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I. NAPSNet

1. US - DPRK Bilateral Meetings

Associated Press ("N KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS ADDRESS IMPLEMENTATION OF DISARMAMENT PLEDGE; NO AGREEMENT YET", 2006-12-19) reported that Financial experts from the United States and DPRK met to address Washington's campaign to isolate it from the international banking system, the key stumbling block blamed for its 13-month boycott of nuclear talks. The meeting came

on the sidelines of six-nation arms talks that entered a second day with discussions focused on the implementation of a disarmament pledge signed by all parties last year. The DPRK and U.S. delegations also held their first one-on-one meeting at the nuclear talks, the PR Chinese press center said.

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2. Power Outages in DPRK

Reuters ("NUCLEAR NORTH KOREA LIGHTS CANDLES TO STAVE OFF DARK", 2006-12-18) reported that as night falls in the mostly empty streets of Pyongyang, shopkeepers at the few stores remaining open light candles because of the power shortages. Banners in the capital proclaim a bright future for the world's newest nuclear power, but after sunset pedestrians make their way in near darkness because there is not enough power for streetlamps. Trolley-buses run in the darkness but without lights. One building that was ablaze with light was a monument, modeled after the Arc de Triomphe in Paris and built in honor of the founder of the state and president for eternity, Kim Il-sung. The DPRK, with about 22 million people, produces only some 4 percent of the electricity that the ROK manages to generate for a population of some 48 million. The DPRK says it has built thousands of hydroelectric plants but experts say most are small, providing barely enough power for a village. Among the DPRK's demands for agreeing to disarm is for help in providing it with a civilian nuclear power plant, and respect from Washington at the negotiations as a fellow atomic weapons power.

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3. Japan Constitutional Revision

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S PM SEEKS TO REWRITE CONSTITUTION WHILE IN OFFICE ", 2006-12-19) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe vowed to rewrite the country's post-World War II pacifist constitution while he is in office. The first step to revising the constitution would be to pass a bill paving the way for a national referendum.

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4. USFJ Base Realignment

Kyodo ("DEFENSE AGENCY CUTS BUDGET REQUEST FOR U.S. FORCES REALIGNMENT", 2006-12-19) reported that the Defense Agency said it has been calling for a nearly 7.2 billion yen allocation for the realignment of US forces in Japan in its request for the fiscal 2007 budget, down from an earlier requested 15.9 billion yen. The agency said it has revised downward its request for spending to implement measures to reduce the burden of Okinawa in hosting the bulk of US forces to 12.6 billion yen from an earlier requested 23.3 billion yen.

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5. Sino-Japanese Relations

Shanghai Daily News ("CHINESE LEADERS AGREE TO VISIT JAPAN NEXT YEAR", 2006-12-19) reported that PRC leaders agree in principle to visit Japan next year, said State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan. The two countries should also further consolidate the "three foundations" for the sound, long-term, stable development of bilateral relations, namely the political foundation, economic

foundation and people-to-people relations, Tang added.

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6. Sino-Pakistani Joint Military Exercise

IANAS ("PAKISTAN-CHINA MILITARY EXERCISE CONCLUDES", 2006-12-19) reported that a 10-day Pakistan-PRC joint military exercise concluded with the two sides pledging to hold more such manoeuvres in future, Online news agency reported. 'Friendship-2006' was aimed at honing counter-terrorism skills and conducted in a mountainous area adjoining Abbottabad.

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7. Cross Strait Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN OKS \$825M INVESTMENT IN CHINA", 2006-12-19) reported that Taiwan has given approval for three semiconductor companies to invest a combined \$825 million in the PRC, in a sign the island's government is softening its long-standing opposition to high-tech investment by local firms in its political rival. While Taiwan's approval of the investments won't be financially meaningful for the two chipmakers as it involves older 0.25-micron production technology, analysts say it's a significant "first step."

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8. PRC Urban Growth

The New York Times ("CHINESE SUCCESS STORY CHOKES ON ITS OWN GROWTH", 2006-12-19) reported that few cities anywhere have created wealth faster than Shenzhen, but the costs of its phenomenal success stare out from every corner: environmental destruction, soaring crime rates and the disillusionment and degradation of its vast force of migrant workers. Shenzhen owed its success to a simple formula of cheap land, eager, compliant labor and lax environmental rules that attracted legions of foreign investors. Now Shenzhen has begun to look less like a model than an ominous warning of the limitations of a growth-above-all approach.

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9. PRC Rural Unrest

The Associated Press ("CHINESE LAND-PROTEST LEADERS GO ON TRIAL ", 2006-12-19) reported that authorities retaliated against seven farmers who led land protests in southern PRC by charging them with extortion and putting them on trial, the farmers' lawyer and an activist said. The farmers organized demonstrations and clashed with police in Sanshan village in Guangdong province in May when a businessman tried to dig up their land, which the local government had leased to him illegally, lawyer Zhang Jiankang said.

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10. PRC Secrecy Trial

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA JAILS SCHOLAR TO 20 YEARS FOR LEAKING SECRETS", 2006-1-19) reported that a former media commentator and researcher with a top state-run academic

institute has been jailed in the PRC for 20 years for leaking state secrets, a rights group has said. Lu Jianhua was sentenced in a closed hearing at a Beijing intermediate court, the Hong Kong-based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy said in a statement.

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