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I. NAPSNet

- 1. Six Party Talks
  2. ROK on Six Party Talks
  3. Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC
  4. ROK on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC
  5. PRC on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC
  6. Experts on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC
  7. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation
  8. PRC on DPRK-US Bilateral Meeting
  9. DPRK-Australian Relations
  10. DPRK Defectors
  11. New Taiwan Premier
  12. US Visit to PRC, Japan
  13. PRC on Iran Nuclear Program
  14. PRC Bird Flu
  15. PRC on Human Rights

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Forbes ("CHINA HOLDS 'BENEFICIAL' NUCLEAR TALKS WITH US, NKOREAN ENVOYS ", 2006-0--19) reported that senior envoys from the US, DPRK and PRC have held a “beneficial” meeting on the stalled six party talks, the foreign ministry said. Foreign ministry spokesman Kong Quan told reporters that, on the PRC’s suggestion, the envoys met yesterday. The meeting had not been previously reported. “The three sides had positive appraisals of this contact. They felt this type of contact was beneficial,” Kong said.

(return to top)

2. ROK on Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("FM POSITIVE ABOUT FUTURE OF SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2006-01-19) reported that Foreign minister Ban Ki-moon struck a positive note on the future of six party talks on Wednesday. Speaking to reporters after a 45-minute meeting with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in New York, Ban said DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's recent visit to the PRC should have very positive implications for the resumption of stalled negotiations. He said Pyongyang's latest announcement that Kim reaffirmed his commitment to denuclearize the Korean peninsula and resolve the nuclear issue only through dialogue is a source of encouragement.

(return to top)

3. Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

Chosun Ilbo ("LAST CHANCE TO REFORM AND OPEN NORTH KOREA ", 2006-01-19) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il told PRC President Hu Jintao after touring the boom towns of Guangzhou and Shenzhen, "The rapidly changing development of the southern region and China's vibrant reality left me with an unforgettable impression." He confessed himself “greatly moved” by the efforts of the Chinese people and their results.

(return to top)

4. ROK on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

The Korea Times ("SEOUL EYES REFORM IN NORTH AFTER TRIP", 2006-01-19) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's trip to the PRC could herald a major change in Pyongyang's economic policy, as well as helping to progress in the multilateral talks on the DPRK’s nuclear weapons programs, a senior Seoul official said on Thursday. “There has always been an important change in North Korea's economic policy after Kim visited China in the past,” Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo said in a briefing at the ministry.

(return to top)

5. PRC on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

Joongang Ilbo ("CHINA'S HOPE FOR “STABILITY” IN NORTH ADDS TWIST TO VISIT", 2006-01-19) reported that PRC state-run Xinhua News Agency followed the lead of the DPRK’s press agency and broke its silence Wednesday night on the visit to the PRC by DPRK leader Kim Jong-il. The coverage

of the visit by the PRC agency was similar to that of the Korea Central News Agency, with one exception that caught DPRK analysts' eyes. "The Chinese government and the people," Xinhua said, "sincerely hope for political stability, economic prosperity and people's happiness in the DPRK."

(return to top)

6. Experts on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

Reuters ("ANALYSIS-N.KOREA'S KIM CAME, SAW AND PONDERS REFORMS ", 2006-01-19) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il came to the PRC to look at the country's economic reforms, saw many achievements he could apply back home, but will likely make few changes to his country's economy, analysts said. They said any reforms would be difficult in an economy that is mostly closed to the outside world and whose leaders seem more interested in staying in power than boosting their people's gross domestic product. Analysts did not think the trip would lead to a "eureka moment" when Kim would see the light of taking his economy on a path similar to the PRC's. But they did note Kim was able to show his top cadres what might be possible.

(return to top)

7. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

The Korea Times ("TWO KOREAS TO RESUME ECONOMIC TALKS ", 2006-01-19) reported that working-level officials of the ROK and DPRK will try to iron out differences on a number of inter-Korean economic cooperation issues during a two-day meeting set to begin today in the DPRK border town of Kaesong.

(return to top)

8. PRC on DPRK-US Bilateral Meeting

RIA Novosti ("CHINA HAILS U.S.-NORTH KOREA TALKS ", 2006-01-19) reported that the Foreign Ministry of the PRC welcomes the results of a meeting held in Beijing between US and DPRK envoys to talks on ending Pyongyang's nuclear program, the ministry's official spokesman Kong Quan said Thursday. The meeting showed a positive attitude toward the resumption of six party talks, the Chinese diplomat said.

(return to top)

9. DPRK-Australian Relations

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA ASKS AUSTRALIA TO RESTORE TIES: REPORT", 2006-01-18) reported that the DPRK has asked Australia to restore bilateral relations and resume training its economic and agricultural officials, an Australian newspaper reported Wednesday. The request came in a rare submission by Pyongyang to an inquiry by the Australian parliament, the national daily, The Australian, reported.

(return to top)

10. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap News ("NEARLY 1,400 N. KOREANS DEFECTED TO S. KOREA IN 2005: MINISTRY ", 2006-

01-19) reported that almost 1,400 DPR Koreans defected to the ROK last year, raising the total number of northern defectors to the ROK since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War to 8,000, officials at the ROK Unification Ministry said Thursday.

(return to top)

11. New Taiwan Premier

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN'S PRESIDENT APPOINTS NEW PREMIER", 2006-01-19) reported that Taiwan's president appointed a popular politician and former party chief as the island's next premier Thursday in a move aimed at regaining support for the ruling party ahead of the 2008 presidential election. Su Tseng-chang, former chairman of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party, will replace Frank Hsieh to head the Cabinet as the island's No. 3 leader, President Chen Shui-bian announced.

(return to top)

12. US Visit to PRC, Japan

Agence France-Presse ("TOP US ENVOY TO VISIT CHINA, JAPAN", 2006-01-19) reported that US Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick is due to depart on a tour of Japan and the PRC to discuss security and trade issues, including Iran's disputed nuclear program, the State Department said.

(return to top)

13. PRC on Iran Nuclear Program

Reuters ("CHINA URGES RESTRAINT IN IRAN NUCLEAR CRISIS", 2006-01-19) reported that the PRC again called for restraint in the Iran crisis on Thursday, with no sign of international consensus yet on the West's drive for the U.N. Security Council to take charge of efforts to curb Tehran's nuclear program.

(return to top)

14. PRC Bird Flu

Agence France-Presse ("CONCERN OVER CHINA'S SUVREILLANCE METHODS AFTER SIXTH DEATH", 2006-01-19) reported that the PRC's bird flu surveillance methods were again under the spotlight after it was revealed the latest human H5N1 fatality occurred in an area where no outbreak among poultry had been reported. The PRC announced late on Wednesday that a 35-yea--old woman from Jianyang city, in the southwestern province of Sichuan, had become the nation's ninth confirmed human case of bird flu and its sixth fatality from the disease.

(return to top)

15. PRC on Human Rights

Reuters ("CHINA SAYS RIGHTS CRITICISMS COME FROM 'THIN AIR'", 2006-01-19) reported that the PRC lashed out at an international human rights group for its routinely dim assessments on Thursday, but also said it had room to improve citizens' rights. Human Rights Watch, a New York-based organization that campaigns against political repression and torture, said in its annual

worldwide report that the PRC remained beset by widespread abuses of citizens' rights.

(return to top)

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