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I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA REACTOR PLAN MAY HURT DISARMAMENT TALKS-SEOUL", 2005-1-21) reported that the DPRK's plan to build light-water atomic reactors and develop other reactors capable of producing fissile material could harm a nuclear disarmament deal signed by Pyongyang, ROK's foreign minister said on Wednesday. "It runs counter to the spirit of the agreement reached on September 19 for North Korea to boost peaceful nuclear activity," Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told reporters at a briefing.

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2. DPRK-Japanese Bilateral Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPAN, N.KOREA TO MEET IN CHINA THIS WEEK ", 2005-12-21) reported that the Japanese government announced it has agreed to hold fresh bilateral talks with the DPRK on Saturday and Sunday in Beijing to discuss issues that divide them. The Japanese Foreign Ministry said the DPRK accepted in principle a proposal from Tokyo to resume bilateral talks on normalization of bilateral diplomatic ties and the abductions as well as on the dispute over the DPRK nuclear program. "We will strongly demand that North Korea provides information about the abductees and repatriates them," Tokyo's spokesman Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said Wednesday morning. He reiterated Japan's position that there can be no normal diplomatic ties unless the abduction issue is resolved.

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3. Expert on DPRK-US Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("LAWYER RECOMMENDS COMPROMISE ON NORTH", 2005-12-21) reported that a Korean-American lawyer said in a recent interview that Seoul and Washington are at a critical juncture to decide their future relations. He said the two are currently experiencing a disconnection on DPRK issues in particular. Kim Suk-han, 56, a partner of the Akin, Gump, Straus, Hauer & Feld law firm in Washington, advises a wide range of major ROK and US firms on their business in both countries. In an interview with the Joongang Ilbo Tuesday, Mr. Kim said it was necessary to nurture the US-ROK relations as both countries need each other.

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4. ROK on DPRK-US Economic Cooperation

The Korea Times ("US FIRMS WELCOME AT KAESONG: SEOUL ", 2005-12-21) reported that Chung Dong-young called Tuesday for US-based firms to operate businesses in the Kaesong industrial complex. Chung's remarks came during a meeting with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and White House national security adviser Stephen Hadley. "If the Kaesong complex project succeeds, it is likely to become the seed of changing North Korea through economic development," Chung was quoted as telling the US officials.

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5. ROK on DPRK Counterfeiting

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL SWINGS BEHIND U.S. IN N.KOREA FORGERY CHARGE", 2005-12-21) reported that the ROK government appears to have shifted its position in a spat between the US and the DPRK over Washington's charge that Pyongyang forged and distributed US dollars. Seoul had tried to remain neutral, saying until last week that the say-so of one side did not make the allegation true, but ROK officials are increasingly swinging behind the US. Unification Minister Chung Dong-young told reporters that the ROK had never defended the DPRK's currency counterfeiting. "South Korea thinks the currency forgery and North Korea's nuclear issue are two different things, and it is the North that links the two issues," he said, adding, "I understand that the U.S. did what it had to do according to its laws" in freezing the assets of North Korean firms it says were involved and banning dealings with a Chinese bank.

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6. Japan Space Program

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN TO ENTER SPACE RACE", 2005-12-21) reported that Japan hopes to become the third nation to produce a space suit, using its technology to design a slimmer outfit for the next US mission to the moon. The agency aims to develop the new space outfit in time for the US manned mission to the Moon due in 2018, the first since 1972.

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7. Sino-Japanese Relations

Kyodo ("CHINA'S TANG SEES NEED FOR JAPAN-CHINA MINISTERS' MEETING", 2005-12-21) reported that PRC State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan sees the need for the foreign ministers of Japan and the PRC to hold talks at an early date to solve bilateral problems, a Japanese lawmaker said Wednesday. Ichiro Aisawa, acting secretary general of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, said Tang made the comments in a meeting with a group of Japanese lawmakers in the PRC capital.

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8. Hong Kong Political Reforms

The Associated Press ("HONG KONG LAWMAKERS REJECT GOVERNMENT PLAN ", 2005-12-21) reported that pro-democracy lawmakers on Wednesday voted down a proposal by Hong Kong's Beijing-backed government to expand an 800-member panel that picks the territory's leader. The measure was part of a political reform package that the pro-democracy lawmakers oppose because it doesn't provide a timetable for when Hong Kong will become fully democratic.

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9. PRC Chemical Spill

Reuters ("NEW TOXIC SLICK CUTS RIVER WATER SUPPLIES IN CHINA ", 2005-12-21) reported that a toxic waste spill from a zinc smelter, the second environmental disaster to hit the PRC in weeks, halted water supplies from a southern river for eight hours and threatened cities downstream, state media said on Wednesday. The zinc smelter, the PRC's third largest, has been ordered to stop production on suspicion of water pollution, state television said on Wednesday, citing sources in the plant's home province of Guangdong. "Currently, the polluted water is flowing downstream. The environmental bureau has initially confirmed that this situation arose because the

Shaoguan smelter released abnormal amounts of polluted water containing cadmium during equipment maintenance," the station said.

[\(return to top\)](#) Agence France Presse ("RUSSIAN CITY PINS HOPES ON DAMS AS POISON SLICK FLOATS NEARER ", 2005-12-21) reported that residents of Khabarovsk anxiously counted the hours as a toxic benzene slick approached the Russian city's waterways, pinning their hopes on filters and makeshift dams set up to protect the 600,000 residents from poisoning. PRC workers assisted by Russian military helicopters worked feverishly through the night to complete work on a makeshift dam to prevent the contaminated water flowing down the Amur river from entering a channel that feeds municipal water treatment facilities. [\(return to top\)](#)

10. UN on PRC Shooting

Reuters ("UN ASKS CHINA FOR DETAILS ON SHOOTING OF PROTESTERS", 2005-12-21) reported that the United Nations investigator into extrajudicial killings has written to the PRC seeking more information on the recent police shooting and killing of protesters in the southern village of Dongzhou, a spokesman said yesterday. Philip Alston, UN special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, sent the letter a week ago via the PRC's diplomatic mission in Geneva, he said.

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11. India-PRC Oil Supply

Agence France Presse ("INDIA, CHINA WIN JOINT BID FOR SYRIAN OIL FIELD: REPORT ", 2005-12-21) reported that India and the PRC, often fierce rivals in the race for global energy supplies, have won a joint bid to buy Petro-Canada's 37 percent stake in Syrian oil fields for 573 million dollars, reports said. India's Oil and Natural Gas Corp (ONGC) and China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC), both state-owned, will have equal stakes in the Al Furat oil and gas fields, the Press Trust of India said on Wednesday.

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12. PRC Coal Mines

Bloomberg News ("CHINA TO HALT OUTPUT AT 8,648 COAL MINES BY END-2005 ", 2005-12-21) reported that the PRC, the world's largest coal producer, plans to halt production at 8,648 coal mines in 25 provinces by the end of this year, about 1,000 more than estimated in August, to boost competitiveness and safety. The government wants to reduce the number of small mines operating with outdated equipment and increase use of coal gas to cut the risk of accidents during mining, the National Development and Reform Commission, the PRC's top economic planning agency, said on its website on Tuesday.

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