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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Times ("RULING PARTY SEEKS S-N MEETING OF LAWMAKERS", 2005-01-25) reported that the ruling Uri Party on Tuesday vowed to pursue an inter-Korean meeting at party or parliamentary level to support the six-way talks for resolving the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. The meeting also aims to come up with possible measures for agricultural cooperation to address food shortages in the DPRK, party officials said.

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2. Japan on Sino-DPRK Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("CHINA ASKS N. KOREA TO ADMIT URANIUM PROGRAM", 2005-01-24) reported that PRC has asked DPRK to admit plans to develop nuclear weapons using enriched uranium, Japan's Nihon Keizai reported Monday. If confirmed, this would mark a substantial shift in policy in Beijing, which had previously faithfully relayed Pyongyang's denials of any such program.

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3. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("CHINA SAYS KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT NORTH KOREA URANIUM", 2005-01-25) reported that the PRC said on Tuesday it had no knowledge of the existence of a uranium-enrichment program in the DPRK, reiterating a long-standing position and debunking a Japanese newspaper report that Beijing's stance had changed. Japan's Nihon Keizai business daily reported on Monday that the PRC, in a policy turnaround, was urging the DPRK to declare it possesses enriched uranium and has a nuclear development program. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said he was doubtful of the sources for the story and its content.

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4. Sino - DPRK Relations

Yonhap News ("CHINA DONATES WEATHER EQUIPMENT TO N. KOREA", 2005-01-25) reported

that the PRC has donated equipment for monitoring and reporting the weather to the DPRK in a goodwill gesture under the auspices of the world weather authority, the DPRK's state-run news agency said Tuesday. "The State Meteorological Bureau of China donated equipment for weather news service and observation to the Hydro-Meteorological Service of the DPRK according to a voluntary cooperation plan of the World Meteorological Organization," the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

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5. ROK on DPRK Human Rights

Korean Times ("OPPOSITION PUSHES FOR NK RIGHTS ACT", 2005-01-25) reported that the opposition Grand National Party (GNP) is pushing ahead with a ROK version of the controversial DPRK Human Rights Act enacted by the US late last year. The bill, which calls for Seoul to take a leading role in assisting DPRK defectors, was put forward by Rep. Hwang Woo-yea and is cosponsored by all 120 lawmakers from the conservative GNP, party officials said Tuesday. The ruling Uri Party strongly opposes the bill, arguing that it would seriously damage inter-Korean relations.

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6. DPRK on ROK Military

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA ACCUSES SOUTH KOREA OF DEPLOYING HEAVY WEAPONS AT BORDER", 2005-01-25) reported that the DPRK on Tuesday accused the ROK of illegally deploying "an artillery piece" inside the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas. The DPRK's Korean Central News Agency, citing an unnamed military source, said the ROK army deployed an artillery piece and a large number of boxes containing shells near the demarcation line that lies at the center of the 4-kilometer-wide DMZ.

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7. Inter - Korean Summit

Korea Times ("`KOREAS MAY ADOPT UNIFICATION DECLARATION'", 2005-01-25) reported that the DPRK is likely to accept the ROK's proposal for an inter-Korean summit this year, in which the two sides will possibly adopt a "unification declaration," a DPRK expert in Japan said in his recent contribution to a Japanese weekly magazine. A high-ranking Seoul official, however, said Tuesday that "it takes two to tango" even though he suggested conditions for a second summit are now ripe.

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8. Inter - Korean Economic Cooperation

Asia Pulse/Yonhap ("SEOUL FASHION MARKET TO BUILD NORTH KOREAN PLANT", 2005-01-25) reported that a popular fashion market in Seoul is turning to cheap DPRK labor as it explores ways of shoring up its rapidly shrinking competitive edge, industry sources said Tuesday. The market is pushing to build a manufacturing facility at an industrial park being built at the DPRK's border city of Kaesong for garment and other labor-intensive ROK businesses.

