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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Diplomacy

Associated Press ("TOP DIPLOMATS FROM SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN, U.S. DISCUSS NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR ISSUE", 2007-01-25) reported that the ROK foreign minister held phone discussions with his U.S. and Japanese counterparts about coming Six Party Talks. U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and ROK Foreign Minister Song Min-soon pledged in their 10-minute conversation Wednesday night to work closely on deciding how to implement the 2005 accord, according to a ministry statement. Song had a 30-minute conversation Thursday with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso, vowing close cooperation to implement the 2005 accord at the nuclear talks. Japan's Foreign Ministry issued a similar statement. Song arrived in Beijing on Thursday for a three-day visit to the PRC, where he was expected to hold talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and other officials on DPRK and other issues.

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2. DPRK-UNDP Relations

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA ACCUSES U.S. OF DIRTY POLITICS ON U.N. FUND", 2007-01-25) reported that the DPRK accused the United States on Thursday of a "smear campaign" after Washington said U.N. Development Fund (UNDP) money may have been diverted to build nuclear weapons. Mark Wallace, the U.S. envoy for U.N. financial management, accused the UNDP in a letter last week of violating rules by hiring North Korean government officials and by paying salaries in cash through the government. "As the UNDP has denied, the U.S. assertions...are a sheer fiction," said a DPR Korean spokesman. U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Monday called for external audits of some U.N. programs to see if they were free of government interference. The UNDP has said there was no reason to believe that programs were subverted in the DPRK. The UNDP has some 20 projects in the DPRK on economic, social, the environment and food management. Ad Melkert, the UNDP associate administrator, said only a small part of the program was administered by the DPRK. UNDP spends some \$2 million to \$3 million a year in the DPRK, including \$100,000 for local salaries. It has some 16 DPR Koreans and four international staff. The agency said the DPRK handled just \$337,000 in UNDP funds over two years.

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3. US on UN DPRK Programs

Kyodo ("U.S. SEEKS UNFPA'S COMPREHENSIVE AUDIT OF N. KOREA PROJECTS", 2007-01-24) reported that the United States urged the U.N Population Fund (UNFPA) to conduct a comprehensive audit of its programs in the DPRK. The move came after the 36-member executive board of the U.N. agency approved an \$8.35 million aid program for the DPRK, focusing mainly on reproductive health, population and development issues, for a three-year period from 2007. The U.S. representative, expressing deep concerns over the humanitarian situation in the DPRK, also called for the UNFPA to make all audits available to the executive board members. Japan also sought close monitoring of implementation of the programs in order to ensure that "maximum benefits are delivered to the neediest individuals, in particular women and youth."

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4. DPRK Ban on Foreign Currency

Associated Press ("REPORT: NORTH KOREA BANS USE OF FOREIGN CURRENCY", 2007-01-25) reported that the DPRK has banned the use of foreign currency in all domestic transactions in an apparent attempt to collect hard currency from individuals amid international economic sanctions over its nuclear test. The ban was announced Monday and took effect immediately, the Dong-a Ilbo newspaper reported, citing unidentified "reliable sources" familiar with DPRK affairs. Foreign money can be exchanged for DPRK currency at government-designated booths, it said. However, the North has a black market for currency where the unofficial rate is many times higher than the government-set rate. Before the ban, foreign currencies, such as the U.S. dollar and euro, could be used at stores in capital Pyongyang and other major cities.

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5. Sino-DPRK Trade Relations

Kyodo ("CHINA'S FOOD EXPORTS TO N. KOREA DOWN 53% IN 2006, OIL STAYS FLAT", 2007-0-25) reported that the PRC, the DPRK's major food and fuel supplier, exported to its impoverished neighbor roughly half the amount of food in 2006 compared with a year earlier while shipping about the same amount of oil. Chinese customs figures showed that the PRC's exports of maize, rice and wheat flour to the country in the 12 months of 2006 totaled 207,250 tons, down 53 percent from a year earlier, according to the General Administration of Customs. Meanwhile, the PRC shipped 524,040 tons of oil to the energy-starved neighbor, up 0.2 percent from the previous year. The PRC does not reveal the amount of its food and fuel assistance to the DPRK, and analysts rely on export figures to assess the amount of aid Beijing gives Pyongyang.

