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I. United States

1. DPRK Nuclear Stand-Off

The Associated Press ("N KOREA THREATENS NEW DEMANDS IN NUCLEAR STANDOFF," Seoul, 03/08/04) reported that the DPRK said Monday that it may insist on the withdrawal of US troops from the ROK as part of a nuclear disarmament deal. The DPRK said it would push the new demands

if the US failed to drop its own insistence that the DPRK "completely, verifiably and irreversibly" dismantle its nuclear weapons programs. The DPRK has said it is willing to give up its nuclear program in return for energy and economic aid, as well as a US guarantee that it will not invade the communist country. In a dispatch carried Monday by the country's official KCNA news agency, the DPRK said if the US continues to insist on complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement, it would offer its own counter demands. "The DPRK cannot but demand the US completely withdraw its troops from South Korea in a verifiable way and make the 'complete, verifiable, irreversible security assurance,"' the report said.

2. DPRK Nuclear Working Groups

Chosun ("JAPANESE NEWSPAPER REPORTS WORKING GROUP TALKS UNLIKELY THIS MONTH," 03/08/04) reported that it is uncertain whether working groups talks to help resolve an international dispute over the DPRK's nuclear development program will be established by the end of this month, the Japanese daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun reported Monday. Although participating countries are negotiating a working-level meeting, it is expected that the participants will have a difficult time selecting topics for discussion. Some Japanese analysts have expressed concerns that the DPRK might use the scheduling of working-level talks as a negotiating card, the newspaper reported. As for the working-level meeting, the ROK, the US and Japan consider the meeting an opportunity to prepare specific ways the DPRK can go about abandoning its nuclear arms program, while the PRC considers the meeting a chance to discuss concrete ways to inspect the DPRK's plan to give up its nuclear weapons, to support energy and to guarantee the security of the DPRK.

3. DPRK-KEDO Relations

Yomiuri ("KEDO TO ASK N. KOREA TO LET IT REMOVE CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS," 03/08/04) reported that the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization will ask Pyongyang to allow it to remove construction materials and tools for the construction of light-water reactors in the DPRK from the country in a working-level meeting between the two sides to be held this week in the DPRK, KEDO sources said Saturday. The four-day meeting, which begins Tuesday, is likely to be held either in Pyongyang or in Hyansan, on the outskirts of the capital, the sources said. KEDO officials, including Deputy Executive Director Hideto Mitamura, and Japanese and ROK government officials in charge of KEDO affairs will attend the meeting. During the meeting, KEDO officials will seek cooperation from the DPRK, which refused to let construction materials and tools in Kumho be transported out of the country after construction of the light-water reactors was temporarily halted in December, the sources said. The DPRK has sought compensation for the construction delay from KEDO. KEDO plans to notify Pyongyang that resumption of construction will be difficult if North Korea remains uncooperative, and if it continues to develop nuclear arms, the sources said. KEDO also may notify Pyongyang of the possibility of a complete discontinuation of the project without waiting for the temporary suspension to expire at the end of November, the sources said.

4. DPRK-EU Relations

Korea Herald ("DPRK DELEGATION TO VISIT EU," 03/08/04) reported that a DPRK parliamentary delegation has left Pyongyang to visit the Czech Republic and Britain, according to the DPRK's official news agency. The DPRK Supreme People's Assembly delegation headed by Chairman Choe Thae-bok left Saturday, the (North) Korean Central News Agency reported. The KCNA did not disclose the purpose or itinerary of the visit.

5. PRC on EU Arms Embargo

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA PRESSES EU TO LIFT ARMS EMBARGO," 03/09/04) reported that the PRC's deputy foreign minister pressed the EU to lift a 15-year-old arms embargo on Beijing, saying the PRC has no plans for big increases in weapons imports as a result, EU sources said. But EU External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten reiterated a call for Beijing to take more "concrete steps" to improve human rights to ensure the lifting of the ban, imposed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. In talks with Patten in Brussels, Yesui Zhang said the PRC feels the ban was "inappropriate in the current context," and reiterated Beijing's respect for an EU code of conduct on arms imports to countries with human rights problems. "They said that they weren't expecting a huge rise in the quantity of arms imports. They understood that the code of conduct would still operate," said an EU source.

6. PRC-ROK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE PRESIDENT HU TIPPED TO VISIT SEOUL IN APRIL," Beijing, 03/08/04) reported that PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing has said that PRC and ROK are discussing a visit to Seoul by PRC President Hu Jintao. Li made the remarks at a press conference on the sidelines of the current session of the 10th National People's Congress, saying President Hu and his people thank ROK President Roh Moo-hyun for inviting him to visit Seoul. The top diplomat said he plans to invite his ROK counterpart, Ban Ki-moon, to visit Beijing next week, indicating that they are preparing to finalize the details of Hu's visit. He did not elaborate on the timing of the visit, but diplomatic sources here said it is likely to take place next month.

