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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Washington Post ("N. KOREA MAY ACCEPT DEAL IN NUCLEAR TALKS", 2007-01-31) reported that the DPRK appears increasingly willing to bargain over the terms of ending its nuclear programs, prompting cautious optimism that some sort of agreement may be reached when the six-nation disarmament talks reconvene next week in Beijing. With just two years left in President Bush's term, State Department officials appear to have been given new freedom to explore different outcomes and proposals with their DPRK counterparts, most recently during unusual bilateral talks held in Berlin. DPRK officials have responded in kind, for the first time moving beyond quibbles about the wording in communiqués and actually talking specifically about what they might do to end their nuclear programs, the officials said. But they still cautioned that intensive bargaining will be necessary to reach any deal.

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2. ROK on Six Party Talks

Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA REMAINS CAUTIOUS OVER NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR TALKS", 2007-01-31) reported that the ROK's foreign minister sounded a note of caution ahead of the six party talks, saying there is far to go before a final agreement is reached. Meanwhile, the nominee to be the U.S. State Department's No. 2 official said in Washington that "there are some grounds for optimism" about seeing results at the talks, due to continued international pressure on Pyongyang.

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3. US-DPRK Financial Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. AND NORTH FIND FINANCIAL ACCORD TOUGH", 2007-02-01) reported that the U.S. and DPRK officials met in Beijing for a second day to address the dispute over the frozen financial assets. No breakthrough was hinted at yesterday.

[\(return to top\)](#) Reuters ("N. KOREA EYES 2ND TEST IF DISPUTE NOT RESOLVED", 2007-01-31) reported that U.S. Deputy Assistant Treasury Secretary Daniel Glaser resumed talks with DPRK officials in Beijing on Tuesday over the dispute over currency counterfeiting. A source close to the talks said they were inching forward and had "established a framework" for more negotiations. Glaser also said U.S. Secret Service officials had presented DPRK officials with their findings. A source with close ties to the DPRK government said the United States lacked evidence of wrongdoing, and that the DPRK would likely express its frustration when it comes to six-party talks scheduled for February 8 in Beijing. "If the United States does not resolve it, North Korea will have no choice but to announce at the six-party talks that it plans to conduct another test," the source told Reuters after being briefed by a DPRK official. [\(return to top\)](#)

4. DPRK Disease Outbreak

Donga Ilbo ("EPIDEMICS ON RISE IN N. KOREA: REPORT", 2007-01-31) reported that infectious diseases such as scarlet fever and measles are on the rise in the DPRK adding to the severe economic hardships they are suffering. DPR Koreans interviewed by the Dong-A Ilbo said that the authorities are sitting on their hands and not moving quickly to handle the outbreak of the diseases in Pyongyang and provincial areas due to a lack of medicine. Scarlet fever, whose symptoms include sore throat, high fever, and a rash first broke out in Hyesan, Yanggangdo, and Shineuiju, North

Pyongan Province last October, and has spread to the rest of the country. Han Myong Ho (alias) living in Chongjin, North Hamgyong Province said, "As of January, 4,000 people caught scarlet fever in Chongjin alone. The affected people were hospitalized at hospitals in Sunam." Symptoms of scarlet fever can be cured with penicillin, but hospitals which did not have stockpiles of the antibiotic just told those infected to boil water before drinking it. Furthermore, the rampant circulation of fake drugs from China may be increasing the death toll. The root causes of the outbreak are poor water and sewer systems, lack of electricity, and a collapse of the country's preventive medicine system. For example, in rural areas in the North, flush toilets are rare, and water and sewer systems are in terrible condition, leading to all kinds of wastewater running directly into rivers.

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5. US-ROK Security Alliance

Korea Herald ("SEOUL CONVEYS CONCERN TO U.S. OVER BELL'S REMARK", 2007-01-31) reported that the ROK expressed concern over "undiplomatic" remarks made by the top US military officer here regarding possible delays in the relocation of US military bases, a Foreign Ministry official said. Earlier this month, Gen. Burwell Bell, commander of U.S. Forces Korea, said he would "fight" any further delay of the planned base movement. Bell's remark came in response to media reports that the U.S. base relocation is likely to be postponed until 2013 from the agreed date of 2008.

