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1. Six Party Talks

Joong Ang Ilbo ("KEEP SIX-PARTY TALKS FOCUSED, ENVOY URGES; SAYS THE CENTRAL ISSUE

IS DENUCLEARIZATION", 2006-12-12) reported that Chun Young-woo, the ROK's chief negotiator in the Six Party Talks said negotiators should keep the focus on nuclear weapons, avoid shaming the communist country's negotiators and not get involved in side issues. Chun pointed out that financial sanctions imposed by Washington is an example of how bilateral issues could hamper the talks. Government sources said that several working groups would be formed within the Six Party Talks framework to address issues such as those concerning Japanese abductees. More pointedly, Chun said, "The naming and shaming of the North Korean leadership would not be conducive to an atmosphere for constructive and productive negotiations." Mr. Chun suggested that "treating them [North Korea] with some respect" would make a "world of difference," and stressed patience.

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2. US on Six Party Talks

Agence France-Presse ("RICE WANTS NORTH KOREA DENUCLEARIZED WITHIN 24 MONTHS", 2006-12-11) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said she wanted quick results for the Six Party Talks that resume next week, setting a two-year time frame to dismantle Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. Rice said Washington was ready to offer the DPRK economic aid, energy assistance and improved political relations if it follows through on a September 2005 "joint statement" in which it pledged to abandon the development of nuclear weapons. Rice said her goal was to have complete irreversible steps to dismantle the DPRK nuclear arms program before the end of President George W. Bush's term in January 2009.

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3. DPRK on Six Party Talks

RTT News ("NORTH KOREA CONFIRMS PARTICIPATION IN SIX-NATION NUCLEAR TALKS", 2006-12-12) reported that the DPRK confirmed its participation in the Six Party Talks, scheduled to resume on 18 December in Beijing. "The talks will be held next week, but it is the moment to watch" said Kim Myong Gil, a minister for the DPRK mission to the United Nations in New York. Kim refused to furnish further details by saying that it was "inappropriate to mention what should be discussed at the negotiating table."

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4. Japan on Six Party Talks

BBC ("JAPAN SETS N KOREAN TALKS GOALS", 2006-12-12) reported that Japan's foreign minister Taro Aso said the DPRK would be pressed over the abduction issue during the upcoming Six Party Talks. He also said the DPRK must let international inspectors resume monitoring of its nuclear sites. Mr Aso wants inspections of the DPRK sites by the IAEA. The DPRK and Japan share a mutual distrust, but any final settlement that offered substantial aid to the DPRK in return for abandoning its nuclear programme would require financial support from Tokyo. Mr Aso also said that Japan wants to hold bilateral talks with the DPRK to discuss the restoration of normal relations between the two countries.

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5. PRC on Six Party Talks

Reuters ("CHINA SEES NO DEADLINE FOR NORTH KOREA TALKS", 2006-12-12) reported that Qin Gang, a spokesman for the PRC Foreign Ministry said the next round of Six Party Talks could make concrete progress, but the PRC would set no deadline results. Qin said the talks would focus on how to implement a joint statement from September last year "in a comprehensive and balanced way," adding that negotiators faced no deadline to reach an agreement. The meeting would be flexible, allowing for two-way and multilateral discussions between the countries, he said. "Whether it's in the meeting or on the sidelines, or even in the toilet, all sides can engage in exchanges," he said. Asked by reporters about the PRC's expectations for progress in this session of talks, Qin said: "That depends on what type of effort the six parties make."

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6. Russia on Six Party Talks

RIA Novosti ("MOSCOW EXPECTS CONCRETE RESULTS AT SIX-PARTY TALKS ON N. KOREA", 2006-12-11) reported that Russia welcomes the resumption of Six Party Talks, scheduled to resume December 18, and hopes for concrete results. "We hope the negotiations will be constructive and will yield concrete results as to how to defuse tensions surrounding the nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula," Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said. Kamynin reiterated that Russia has consistently spoken in favor of a political resolution of the issue.

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7. Sino-US Trade Relations

The New York Times ("BEFORE VISIT TO CHINA, A REBUKE", 2006-12-12) reported that in a rebuke to the PRC on the eve of a high-level visit by US officials, the Bush administration formally accused PRC leaders of failing to meet commitments to open the nation's economy and crack down on piracy of foreign goods. The criticism came in a 100-page report to Congress by Susan C. Schwab, the United States trade representative.

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8. PRC Anti-Corruption Measures

Agence France-Presse ("BEIJING VICE MAYOR FOR OLYMPIC CONSTRUCTION TO FACE CHARGES", 2006-12-12) reported that a former Beijing vice mayor in charge of 2008 Olympic construction projects was ousted from the ruling Communist Party for graft and faces judicial prosecution, state press reported. "Liu Zhihua used his position for personal use, sought benefits from others and received several million yuan in bribes," China Central Television reported in an evening news broadcast.

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9. PRC Environment

Agence France-Presse ("WINTER BLUES FOR BEIJING AS POLLUTION WORSENS ", 2006-12-12) reported that Beijing residents have been warned to stay indoors as the city's pollution index hit its

highest level amid the worst conditions since coal-fired power plants kicked into gear for winter. Every monitoring station in Beijing's urban districts recorded levels of particulates seven times higher than the safety standard, the Beijing environmental protection bureau said.

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10. PRC Cultural Controls

Reuters ("CHINA TIGHTENS CONTROL ON NETWORK MUSIC: XINHUA", 2006-12-12) reported that the PRC's Ministry of Culture has said it must approve all imported network music distributed in the country, the official Xinhua news service reported. The PRC Ministry of Culture said network music -- mainly music played on, and downloaded from, the Internet or provided by mobile phone servers -- must be imported by "legal units" approved by the ministry, or face punishment, the report said.

(return to top) BBC News ("CHINA 'CRACKDOWN ON ONLINE GAMES'", 2006-12-12) reported that the PRC is enforcing more monitoring of online games after some were found to contain banned religious or political material, a state news agency reported. The announcement adds to government controls on PRC newspapers, television and other media. Distributors must now obtain approval before releasing new games, reported Xinhua news agency. (return to top)

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