7. PRC-Hong Kong Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU SAYS 'NECESSARY TO REVIEW' PRINCIPLES FOR GOVERNING HONG KONG," 03/07/04) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao has said it is "necessary to review" the fundamental principle underlying the government of Hong Kong as a special region within the PRC, state media reported. Hu made the reference to the "one country, two systems" formula, coined by late patriarch Deng Xiaoping, while meeting Hong Kong Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa Saturday on the sidelines of the Chinese parliament's annual session. "It is necessary to review Deng Xiaoping's theory on 'one country, two systems', which is still playing a significant role in guiding practice," Hu was quoted by Xinhua news agency as telling Tung. According to the "one country, two systems" principle, the people of Hong Kong are to be allowed a great deal of autonomy while leaving only foreign policy and defense to the government in Beijing. The principle has been at the heart of heated arguments in Hong Kong, with many people in the city worrying that China wants to impose a greater degree of control. Even as Hu struck a conciliatory note in hit talks with Tung, PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said the PRC "does not welcome (and) does not need any outside interference" on Hong Kong. "Hong Kong is China's Hong Kong," Li told a press conference on the sidelines of China's annual full meeting of the 3,000-member National People's Congress.

8. Taiwan Presidential Election

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN'S PRESIDENTIAL RIVALS IN TIGHT BATTLE AS ELECTION NEARS," 03/07/04) reported that Taiwan's presidential election enters the final fortnight of campaigning with the two candidates running neck and neck in a contest rife with animosity. President Chen Shui-bian has closed the once large gap on his sole challenger, Lien Chan of the

Kuomintang (KMT), after running a vigorous campaign for a second four-year term focused on forging a Taiwanese identity apart from the PRC. A second successive defeat for the main opposition KMT could also signal the marginalisation of one of the world's wealthiest political forces, after a dismal showing in 2000 ended 51 years of unbroken control. The campaign by Chen's pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) gained impetus last weekend when an estimated two million people joined a human chain that ran 500 kilometres (310 miles) through Taiwan in a protest against hundreds of Chinese missiles pointed at the island. Chen has called a referendum for the same day as the presidential election with voters being asked to support peace talks and the strengthening of military defences. Opposition leaders said they would boycott the referendum but have stopped short of demanding voters follow their lead for fear of appearing to be pro-PRC.

9. Japan Constitutional Revision?

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S RULING PARTY MULLS CHANGES TO PACIFIST CONSTITUTION," 03/08/04) reported that Japan's ruling party is considering a referendum on revising the country's pacifist constitution to reflect the fact that Japan has armed forces. The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) plans to submit a bill for a plebiscite before June 16 when the current parliamentary session ends, Kyodo News agency reported, citing senior party lawmakers. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has consistently said since taking office in 2001 that the constitution should be changed to recognise the country's "Self Defence Forces" formally as a full-fledged military. The conservative LDP vowed last November, during campaigning for the general election, to draw up an amendment to the constitution by November 2005 when the party marks its 50th anniversary. Commenting on the report, an official at the LDP's policy affairs council said no decision had yet been taken on the timing of submitting a bill. "It is not the case that we have been given any instruction to submit such a bill," he said.

10. ROK-Japan Relations

Asia Pulse ("S. KOREAN FOREIGN MINISTER LEAVES FOR JAPAN," Washington, 03/08/04) reported that ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon on Saturday left for Japan, winding up his five-day visit to the US. In Tokyo, he will pay a courtesy call on Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Monday after meeting with Japan's Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi upon his arrival a day earlier. Ban's visit to Japan comes at a sensitive time, following a recent speech by President Roh Moo-hyun in which he openly criticized Japan's leaders for not fully repenting for its colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula (1910-1945). Early last week, the ROK parliament also approved a bill to look into the activities of Koreans who assisted the Japanese authorities during colonial rule.

11. DPRK Defector Death Threat

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA'S TOP DEFECTOR RECEIVES DEATH THREAT," 03/08/04) reported that the DPRK's top defector was depicted with a blood-spattered meat cleaver piercing his skull in a graphic death threat posted in the ROK capital, police said. A photograph of Hwang Jang-Yop mounted on a board with the meat cleaver buried in his forehead was found outside the offices of a DPRK defectors group which Hwang leads. A message under the photograph that was covered in fake blood named Hwang and two other prominent defectors and contained the words, "I will kill you all." Printed leaflets scattered nearby warned Hwang of an imminent attempt on his life. "Brace yourself, Hwang Jang-Yop, traitor of the people," the leaflets said. Hwang, 81, the former secretary of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party and former mentor to dictator Kim Jong-Il, defected to the ROK in 1997 and has been an outspoken critic of the DPRK. In 1997 DPRK agents allegedly gunned

down another prominent DPRK defector Lee Han-Young, who said he was the nephew of Sung Hae-Rim, a former actress who became Kim Jong-Il's mistress.

