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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Counterfeiting

China Daily ("NORTH KOREA HINTS AT CURBING MONEY LAUNDERING", 2006-01-26) reported that the DPRK has hinted it might observe international standards on money laundering but Washington wants action, Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said on Wednesday. In a Reuters interview, Hill, who heads the US delegation to six talks said the hint came when he met in Beijing last week with DPR Korean counterpart Kim Kye-gwan and PRC officials in an effort to restart the stalled negotiations.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("HILL SEES RAY OF HOPE IN N.KOREA STANDOFF ", 2006-01-26) reported that the US chief delegate at stalled six party talks held out some hope that the negotiations could resume soon despite tough talk from Washington and Pyongyang. Christopher Hill said his DPRK counterpart Kim Kye-gwan at a meeting in Beijing last week "indicated they would be prepared to subscribe to international norms with respect to money laundering and would want to cooperate internationally on these issues." But Hill told Reuters his government was “not looking here for words. We're more interested in actions. We'd like to see this (illicit) activity cease." Hill said he “made very clear that financial measures -- what we'd call defensive measures -- are quite separate from the issue of the six-party talks, and the way to end those measures was to end the activity that those measures were designed to counter," according to the news agency. (return to top) Yonhap News ("BUSH SUPPORTS N.K. NUCLEAR TALKS BUT HOLDS FIRM ON COUNTERFEITING", 2006-01-26) reported that US President George W. Bush reaffirmed his administration's commitment Thursday to DPRK nuclear negotiations but said there is no room for compromise on stopping the nation's illicit counterfeiting. He said the two issues, nuclear armament and counterfeiting, are entirely separate, a policy administration officials have told the DPRK and other negotiating partners. (return to top)

2. Inter-Korean Unification Festival

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA PROPOSES HOLDING JOINT FESTIVAL WITH SOUTH ", 2006-01-26) reported that the DPRK proposed that the two Koreas hold a national unification festival to mark the sixth anniversary of the landmark June 15 summit between their leaders in 2000, the DPRK’s official media said. Yang Hyong-sop, vice-president of the presidium of the North's Supreme People's Assembly, made the overture during a meeting on policy, reported the (North) Korean Central Broadcasting Station.

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3. UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2006 on DPRK

The Korea Times ("EFFECTS OF NK ECONOMIC REFORM HARD TO DETECT’ ", 2006-01-25) reported that the DPRK’s economic reform steps have generated economic activities, but the degree

of implementation and impact is not that visible, according to a UN humanitarian report. The country's weak managerial capacity is also limiting aid project implementation, the report said. The UNICEF Humanitarian Action Report 2006, dated Monday, asks the international community to donate $583.48 million to fund UNICEF's actions for the year, including $11.2 million for the DPRK.

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4. DPRK Defectors

The Korea Times ("67% OF DEFECTORS FACE DISCRIMINATION", 2006-01-26) reported that more than 67 percent of DPRK defectors say they have suffered workplace discrimination the ROK, according to a report of the human rights panel. The National Human Rights Commission yesterday released a survey showing that 67.6 percent of 500 DPRK defectors said they are discriminated against at work.

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5. DPRK Industry

The Korea Times ("NORTH LAGS SOUTH BY 35 YEARS", 2006-01-25) reported that the DPRK lags behind the ROK by 35 years in terms of industrial development, a state-run bank said Wednesday. A book published by the Korea Development Bank said most of the DPRK's industries are shown to remain at a level not seen in the ROK since the late 1960s. The industrial gap is most conspicuous in the electricity, shipbuilding and textile sectors, the book said, followed by the fields of steel-making, auto-manufacturing, machinery and electronics.

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6. DPRK Burial Ban

Donga Ilbo ("NORTH KOREANS CIRCUMVENTING BURIAL BAN ", 2006-01-26) reported that last year, Cheong-jin authorities banned burials and announced a directive calling for the cremation of dead bodies because there were too many graveyards and too few trees. A similar rule took effect in Pyongyang in 2004. It costs 90,000 DPRK won (about 30 dollars) for one cremation. Older citizens have became frustrated. "This is the wrong time to die," one senior citizen said. "My son, I want to be buried underground." There are solutions to this dilemma, however. Cremation is compulsory only in large cities. One can rent a car to move dead bodies and bury them in rural areas. However, it costs over 100,000 won to move a body the distance between Seoul and Suwon. The average wage of a worker is 2,000-3,000 won. It is also difficult to pay a visit to one's ancestors' graves this way. It is also possible to bury dead bodies near the mountains by bribing forest conservancy officials. The only choice left is a secret burial at night.

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7. US - ROK Security Alliance

BBC News ("US COMMANDER ON SOUTH KOREAN WARTIME OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF TROOPS", 2006-01-26) reported the defence chiefs of the ROK and the USA agreed to "appropriately accelerate" talks on the ROK's desire to regain the full war-time operational control of its 680,000-member military.

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8. US on Tensions with ROK

Chosun Ilbo ("WASHINGTON GLOSSES OVER N.KOREA SPAT WITH SEOUL ", 2006-01-26) reported that the US downplayed a warning by ROK President Roh Moo-hyun that attempts from Washington to topple the DPRK regime would result in “friction” with Seoul. “Hadn't seen those comments,” State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters. “There was no such word as ‘friction’ in the translated version that we have and there’s no need for further comment,” another spokesman later told the Chosun Ilbo on the phone.

