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I. United States

1. US-DPRK Meeting

US Acting State Department Spokesman Glynn Davies ("REPORT ON STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING, FEB. 25," USIA Report, 2/25/97) said that US and DPRK officials will meet in New York on March 7. Among the bilateral issues the two sides will discuss is the possibility of opening liaison offices in each others' countries. This meeting is in addition to the previously announced joint US-ROK briefing of the DPRK on the four-party peace talks proposal scheduled for March 5, also in New York.

2. Past DPRK Defector Dies from Shooting

Reuters ("N.KOREAN DEFECTOR DIES OF GUNSHOT WOUNDS," Seoul, 2/25/97) and the Associated Press ("SHOT KOREAN DEFECTOR DIES," Seoul, 2/25/97) reported that past DPRK defector Li Il-nam, known in the ROK as Lee Han-yong, died on Tuesday after being shot on February 15. Doctors at the Cha Hospital in Bundang, a suburb south of Seoul, said they could not remove a bullet in Li's head because it was too deeply planted. He had been in a coma since the

shooting and had not been expected to survive. Lee, 36, was the nephew of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's former wife. At the time of the shooting, police asserted that the assailants were DPRK agents. Although not abandoning that theory, police have since suggested the shooting might have been the result of a failed business deal or a personal dispute. On Monday, police distributed 300,000 copies of a photo of a man suspected in

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3. ROK President Apologizes for Financial Scandal

Reuters ("S. KOREAN PRESIDENT APOLOGIZES FOR SCANDAL," Seoul, 2/25/97) reported that ROK President Kim Young-sam apologized on Tuesday for the Hanbo Steel Co. loans scandal. Three of Kim's closest aides have been arrested in the scandal, which has rocked the nation. Kim also said he was ashamed that his own son had become embroiled in the affair, and banished him from public life until Kim leaves office. Appearing chastened and solemn in a televised address on the fourth anniversary of his inauguration, Kim said he was in "agony and sorrow." "I, as the president, offer a sincere apology to the people over this incident," said white-haired Kim in the 18-minute address. "I have traveled a one-way road with self-restraint and abstinence in the past four years and am devastated and in despair," Kim said, referring to the anti-corruption drive he launched shortly after taking office in 1993. "Whatever the reasons, all these are the consequence of my lack of virtue. It is the responsibility of myself, the president," Kim said. Kim's speech action was considered a dramatic gesture of contrition to try to salvage his presidency. Although constitutionally barred from another term after his current term expires next February, Kim wants to retain power and place a protege as his successor to shield him in retirement. Following in a long Korean tradition, Kim's demeanor was a model of penitence: he kept his gaze low, his voice hushed and his manner grave. The spectacle of a once-popular president begging forgiveness drew some public sympathy, but little forgiveness. Kim's approval rating, which once hovered above 90 percent, has dropped to under 20 percent, according to a survey out last week, and reported reactions after the speech indicated no significant changes in this mood.

The Associated Press ("S. KOREA PRESIDENT APOLOGIZES," Seoul, 2/25/97) also reported that, following President Kim Young-sam's nationally televised apology for the Hanbo loan scandal, all twelve of Kim's senior secretaries and key leaders of the governing New Korea Party offered to resign. Cabinet members were also expected to offer their resignations. Information Minister Oh In-hwan said the president would reorganize his government. The report also noted that Kim moved against his son, 38-year-old Kim Hyun-chul, even though prosecutors have already questioned and cleared the younger Kim. The president said in his speech that although his son was legally cleared in the scandal, he felt "moral responsibility" and will order him to suspend all "social activity." "As other fathers in this world, I consider my son's fault to be my own," Kim said. The ROK's national Yonhap news agency said Kim Hyun-chul will be sent abroad for study.

4. DPRK Food Situation

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("U.N. FOOD AGENCY HEAD PLANS VISIT TO N. KOREA IN MARCH," Rome, 2/25/97) reported that Catherine Bertini, the head of the UN World Food Program, will visit the DPRK next month in an effort to focus international attention on the country's food needs. During the four-day visit, beginning March 15, Bertini will meet with officials and visit areas battered by floods over the past two years that destroyed 2 million metric tons of grain, the Rome-based agency said Tuesday. The agency appealed two weeks ago for US$41.6 million in emergency food aid, saying the target represents only a fraction of total food needs. Bertini will be one of the highest-level relief officials ever to visit the DPRK. "I think it's critical to know there are 24 million people in this country and that every one of them has over the last few years received less and less food," Bertini said in a press release.

