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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("MINISTER HOPES 'OUTPOST OF TYRANNY' REMARK DOESN'T AFFECT NUKE TALKS", 2005-01-20) reported that the ROK's foreign minister expressed his hope Thursday that US Secretary of State designate's reference to the DPRK as an "outpost of tyranny" would not derail efforts to resume six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. "I hope the remarks by Condoleezza Rice will not affect the resumption of six-party talks," Ban Ki-moon told reporters.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Times ("WHITE HOUSE EXPECTS NK TALKS `VERY SOON'", 2005-01-20) reported that the US is hopeful the DPRK will resume negotiations on dismantling its nuclear weapons programs "very soon," a senior official in Washington said Wednesday. "It's important that we move forward on the multilateral approach that this administration is pursuing," White House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters at a briefing. "We continue to remain hopeful that North Korea will come back to the six-party talks very soon."

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3. DPRK on Nuclear Issue

Yonhap ("N. KOREA DENOUNCES LIBYA'S NUCLEAR DEAL WITH U.S.", 2005-01-20) reported that the DPRK reiterated its opposition Thursday to the US demand that it follow Libya's footsteps and abandon its nuclear arms program in exchange for political and economic benefits. The latest edition of a DPRK weekly called the US demand a "shameless" move, claiming that Libya has won almost nothing by accepting the US proposal to scrap its nuclear program.

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4. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap ("BUSH'S SILENCE ON PYONGYANG HERALDS NO POLICY CHANGE", 2005-01-20) reported that with the world's attention riveted on his mouth, George W. Bush took an oath at his second inauguration on Thursday. He used much of his 17-minute inauguration speech to stress the cause of freedom and democracy in the international community, and did not directly mention about

the DPRK.

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5. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Kyodo News ("JAPAN NEEDS N. KOREAN POLICY WITH EYE TO FALL OF KIM REGIME: TAKEBE", JAPAN NEEDS N. KOREAN POLICY WITH EYE TO FALL OF KIM REGIME: TAKEBE) reported that Japan may need to compile a policy on Pyongyang taking into consideration the possibility that the regime led by DPRK leader Kim Jong Il may collapse, Tsutomu Takebe, secretary general of Japan's governing Liberal Democratic Party, said Thursday. "People in North Korea have been suffering from human rights infringement, and it is unforgivable from the humanitarian standpoint. We need to consider issues of North Korea by taking into account the possibility of a collapse of its regime," Takebe said in a speech in Tokyo.

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6. US on Missile Defense and the DPRK

Reuters ("U.S. MISSILE DEFENSE SHAPING UP, TOP TESTER SAYS", 2005-01-20) reported that President Bush's fledgling missile defense system should provide a limited capability to thwart a DPRK missile attack, the Pentagon's top weapons tester said in a report made available Wednesday. A system "testbed" put together by Boeing Co. "should have some limited capability to defend against a threat missile from North Korea," Thomas Christie, the Pentagon's director of operational testing, said in his annual report to Congress on top US weapon programs. "Ground testing has improved our confidence that military operators could exploit any inherent capability that may exist in the testbed, if needed in an emergency," he wrote.

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7. DPRK on US Human Rights

Korean Central News Agency of the DPRK ("KCNA REFUTES U.S. ACCUSATIONS AGAINST DPRK", 2005-01-20) reported that the Human Rights Watch, which claims to be a US non-governmental human rights organization, in an "annual report on human rights" released on Jan. 13 dealing with human rights performances in at least 60 countries once again pulled up the DPRK over "the issues of political offenders" and "defectors from the north". We term the Human Rights Watch's malignant mud-slinging at the DPRK over its human rights performance as sheer sophism fully representing the US hostile policy toward the DPRK. The US, styling itself a "human rights judge", has no right to talk about human rights as it is the graveyard of human rights and the worst human rights abuser in the world.