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6. Top US Official Resignation

Reuters ("TOP U.S. NON-PROLIFERATION OFFICIAL RESIGNS", 2007-01-24) reported that the top U.S. non-proliferation official submitted his resignation on Wednesday, leaving the Bush administration with another major vacancy as it struggles to resolve nuclear-related disputes with Iran and the DPRK. Robert Joseph, who has a reputation as a hard-liner with deep skepticism about the potential for any serious deal with Pyongyang, plans to leave the government in February after completing work-related assignments in Ankara and Moscow. Joseph, who holds the title of undersecretary for arms control and international security at the State Department, declined comment. But other officials told Reuters he had signed his resignation letter on Wednesday. One senior official said Joseph was in the administration for six years -- first on the White House National Security Council staff and later moving to the State Department -- and felt it was time to leave government. Asked if a potential DPRK deal had anything to do with the decision, the senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said: "I don't know. He just told me he just decided it's time to go." However, Joseph's departure comes amid a flurry of diplomacy that U.S. and Asian officials increasingly believe is likely to produce the kind of nuclear freeze deal with the DPRK that Joseph and other hardliners have long opposed. Joseph is the latest high-level departure from the State Department as embattled President George W. Bush begins his final two years in office. Other vacancies include deputy secretary, counselor and assistant secretaries for counter-terrorism and political-military affairs. Joseph, a major force behind the administration's controversial proliferation security initiative which organized countries in a voluntary program to share intelligence and interdict trade in weapons of mass destruction, is expected to teach, write and consult.

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7. Russia on US Missile Defense in Central EU

Washington Times ("RUSSIA HITS U.S. ANTI-MISSILE PLANS", 2007-01-25) reported that Russia's defense minister yesterday harshly criticized U.S. plans to deploy missile-defense sites in Central Europe, saying Moscow doesn't trust the U.S. explanation that they are intended to counter missile threats posed by Iran and the DPRK. Sergei Ivanov, speaking during a trip to India where he co-chaired a bilateral commission on military ties, said neither Iran nor DPRK has or will have a capability to build missiles that can reach Europe. "They don't and won't have intercontinental ballistic missiles," Mr. Ivanov told reporters. "And a question comes: whom it's directed against?" U.S. authorities said Monday they had told Polish leaders that the United States wants to open formal negotiations on the possibility of locating ground-based interceptor missiles in Poland. Prime Minister Mirek Topolaneck of the Czech Republic also said Washington had asked to base a radar station in the country that would serve as another part of the system. Both Poland and the Czech Republic are former Soviet satellite nations that are now NATO members. Mr. Ivanov said yesterday that the deployment of U.S. missile-defense facilities in Poland and the Czech Republic was a decided issue despite official claims that talks were still ahead. "It's done mostly to assuage domestic public opinion," he said. "The decision already has been made, and the talks serve simply as a cover. Like other new NATO members, the Czech Republic and Poland want to show their loyalty." Russian military officials have said they see the U.S. system as a threat that would upset the security balance and have warned of unspecified measures in response.

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8. ROK-Japan Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("PRESIDENT SAYS HE'LL BE 'FLEXIBLE' ON JAPAN TIES", 2007-01-25) reported that in comments on the ROK's external relations during his New Year press conference yesterday, President Roh Moo-hyun promised to be flexible in trying to improve relations between the ROK and Japan, but said he would oppose efforts by Japan to link the abduction of Japanese citizens by the DPRK to a settlement of the nuclear issues in the six-way talks. Mr. Roh noted that he was considering a visit to Japan, and said those plans would not be driven by any benchmarks.