5. ROK Lifts DPRK Travel Ban

The Associated Press ("S. KOREANS ALLOWED INTO N. KOREA," Seoul, 2/25/97) reported that the ROK has lifted its five-month ban on travel to the DPRK. The ROK conglomerate Daewoo announced that three of its executives arrived in the DPRK from Beijing on Tuesday to resume supervisory work at a joint-venture factory south of Pyongyang. The US$10 million factory, the first of its kind for the rival Koreas, has been producing clothes and bags since 1996 for export to third countries. The Daewoo executives had not been in the country since the beginning of the submarine incursion incident last September.

II. Republic of Korea

1. Nuclear Site Survey Team

The ROK Office of Planning for the Light Water Reactor Project said yesterday that a KEDO site survey team from the will start its seventh mission at a candidate reactor construction site in the DPRK beginning March 1. This trip will mark the first visit for a survey team to the DPRK since the submarine incursion incident. The ROK government called for additional safety guarantees from the DPRK, given the volatile situation facing the Korean peninsula. Consequently, Pyongyang promised that it would keep its duties in accordance with the protocol on consular protection, also guaranteeing the safety of visiting reactor experts. Although the DPRK has boycotted dialogue with the ROK government, it has called for an early resumption of the reactor project, reflecting its dire need for energy sources. The survey team will fly to Pyongyang via Beijing and travel by railroad to the candidate reactor construction site of Sinpo. They will also conduct "boring work" for five months along with other on-site testing, including seismic topography and hydro-geological investigation. So far, KEDO has dispatched six site survey missions comprising officials and experts from the ROK, Japan and the US, from Aug. 15, 1995 to July 30, 1996. (Korea Times, "KEDO TO START 7TH SURVEY ON NK N-REACTOR SITE MAR.1," 02/25/97)

2. ROK President Apologizes for Financial Scandal

ROK President Kim Young-sam made a public apology to the nation, admitting his responsibility as the chief executive for the loans-for-kickback scandal involving the Hanbo business group and his close deputies. "I don't know how to heal the wound in the peoples' hearts caused by this case. I cannot even hold my head up for the scam, in which senior politicians of the ruling and opposition parties and my close deputies had been involved," Kim said in a nationally televised address yesterday on the fourth anniversary of his inauguration. Kim also apologized for that fact that his second son Hyon-chol has been cited as the key figure who pressured banks to extend huge loans to the debt-ridden conglomerate, "even if the allegation of influence-peddling has not yet been

verified." The president promised to hold public officials accountable if they are found to have committed administrative and policy mistakes in allowing the Hanbo group to build the Tangjin steel mill, whose economic feasibility was in doubt. Kim pledged to "recruit clean and competent figures," indicating a reshuffle of his Cabinet and ruling party. Lamenting that political corruption and politico-business collusion are still deep-rooted in some quarters of Korean society, Kim said his government will revise the election and political fund laws if necessary and accelerate sweeping reforms in the nation's banking industry. In addition to the Hanbo scandal, Kim also apologized for the ruling camp's railroading of the labor reform bills last December and stressed the need to ensure national security at all costs especially in the wake of Hwang Jang-yop's defection. (Korea Herald, "KIM APOLOGIZES TO NATION FOR HANBO SCANDAL," Han Dong-soo, Seoul, 02/25/97)

3. ROK Bans Foreign Fishing Vessels

Operations by foreign fishing vessels in the portions of the East Sea and the West Sea that neighbor the DPRK as well as in certain areas of the Straits of Korea, including the nation's 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone (EEZ) will be placed off limits by the EEZ Fishing Act, the Ministry of Maritime and Fisheries Affairs announced yesterday. The new law also stipulates that foreign fishing vessels operating in the territorial waters of the ROK will have to pay 1,000 won per each ship's tonnage in basic entry fees and additional charges in accordance with the catch of each type of fish. The establishment of the enforcement period of the new act will depend on the results of future negotiations on fisheries accord between the ROK and Japan as well as the PRC. The limits on entry to the East Sea and the West Sea are mainly due to security reasons. The banned areas of the Straits of Korea are due to its importance as a sea route. (Joong Ang Ilbo, "FOREIGN FISHING VESSELS TO BE BANNED IN PARTS OF NATION'S TERRITORIAL WATERS," 02/25/97)

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

Produced by the Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development.

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