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9. Inter - Korean Communications

Korea Herald ("KOREAS TO DISCUSS PHONE RATE FOR KAESONG", 2005-01-25) reported that the two Koreas will hold a working-level meeting Wednesday in Kaesong, just north of the Demilitarized Zone, to discuss technical issues for the connection of telephone lines between the ROK and the industrial park in the DPRK border city. The telephone rate has been the thorniest issue in the long-stalled negotiations for the establishment of a communications network that began in April.

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10. DPRK Food Supply

Kyodo ("N. KOREA CUTS DAILY FOOD RATIONS TO ONLY 250 GRAMS: BBC", 2005-01-25) reported that the DPRK has cut food rations to half the amount recommended by the World Food Program, the BBC reported Monday, quoting a WFP spokesman. Government handouts have been cut from 300 grams of cereals a day to 250 grams, the British broadcaster said. According to the website, experts on the DPRK believe that the cut in rations may be an attempt by the government to stimulate interest in the privately-run farmers' markets.

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11. DPRK Marks USS Pueblo Anniversary

Itar-Tass ("NKOREA MARKS ANNIVERSARY OF US SPY SHIP SEIZURE", 2005-01-24) reported that the DPRK is marking the 37th anniversary of the seizure of the US' spy ship Pueblo. The ship remains one of main symbols of the victory over "American imperialism". Many residents of Pyongyang and guests of the capital are going these days to see the Pueblo that is moored near the bank of Tedongang River. The Pueblo history has become since then one of favorite propaganda themes, and is extensively used in military patriotic education of the youth.

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12. DPRK Maritime Accident

Yonhap News ("N. KOREAN CARGO SHIP CAPSIZES IN LEBANON, TWO MISSING", 2005-01-25) reported that two sailors were missing after a DPRK cargo ship capsized in waters off Lebanon on Monday, local police said Monday. The ship Mary was heading toward Syria from Egypt carrying five sailors when it overturned in waters south of Beirut, they said.

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13. ROK Maritime Accident

Yonhap News ("S. KOREAN SHIP TO RESUME SEARCH-AND-RESCUE MISSION IN N.K. WATERS ", 2005-01-25) reported that a ROK ship will resume its search for the missing crew members of a ROK merchant vessel that sank last week in the DPRK's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) last week, the Korea Coast Guard said Tuesday. It said that starting Wednesday, the 5,100-ton cutter Sambong will take over duties from a 1,500-ton patrol vessel that had been conducting the search.

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14. DPRK Defectors in the PRC

Donga Ilbo ("EIGHT NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS ENTER JAPANESE SCHOOL IN BEIJING", 2005-01-25) reported that eight DPRK defectors entered the Japanese School in the Qiaoyang district at and requested asylum in the ROK. The defectors were made up of seven women, including a pair of sisters ages nine and 11, and one man in his twenties. Notified by the school, the Japanese embassy announced the fact to the PRC government, and is in the process of identifying them after having moved them three hours after their entry.

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15. DPRK Defectors in the US

Donga Ilbo ("U.S. ARRESTS 15 KOREAN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS NOT YET CONFIRMED AS NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS", 2005-01-25) reported that fifteen Koreans and one broker trying to smuggle into the US through New York were arrested by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under the US Department of Homeland Security and await identity interrogation at the federal court of Albuquerque, New Mexico, according to the local press. The Consulate General of the Republic of Korea located in Los Angeles stated that it has not been confirmed if those arrested are DPRK defectors, and that it was gathering more information on the issue.

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16. DPRK Rare Species

Donga Ilbo ("RARE ANIMAL SPECIES IN NORTH KOREA", 2005-01-25) reported that on January 25, the Korea Institute of Science and Technology Information (KISTI) and the Cultural Properties Administration publicized the natural treasures of the two Koreas on the websites of the DPRK's Science Technology Network (http://nm.nktech.net) and the Cultural Properties Administration (http://www.ocp.go.kr). Natural treasures include the world's endangered species, "Yongnim grizzly bear" (or brown bear) and the DPRK's rare natural monuments such as "Samjiyeon-nureongi" (or a reindeer) and "Baegam Korean pica," which do not dwell in the ROK.

