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Preceding NAPSNet Report

1. Kim Jong-il's Visit to PRC

Washington Post ("NORTH KOREAN LEADER REPORTEDLY TRAVELING IN CHINA", 2006-01-10) reported that the leader of the DPRK, Kim Jong Il, was reported to be traveling in the PRC and perhaps Russia on Tuesday, after his government refused again to return to six party talks. The PRC government and the DPRK Embassy here declined to confirm Kim's visit, maintaining the secrecy that has marked his three previous trips to the PRC. But an official in the border city of Dandong said a special train from the PRC carrying Kim crossed into the country amid high security on Monday. News agencies in the ROKa and Japan, citing diplomatic and intelligence sources in Seoul and Beijing, also reported Kim's visit, adding that he was expected to spend four to five days in the PRC to meet with President Hu Jintao to discuss the stalled nuclear talks and bilateral economic cooperation.

(return to top) Reuters ("CHINA HINTS AT VISIT BY RECLUSIVE N.KOREA'S KIM", 2006-01-10) reported that the PRC declined to confirm that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il was making a secret visit, but suggested that rumours of such a trip may be true. Asked if Kim was in the PRC, Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said he had not been authorised to release specific information. "But I want to point out that China and North Korea are friendly neighbours and maintain a tradition of exchanges of high-level visits," he told a regular news conference. Asked if there were plans for such a visit in the future, he just said: "Yes." "But as to the exact time of such a visit, when I have the authorised information it, I will release it in a timely way," Kong added. (return to top)

2. PRC on Six Party Talks

RIA Novosti ("CHINA HOPES FOR DIALOGUE ON U.S. SANCTIONS AGAINST N. KOREA", 2006-01-10) reported that the PRC hopes that the issue of US financial sanctions being imposed on the DPRK will be addressed through dialogue, a Foreign Ministry spokesman said Tuesday. Kong Quan said all the negotiators and the entire international community were concerned about complications emerging in the ongoing six party talks. Quan said the PRC was hoping for a solution based on mutual respect and equality, which would help avoid any further complications in the negotiating process. According to Quan, the PRC expects all the negotiators to do their best to accelerate the second phase of the fifth round of talks, the first stage of which was held in Beijing November 9-11 and yielded a statement on starting the second round as soon as possible.

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3. US on DPRK Counterfeiting

Agence France Presse ("FINANCIAL SANCTIONS ON NORTH KOREA BASED ON SOLID EVIDENCE: US", 2006-01-10) reported that the US has said sanctions imposed on the DPRK for alleged illicit financial activities were based on carefully scrutinized evidence, rejecting Pyongyang's contention that the charges were groundless. "The Treasury Department's very careful in going through, accumulating and analyzing this evidence in coordination with other parts of the US government," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters.

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4. Expert on DPRK-US Relations

The Korea Times ("US WILL MAINTAIN HARDLINE STANCE ON NK'", 2006-01-10) reported that according to Jeong Se-hyun, who served as the ROK's unification minister from 2002 to 2004, said it might be wrong to expect an early resumption of the nuclear talks, considering the recent harsh remarks made by US administration officials toward the DPRK. "Such wars of words have typically caused a delay in the talks," Jeong said during a forum hosted by Kyungnam University's Graduate School of DPRK Studies in a Seoul hotel Monday. "We cannot but question whether the United States has a `real intention' that is quite different from its `proclaimed policy' of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue." Jeong added that if the incumbent US government maintains a hard-line stance on the DPRK, further progress in the nuclear talks cannot be expected at least until the US elections for the House of Representatives and Senate scheduled for November.

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5. France on DPRK Nuclear Program

Bloomberg News ("CHIRAC SAYS IRAN, NORTH KOREA RISK `ERROR' ON NUCLEAR PROGRAMS", 2006-01-10) reported that French President Jacques Chirac said that the DPRK is making a "serious error" by pursuing nuclear activities in defiance of international agreements. "The international community has an imperative to make agreements respected for the security of everyone," Chirac told ambassadors to France today in a New Year's address in Paris. The DPRK "would be committing a serious error in not taking the hand we are offering them."

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6. ROK Maestro to Perform with DPRK

Korea.net ("MAESTRO CHUNG HOPES TO PERFORM BEETHOVEN WITH NORTH KOREANS ", 2006-01-09) reported that the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra has embarked on a plan to become the world's top orchestra by presenting the "Beethoven Cycle," the first of many planned offerings. The 51-year-old conductor said a leading orchestra needs to focus not only on nurturing its musical capability but also contributing to society through music and other projects. "At the last Beethoven Cycle concert in late December, I hope to perform with North Koreans, or at least having them as chorus members," Chung said. "I want to create projects, in which we perform for poor North Korean children."

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7. Joint US-Japanese War Games

Agence France-Presse ("JAPANESE TROOPS TO BEGIN AMPHIBIOUS COMBAT TRAINING IN US", 2006-01-10) reported that around 200 Japanese troops launched a simulated beach landing in the face of a hostile enemy force as part of an amphibious training exercise with the US military, officials said. The soldiers from the Japanese Self-Defense Force were undergoing the intense training with the US Marine Corps under an exercise code-named "Iron Fist," which is unfolding on the California coast near the city of San Diego.

