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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks Agreement

Korea Herald ("NATIONS SCURRY TO ACT ON NUKE DEAL", 2007-02-20) reported that the six member countries of the nuclear talks are gearing up to make some moves on the deal struck in Beijing last week by sending delegates to coordinate steps and arranging working group meetings. Deputy Foreign Minister Shim Yoon-joe left for Washington yesterday for a four-day trip to meet Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nicholas Burns, chief nuclear negotiator Christopher Hill, Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor Jack Crouch and Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation John Rood. Japan, which is currently refusing to talk economic incentives for the DPRK, is also making moves to open a bilateral working group with the DPRK. Japan is set to hold a preparatory discussion with the DPRK side sometime this month, possibly in Tokyo, Pyongyang, Singapore or Beijing.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Programs and Six Party Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("EX-U.S. OFFICIAL: THE KEY TO DEAL IS NORTH'S DISCLOSURE OF URANIUM", 2007-02-20) reported that whether Pyongyang fully describes its alleged uranium-based nuclear program could be a "deal breaker" in the coming months, as the DPRK takes its first steps toward denuclearizing, former US Defense Secretary William Perry said. Mr. Perry said Pyongyang's willingness to give up its nuclear weapons had not gone through any serious tests.

(return to top) Yonhap ("S. KOREA BELIEVES N. KOREA HAS URANIUM-ENRICHING PROGRAM: INTELLIGENCE CHIEF", 2007-02-20) reported that the ROK's intelligence agency said it believes the DPRK is running a clandestine uranium-enriching program, an allegation that has been surfacing as a key source of contention on a nuclear disarmament deal reached last week. "We believe (the program) exists," Kim Man-bok, head of the National Intelligence Service, told a parliamentary committee. (return to top)

3. Inter-Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("AID TO NORTH SEPARATED FROM POLITICS", 2007-02-20) reported that humanitarian aid will keep flowing to the DPRK "if possible," no matter what the country does politically, the Ministry of Unification announced. In its plan for this year, the Unification Ministry set forth six goals for inter-Korean relations, saying "humanitarian assistance will be provided separately from political situations if possible." Among the goals were releasing tension and building trust between the two Koreas, expanding inter-Korean economic projects, the construction of infrastructure such as roads and train tracks in the DPRK and adding more businesses to the Kaesong Industrial Complex program.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Korea Times ("EXPANSION OF KAESONG SITE TO RESUME BY APRIL", 2007-02-20) reported that

Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung said the ministry would resume the halted expansion of a joint industrial complex in the DPRK city of Kaesong no later than mid-April. "We've already completed preparing some 3.3 million square meters of land there with almost perfect water and electricity supply," Lee said in a press briefing at the ministry in Seoul. "Considering its important role for small- and medium-sized South Korean companies, I believe we should resume the expansion plan late next month or mid-April at the latest."

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5. Inter-Korean Summit

Korea Times ("S-N KOREAN SUMMIT GAINING GROUND", 2007-02-20) reported that talk about an inter-Korean summit this year is getting louder and louder despite Chong Wa Dae's repeated denials, as influential figures in and outside the government float its possibility day after day. Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung said Tuesday that summit talks with the DPRK would be a "useful" means of dialogue to resolve the DPRK's nuclear issue and ensure peace on the Korean Peninsula.

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6. Japan on Abductee Issue

Kyodo ("ABE REASSURES ABDUCTEES' KIN: NO TIES WITH N. KOREA UNTIL ALL RETURN", 2007-02-20) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told the families of Japanese nationals abducted by the DPRK that Japan will not normalize ties with Pyongyang until all those abducted by its agents are returned, reassuring them over concerns that the abduction issue may be sidelined as denuclearization negotiations proceed. "The agreement (at the six-nation talks) is an important step toward resolving the abduction issue," Abe told the families at his office.

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7. DPRK Financial Transactions

Korea Times ("NORTH KOREA ENACTS LAW AGAINST MONEY LAUNDERING", 2007-02-20) reported that the National Intelligence Service (NIS) on Tuesday confirmed that the DPRK recently enacted a law that prohibits money laundering. The standing committee of the DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly adopted the legislation last October to ban financial transactions involving illegal earnings, the agency said in a press release. The enactment apparently aimed at settling the US financial sanctions on a bank in Macau that was blacklisted by Washington in September 2005 for its suspicious role in helping the DPRK conduct illicit financial activities, it said.