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8. Inter - Korean Relations

Korea Times ("LABOR PARTY SEEKS TO BOOST INTER-KOREAN TIES", 2005-01-20) reported that Kim Hye-kyung, chairwoman of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), on Thursday criticized Washington’s policy toward Pyongyang, vowing her party will work toward improving inter-Korean relations by boosting party-level exchanges and supporting a possible South-North summit. "The DLP is currently working on a plan to send delegations to the North and also pushing for active

party-level exchanges with the DPRK's Korea Socialist Democratic Party (KSDP)," Kim told a news conference held at the party headquarters in Seoul.

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9. US - ROK Relations

Arirang TV ("POLL SUGGESTS KOREANS LESS HOSTILE TO U.S.", 2005-01-20) reported that as US President George W. Bush prepares to be sworn in for a second term in office, a recent poll shows most people in the world believe his re-election will lead to more setbacks for global peace and security. The survey also found the ROK's anti-US sentiment was slightly lower than that of many other countries around the world. Anti-American sentiment in the ROK was rated at 54 percent, while the global average stood at 58 percent believing that Bush's re-election made the world more dangerous.

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10. ROK Maritime Accident

Agence France Presse ("SOUTH KOREAN CARGO SHIP SINKS IN NORTH KOREAN WATERS, 14 MISSING", 2005-01-20) reported that the DPRK has approved an unprecedented search and rescue operation by the ROK's coastguards in its waters after a ROK cargo ship sank off the DPRK's east coast, Seoul officials said. The 2,862-tonne Pioneernaya aboard went down early Thursday, some 260 kilometres (160 miles) northeast of the ROK's eastern city of Goseong, near the border with the DPRK. Only four, two Vietnamese and two Koreans, were rescued by a nearby Russian vessel, with 14 people still missing, the Unification Ministry said.

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11. DPRK on ROK Maritime Accident

International Herald Tribune ("NORTH KOREA ALLOWS SOUTH TO CONDUCT SEA SEARCH", 2005-01-20) reported that the ROK Coast Guard began an unprecedented search and rescue operation in DPRK waters on Thursday after Pyongyang approved the mission, government and rescue officials said. The DPRK gave the ROK vessel permission to enter its waters just hours after Seoul made the request on Thursday morning, said Kim Hong Jae, a spokesman for the Unification Ministry. "Our request and the North's go-ahead went and came very smoothly," Kim told Reuters.

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12. Japan on DPRK Shellfish Boycott

Japan Times ("JAPAN COULD 'CLAM DOWN' ON N. KOREA", 2005-01-20) reported that Japan's powerful diplomatic weapon against the DPRK could be a humble shellfish, if Japan chooses to stop eating them, a citizens' group said Wednesday. Japan regularly imports tons of "asari" clams from the reclusive state. Boycotting asari imports could help Japan find out what happened to citizens abducted by the DPRK and the clams could instead feed starving DPRK citizens, the group said.

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13. Japan on DPRK Abductees

Kyodo News ("GROUP RETRACTS CLAIM THAT COUPLE IN PHOTO ARE JAPANESE ABDUCTEES", 2005-01-20) reported that a group investigating the suspected abductions of Japanese nationals by the DPRK on Wednesday retracted its claim that a couple shown in a photograph owned by a DPRK defector are two missing Japanese citizens. The photo, which was provided by Tokyo Broadcasting System Inc. to the Investigation Commission on Missing Japanese Probably Related to the DPRK, was believed to show Hiroshi Saito, who went missing in December 1968 at age 18, and Kyoko Matsumoto, who went missing in October 1977 at age 29. However, the man and woman in the photo later told TBS they are DPRK defectors who fled to the ROK, according to the group.

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14. ROK on Aid to the DPRK

Yonhap ("SEOUL SAYS N. KOREA PLAGUED BY COMPLICATED EMERGENCIES", 2005-01-20) reported that the Unification Ministry said Thursday that the DPRK is being plagued by a set of "complicated emergencies" arising from natural disasters, structural problems and economic isolation. The ministry responsible for handling inter-Korean affairs said that international assistance is still widely needed to feed the DPRK's 23 million people, despite some positive effects from foreign aid and the launch of several economic enclaves.

