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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Foreign Minister Dies

BBC ("NORTH KOREA FOREIGN MINISTER DIES", 2007-01-03) reported that the DPRK's Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun has died. In a one-sentence dispatch, the KCNA news agency said Kim Jong-il expressed his condolences over Paek's death. Paek, 78, was one of only a few DPRK officials who was widely known in the West. But analysts do not expect his death to impact on foreign policy,

which has been largely set by Kim. The KCNA report gave no indication as to the cause of death, but Paek had been rumored to be ill for some time, possibly with chronic kidney failure.

[\(return to top\)](#) Joong Ang Ilbo ("NORTH'S FOREIGN MINISTER, 77, IS DEAD", 2007-01-03) reported that Paek was born in 1929, and graduated from Kim Il Sung University. In 1968, he became the vice director of the International Affairs Department of the Workers' Party. From 1974 to 79, he was the DPRK's ambassador to Poland. Mr. Paek was active in inter-Korean talks. In 1972, he attended inter-Korean Red Cross talks; in 1984, he visited Seoul to deliver relief goods after extensive flooding here. In the 1990s, he participated in bilateral talks with the ROK under the pseudonym Paek Nam-jun, and served in several posts involving ROK affairs. He had been foreign minister since 1998. His most recent foreign trips were to Malaysia and Singapore for the Asean Regional Forum in July. He was known to have suffered from chronic kidney disease and had been too ill recently to work. Kang Sok-ju, the DPRK's first vice foreign minister, or Kim Kye-gwan, vice foreign minister, have stood in for him recently. [\(return to top\)](#) Reuters ("U.N. CHIEF SENDS CONDOLENCES TO NORTH KOREA", 2007-01-03) reported that U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon sent his condolences on the death of the DPRK foreign minister, saying he hoped it would not hinder the Six Party Talks. [\(return to top\)](#)

2. DPRK-US Financial Talks

Agence France-Presse ("US-NORTH KOREA TALKS ON FINANCIAL SANCTIONS IN LIMBO", 2007-01-03) reported that the two-day meeting between US Treasury and DPRK officials which were held on the sidelines of the Six Party Talks ended in deadlock. The officials had planned to have further talks on the financial sanctions in New York on January 22 but US Treasury spokeswoman Molly Millerwise told AFP on Tuesday "there hasn't been a firm date and place nailed down yet." An ROK newspaper reported a week ago that the DPRK had rejected New York as a venue for the second round of talks after accusing US Treasury officials of not being serious. "The US didn't even offer evidence that North Korea committed illegal activities," North Korea's chief nuclear negotiator Kim Kye-Gwan was quoted saying. Millerwise said that any resolution to the issue would entail a lengthy process. "As we said at that time, for this effort to be productive, we believe it will be a long process through which we address our underlying concerns and concerns of the international financial community -- from North Korea's illicit conduct to recognized standards and norms for operating in the international financial system," she explained. The measures against BDA "remain in place and the institution remains designated as a primary money laundering concern," she added. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice will meet her new ROK counterpart Song Min-soon following criticism by President Roh Moo-Hyun that Washington had wrecked hopes of a nuclear deal by imposing the financial sanctions.

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3. DPRK Ideology and Personality Cult

Christian Science Monitor ("N. KOREA ESCALATES 'CULT OF KIM' TO COUNTER WEST'S INFLUENCE", 2007-01-03) reported that the extraordinary degree of cult worship in the DPRK is not well known, nor that programs promoting the ideology of Kim are growing. Government spending on Kim-family deification is the only category in the North's budget to increase even as defense, welfare, and bureaucracy spending has decreased, according to a new white paper by the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy in Seoul. Extra financing may come from recent budget offsets caused by the shutting down of older state funding categories, says Alexander Mansourov of the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu. It has long been axiomatic that the main danger to the Kim regime is internal unrest. The DPRK is steadily updating its ideology to make it

relevant. Kim broke away from orthodox communism, for example, in a program called "our style socialism." While Marxism-Leninism demands fealty to "nation," "party," and "serving the people" - Kim's "our style [Korean] socialism" does no such thing. It makes "family loyalty," with Kim at the head, the supreme good - a major deflection from communism. "Unlike the Stalin and Mao personality cults, there is a deification and a religious emotional element in the North," says former ROK foreign minister Han Sung Joo, who visited Pyongyang this past October, and in 1985. The DPRK uses "ideology rather than physical control" whenever possible, says Lee Jong Heon from Chung-Ang University in Seoul. "Military First is not aimed at building up the military, which is already quite built up and strong," says Lee, whose dissertation is titled, "A Political Economic Analysis of the North Korean Regime." "It is about replacing the old party - First Rice - structure of senior Kim. If the party is unwieldy, the military will control the people on behalf of the leader." Kim is not depending on the party, but a smaller more streamlined military apparatus. This is due to his politics as a result of the nuclear crisis brought by the Americans," says Haiksoon Paik, a DPRK specialist at the Sejong Institute outside Seoul. "North Korea's party has not been functioning as well as it is supposed to ... several positions in the Politburo have not been reappointed."