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6. US-ROK Trade Relations

Korea Times ("SEOUL LEAVES OPEN FTA PACKAGE DEAL", 2007-01-31) reported that the ROK hinted at a package deal to complete a free trade agreement (FTA) with the US currently under extended talks. During a radio interview, Lee Hye-min, the No. 2 in the ROK negotiating team said, "The two sides should make a give-and-take deal after the seventh and final round is completed." The package deal Lee talked about is likely to address the issue of US beef.

[\(return to top\)](#) Joongang Ilbo ("KOREA-U.S. TRADE TALKS WILL BE SUCCESSFUL: HAN", 2007-0-31) reported that ROK Prime Minister Han Myeong-sook is certain that a free trade agreement between the ROK and the US will come to fruition. At a meeting held yesterday by the Korus FTA Industry Alliance, the minister said, "Both governments have strong intentions for the agreement, and the business societies in Korea and the United States want the FTA. I am certain of success. Although some unsolved issues exist, major progress is expected. The government will work to listen to the industries." [\(return to top\)](#)

7. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("CHINA HAS BEGUN SUPPLYING FROM DISPUTED GAS FIELD: REPORT", 2007-01-31) reported that the PRC has begun supplying natural gas from a gas field in the East China Sea, where the PRC and Japan are in a dispute over resource exploration rights, a Hong Kong newspaper reported. Production is under way at the Chunxiao gas field and natural gas is now being supplied to the cities of Ningbo and Shaoxing in Zhejiang Province, the Tai Kung Pao reported in its online edition.

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8. Japan on PRC ASAT Test

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S ABE CHARGES CHINA'S SATELLITE TEST ILLEGAL ", 2007-0-31) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has voiced concern about the PRC's satellite-destroying test, charging that Beijing had violated international law. "I believe it would not be in compliance with basic international rules such as the Outer Space Treaty," Abe said. The 1967 UN Outer Space Treaty, which bans weapons of mass destruction in space, says that all nations should avoid contamination of space and be held liable for any damage caused.

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9. Sino-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INCOMING RICE DEPUTY SEEKS US 'ENGAGEMENT' WITH CHINA ", 2007-01-31) reported that incoming number-two US diplomat John Negroponte has said Washington should adopt an engagement policy at all levels with the PRC, which is countering traditional US influence in Asia. Negroponte, currently the top US spy chief and set to become Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's deputy, also told a Senate hearing on his confirmation that it would not be wise for Washington to review its policy on Taiwan.

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10. Myanmar-PRC Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, MYANMAR VOW TO STRENGTHEN TIES ", 2007-01-31) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao met in Beijing Wednesday with Thura Shwe Mann, member of the ruling Myanmar State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the Myanmar military's chief of staff. The two exchanged views on the relations between the two armed forces and other issues of common concern, vowing to strengthen bilateral military ties, according to sources with the PRC Defense Ministry.

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11. PRC Rural Unrest

China Daily ("FARMERS' PROTESTS DROP 20% LAST YEAR", 2007-01-31) reported that the number of rural protests involving mass participation declined "markedly" last year, and will continue to drop if government officials work in real earnest to redress farmers' complaints. That was the message delivered yesterday by Chen Xiwen, the top advisor to the government on rural policy. Chen revealed after the briefing that he estimated the decline in protests was close to 20 percent, and there had been 23,000 such incidents on the mainland last year, with less than half in the countryside.

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12. Hong Kong Leadership

The Associated Press ("CANDIDATE COULD MAKE HISTORY IN HONG KONG", 2007-01-31) reported that pro-democracy lawmaker Alan Leong said Wednesday he would make history by becoming the first politician on the ballot to challenge a Beijing-backed candidate in Hong Kong's

leadership race. Leong, who is also a lawyer, said he has received the 100 nominations he needs to be considered for the chief executive slot — Hong Kong's top job. He will be the first challenger on the ballot since the former British colony returned to PRC rule 10 years ago.

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