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15. ROK - Japanese Relations on Park Assassination Attempt

Korea Herald ("ATTEMPT ON PARK'S LIFE IN 1974 CAUSED NEAR-BREAK IN JAPAN TIES", 2005-01-20) reported that three decades ago, an assassination attempt against then President Park Chung-hee by a pro-DPRK resident of Japan which killed the First Lady nearly resulted in a break of diplomatic ties between Seoul and Tokyo, secret diplomatic documents showed yesterday. The Foreign Ministry declassified 15 sets of files on the 1974 death of First Lady Yook Young-soo, shedding some new light but not removing all elements of mystery from the case.

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16. ROK on Colonial Victims

Chosun Ilbo ("GOVT TO PRIORITIZE LAW FOR COMPENSATION OF COLONIAL VICTIMS", 2005-01-20) reported that the government and the ruling Uri Party decided Thursday to legislate a special law to compensate victims of Japanese colonial rule. Uri lawmaker Moon Byung-ho, who chairs the parliamentary Bill Review Subcommittee under the Health and Welfare Committee, said the government had agreed to complement the Pacific War Victim Support Law, now before the National Assembly, with a special law rather than legislating a separate bill.

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17. DPRK - Japanese Relations

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG URGES TOKYO TO PAY DEBTS ON HISTORY", 2005-01-20) reported that the DPRK on Thursday renewed its harsh rhetorical criticism of Japan's past atrocities and accused

Japanese ultra-right wing politicians of trying to cover up the past. "Japanese right-wing forces and media are becoming so noisy in their smear campaign against DPRK, persistently tampering with Japan's crime-woven past," a DPRK committee said in a report by the Korean Central News Agency monitored by the ROK's Yonhap News Agency.

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18. Japan on Iraq Kidnapping

Agence France Presse ("TOKYO CHECKING REPORT ON KIDNAPPED JAPANESE IN IRAQ, HAS DOUBTS", 2005-01-20) reported that Japan is checking a report that gunmen have kidnapped a Japanese engineer in Iraq but the possibility that the person is a Japanese national is "extremely low," a government spokesman said. Quoting the Iraqi police, a report from Iraq said the Japanese engineer was traveling with two Iraqi policemen when gunmen stopped their vehicle, killed the two officers and abducted the Japanese national. "In the first place we do not have information that such a Japanese is in Iraq. We are ckecking what is the fact," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda told a regular news conference.

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19. Japan on EU Arms Embargo

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN VOICES OPPOSITION TO EU LIFTING ARMS EMBARGO ON CHINA", 2005-01-20) reported that Japan has voiced opposition to the European Union's likely lifting of an embargo on arms sales to the PRC, saying the move raises serious concerns over peace and security in East Asia. "It is extremely worrying as this issue concerns peace and security environments not only in Japan but also in East Asia as a whole," Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura told a joint news conference with visiting British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. "I told him we are opposed to" the lifting of the 15-year-long embargo, Machimura said, adding that the issue was of great concern also for the US.

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20. Sino - Japanese Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN PROPOSES JOINT PLAN WITH CHINA TO IMPROVE TIES", 2005-01-20) reported that Japan proposed to the PRC in a meeting of senior diplomats Thursday that they should draw up a joint plan to improve testy relations between the two countries, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said. Sasae said that under that plan, the two countries should set several goals for the current year and discuss ways to achieve them. Cui said the idea has merits, adding that it is important for the two countries to view issues from an overall standpoint as they impact the bilateral relations, according to the official.

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21. PRC on Iraq Hostages

Reuters ("FAMILIES OF CHINESE HOSTAGES IN IRAQ ISSUE PLEA", 2005-01-20) reported that relatives pleaded for the lives of eight PRC hostages in Iraq as a deadline set by their captors neared on Thursday, and the US military said a Brazilian was also missing following an insurgent attack. Guerrillas released a video on Tuesday showing the PRC workers being guarded by gunmen, and

said they would kill them unless the PRC -- which opposed the US-led war in Iraq -- clarified within 48 hours why its citizens were in the country.