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17. Japan on Abductees

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN ASKS NKOREA TO RESPOND TO CLAIMS OVER KIDNAP VICTIM'S REMAINS", 2005-01-25) reported that Japan demanded the DPRK respond to its claim that Pyongyang presented the wrong set of human remains in an effort to prove that a Japanese woman it kidnapped during the Cold War was dead. Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura called for a diplomatic response, criticising repeated allegations by the DPRK through its state media that Japan released fake analysis of the remains.

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18. ROK National Defense

Yonhap ("S. KOREA TO REVIEW E-X PROJECT", 2005-01-25) reported that the ROK Defense Ministry said Tuesday it will review whether to move ahead with a procurement project to introduce

four airborne early warning systems by 2011. In September, the ROK picked two foreign weapons-making firms -- Boeing of the US and IAI ELTA of Israel -- to compete for the US$1.9 billion project, code-named E-X. The E-X project is aimed at strengthening the ROK's independent aerial surveillance capacity to detect the movement of DPRK and other enemy troops.

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19. US - ROK Relations

Joong Ang Daily ("EMBASSY LAND SWAP DETAILED; U.S. TO RETAIN ENVOY'S HOME", 2005-0--25) reported that a Foreign Ministry official clarified and detailed yesterday the negotiations with the US over a property exchange aimed at enabling the construction of a new US Embassy. The official made clear that Habib House, the current US ambassador's residence behind Deoksu Palace, was not being discussed in the proposed exchange and would remain in US hands. According to the ministry official yesterday, the US and ROK have agreed in principle that the ROK would take possession of the US-owned property where Gyeonggi Girls' High School once stood and adjacent land referred by the embassy as the former senior officer's housing compound.

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20. Sino - ROK Trade Relations

Joong Ang Daily ("KOREA POURS INVESTMENTS INTO CHINA, STIRRING WORRY", 2005-01-25) reported that the ROK ranked at the top of the list for foreign investments in the PRC last year, but economic analysts say numbers are not everything. Specialists worry that ROK investments lack diversity; statistics show that 89 percent of this country's investments in the PRC are in secondary industries such as production and mining.

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21. ROK - Japanese Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("SOUTH KOREA-JAPAN FRIENDSHIP YEAR GETS UNDER WAY", 2005-01-25) reported that the ROK-Japan Friendship Year 2005 officially kicked off on Tuesday at the National Yoyogi Stadium in Tokyo. The year marks the 40th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Some 2,500 people took part, including key figures in both governments like Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and ROK Ambassador to Japan Na Jong-il as well as prominent figures from the art and culture worlds.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("JAPAN REFUSED PERMANENT BURIAL OF KOREAN VICTIMS", 2005-01-25) reported that Japan turned down a request by Seoul to provide a permanent resting place for the unclaimed remains of ROK forced laborers or conscripts in 1966. Newly declassified documents show that the Park Chung-hee government asked Japan to permanently bury the remains of Korean World War II victims without families but Tokyo refused. (return to top)

22. Zhoa Zuyang's Death

Washington Post ("ZHAO'S FAMILY RESISTS BEIJING OVER FUNERAL", 2005-01-25) reported that the family of Zhao Ziyang, the former Communist Party chief who dissented from the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, is resisting government demands that it surrender control of his funeral and insisting on changes in an official obituary drafted by the party, family friends said

Monday. A week after Zhao's death at the age of 85, the government was refusing to give in to appeals by Zhao's children on both issues, but also unwilling to risk the embarrassment of holding a funeral without them, friends said.

(return to top) The New York Times ("COMING FUNERAL OF ZHAO IS TANGLED IN QUARRELS", 2005-01-25) reported that PRC authorities and the family of Zhao Ziyang were deadlocked over his funeral arrangements on Monday, more than a week after his death, as political disputes about how to commemorate the fallen leader appeared to increase. A party elder circulated a letter that called for the posthumous rehabilitation of Mr. Zhao. Intellectuals and opposition figures in the capital were abuzz with rumors, so far unconfirmed, that several retired Politburo members had indicated their desire to attend Mr. Zhao's burial service. (return to top)

23. PRC on EU Arms Ban

The Associated Press ("BEIJING PRESSES EUROPE TO LIFT ARMS BAN", 2005-01-25) reported that Beijing pressed Europe on Tuesday to lift its 15-year-old ban on the sale of weapons to the PRC despite US opposition, denouncing the embargo as "political discrimination." A spokesman for the PRC Foreign Ministry, Kong Quan, said the ban was a handicap to normal diplomatic relations with the European Union. "This arms embargo is not in alignment with fast developing bilateral relations," the spokesman said.

