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I. United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("U.S. WANTS N. KOREA REPLY ON NUKE TALKS BY FEB. - PAPER", 2005-01-06) reported that the US is setting a deadline of early February for a reply from the DPRK on whether the DPRK will return to six-party talks on its nuclear arms program, a Japanese newspaper said on Thursday. If Pyongyang does not reply positively by the time President Bush gives his State of the Union address, the US will prepare to bring the matter to the U.N. Security Council, the conservative Sankei Shimbun said, quoting an unidentified diplomatic source familiar with the talks.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap ("U.S. SEEKS POLITICAL, DIPLOMATIC END TO PYONGYANG NUKES: POWELL", 2005-0-06) reported that Washington will seek a political and diplomatic settlement to the DPRK's nuclear ambitions during President George W. Bush's second term in office, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said Thursday. Speaking to the ROK's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon at a meeting of world leaders to organize help for victims of the December 26 tsunami, Powell stressed that the US did not have hostile intent towards Pyongyang.

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3. US, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Kyodo News ("MACHIMURA, POWELL AGREE ON NEED TO RESUME 6-WAY TALKS", 2005-01-06) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and US Secretary of State Colin Powell agreed Thursday that the six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear programs should be resumed as soon as possible, a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said. On the six-way talks, the two shared the view that the DPRK was unwilling to join the talks before seeing changes in key personnel in the US government linked to the inauguration of US President George W. Bush for his second term on Jan. 20.

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4. PRC, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Times ("BEIJING BACKS SEOUL'S NUCLEAR STANCE", None) reported that ROK officials attached special significance to PRC Premier Wen Jiabao's remark in Jakarta on Wednesday in which he praised Seoul's approach toward the DPRK nuclear issue, saying it has Beijing's "full support."

Suggesting closer bilateral cooperation, Premier Wen also said Seoul's "peace and prosperity" policy was "essential" to both peace on the Korean peninsula and the success of the six-party talks.

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5. IAEA on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("ELBARADEI SAYS N. KOREA NUKE CRISIS GETTING WORSE", 2005-01-06) reported that the crisis caused by the DPRK's refusal to abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions is deepening and needs to be resolved as soon as possible, the head of the UN nuclear watchdog said Wednesday. "This has been a pending issue for 12 years, and frankly it is getting worse," International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Mohamed ElBaradei told Reuters in an interview. "We need to address the whole question and bring it to a resolution," he said. "I would certainly hope that by the end of the year we should be there."

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6. US Delegation to the DPRK

Korea Times ("US RIGHTS ACT SPONSOR HEADS TO NORTH KOREA", 2005-01-06) reported that a US lawmaker who sponsored the controversial North Korean Human Rights Act will visit Pyongyang on Saturday, aides announced Thursday, declining to elaborate on the purpose of his trip. Rep. Tom Lantos, a California Democrat, will spend four days in the DPRK and meet with several ranking officials, a legislative assistant said. The aide said he plans discussions on "issues of mutual concern" but did not confirm if human rights will be on his agenda.

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7. DPRK Economic Reforms

Financial Times ("PYONGYANG REACHES OUT TO 'INVISIBLE HAND'", 2005-01-06) reported that the invisible hand of the free market is slowly starting to guide the DPRK economy, although Kim Jong-il's iron fist still has a tight grip around it. Following more than two years of economic experimentation, with mixed results, it appears Mr Kim's cash-strapped regime is now ready to let a little more capitalism into the DPRK. Restaurants and computer cafés are springing up in Pyongyang, and farmers will soon be allowed to grow more food for their families. "North Korea is following the former Chinese path, focused on increasing productivity," says Kil Jeong-woo, head of the Unification Research Institute at the ROK's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper. "They are heading in the right direction towards a more market-based economy, but progress is slow."

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8. DPRK Military Forces

Kyodo News ("SATELLITE PHOTOS SHOW OUTDATED N. KOREAN MILITARY FORCES", 2005-0-06) reported that a US environmental group unveiled Wednesday some 100 commercial satellite photos of DPRK defense, nuclear and other facilities taken over the past two to three years, concluding that its conventional military weapons are outdated and do not pose a threat to the US and ROK. "From what has been seen of North Korea's capability, certainly not a threat to the United States...not much of a threat to South Korea," Thomas Cochran, the nuclear program director of the Natural Resources Defense Council, said in releasing the photos at a press conference. Cochran also

said the photos suggested that there is no need for nuclear weapons, especially the earth-penetrating bunker busters being developed by the US, to remove targets, adding that the DPRK can be dealt with using conventional weapons.

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9. DPRK Energy Supply

Financial Times ("AMINEX IN NORTH KOREA DEAL", 2005-01-06) reported that Aminex, the oil and gas exploration company, has agreed to buy 10 per cent of Kobril, the DPRK's state-controlled natural resources company. The deal marks a rare foray for a western business into the DPRK and reflects the country's growing desire to develop its oil, gas and mining assets. Aminex said Kobril was the DPRK's "vehicle for international co-operation in the development of many areas of natural resources, including not only oil and gas but also gold, coal, iron ore and coal-bed methane".