(return to top) Agence France Presse ("MEDIATORS CONFIDENT OF CHINESE HOSTAGES' RELEASE AS DEADLINE APPROACHES", 2005-01-20) reported that mediators trying to help the PRC win the release of eight of its nationals being held hostage in Iraq are optimistic of success, as the deadline for the captives' execution approaches. Diplomats from the PRC's embassy in Baghdad were in talks with the Islamic Scholars Association and its chairman Harith Al-Dhari, who helped in the release of seven PRC taken hostage last April, the Xinhua news agency said. "All of the Iraqi people know the attitude of the Chinese people toward the Iraqi issue, and I am optimistic that the kidnapped Chinese will be released soon," the chairman told the agency in the Iraqi capital. (return to top)

22. PRC on Activist's Arrest

The Associated Press ("WIFE OF BOSTON-BASED DISSIDENT JAILED", 2005-01-20) reported that the wife of a Boston-based democracy activist jailed in the PRC said on Thursday she plans to seek medical parole for her husband after seeing him for the first time since he was detained in 2002. Yang Jianli, who has served more than half of a five-year prison term on charges of spying for Taiwan and illegal entry into the country, became eligible for parole Oct. 26. But PRC officials have rejected appeals by American lawmakers and State Department officials for his release, saying his sentence conforms with PRC law.

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23. PRC on Zhao Ziyang's Death

The Associated Press ("CHINA TO HOLD MEMORIAL FOR DEPOSED LEADER", 2005-01-20) reported that the PRC will hold a memorial for ousted Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang at its main cemetery for revolutionary heroes but it hasn't been decided whether he will be buried there, a relative said Thursday. Zhao's family has accepted a government offer to hold a ceremony at Beijing's Babaoshan Cemetery, but no date has been set, said his son-in-law, Wang Zhihua.

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24. PRC Economic Reforms

Los Angeles Times ("AN OLD DOGMA'S NEW TWIST", 2005-01-20) reported that the decidedly retro Nanjie seems to have found the answer to the good life. It is the best known of a handful of villages to return to the country's communist past. But its de facto CEO, Wang is also realistic. That's why he didn't think twice about hiring an outside brewery executive with a PhD at an annual salary of $60,000. His adaptability is supported by another of his beloved slogans: Wai yuan nei fang, or "Circle on the outside, square on the inside." The circle refers to the flexibility of the market economy and the square the dogma of communism. Their coexistence represents the "third way" that allows Nanjie to hold on to Maoist nostalgia without rejecting the benefits of capitalism.

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25. Cross Strait Relations

BBC News ("FLYING THE FLAG FOR CHINA - IN TAIWAN", 2005-01-20) reported that in a quiet

neighborhood in northern Taipei, two rather frayed red flags billow in the breeze - one is the banner of the PRC Communist Party, the other, the national PRC flag. The man who put them up, Dai Chung, is the secretary general of the PRC Communist Party's Taiwan province branch - an office he said he launched after the election of Taiwan's independence-leaning President, Chen Shui-bian, in 2000. But it was only last month, when he advertised for a secretary in a local paper, that his activities came to the attention of the Taiwanese authorities, who've demanded he close down his operation.

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26. Grenada and Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA AND GRENADA AGREE TO RESUME TIES", 2005-01-20) reported that the PRC and Grenada agreed Thursday to resume diplomatic ties in a step that would require the Caribbean island to break relations with Beijing's rival, Taiwan. The announcement is a blow to Taiwan in its effort to maintain official relations with foreign governments as a way to assert the self-ruled island's status as a sovereign nation. Grenada was one of 27 mainly African and Latin American nations that recognize Taiwan instead of the PRC.

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27. PRC Environmental Protection

BBC News ("CHINA SUSPENDS 26 POWER PROJECTS", 2005-01-20) reported that the PRC has ordered a halt to construction work on 26 big power stations, including two at the Three Gorges Dam, on environmental grounds. The move is a surprising one because the PRC is struggling to increase energy supplies for its booming economy. Last year 24 provinces suffered black outs. The State Environmental Protection Agency said the 26 projects had failed to do proper environmental assessments.

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