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I. NAPSNet

1. Bilateral Talks on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("US ENVOY TO N.KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS STARTS ASIA TOUR", 2006-01-11) reported that a US envoy held talks in Tokyo and Seoul on Wednesday to shore up crumbling negotiations on ending the DPRK's nuclear weapons programs, Japanese and ROK officials said. The chief US negotiator for the six party talks, Christopher Hill, flies to Beijing on Thursday to continue discussions with PRC officials. Hill met Japan's chief negotiator in Tokyo on Wednesday before heading to Seoul to meet the ROK's envoy to the talks. He then travels to Beijing to meet the PRC's pointman on Thursday, RO Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told a news briefing.

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2. ROK on Six Party Talks

The Korea Times ("SEOUL TRIES TO REV UP 6-WAY TALKS", 2006-01-11) reported that participating countries in the six party talks are briskly maneuvering to resume the disarmament dialogue. It was belatedly known that Song Min-soon, Seoul's top envoy to the six party talks, returned from his two-day trip to Beijing on Tuesday, where he had exchanged "creative opinions" on how to reopen the multilateral dialogue. "South Korea will conduct active and creative roles constantly to map out plans for the implementation of the joint principle statement reached on Sept. 19," Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki-moon said at a weekly briefing on Wednesday.

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3. ROK on Six Party Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("SEOUL STEPS UP EFFORTS TO PUSH 6-WAY MEETING", 2006-01-11) reported that Seoul's diplomatic pace is being stepped up in efforts to get the stalled six-nation nuclear talks back on track. Journalists learned yesterday that Song Min-soon, Seoul's chief negotiator to the talks, made an unannounced two-day trip to Beijing on Monday to discuss the talks with PRC officials. Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon will be in Washington next week for talks that will include discussions of the nuclear issues, and Christopher Hill, Mr. Song's US counterpart in the six party talks, was scheduled to arrive in Seoul late yesterday evening from Tokyo.

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4. ROK on Six Party Talks

Korea Herald ("RESUMPTION OF NUKE TALKS LIKELY TO TAKE SHAPE THIS MONTH: SONG ", 2006-01-11) reported that the ROK's delegate to the six-party talks said yesterday the outline for the next round of the nuclear negotiations will likely take shape within this month. "We are working towards possibly seeing within this month the outline of relevant factors such as the date of the next negotiations," Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon said.

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5. Kim Jong-il's Visit to PRC

The Korea Times (" MEDIA GOES WILD OVER NK LEADER'S WHEREABOUTS", 2006-01-11) reported that the world's media appeared to be caught in a whirl of contradicting reports over the possible whereabouts of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il after it was first reported that Kim seems to have traveled outside his country in a specially armored train Tuesday. Quoting unnamed sources in Beijing, Shanghai, and Seoul as well as in the region around the PRC-DPRK border, news agencies churned out a heap of reports and speculations over where the secretive leader might possibly be, as government officials of the ROK and the PRC remained tight-lipped, either unable or unwilling to confirm those reports.

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6. ROK on Kim Jong-il's Visit to PRC

The Korea Times ("SEOUL NOT INFORMED OF KIM JONG-IL'S TRIP TO CHINA", 2006-01-11) reported that Beijing did not notify Seoul of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's visit to the PRC, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki-moon said on Wednesday. "China has not officially announced (Kim's visit)," he told reporters at a weekly briefing. "China didn't inform us or confirm the news either. So I am not in a position to talk about the issue."

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7. US Envoy on Possible Meeting with Kim Jong-il

Yonhap News ("U.S. NUCLEAR ENVOY RULES OUT MEETING WITH KIM JONG-IL IN CHINA", 2006-01-11) reported that the chief US negotiator on DPRK's nuclear program said he has no plan to meet with Kim Jong-il in the PRC. "It was complete coincidence that I am in the area at the same time. I planned this visit a few days ago," he said upon arriving at Seoul's Gimpo airport late in the day.

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8. PRC on DPRK Counterfeiting

Chosun Ilbo ("CHINA FINDS N.KOREA GUILTY OF MONEY LAUNDERING ", 2006-01-11) reported that a three-month investigation by the PRC of accusations that the DPRK used a Macau bank to launder gains from currency forgery has confirmed the suspicions, RO Korean diplomatic sources said Wednesday. RO Korean Foreign Ministry sources said based on the findings PRC is in the midst of trying to convince the DPRK that it needs to take steps in the matter. They said ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and his PRC counterpart Wu Dawei have already met in Beijing to discuss the issue.

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9. Compensation for DPRK Solider

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA WANTS US\$1 MILLION FOR CAR ACCIDENT DEATH ", 2006-01-11) reported that the DPRK military authorities are reportedly demanding US\$1 million in compensation

for the death of a soldier and injury of two others when a car driven by a RO Korean ploughed into them in the Mt. Kumgang resort last month. The driver worked for a subcontractor of Hyundai Asan.

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10. Japan Defense Chief

The Associated Press ("JAPANESE DEFENSE CHIEF TO VISIT BRITAIN, RUSSIA AND U.S.", 2006-01-11) reported that Japan's defense chief will visit Britain, Russia and the US on Jan. 10-17 for talks with his counterparts, the Defense Agency said Tuesday. Defense Agency chief Fukushima Nukaga is slated to meet with Britain's Defense Secretary John Reid on Jan. 11, Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov on Jan. 13, and US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld on Jan. 17, the agency said in a statement.

