The central government this week issued a notice calling on local authorities around the nation to lift restrictions on so-called "environmentally friendly" cars, the China Daily said.

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