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10. DPRK Video

JoongAng Ilbo ("VIDEO DETAILS LIFE IN NORTH KOREA", 2005-01-06) reported that the JoongAng Ilbo obtained yesterday a 90-minute video tape of DPRK citizens in Cheongjin, a city of about 660,000 people on the eastern coast not far from the Russian-PRC border. Allegedly filmed by a DPRK army officer assigned to border patrol, the video includes the rare scenes of DPRK criminal trials. The tape includes footage of young orphans and a detention center for repatriated defectors.

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11. DPRK Ferry to Japan

Kyodo News ("N. KOREAN FERRY CALLS OFF JAPAN PORT CALL DUE TO INSURANCE PROBLEM", 2005-01-06) reported that a DPRK ferry that has been under increased Japanese scrutiny has called off its port call planned for this month in Niigata due to a problem related to obtaining insurance, a group of pro-Pyongyang Korean residents in Japan said Thursday. The port call was canceled because it is taking the owner of the Mangyongbong-92 time to take out internationally credible indemnity insurance, as required by the Niigata prefectural government, according to the Niigata branch of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, called Chongryon.

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12. Japan-DPRK World Cup Qualifier

Kyodo News ("JAPAN CAUTIONS CITIZENS TRAVELING TO N. KOREA FOR JUNE SOCCER MATCH", 2005-01-06) reported that the government on Thursday again cautioned Japanese soccer fans planning to visit DPRK for a Japan-DPRK World Cup qualifier match as Japan does not have diplomatic representation there. The Foreign Ministry, in maintaining its earlier advisory for caution when going to the DPRK, issued an additional notice because it expects a number of Japanese to travel to watch the soccer match scheduled in Pyongyang in June.

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13. DPRK Defectors in the ROK

Korea Times ("NK DEFECTORS TO MEET CIVILIAN HELPERS", 2005-01-06) reported that civilians have taken over police officers' role of helping DPRK defectors adjust to the ROK, the Seoul government said Thursday. With 140 DPRK defectors completing the three-month adjustment course at Hanawon today as a start, the government's new policy will put into practice, the Unification Ministry said. On average, two ROK helpers will be assigned to one family of DPRK defectors over a six-month period to help them with tasks from shopping to registering for school, the officials said.

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14. ROK on DPRK Abductees

International Herald Tribune ("ISSUE OF ABDUCTEES HEATS UP IN S. KOREA", 2005-01-06) reported that in an acrimonious public debate in the National Assembly, the government was harshly criticized Thursday for its inaction on ROK citizens abducted by the DPRK, contrasting Seoul's stance with Tokyo's aggressive policies on the issue. "The Japanese prime minister's negotiations with Kim Jong Il have borne fruit," said opposition leader Park Geun Hye, on moves made by Tokyo since 2002 to repatriate Japanese abductees or their remains. "We are utterly ashamed at this difference, and we urge the government and various parties to bring South Korean abductees home."

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15. Reverend Kim Abduction Issue

Donga Ilbo ("REV. KIM DONG-SIK ALLEGEDLY DIED IN 2001 IN NK", 2005-01-06) reported that on January 6, the Citizen's Coalition for Human Rights of Abductees and North Korean Defectors asserted that Rev. Kim Dong-sik, who was abducted in January 2000 while assisting DPRK defectors in Yanji, PRC, is likely to have died in the DPRK. Kim was kidnapped by DPRK agents who pretended to be defectors.

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16. Vietnam on DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("VIETNAM WANTS INTER-KOREAN CONSENSUS ON DEFECTORS: AMBASSADOR", 2005-01-06) reported that faced with a growing number of DPRK defectors illegally crossing over its border, Vietnam wants the ROK and DPRK to step forward and reach an agreement on handling the defectors, its envoy in Seoul said Thursday. "Vietnam wants to maintain its friendly relationship with both South and North Korea, and we hope the two Korean governments can find a good way to solve the (DPRK defector) issue," Duong Chinh Thuc, ambassador of Vietnam in Seoul, said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency.

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17. ROK Foreign Ministry Reshuffle

Yonhap ("FOREIGN MINISTRY REPLACES DEPUTY MINISTER", 2005-01-06) reported that the Foreign Ministry announced a reshuffle on Thursday that affects three high-level posts, including the

deputy minister that serves as the country's chief negotiator in six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear program.

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18. USFK Tsunami Aid

Chosun Ilbo ("USFK TO SEND 370 MEN, 8 CHOPPERS TO SOUTH ASIA", 2005-01-06) reported that focusing on medical, air and logistical staff, the US Forces Korea (USFK) will dispatch 370 men and eight helicopters to South Asia to assist in post-tsunami reconstruction efforts. This is more than three times the number of personnel who were initially expected to go. USFK spokeswoman Col. MaryAnn Cumming said Thursday that the decision to send the troops was made following close consultations with the ROK government, and that the date of their departure has yet to be decided.