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11. US-Japan Relations

The Associated Press ("HEAD OF U.S. FORCES IN JAPAN APOLOGIZES ", 2006-01-11) reported that the head of the US Forces in Japan apologized Wednesday to Japanese defense officials over an American sailor's alleged slaying of a Japanese woman earlier this month, the Defense Agency said. Lt. Gen. Bruce Wright, commander of U.S. Forces in Japan, visited the Japanese defense agency office in Tokyo and conveyed his "deep apologies" to administrative deputy director Takemasa Moriya over the killing, said a defense official who was not allowed to be identified under agency policy.

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12. US-ROK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US, SOUTH KOREA TO LAUNCH STRATEGIC DIALOGUE ", 2006-01-11) reported that The US and the ROK will launch their first ministerial strategic dialogue next week on a wide range of issues, the State Department said. Condoleezza Rice will host the ROK's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon for the inaugural session of the so-called Strategic Consultations for Allied Partnership on January 19, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters. "Topics of discussion will include global, regional and bilateral issues of mutual concern," he said.

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13. Japan on SDF Role

Kyodo ("DEFENSE CHIEF NUKAGA EAGER FOR MORE ACTIVE INT'L ROLE FOR SDF ", 2006-0-11) reported that Japanese Defense Agency Director General Fukushima Nukaga on Wednesday expressed eagerness for the Self-Defense Forces to take a more proactive role in international cooperation activities by making them part of the SDF's main duties. "World peace is directly linked to peace in Japan. Participation in international cooperation activities has been deemed a secondary duty, but we are considering upgrading it to a main duty," Nukaga said in a speech delivered at the Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies during his visit to London.

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14. Japan on Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Agence France-Presse ("KOIZUMI STANDS BY SHRINE VISITS, WON'T MAKE SUCCESSOR DO SAME ", 2006-01-11) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he would not require his successor to follow his example and pay visits to a Tokyo war shrine, actions which have angered Asian neighbors. Koizumi, who is visiting Turkey this week, stood by his controversial and repeated visits to the Yasukuni shrine and is seen by the PRC and the ROK as a symbol of Japan's war-time militarism.

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15. Japan and Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("TAIWAN'S EX-PRESIDENT LEE MAY VISIT JAPAN ", 2006-01-11) reported that former Taiwan president Lee Teng-hui wants to travel to Japan in May, a newspaper reported on Wednesday, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe said the government would decide appropriately on whether to admit him. Any such visit would likely annoy the PRC, which regards Taiwan as a renegade province and whose ties with Japan are already deeply strained.

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16. PRC on Iran Nuclear Program

Reuters ("CHINA OFFERS TO HELP REIN IN IRAN: US CONGRESSMEN ", 2006-01-11) reported that the PRC has offered to help rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions and ease US complaints about pirated goods ahead of a Washington visit by President Hu Jintao expected in mid-April, visiting US congressmen said on Wednesday. The chairman of China's National People's Congress, Wu Bangguo, told the congressmen the PRC "agreed that they (Iran) should not have nuclear weapons, and agreed to working with the United States and especially the EU3" on Iran, Mark Kirk, a Republican Congressman from Illinois, told reporters.

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17. US on PRC-Australian Uranium Deal

Agence France-Presse ("US WANTS TERROR SAFEGUARDS ON AUSTRALIA URANIUM EXPORTS TO CHINA ", 2006-01-11) reported that the US said it had no objection to Australia selling uranium to the PRC, provided there were safeguards to prevent the material falling into the hands of extremists. With Australia in the process of negotiating uranium sales to Beijing, US Energy Secretary Sam Bodman said all export deals involving the radioactive material needed to include provisions that prevented nuclear proliferation.

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18. PRC African Diplomacy

BBC News ("ENERGY DEALS BEHIND CHINESE VISIT ", 2006-01-11) reported that PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing is beginning a week-long visit to Africa during which energy deals will be high on the agenda. The PRC is increasingly looking to Africa for oil and gas as its economy booms. But the PRC is looking too at other African resources - particularly its timber reserves.

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19. PRC Bird Flu Outbreak

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA ON HIGH ALERT AFTER TWO MORE BIRD FLU DEATHS ", 2006-01-11) reported that the World Health Organization (WHO) said two more people have died from bird flu in the PRC, as an infected boy remained critically ill and authorities worked to contain another outbreak. The latest events in the PRC, which has the world's biggest poultry industry, triggered further alarm bells just a day after the government warned the H5N1 crisis had not yet peaked and human-to-human transmission remained possible.

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20. PRC Chemical Spill

Agence France-Presse ("TOXIN LEVEL IN CHINESE RIVER STILL UNSAFE ", 2006-01-11) reported that levels of a cancer-causing chemical found in a PRC river are still above safety standards after a spill last week, despite earlier official reassurances. After nearly a week of clean-up efforts, the amount of cadmium is threatening the safety of drinking water in the downstream regions of the Xiangjiang river in Hunan province, the China Daily reported.

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21. Hong Kong WTO Protest Arrests

Joongang Ilbo ("HONG KONG POLICE DROP CHARGES ON 8 KOREANS", 2006-01-11) reported that eight South Koreans facing charges of violence in connection with protests during last month's World Trade Organization meeting were released yesterday by Hong Kong authorities. Prosecutors cited a lack of evidence and the relatively minor charges against them. But three other Koreans face a trial in March on more serious charges after entering pleas of not guilty.

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org