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9. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("CHINA, JAPAN HOLD SUBCABINET-LEVEL TALKS IN BEIJING ", 2007-01-25) reported that the PRC and Japan began subcabinet-level talks Thursday that are expected to cover a bilateral gas dispute in the East China Sea as well as expected visits to Japan later this year by PRC leaders. Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi met with PRC Deputy Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in the afternoon.

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10. Disposal of Japanese Weapons in PRC

Mainichi Daily News ("CHINESE VICTIMS OF JAPANESE CHEMICAL WEAPON SUE GOVERNMENT", 2007-01-25) reported that a group of PRC plaintiffs sued the Japanese government over the sickening of 44 people when construction workers broke open a barrel of poison gas left behind by Japanese troops in World War II. The plaintiffs are demanding a total of 1.43 billion yen

(US\$11.8 million), according to Akira Ibori, one of their lawyers. The suit, filed at Tokyo District Court, also demands that Japan cover medical costs and income losses due to health problems blamed on the accident, which happened in Qiqihar City, northeastern PRC, Ibori said.

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11. Japanese Historical Revisionism

The Associated Press ("JAPANESE DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES PRODUCTION OF NANKING FILM TO DENY MASSACRE", 2007-01-25) reported that a Japanese filmmaker announced that he is working on a documentary reporting that the Nanking Massacre never happened. "The Truth about Nanking," will be based on testimony from Japanese veterans, archival footage and documents that proponents say prove accounts of the killings are nothing more than PRC propaganda. "This will be our first effort to correct the errors of history through a film," director Satoru Mizushima.

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12. PRC on Japanese Historical Revisionism

Shanghai Daily ("CHINA DECRIES PLAN FOR MASSACRE-DENIAL MOVIE", 2007-01-25) reported that a PRC government official said that the evidence for the Nanjing Massacre was "ironclad" in response to reports that a Japanese filmmaker is planning a documentary denying the atrocity. Critics said the film will only cause embarrassment for Japan. "They say the film will transmit the truth about Nanjing, but they will be only spreading shame for Japan," said Shinichiro Kumagai, a Japanese activist.

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13. Japan Constitutional Revision

Asahi Shinbun ("DIET OPENS SESSION ON THEME OF REFORMS", 2007-01-25) reported that the Japanese Diet session opened for a 150-day run, with constitutional amendments, education reform, income disparity among key issues. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has made it clear he intends to rewrite the U.S.-drafted pacifist Constitution. He will call for the passage of a bill for a national referendum, a procedure required to revise the Constitution.

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14. PRC African Diplomacy

The New York Times ("CHINESE LEADER TO VISIT SUDAN FOR TALKS ON DARFUR CONFLICT", 2007-01-25) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao would visit Sudan in early February and would seek a diplomatic solution to the conflict in the country's western Darfur region. The PRC has faced widespread criticism for its economic engagement with Sudan at a time when government-allied militias have carried out frequent attacks on civilian populations in western Darfur. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said that the PRC would use its diplomatic influence to encourage a settlement of the Darfur crisis, but that it would not publicly pressure Sudan or threaten it with sanctions.

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15. PRC Workers Kidnapped

BBC News ("CHINESE WORKERS SEIZED IN NIGERIA", 2007-01-25) reported that at least two PRC workers have been abducted in Nigeria's southern region. A police official in Bayelsa state said the kidnappers broke into the offices of the Chinese National Petroleum Company, seizing hostages and cash. About 100 foreign hostages, mostly oil workers, have recently been kidnapped in the oil-producing Niger Delta.

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16. PRC Economic Growth

BBC News ("CHINA ECONOMY RECORDS HUGE GROWTH", 2007-01-25) reported that the PRC's economy expanded by 10.7% in 2006, marking the fastest growth since 1995, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. The PRC's economy continues to be powered by a huge appetite for investment, and a boom in exports that generated a trade surplus of \$177.47bn last year.

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