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I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on Six Party Talks/ Korea Summit

Yonhap News Agency ("N NUCLEAR RESOLUTION A MUST TO RESTORE INTER-KOREAN TALKS – SOUTH MINISTER", 2007-01-24) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun said, he will not sit down with Kim Jong-il unless the ongoing Six Party Talks produce significant progress. Unification Minister Lee Jae-joung said it is "of no use" to discuss when a second inter-Korean summit would or could be held. The remarks came less than one day after the South Korean president said in a nationally televised New Year's address Tuesday that he would not give up efforts to pursue a summit with North Korea's Kim Jong-il. Roh, however, said such a meeting would be possible only after the communist nation makes "some visible" efforts to dismantle its nuclear weapons programme.

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2. DPRK-Iran Relations

Stratfor ("NORTH KOREA: IRAN STUDIED TEST RESULTS?", 2007-01-24) reported that the DPRK has permitted Iranian nuclear scientists to study the results of Pyongyang's October 2006 nuclear test in order to assist Iran in preparing to conduct its own underground nuclear test. The British daily Telegraph cited an unnamed senior European defense official who said Iran could attempt to conduct its test by the end of the year.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA BLOCKS NORTH KOREAN WEBSITES", 2007-01-23) reported that the DPRK slammed the ROK for blocking access to DPRK Web sites. The Koreas both block access to each other's websites. The ROK's anti-communist National Security Law prohibits the country's citizens from unauthorized contact with DPR Koreans or materials from the country, and some Web sites are blocked in the by the government. Blocking the Internet dampens the spirit of reconciliation on the peninsula, according to the statement, carried by the official DPR Korean Central News Agency.

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4. DPRK-Russia Relations

Donga Ilbo ("N. KOREA OFFERS DEBT DEAL TO RUSSIA", 2007-01-24) reported that the DPRK is said to have offered Russia the rights to develop its underground resources and to lend its ports for free in return for writing off debts worth $8 billion (approximately 7.44 trillion won). The DPRK's accumulated debt to Russia has reached $8 billion, including principal and interest. The two countries are expected to deal with details about Pyongyang’s debts in March when they hold the North Korea-Russia Commission on Economic and Technological Cooperation. Officials from Pyongyang and Moscow have visited each other to hold debt negotiations and to estimate the amount owed to Russia. Pyongyang has borrowed from Russia since the era of the former Soviet

Union.

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5. US-ROK Security Alliance

Chosun Ilbo ("UN COMMAND TO END ARMISTICE DUTIES", 2007-01-24) reported that the US Forces Korea said the UN forces commander here "cannot be responsible for maintenance of the Armistice Agreement and potential crisis escalation" once he has no further control of ROK forces after their full operational control has been handed over to Seoul. It was USFK Commander Gen. Burwell Bell's first official statement of his position that the largely nominal UN forces, which are headed by the USFK chief, will no longer be responsible for maintaining the armistice treaty once Combined Forces Command is dismantled.

(return to top) Associated Press ("U.S. GENERAL IN S.KOREA WARNS OF CHANGES", 2007-01-24) reported that The top U.S. officer in the ROK, U.S. Army Gen. B.B. Bell, who also serves as chief of the U.N. Command, warned that changes to the command structure on the Korean peninsula could damage the ability of allied forces to maintain the more than half-century-old armistice with the DPRK. He said the problem should be carefully considered during peacetime because on the Korean Peninsula "crisis escalation could quickly, indeed almost instantaneously, lead to combat operations." (return to top)

6. US-ROK Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. SAYS BEEF ISSUE CRUCIAL TO FTA SUCCESS", 2007-01-24) reported that the US has underlined that the ROK must fully reopen its beef market before it agrees an envisioned free trade agreement (FTA). Seoul has applied strict quarantine measures for safety reasons, but Washington criticizes them as hindering trade. The remark comes as the two sides prepare for another round of trade talks.

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7. ROK Elections

The Los Angeles Times ("SOUTH KOREAN RACE IS A LIBERAL-FREE ZONE", 2007-01-24) reported that a Gallup Korea poll said Lee Myung-bak, the former Seoul mayor, had the backing of half of the decided voters in the ROK Presidential race. Polls show that Lee's closest challenger is Park Geun-hye, the daughter of a former president and also a member of the conservative Grand National Party. Either way, it is not difficult to predict that the liberal left's decade-long grip on the presidency will end this year. It is uncertain whether a change of government, if it comes, will drastically alter the ROK's policy toward the DPRK. After a decade of offering North Koreans a hand instead of a fist, there is a lot of public support for engagement. Even some conservatives are reluctant to return to Cold War ways.

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8. Japan UNSC Seat

Kyodo ("JAPAN TO SEEK SEAT ON U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL IN LIEU OF MONGOLIA ", 2007-0--24) reported that Japan will seek a nonpermanent seat on the UN Security Council for a two-year term starting in 2009 in lieu of Mongolia, according to an agreement made by Japanese Prime

Minister Shinzo Abe and Mongolian President Nambaryn Enkhbayar. According to Foreign Ministry Press Secretary Mitsuo Sakaba, Japan has been keen on getting back onto the Security Council as soon as possible to fulfill its role in tackling major international security concerns such as the DPRK and has been exploring ways to do so since last year.