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4. DPRK Food Situation

Associated Press ("NO FOOD CRISIS IN NORTH KOREA: NEWSPAPER", 2007-01-03) reported that the DPRK claims it has no serious trouble feeding its people despite heavy floods and sanctions by "enemy states" Japan and the United States. Quoting Kim Kyong-il of the DPRK Agricultural Ministry, the Chosun Sinbo says the problem of feeding the people is "in no way at a serious level". "Because of economic sanctions by enemy countries like the United States and Japan, there have been problems in a series of plans to modernise farming," the newspaper said. In the joint New Year editorial carried by state newspapers, the DPRK acknowledged its farms face difficulties. "We should, as in the past, keep up farming as the great foundation of the country and make an epoch-making advance in solving the problem of food for the people," it said. Much of the food shortfall has been made up with international aid in previous years, but the ROK - one of the largest single donors of food - suspended its food handouts last year. Even in a good year the DPRK does not produce enough grain to feed its people. But aid officials have said it is expected to face a severe shortage soon due to crop damage caused by the July floods and decreased food donations from abroad.

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5. ROK-PRC Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREAN, CHINESE PRESIDENTS EXCHANGE NEW YEAR'S MESSAGES", 2007-01-03) reported that this year has been designated the ROK-PRC Exchange Year. Seoul's Foreign Ministry says President Roh Moo-hyun and PRC President Hu Jintao exchanged New Year's messages, wishing each other a successful year of exchange on all fronts. Roh expressed hopes for active civilian cooperation and exchange between the two countries, while Hu wished for friendlier bilateral ties this year.

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6. ROK-Japan Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN, S. KOREA ARRANGING EEZ TALKS IN MID-JANUARY: REPORT", 2007-01-03) reported that Japan and the ROK have been working to hold a meeting in Tokyo possibly in mid-

January as part of their efforts to define their exclusive economic zones, the ROK's Yonhap News Agency reported. The meeting would be the seventh in a series of negotiations. In the latest round, the discussions are expected to focus on measures for the two countries to conduct marine researches smoothly.

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7. Japan Imperial Succession

The Associated Press ("REPORT: JAPAN TO DROP WOMAN MONARCH PLAN", 2007-01-03) reported that Japan will drop plans to allow women to inherit the Chrysanthemum Throne following the birth last year of a long-awaited male heir, a news report said. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe plans to ditch recommendations by a government panel in 2005 that an emperor's first child — boy or girl — should accede the throne, according to a report by the daily Sankei Shimbun.

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8. Japan-Russian Territorial Dispute

Pravda ("JAPAN, RUSSIA EXPLORING NEW SOLUTIONS TO ISLAND DISPUTE", 2007-01-03) reported that Japan and Russia are exploring ways to resolve a 60-year row over a string of islands, possibly by splitting their total area rather than dividing their number evenly between the two countries, a news report said. A Russian Foreign Ministry official identified only as Denisof raised the possibility but his remarks did not yet amount to a formal Russian proposal, the paper said, citing unnamed officials. Last month, Foreign Minister Taro Aso told parliament that Japan could consider the idea of splitting the islands by total area but later denied Japan officially pushed that solution.

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9. Sino-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA REASSURES US ON MILITARY, ENERGY ", 2007-01-03) reported that the PRC used a visit by US lawmakers to reassure the US that it is not a rival on issues such as military spending or energy consumption, state media said. PRC legislators meeting with the US delegation also warned the US not to send the "wrong signals" to independence-minded politicians on Taiwan, the China Daily reported. "China has no intention nor ability to conduct an arms race with other countries, and it does not pose a threat to the security of other countries," the statement said.

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10. PRC African Diplomacy

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER TAKES COOPERATION TOUR TO GUINEA-BISSAU ", 2007-01-03) reported that the PRC's Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing arrived in the central African nation of Guinea-Bissau for cooperation talks during a seven-nation tour reflecting heightened PRC interest in Africa. Li Zhaoxing, who was met at Bissau airport by his counterpart Antonio Isac Monteiro, was to see President Joao Bernardo Vieira and sign a protocol to build on existing cooperation projects, the foreign ministry said in a statement.

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