II. People's Republic of China

1. PRC National People's Congress

China Daily (Xing Zhigang, "'PUT PEOPLE FIRST,' PREMIER PLEDGES," 03/06-07/04, P1) reported that "putting people first" will be the main feature of the central government's work in 2004, Premier Wen Jiabao vowed on March 5. In his first government work report to the 10th National People's Congress, Wen promised "all-round, balanced and sustainable" development focused on job creation, improving the welfare system and narrowing the urban-rural divide. The innovative premier devoted an entire section of the report to outlining a range of measures aimed at building a more people-oriented government. "All power is bestowed by the people, so the government must be accountable to the people, act in their interests and accept their oversight," the premier told 2,904 lawmakers in his nationally televised address in the Great Hall of the People. Wen stressed that his government will continue to put people first and concentrate on resolving major social problems. He also called for scientific and democratic policy making, and said the government's style of work and the overall quality of civil servants should also be improved to help build a clean government and stamp out corruption. He also said the mainland has "utmost sincerity and will do everything possible" to bring about a peaceful reunification of the motherland, but "stand firmly opposed to any form of separatist activities aimed at 'Taiwan independence,' and will never allow anyone to split Taiwan from China by any means."

2. ROK-Japan Relations

People's Daily (Xu Baokang, "S. KOREAN PRESIDENT SLAMS KOIZUMI," 03/02/04, P3) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun on March 1 called on Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to refrain from remarks and actions that can hurt the feelings of Koreans. "A national leader should not behave like a thoughtless person or a politician hungry for popularity," Roh said in an apparent reference to the Japanese leader. He made the speech to mark the 85th anniversary of the March 1, 1919 Independence Movement. Roh's criticism of Koizumi was not included in his text distributed in advance and came after reports that the Japanese leader is determined to continue to make his annual visit to the Yasukuni shrine, a memorial site for World War II war criminals. "They'd better refrain from doing things that hurt my people," he said. "Japan should do its best to do its part, since the Koreans, their government in particular, have shown self-restraint." President Roh asked for national efforts to overcome the residual discord resulting from conflicts between Korean independence fighters and pro-Japanese collaborators under the 1910-1945 Japanese colonial rule. Roh pledged to illuminate the truth about the so-called pro-Japanese figures, many of who managed to stay among the affluent in South Korean society.

3. PRC-US Relations on HK

China Daily (Qin Chuan, "NATION OPPOSES FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN HK AFFAIRS," 03/05/04, P1) reported that the Chinese Government resolutely opposes any attempts to interfere in its internal affairs, Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said on March 4 at a regular briefing in Beijing. It has been reported that Martin Lee along with two members of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Legislative Council will give evidence to a US Senate hearing on the issue of

democracy in Hong Kong. Liu said Hong Kong's democratic issues are part of China's internal affairs, and Basic Law provides guarantees for the development of democracy in Hong Kong and its people's democratic rights. He added the Chinese Government has made clear to the US its position and concerns over the issue. The prime minister also indicated there is no sense in Taiwan authorities holding a referendum because they cannot legally hold such a vote without the approval of the central government of China, Liu said.

4. PRC's Commentary on Six-party Talks

China Daily (Hu Xuan, "TALKS FRUITFUL, MORE EFFORTS NEEDED," 03/01/04, P4) carried a commentary saying that the second round of six-party talks in Beijing wound up on Saturday, offering the parties involved another chance to return to the negotiation table, and marking a positive step toward working out a peaceful resolution to the longstanding nuclear stalemate on the Korean Peninsula. In the Chairman's Statement for the second round of six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, the first such statement since the meeting last August, it is noted that all parties stand by their goal of non-nuclearization of the peninsula and agree to bring an end to the impasse through dialogue and peaceful means in a spirit of mutual respect and consultations conducted on an equal footing. The consensus on the timing of the next round and the setting up a working group is of great significance in laying the necessary groundwork for and pushing forward the process of dialogue aimed at reaching a final peaceful settlement of the issue. If they keep their minds open, solutions to the issue may be in sight. Despite the progress already made, severe disagreements still exist, the article commented. The political challenge in this issue is to find ways to transfer divergence into consensus. As the nuclear issue is a continuing impasse between the DPRK and the US, extra efforts must be made by the two sides. However, international intercession and the diplomatic efforts of other countries in dealing with the nuclear issue can also undoubtedly play a positive role in resolving the issue. With the multilateral consultation under way, patience, sincerity and flexibility on all sides are needed to ensure long term peace and stability on the peninsula and throughout the region, no matter how arduous and plodding the process might be.