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9. Japan Iraq Role

Kyodo ("JAPAN HAS HOPES FOR NEW U.S. IRAQ POLICY, CONTINUES SUPPORT FOR BUSH", 2007-01-24) reported that Japan threw its support behind US President George W. Bush, with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe saying he hopes Washington's plan to increase US troops in Iraq will produce "effective achievements" and promising continued Japanese assistance for the reconstruction process there. "Japan too will fulfill its responsibility so that Iraq can recover as soon as possible," Abe said.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S DEFENSE MINISTER CALLS BUSH 'WRONG' ON IRAQ ", 2007-01-24) reported that Japan's defense minister has said US President George W. Bush was wrong to invade Iraq and warned that Tokyo could not automatically renew its air force mission to the war-torn country. "Mr. Bush went ahead in a situation as if there were nuclear weapons, but I think that decision was wrong," Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma said of the 2003 invasion. (return to top)

10. PRC African Diplomacy

The Associated Press ("HU JINTAO'S AFRICA TRIP TO FOCUS ON AID ", 2007-01-24) reported that President Hu Jintao will seek to boost trade and highlight the PRC's aid initiatives during his trip to Africa, an official said, brushing aside accusations that the PRC is overlooking human rights abuses to gain access to Africa's resources. Africa has become an important source of oil and other natural resources to feed the PRC's rapid economic growth. African workers have protested what they see as ill-treatment and poor pay by PRC companies, as well as the flood of PRC workers who take away their jobs.

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11. PRC One Child Policy

The Washington Post ("CHINA MAY LOWER FINES FOR POOR WHO VIOLATE ONE-CHILD-ONLY POLICY", 2007-01-24) reported that fines imposed on Chinese who violate the country's one-chil--only policy may be reduced for the poor, a top family planning official said Tuesday, as authorities stressed a broader approach to population management. The announcement came a day after state media reported that many Chinese believe it is unfair that the wealthy can "buy" a second child by simply paying fines for breaking the one-child-only rule for most urban couples.

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12. PRC Internet Use

Reuters ("CHINA'S HU VOWS TO "PURIFY" INTERNET ", 2007-01-24) reported that the PRC Communist Party chief Hu Jintao has vowed to "purify" the Internet describing a top-level meeting that discussed ways to master the country's sprawling, unruly online population. But he made it

clear that the Communist Party was looking to ensure it keeps control of the PRC's Internet users, often more interested in salacious pictures, bloodthirsty games and political scandal than Marxist lessons.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("CHINA MAY HAVE WORLD'S LARGEST ONLINE POPULATION IN TWO YEARS ", 2007-01-24) reported that the PRC's Internet population could overtake the US as the world's largest within two years, but foreign dotcoms may have to wait much longer to profit from it, analysts say. While usage will pick up as computers get cheaper and the Internet becomes more attractive, local culture and habits constitute formidable barriers to entry for overseas businesses, they said. (return to top)

II. CanKor

13. Report #270

CanKor ("OPINION", 2007-01-24) In this double-sized OPINION issue, CanKor presents a number of interviews, articles and analyses from the last three months of 2006 that should not have been missed. University of Chicago professor of history Bruce Cumings states in an interview, "The worst failure has occurred in the Bush administration, where you have people inside that administration that can't decide whether they want to overthrow North Korea or negotiate with North Korea... If this is our enemy, we have to know it. And people in Washington have constantly underestimated, mischaracterized Kim Jong Il and the North Korean regime, and we're paying the price for it." Dean of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service Robert Gallucci says, "We can't invade. Sanctions won't work. The only option left is to talk... While some have reduced a critical and complex foreign policy issue to a debating point in partisan politics, it is important to sort out the facts of what has happened in the past decade or so if we want to chart a more effective course for policy." Former president of ROK Kim Dae Jung says neither military measures nor sanctions will work. "The third option, which I would like to propose, is to resolve the issue through dialogue between the United States and North Korea." UCLA professor Tom Plate says, "The testy North Korean issue is a problem that will be with us for a while, so settle down and get used to it," but "North Korea's march toward a scary nuclear arsenal (with serious export capability) can be capped, at least to its current minimalist level." Veteran journalist Donald Kirk analyzes how "those four tendentious initials, CVID (complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement) appear to have been dropped entirely from the vocabulary of US officials talking about talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons." Stanley Foundation programme officer in Policy Analysis and Dialogue Michael Schiffer says that "the shortcomings of the six-party process thus far -- starting with its 'on-again, off-again' nature -- illustrate the need for a stable multilateral security framework for the region, regardless of whether the six-party process meets with success any time soon." President of the public relations agency Insight Communications Consultants Michael Breen asks what is the point of Six-Party Talks? "In case there's misunderstanding, yes, I am proposing a long-term vision of regime-change. But execution should be by North Koreans themselves, or, if their hands are tied, by Father Time and Mother Nature. Not by foreign countries. All the international community has to do is engage in talks, lots of them." Junior fellow in the China programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Oriana Skylar Mastro explains why it is a miscalculation to depend on China to solve the DPRK nuclear crisis. "This is all wishful thinking on the part of the United States. What's really happening is that Beijing simply sees what the United States describes as parochial interests as its own national interests -- which it believes great powers are supposed to protect." "The USA has argued, thus far unpersuasively," says President of the Pacific Forum CSIS Ralph Cossa, "that the pot of gold at the end of the cooperation rainbow would far exceed the $24 million in assets

frozen as a result of the BDA action. This may be true, but totally misses the point. From Pyongyang's perspective, it is not just about the money." CanKor Report #270 ends with an annotated list of additional important and interesting articles available on the Internet and worth reading in this context.

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