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I. United States

1. Russia-DPRK Summit

Agence France Presse ("MOSCOW DENIES RUSSIA-NKOREA SUMMIT TO BE HELD THIS MONTH," Moscow, 2/1/01) reported that Russian foreign ministry sources denied Japanese media reports on Thursday that Russian President Vladimir Putin and DPRK leader Kim Jong-il would hold a February 25-26 summit in the Siberian city of Irkutsk. In reference to a Sankei Shimbun report, an undisclosed foreign ministry source told Interfax, "These reports are not true. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il's visit to Russia has been set for an entirely different time."

2. South China Sea Dispute

Agence France Presse ("PHILIPPINE NAVY BOARD CHINESE FISHING BOATS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA," Manila, 2/1/01) reported that the Philippine Foreign Secretary Lauro Baja said on Thursday that its navy boarded four Chinese fishing vessels near a disputed South China Sea shoal and ordered the fishermen to leave the area. The Chinese boats were ordered to leave Scarborough Shoal, but no arrests were made.

II. Republic of Korea

1. ROK Policy towards DPRK

The Korea Herald (Shin Yong-bae, "TOP DIPLOMATS PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR N.K.'S," Seoul, 02/01/01) reported that heads of the ROK's overseas diplomatic missions ended their three-day annual conference on Wednesday, pledging to step up their diplomatic support for the DPRK's efforts to join the international community. "The participants resolved to spearhead diplomatic efforts so that we can play a leading role in expanding North Korea's participation in the global community and improving relations between them and Western nations," said a Foreign Ministry spokesman. The 97 envoys, including four consuls general, also agreed that rapprochement between the ROK and the DPRK and the process of ending the Cold War animosity on the Korean Peninsula began in earnest after the inter- Korean summit talks last June. "They agreed to work on diplomatic measures to support the further development of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation on the basis of public consensus and close cooperation with foreign nations," spokesman Lee Nam-soo said. For the establishment of a peace regime on the peninsula, the ambassadors discussed ways to resume as early as possible the four-way talks on Korean peace.

2. Inter-Korean Talks

The Korea Times ("KOREAS REACH AGREEMENT ON DMZ JOINT REGULATIONS," Seoul, 02/01/01) reported that the ROK and the DPRK tentatively reached an agreement on a package of joint regulations that will be applied to military personnel in the Demilitarized Zone in connection with the reconnection of the severed railway and road links. The agreement was reached during the fourth round of working-level military talks at Panmunjom. The joint regulations are, among other things, aimed at averting accidental clashes in the DMZ as rival troops work on the construction project. The two sides agreed to finalize the establishment of the joint regulations at the upcoming fifth working-level military talks, which are due to take place as early as February 6. A ministry official said that the two Koreas agreed on 36 out of 41 pending points during their talks, leaving only five to be tackled later. ROK chief negotiator Brigadier General Kim Kyong-duck declined to comment on what the five issues are, but he was optimistic on the prospect of reaching a final agreement at the next talks. During their talks, the two Koreas also reached agreement that their defense ministers will sign an accord at the second defense ministers' talks ensuring military guarantees for the construction of the inter-Korean railway and road links.

3. Suit against Kim Jong Il

Chosun Ilbo ("FAMILIES OF KAL BOMBING TO SUE KIM JONG IL," Seoul, 02/01/01) reported that the families of the victims of Korean Airlines (KAL) flight 858 which was blown up by DPRK agents over Burma in 1987 announced on Wednesday that they will file a lawsuit in the Seoul District Prosecutors' Office against Kim Jong-il for ordering the bombing. They said that one of the perpetrators, Kim Hyon-hee, now an ROK citizen, had admitted that Kim Jong-il had personally ordered in his own writing the planting of a bomb on the plane, which killed 115 people. They added that if Kim comes to Seoul without admitting responsibility and offering an apology and compensation, he should be arrested and tried. In related news, the committee against Kim Jong-il's visit, composed of 12 organizations including one for family members of soldiers and policemen killed in action, said that it was also filing lawsuits against the DPRK leader for the KAL and Burma bombings, kidnapping more than 3,700 ROK citizens, and assassinating his nephew-in-law who had defected.

4. Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("RED CROSS TALKS CONCLUDE WITH SIX POINT STATEMENT," Seoul, 02/01/01) reported that the Korean National Red Cross (KNRC) and its DPRK counterpart issued a six point tentative agreement Wednesday at the conclusion of their third meeting in Kumgang. The two sides agreed in principle to expand displaced family member contacts and letter exchanges, after the test period had been analyzed, and said that a formal statement would be issued after their fourth meeting from April 3 to 5. Letters containing up to two photographs from 300 confirmed family members in the DPRK will be exchanged with their ROK relatives on March 15. The third exchange visits of 100 family members from each country will take place from February 26 to 28 and the initial lists will be exchanged on February 9. With regard to the fourth meeting, no agreement was reached on location as the ROK wants it held in Seoul, while the DPRK wants it in Mt. Kumgang. Also no agreement was made on the site of a permanent meeting place as this was put off until the next meeting. The 22 member ROK delegation will return to Seoul on Thursday morning

5. Inter-Korean Electricity Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("SOUTH-NORTH ELECTRICITY TALKS TO OPEN FEBRUARY 7," Seoul, 02/01/01) reported that the two Koreas are set to open talks in Pyongyang from next Wednesday to discuss ways for the ROK to provide electricity to the DPRK. The four-day meeting aims to review the DPRK's earlier request for 500,000 kilowatts of power supply. Meanwhile, a separate working-level meeting is set to get underway later next month from February 21- 24 to discuss joint flood countermeasures along the DPRK's Imjin River.

6. DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo (Ahn Sung-kyoo, "BIG QUESTION ON REACTORS," Seoul, 02/01/01) reported that a private US institute has raised questions whether the two light-water reactors that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization is building for the DPRK are capable of producing plutonium for weapons. The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, which has Deputy Secretary of Defense-designate Paul Wolfowitz on its board of advisers, wrote a letter in December to the international consortium building the reactors, raising doubts about the energy development organization's claims that these reactors are proliferation-resistant. Considering the center's influence, the questions it raised are likely to lead to a re-examination of the Geneva Agreement, said Lee Dong-bok, a professor at Myongji University.

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