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8. DPRK Measles Outbreak

BBC News ("N KOREA 'HIT BY MEASLES EPIDEMIC'", 2007-02-20) reported that the DPRK has been hit by a measles epidemic that has killed four people and infected some 3,000, the Red Cross has said. Pyongyang has requested five million doses of vaccine to fight the epidemic. Correspondents say medicine is in short supply and years of malnutrition have weakened resistance to disease.

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9. Korean Reunification

Chosun Ilbo ("TWO KOREAS WILL BE UNIFIED BY 2020: ARMITAGE", 2007-02-20) reported that the two Koreas will highly likely be unified by 2020, the former US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage predicts in a report. Titled "US-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right Through 2020", the report was issued by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). In it, Armitage says, "It appears increasingly likely that the North Korean nuclear issue will be finally resolved only upon unification."

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10. US-Japan Security Alliance

Asahi Shinbun ("'ARMITAGE 2' URGES ASIA TIES", 2007-02-20) reported that a panel of bipartisan Asian experts has called for a strengthening of the Japan-US alliance, which it said must be the focus of the US's strategy in the region. The panel, co-chaired by former US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Harvard University professor Joseph Nye, released proposals Friday for policies spanning the next 13 years. The panel said the US and Japan should use their ties to deal with emerging powerhouses the PRC and India, among other developments.

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11. US-Japan Relations

BBC News ("CHENEY SET TO HOLD US-JAPAN TALKS", 2007-02-20) reported that US VP Dick Cheney has arrived in Tokyo at the start of a trip officials say is designed to bolster America's strategic alliances in Asia. Both sides say the talks in Tokyo will focus on security, not economic ties, with DPRK likely to be high on the agenda. Japan's relations with the PRC are also likely to be covered. The US believes ties with Tokyo are stronger than ever. But analysts say Mr Abe will be seeking reassurances that setbacks in Iraq and elsewhere will not mean the US loses interest in trying to resolve the difficult issues in East Asia.

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12. US Base Explosions in Japan

The Associated Press ("CLAIM FOR JAPAN BASE BLAST", 2007-02-20) reported that several Japanese media outlets received a statement from a group suspected of being ultra-leftist extremists that claimed responsibility for two small explosions outside a US military base south of Tokyo. The Revolutionary Army group called the act "an attack to sabotage" US military realignment in Japan and Vice President Dick Cheney's visit to Japan.

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13. UNSC Expansion

Yomiuri Shimbun ("JAPAN STILL FAR FROM PERMANENT UNSC SEAT", 2007-02-20) reported that the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on reform of the U.N. Security Council held its first meeting of the year last week. Ambassadors from five countries--Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, the Netherlands and Tunisia--were appointed as "facilitators" to assist in the process of consulting with

member states over reform of the Security Council. They are scheduled to report back to the General Assembly president by the end of March. Japan, Brazil, Germany and India, the so-called Group of Four (G-4) have campaigned for permanent seats. However, countries such as Italy, Pakistan and the ROK, which oppose the G-4 efforts, again declared their opposition to increasing the number of permanent seats.

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14. Japan SDF in Nepal

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO SEND SEVERAL SDF TROOPS TO U.N. MISSION IN NEPAL", 2007-02-20) reported that the Japanese government is preparing to send several Self-Defense Forces troops to Nepal to participate in a U.N. military observer mission, making it the first SDF deployment overseas since the Defense Agency was upgraded to the Defense Ministry in January. The unarmed officers will be dispatched based on Japan's International Peace Cooperation law in response to requests from the United Nations. They will be involved in monitoring the management of weapons and soldiers.

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15. PRC Property Rights

The Associated Press ("IN CHINA, A MOVE AGAINST PRIVATIZATION", 2007-02-20) reported that a group of PRC scholars and retired officials has petitioned the PRC's legislature to halt the privatization of state companies, arguing it has widened the country's income gap and fueled social unrest. The sharply worded appeal criticized a decade-long program to privatize state companies, saying it had allowed hundreds of millions of dollars in assets to fall into private and foreign hands. Such privatization, it said, violates the constitution and must be stopped to curb spreading social unrest.

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16. EU-PRC Trade Relations

Reuters ("TRADE BARRIERS COST EU BILLIONS IN LOST BUSINESS IN CHINA", 2007-02-20) reported that EU companies are denied business opportunities in the PRC worth at least ¤20 billion a year because of non-tariff trade barriers, according to a study published by the European Commission. The survey said that the PRC offered huge opportunities for European business, especially in services and environmentally friendly technology. But it said the PRC was not living up to its WTO commitments in many areas, notably in implementing the rules by the provincial authorities and in intellectual property rights, and European industry was suffering as a result.

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