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8. Japan Missile Defense Program

Kyodo ("JAPAN TO BUY 36 SEA-BASED MISSILE INTERCEPTORS FROM U.S. BY 2010 ", 2006-0--10) reported that Japan plans to purchase 36 sea-based missile interceptors from the US between 2007 and 2010 for deployment on Aegis-equipped destroyers under Japan's missile defense shield program, government sources said Tuesday. The Defense Agency plans to conduct a joint test with the US around 2008 in Hawaii for one of the SM-3 interceptors by deploying it on the Kongo, a Sasebo-based destroyer equipped with the advanced Aegis air defense system, the sources said.

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9. Japan on UNSC Reform

Kyodo ("JAPAN EXPLORING NEW IDEA FOR SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM WITH U.S., G-4", 2006-01-10) reported that Foreign Minister Taro Aso said Tuesday that Japan will seek permanent membership of the UN Security Council by expanding its support base through continued negotiations with the US as well as other countries also bidding to become permanent members. Japan "should basically continue discussing it with the United States while cooperating with the G-4 in various forms," he said.

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10. Japan-ROK Trade

Joongang Ilbo ("KOREAN TRADE DEFICIT WITH JAPAN RISING", 2006-01-10) reported that the ROK's trade deficit with Japan came to $23.7 billion last year, lifting the cumulative deficit to more than $250 billion, according to a government report yesterday. The report by the Commerce Ministry said exports by Korean companies to Japan amounted to around $23.2 billion last year, while imports hit $46.9 billion.

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11. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN EYES RESUMING SUBCABINET-LEVEL DIALOGUE WITH CHINA NEXT MONTH ", 2006-01-10) reported that Japan is seeking a way to resume subcabinet-level talks with the PRC as early as next month in a bid to jumpstart high-level dialogue amid strained bilateral ties, government officials said Tuesday. The move to pursue such talks comes after Japan and the PRC agreed during informal talks in Beijing on Monday to promote working-level negotiations.

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12. Sino-Indian Energy Cooperation

Agence France-Presse ("INDIAN MINISTER SEES NEW ENERGY COOPERATION ERA AS HEADS TO CHINA ", 2006-01-10) reported that India's petroleum minister called for a new era of energy cooperation with the PRC to avoid costly competition for fuel assets as he prepared to visit Beijing. India has dubbed 2006 the "Year of Friendship with China" with which it has often been a bitter rival in the race for global fuel supplies and fought a brief border war over four decades ago. "A cooperative relationship is not only desirable but eminently feasible," Petroleum Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar told reporters.

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13. Sino-US Economic Relations

Washington Post ("CHINA SET TO REDUCE EXPOSURE TO DOLLAR", 2006-01-10) reported that the PRC has resolved to shift some of its foreign exchange reserves -- now in excess of $800 billion -- away from the US dollar and into other world currencies in a move likely to push down the value of the greenback, a high-level state economist who advises the nation's economic policymakers said. The new policy reflects the PRC's fears that too much of its savings is tied up in the dollar, a currency widely expected to drop in value as the US trade and fiscal deficits climb.

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14. PRC Military

The Los Angeles Times ("CHINA'S VAST MILITARY CUTS FAT, ADDS MUSCLE", 2006-01-10) reported that the PRC, which has the largest military force in the world, is making important strides toward developing a lean, high-tech fighting machine, the People's Liberation Army said Monday. A two-year slim-down program has eliminated more than 200,000 jobs, or about 9% of the service, according to the PLA's official newspaper. By year end, that left a total of about 2.3 million members, a 45% reduction since 1987.

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15. Hong Kong WTO Protesters Arrest

The New York Times ("ARRESTS OF TRADE PROTESTERS EMBROIL HONG KONG WITH CHINA AND SOUTH KOREA", 2006-01-10) reported that the decision to bring charges against 14 people here after a violent demonstration at the World Trade Organization conference last month is turning into a contentious and diplomatically sticky issue for the governments of Hong Kong, the PRC and ROK. The ROK government has appealed to the Hong Kong government repeatedly to release the protesters, all of them men. But the Hong Kong authorities have refused, pointing out that the protest here on the night of Dec. 17 left 137 people injured, including 67 police officers.

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16. PRC Unrest Trial

The Washington Post ("3 PEASANTS SENTENCED IN RIOT IN CHINA", 2006-01-10) reported that a PRC court sentenced three villagers to prison terms ranging from one to five years Monday after convicting them of illegal acts during a peasant riot last April in Zhejiang province, according to attorneys and village activists. The violent uprising at Huaxi near the city of Dongyang erupted over farmers' complaints that local officials unfairly confiscated their fields and allowed the land to be used by chemical factories that polluted the area. Dozens of policemen were injured and hundreds more fled the village after about 3,000 farmers attacked them with stones and bricks.

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17. PRC on Chemical Spills

Reuters ("CHINA OFFICIALS PLAY DOWN TOXIC RIVER SCARE: PAPER", 2006-01-10) reported that PRC authorities are playing down the severity of the latest in a series of river pollution scares and have failed to stop further contamination, the China Youth Daily said on Tuesday. Jiang Yimin, head of the Hunan province environmental protection agency, said on Monday that cadmium levels in the Xiangjiang River were still "one or two times" above national standard, but did not represent an immediate public health hazard, according to the China Daily.

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