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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK, PRC on Six Party Talks

RIA Novosti ("NORTH KOREA SECURES CHINA'S SUPPORT ON NUCLEAR ISSUE ", 2006-01-18) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il secured PRC support in resolving the international standoff over his regime's nuclear ambitions as he met with President Hu Jintao at the end of an unofficial eight-day visit to PRC Wednesday. According to the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), Hu pledged help in fostering the resumption of the stalled six party talks. He described the six party talks as "the correct choice" for settling the nuclear dispute. Kim reportedly said he remained committed to peacefully resolving the conflict surrounding Pyongyang's nuclear program. KCNA quoted him as saying "there is no change in [North Korea's] basic stand of maintaining the goal of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula, implementing the joint statement issued at the fourth round of the six-party talks and pursuing a negotiated peaceful settlement."

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2. ROK on Six Party Talks

Xinhua ("S. KOREA WELCOMES DPRK TOP LEADER'S VISIT TO CHINA ", 2006-01-18) reported that the ROK government Wednesday welcomed top leader of the DPRK Kim Jong-il's recent visit to the PRC. ROK Foreign Ministry expressed its hope in a statement issued Wednesday evening that Kim's visit would lead to the resumption of stalled six party talks. "We hope Kim's China visit would provide a good opportunity to make progress toward a peaceful resolution of the North Korean (DPRK) nuclear issue in the six-party talks," the very brief statement said.

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3. Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

Reuters ("N.KOREAN LEADER RETURNS HOME ON TRAIN - YONHAP", 2006-01-18) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il is believed to have crossed the border into the DPRK from the PRC on Wednesday ending a rare international trip conducted under a heavy veil of secrecy, ROK's Yonhap news agency said.

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4. Expert on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

The Korea Times ("NK TRIES TO REVIVE SINUIJU AS SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONE'", 2006-01-18) reported that DPRK North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's secret visit to the PRC is aimed at reviving its special economic zone in Sinuiju, former Unification Minister Park Jae-kyu said at a seminar in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday. His remarks at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars came as Pyongyang is expected to come up with major economic reform measures in the near future, following Kim's tour of the PRC's booming commercial south. "After his visit to Shanghai (in January 2001), I heard that Kim instructed his officials to develop Sinuiju as an IT-oriented industrial area," Park said. "I think Kim's visit was intended to get China's help to jumpstart his special economic zone projects in Sinuiju and the Rajin-Sonbong region."

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5. Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks

The Korea Times ("KOREAS TO HOLD RED CROSS TALKS ON FEB. 21-23 ", 2006-01-18) reported that the ROK and the DPRK have agreed to hold the seventh round of Red Cross talks at Mt. Kumgang in the North on Feb. 21-23, the ROK's Red Cross announced Tuesday. The ROK also accepted the DPRK's proposals the previous day that the fourth round of reunions of separated families via video be held on Feb. 27-28, and the 13th round of separated family reunions on Mar. 20-25, it said in a press release.

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6. DPRK-US Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA A 'MOB NATION': U.S. COLUMNIST ", 2006-01-18) reported that a fellow of the hard-right US think tank Heritage Foundation has accused the DPRK of becoming a "mob nation" that proliferates drugs and weapons besides counterfeiting US dollars. "North Korea has become a gangster nation, pocketing \$700 million to \$1 billion a year from counterfeiting, trafficking illicit narcotics [and] smuggling contraband smokes," Peter Brooks wrote in the conservative New York Post. He said Pyongyang's ill-gotten gains equal "the country's legitimate annual export income."

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7. DPRK-US Bilateral Meeting

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREAN, U.S. CHIEF NEGOTIATORS MEET IN BEIJING ", 2006-01-18) reported that the US and the DPRK chief negotiators in stalled six party talks, Christopher Hill and Kim Kye-gwan, met in Beijing on Wednesday, a diplomatic source in Beijing said. The meeting reportedly focused on the DPRK's alleged counterfeiting activities, which have emerged as a stumbling block to the talks because of financial sanctions Washington has taken as a result.

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8. Expert on DPRK Leadership

The Korea Times ("KIM'S SELF-CONFIDENCE WEAKENED' ", 2006-01-18) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il may be learning as much as he can about the outside world, but it doesn't seem to be doing him much good, according to a former ROK unification minister. In fact, Park Jae-kyu said during a lecture in Washington on Tuesday that Kim's newly acquired awareness may have sapped his self-confidence. "One difference I noticed in my latest encounter with the chairman was that the aura of supreme self-confidence I witnessed in 2000 seemed to be either absent or markedly muted," Park said.

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9. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation

Japan Times ("JAPAN, US TO MELD MISSILE SHIELD DATA", 2006-01-18) reported that Japan and the US will integrate their information networks on missile defense by the end of fiscal 2006, Defense Agency chief Fukushima Nukaga said Friday night. After working out details such as the

roles of the Self-Defense Forces and the US military in the initiative, the two countries are expected to sign an agreement possibly this summer, according to Nukaga, who is currently visiting Russia.

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10. USFJ Force Realignment

The Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN US AGREE TO FINALIZE MILITARY REALIGNMENT REPORT BY MARCH", 2006-01-18) reported that Visiting Defense Agency chief Fukushima Nukaga and US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld agreed Tuesday to accelerate efforts to compile a final report by the end of March on realigning US military forces in Japan.

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11. Japan-India Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("INDIAN FINANCE MINISTER HOPES TO SIGN FREE TRADE DEAL WITH JAPAN BEFORE CHINA", 2006-01-18) reported that India's finance minister said Wednesday that his government hopes to conclude a free trade agreement with Japan before it concludes one with the PRC. "We are talking with both countries, so as to which comes first I don't know. But I hope an agreement with Japan comes first," P. Chidambaram said after a speech in Tokyo.

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12. Bird Flu

Agence France-Presse ("MORE THAN 1.5 BILLION DOLLARS PLEDGED TO FIGHT BIRD FLU", 2006-01-18) reported that more than 1.5 billion dollars has been pledged at a conference here to fund the first global fight against bird flu, sources said, as the UN led warnings over the urgency in preparing for a pandemic. The United States, Japan and the European Union will be among the biggest donors, they said.

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13. PRC Rural Unrest

The Associated Press ("CHINA VILLAGE SECURED AFTER DEADLY PROTEST", 2006-01-18) reported that police on Tuesday patrolled a village in southern PRC where a teenage girl reportedly was clubbed to death during a protest over land seizures, and Hong Kong news reports quoted villagers as saying demonstrations would continue. The girl reportedly was killed Saturday by police who clashed with hundreds of people protesting over what they said was inadequate compensation for farmland taken for industrial use in Sanjiao, a village in Guangdong province.

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14. PRC Journalists Arrested

Agence France-Presse ("JOURNALISTS JAILED IN CHINA FOR PUBLICIZING LAND DISPUTES", 2006-01-18) reported that two journalists in eastern PRC were sentenced to up to 10 years in jail for publishing an unauthorized magazine that exposed local land disputes, a court official said. Zhu Wangxiang and Wu Zheng were convicted by the Liandu district court in Lishui city, Zhejiang

province, on Tuesday for publishing the "New China Youth" magazine without having the approval of media authorities, a court official told AFP.

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