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24. US - EU on PRC Arms Ban

The Associated Press ("BRITAIN'S STRAW, RICE DIFFER ON CHINA ARMS", 2005-01-25) reported that British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw affirmed European intentions to lift an arms embargo on the PRC in a meeting Monday with Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice. Straw told Rice the Europeans were strengthening a code to regulate arms sales to the PRC while preparing to eliminate a 15-year-old embargo, a British spokesman said. Other countries already provide the PRC with weapons, the spokesman said, and the quantity and quality that the PRC receives will not be increased by European sales.

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25. Sino - Mexican Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA EAGER TO INCREASE TIES WITH MEXICO", 2005-01-25) reported that the PRC's vice president expressed a strong desire to increase economic and diplomatic cooperation with Mexico while meeting Monday with Mexican lawmakers, cabinet ministers and business leaders. PRC Vice President Zeng Quinghong and Mexican President Vicente Fox on Monday signed an agreement to stimulate tourism between their countries and approved new agricultural protocols designed to promote Mexican avocado exports and PRC apple exports.

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26. Sino - Indian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA, CHINA MOVE BEYOND BORDER DISPUTE TO TALK STRATEGY", 2005-01-25) reported that Asian powers India and the PRC raised relations above a dragging border dispute this week, talking multipolarity, UN reforms, non-proliferation and terrorism in a first round

of strategic dialogue, officials and analysts said. The session on Monday offered a new advance in a steady process kicked started in 2003 and to be continued by an Sino-Indian summit in New Delhi in March. "The strategic dialogue is a step forward," said Sujit Dutta, a senior fellow at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses.

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27. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN'S NEW PREMIER CALLS FOR RECONCILIATION WITH OPPOSITION, CHINA", 2005-01-25) reported that Taiwan's new Prime Minister Frank Hsieh pledged after his appointment to seek reconciliation with the PRC as well as with political foes at home. "Taiwan's politics are experiencing a deadlock with the people disappointed at, and tired of, the power struggle between political parties," Hsieh said. "I will form a cabinet of stability to seek domestic political stability, cross-strait peace and greater benefits for the people through talks and negotiations with the goal of seeking co-existence and reconciliation," he said.

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28. Sino - US Economic Relations

Washington Post ("U.S. MAY SCRUTINIZE IBM'S CHINA DEAL", 2005-01-25) reported that the Bush administration is considering launching an extensive probe of whether the pending sale of International Business Machines Corp.'s personal computer business to a PRC company might pose national security problems, according to members of a congressional oversight group. Some of the fears involve the possibility that PRC computer experts could use an IBM facility in North Carolina to engage in industrial espionage, according to Michael R. Wessel, a member of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, which was established by Congress to monitor Sino-American commercial relations.

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29. PRC Hostages in Iraq

The Associated Press ("FREED CHINESE HOSTAGES LEAVE FOR HOME", 2005-01-25) reported that eight PRC construction workers freed by insurgents in Iraq left for home Tuesday following a delay in their departure from Baghdad, state media reported. PRC Foreign Ministry officials accompanied the men, the Xinhua News Agency said. They were likely to fly to the PRC later Tuesday, the official said on condition of anonymity.

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30. PRC Religious Freedom

Reuters ("CHINA TELLS TIBET MONKS TO SUPPORT PANCHEN LAMA", None) reported that PRC authorities have told senior religious leaders in a Tibetan area to urge the faithful to show more support for a top monk anointed by the PRC and on whom the future of the restive region may ride. The order was issued, together with a threat of punishment, in a closed-door meeting in November in Qinghai, a western province with a population of more than 5 million, many of whom are ethnic Tibetans, sources familiar with the issue said.

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