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9. PRC Market Reforms

The International Herald Tribune ("CHINA VOWS TO LOOSEN ITS MONETARY POLICIES", 2006-01-26) reported that the PRC pledged to liberalize its interest rate and foreign-exchange policy further as part of wider economic change but said the process would be gradual.

(return to top) The Globe and Mail ("GOOGLE DEFENDS MOVE TO CENSOR CHINA SEARCH", 2006-01-26) reported that Google will block politically sensitive terms on its new PRC search site and not offer e-mail, chat and blog-publishing services, which authorities fear can become flashpoints for social or political protest. Those actions go further than many of its biggest rivals in the PRC. (return to top) Xinhua ("CHINESE GOVT MAY EASE CURBS ON OIL PRICE", 2006-01-26) reported that the PRC is expected to relax controls over retail oil prices in its domestic market soon, bringing them more into line with international prices. (return to top)

10. PRC Media Controls

The International Herald Tribune ("CHINA JAILS JOURNALIST FOR 3 YEARS", 2006-01-26) reported that a PRC journalist was sentenced to three years in prison for "spreading false and alarmist information," his lawyer said, hinting that the verdict was punishment for having supported an imprisoned anti-corruption crusader.

(return to top) The Boston Globe ("CHINA TO 'STRIKE HARD' AGAINST RISING UNREST", 2006-01-26) reported that the PRC is preparing to "strike hard" against rising public unrest, highlighting the government's fears for stability even as the economy booms. (return to top)

11. PRC Bird Flu

The China Post ("SEVENTH BIRD FLU DEATH IN CHINA", 2006-01-26) reported that a Chinese woman infected with bird flu has died. The victim is the seventh person to die from bird flu in the PRC since November.

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12. PRC Environmental Initiatives

Xinhua ("CHINA BUILDS 1ST NATIONAL MARITIME FOREST PARK", 2006-01-26) reported that Hainan national maritime forest park, the first national maritime forest park in the PRC, was established in Hainan Province recently.

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13. PRC-Cross Strait Relations

Xinhua ("MAINLAND, TAIWAN CHARTER FLIGHTS STRIKE PEAK BEFORE FESTIVAL", 2006-0--25) reported that charter flights between the PRC and Taiwan for the the Chinese lunar new year have entered the peak period.

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14. PRC-Africa Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA TO LAUNCH FIRST OVERSEAS RADIO SERVICE IN KENYA", 2006-01-26) reported that China Radio International (CRI), The PRC's only radio station running an overseas service, said it is going to launch FM radio service in Nairobi on Saturday.

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15. PRC-Africa Relations

BBC News ("ZIMBABWE PLANNING CHINESE LESSONS ", 2006-01-26) reported that Zimbabwe's government hopes to see Mandarin Chinese taught in universities as the school year starts in February. The plan is part of President Robert Mugabe's "Look East" policy. It is not clear whether Chinese will be a compulsory subject.

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16. PRC-Iranian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA BACKS RUSSIAN PLAN TO RESOLVE IRANIAN NUCLEAR STANDOFF", 2006-01-26) reported that the PRC has backed a plan to have Iran's uranium enriched in Russia, as the Islamic republic's top security envoy met with PRC officials in Beijing for talks on his nation's nuclear program.

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17. Japan-PRC Bilateral Talks

Crisscross News ("JAPAN, CHINA TO HOLD SUBCABINET-LEVEL TALKS", 2006-01-26) reported that Japan and the PRC have agreed to hold subcabinet-level talks on Feb 10 and 11 in Tokyo to discuss how they can resume meetings between their leaders.

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18. Japanese-PRC Relations

Xinhua ("JAPAN'S PROMINENT RELIGIOUS FIGURE CALLS FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH CHINA", 2006-01-26) reported that Soka Gakkai International (SGI) Honorary President Daisaku Ikeda called for improved bilateral relations between the PRC and Japan in his annual peace proposal.

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19. Japan-North America Trade

Crisscross News ("JAPAN WILL STILL TAKE CANADIAN BEEF DESPITE LATEST BSE TEST", 2006-01-25) reported that Agriculture Minister Shoichi Nakagawa said, "The Canadian case [of BSE] does not affect the export program," Japan imports only beef from cattle aged up to 20 months from the country.

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20. Japan Business Developments

The Globe and Mail ("END OF AN ERA: SONY NO LONGER MAKING WALKMANS IN JAPAN", 2006-01-26) reported that Sony by the end of March will close a factory that began producing the Walkman music players in 1979. Production of Walkman brand products will be shifted to plants in Malaysia and the PRC. The move comes as competition intensifies in the booming digital portable music player market, where Sony lags far behind Apple Computer Inc.'s iPod.

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21. Japan Yasukuni Shrine

The Japan Times ("KOIZUMI NOT BACKING DOWN ON YASUKUNI", 2006-01-26) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi again attempted Wednesday to justify his repeated trips to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine by noting that the PRC and ROK are the only countries that denounce the visits.

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22. US Pacific Military Presence

Crisscross News ("PENTAGON EYES GREATER PACIFIC PRESENCE BUT NO 2ND CARRIER FORCE", 2006-01-26) reported that the U.S. Defense Department will call for boosting its Pacific presence with at least six aircraft carriers and more submarines in its upcoming defense review report, but is likely to give up its plan for a second forward-deployed carrier strike force.

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23. Mongolia Politics

BBC News ("ENKHBOLD IS MONGOLIA'S NEW PM ", 2006-01-25) reported that the Mongolian parliament has chosen the former mayor of Ulan Bator, Miyeegombo Enkhbold, as the new prime minister.

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