5. Nations' Attitude towards Six-party Talks

China Daily (Hu Xiao, "SIX-PARTY TALKS TO RESUME IN JUNE," 03/01/04, P1) reported that Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck of the ROK, the chief delegate to the just-ended Beijing six-party talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, said yesterday the talks were "very successful." He made his remarks upon arriving in Seoul from Beijing, the Yonhap News Agency reported. All participants expressed satisfaction after the talks while recognizing some major differences remain. Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said during the closing ceremony, which was broadcast worldwide, that "differences, even serious differences, still exist... The road is long and bumpy. But time is on the side of peace." US late Saturday welcomed the event's results, with officials saying that progress was made on a "regularized process" for a peaceful settlement. Kim Kye-gwan, deputy foreign minister of the DPRK said on Saturday at a news conference PRC plays an important role, adding the DPRK appreciated PRC's efforts. Kim said the second round of talks was practical and the DPRK delegation participated in the talks with sincerity, aiming to solve the issue through dialogue. He also reaffirmed the DPRK's stance that it should be compensated if it stops its nuclear programs. Economic aid is key in Pyongyang's demands for its freezing and then dismantling its nuclear programs, while Washington has said a freeze is not enough. Washington has asked the DPRK to first dismantle "all" its nuclear programs. Another major advance in the talks is the ROK's offer of providing energy aid as long as the freeze is a stepping stone to nuclear dismantlement. PRC and Russia agreed to join the ROK in providing aid, said the report.

6. PRC on Japan's Shrine Visited

China Daily ("SHRINE OBSESSION MORE THAN ONE MAN'S STANCE," 03/02/04, P1) reported that the Osaka District Court in western Japan delivered a bewildering ruling on Friday. Affirming that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited the notorious Yasukuni Shrine in an official capacity on August 13, 2001, the court refused to rule on the visit's constitutionality. Accusing Koizumi of violating the constitutional separation of church and state, more than 600 Osaka residents filed the lawsuit in the hope of preventing their prime minister from further visits to shrine, where 2.5 million Japanese war dead - including 14 Class-A World War II war criminals - are enshrined. They also claimed compensation for "mental anguish" the visits had inflicted. The court's awkward mismatch is a disappointing compromise of professional integrity. Surely Koizumi was not honest - he is well aware of the political sensitivity surrounding his Yasukuni visits. Commenting on Chinese and Korean indignation at his Yasukuni visits, Koizumi once said: "They must be made to understand. Because this is Japan's culture and tradition." If such is Japan's culture and tradition, we have to look out for more than Koizumi.

7. Relations Across Taiwan Straits

China Daily ("OVERSEAS CHINESE CRITICIZE ¡(r)REFERENDUM,'" Bangkok, 03/03/04, P2) reported that Taiwan leader Chen Shui-bian's plan of holding the so-called "referendum" has further deteriorated cross-Straits relations and pushed local peoples' lives to a risky brink, a delegate of the overseas Chinese world conference said here yesterday. Boonsong Srifuengfung, president of the Thai-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, said at the opening ceremony that the central government's basic principles on peaceful reunification, especially the "one country, two systems" principle for settling the Taiwan question, have gained more and more understanding and recognition from Taiwan compatriots. It is the common desire of Taiwan compatriots to pursue peace, stability and development, said Boonsong, whose organization sponsored the meeting. However, with the support of Taiwan authorities, pro-independence forces on the island have repeatedly hindered and challenged such a historical trend by pursuing "incremental independence," which has gravely harmed cross-Straits relations. The two-day overseas Chinese world conference for promoting peaceful reunification of China opened in Bangkok yesterday morning. More than 1,000 delegates from some 20 countries and regions around the world gathered at the conference.

III. CanKor E-Clipping Service

1. Issue #156

Six-party talks see "modest progress" read the headlines following the conclusion of the long-anticipated second round. The agreement to hold another round of talks shows that the six-nation framework has been institutionalized and indicates a step forward, said Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda. Other positives noted include the agreement to set up working groups to carry on the momentum between meetings, and a pledge to hold a third round of talks before July. All six nations said the four days of discussions had been useful and more substantive than the first round in August, and reported the tone of the talks had changed. While the US has previously ruled out any "quid pro quo" if the DPRK gives up its nuclear ambitions, it offered to give security guarantees and has left the door open for other nations to provide inducements. The talks closed with some issues still unresolved: no understanding was reached on how to end the DPRK's nuclear program. The DPRK backed away from an earlier offer of a freeze and declared instead its intention to maintain a civilian nuclear energy industry. The DPRK continued to deny US allegations that it

has a uranium enrichment program. The DPRK blocked the adoption of a joint declaration calling for a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula by insisting on minor changes at the last minute, forcing China to issue a less formal statement.

For more information: http://www.cankor.ca

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We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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