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From:

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To:

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Subject:

Fw: N. Korea 'agrees to suspend uranium enrichment' (AFP)

From: OpsNewsTicker

Sent: Saturday, December 17, 2011 05:30 AM

To: NEWS-Mahogany; NEWS-EAP; NEWS-ISN; NEWS-Korea **Subject**: N. Korea 'agrees to suspend uranium enrichment' (AFP)

SEOUL — North Korea has agreed to suspend its enriched-uranium nuclear weapons programme, a key United States demand for the resumption of disarmament talks, according to news reports.

Yonhap news agency and the Chosun Ilbo daily quoted an unidentified diplomatic source saying the Washington had also agreed to provide the North with up to 240,000 tonnes of food aid.

Pyongyang pledged "to implement initial measures of denuclearisation that include a suspension of its uranium enrichment programme," Yonhap said.

The North apparently agreed to put stricter and clearer monitoring systems in place to ensure that the food aid reached those most in need, according to the source, Yonhap said.

The agreements came when Robert King, US special envoy for North Korean human rights, met with Ri Gun, head of North American affairs at North Korea's foreign ministry, on Thursday and Friday in Beijing, the source said.

The reports could not be independently confirmed.

Suspending the uranium enrichment programme -- first disclosed by the North one year ago -- is a key demand of Washington's before six-party negotiations can resume.

The North quit the six-party forum -- which also includes China, Russia, Japan and South Korea -- in April 2009, one month before its second nuclear test.

Pyongyang has long said it wanted the six-nation talks to re-start, but without preconditions.

But the United States says the North must first show "seriousness of purpose" by shutting down the enrichment programme.

According to both Yonhap and Chosun Ilbo, the two countries were likely to hold a third round of talks this coming week in Beijing to discuss resuming the six-party talks.

Glyn Davies, the US special representative on North Korea, will likely meet with North Korean First Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-Gwan in Beijing around Thursday, the source said.

North Korea was promised 500,000 tonnes of food aid from the United States when it dismantled part of its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon in 2008.

It had received 170,000 tonnes by the time the aid was suspended in 2009 as tensions worsened over the North's nuclear programmes.

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