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19. ROK Historical Revisionism

Chosun Ilbo ("MILITARY BEGINS INVESTIGATIONS INTO ITS PAST", 2005-01-06) reported that the Defense Minister said Thursday that in order to alleviate citizen suspicions concerning the military's modern history, it has selected five subjects of investigation, including the Samcheong Re-education Program of the early 1980s, and composed a set of taskforces that have launched investigations into the matters. According to the Defense Ministry, the five taskforces are the "Samcheong Re-education Program" compensation team, the "Nokhwa Project" (which forced student activists into early conscription and turned them into snitches during the early 1980s) investigation team, the "Silmi Island Incident" investigation team, the special investigation team into suspicious deaths, and the final team probing civilian deaths during the Korean War. A Defense Ministry official said that in order to regain public trust in the military, it had started preliminary investigations focusing on the five taskforces.

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20. Japan UNSC Bid

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, INDIA EYE U.N. REFORM, WORDING DIFFERS OVER VETO POWER", 2005-01-06) reported that Japan and India agreed Thursday to continue cooperating in their bids to become permanent members of the UN Security Council, but the wording used in the foreign ministers' meeting appeared to suggest some differences in their approach over veto power in the possible reforms. Japan wants possible new members to have veto rights, and the official said there is no change in Japan's position.

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21. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Agence France-Presse ("TOKYO WAR SHRINE AT CENTER OF ROW WITH CHINA UNDER CYBER ATTACK", 2005-01-06) reported that a Tokyo war shrine at the center of a row with Beijing has come under intense cyber attack, with its website barraged by e-mails believed to come from the PRC, a shrine official said. The Yasukuni Shrine is dedicated to Japan's war dead, including several convicted war criminals. The website started seeing attacks after Koizumi visited in August 2001, a Yasukuni official said. The attacks became heavier last September, sometimes reaching 900,000

times a minute, shutting down the site five times in 2004.

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22. Asian Energy Security

Kyodo News ("STABLE OIL PRICES EYED FOR ENERGY SECURITY IN ASIA", 2005-01-06) reported that Ministers from oil producing and consuming countries agreed Thursday to work for the stabilization of international crude oil prices to ensure energy security in the rapidly growing Asian region, Japanese officials said. The accord came at the first meeting between four Asian oil consuming countries -- the PRC, India, Japan and ROK -- and eight oil producing nations, including Saudi Arabia, as well as three organizations such as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. The oil consuming nations asked the oil producers to supply enough oil to meet demand from consumers, the Japanese officials said.

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23. Sino - Japanese Tsunami Aid

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, CHINA TO COOPERATE FURTHER IN TSUNAMI DISASTER RELIEF", 2005-01-06) reported that Japan and the PRC agreed Thursday to step up cooperation in disaster relief as their leaders met on the sidelines of an emergency summit in Jakarta following the Dec. 26 earthquake and tsunamis across the Indian Ocean, Japanese officials said. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met shortly during a break at the summit, they said. "We hope to strengthen bilateral cooperation also in the field of disaster relief," Wen was quoted by the officials as telling Koizumi.

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24. PRC Tsunami Aid

Los Angeles Times ("CHINA STEPS UP TO ROLE OF RISING REGIONAL LEADER", 2005-01-06) reported that the PRC's presence in the global effort to aid tsunami victims is hard to miss here. Its team, which includes 16 emergency doctors, is larger than that of any other foreign country on the base and has made frequent runs to remote villages, treating about 1,000 victims a day. The PRC's monetary pledge has topped \$63 million, its largest peacetime overseas humanitarian donation. But others say that there is another reason that the PRC is taking such an active role: As a rising regional power, it is eager to recast itself as a kinder and gentler neighbor.

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25. PRC - US on Anti-Secession Law

Agence France Presse ("US, CHINA HOLD TALKS ON PLANNED LAW BARRING TAIWAN'S INDEPENDENCE", 2005-01-06) reported that the US and PRC held their first high-level talks on Beijing's proposed law aimed at preventing Taiwan from becoming independent. US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage met PRC Minister of Taiwan Affairs Chen Yunlin at the State Department and the "anti-secession" law was among the cross strait issues discussed, officials said.

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26. PRC Anti-Secession Law

Asia Pulse ("TAIWAN TO MONITOR BEIJING-WASHINGTON TALKS ON ANTI-SECESSION LAW", 2005-01-06) reported that an official of the Cabinet-level Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) said Wednesday that the government will closely monitor developments in the PRC's communications with the US about its plan to enact an anti-secession law. The mainland's plan to promulgate an anti-secession law is not only a tremendous provocation of Taiwan but also a unilateral move to change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, Chiu told reporters.

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27. PRC Economic Development

The Associated Press ("OFFICIAL: CHINA DEVELOPMENT THREATENED", 2005-01-06) reported that the PRC's growing reliance on imported oil, pollution and looming water shortages pose the major threats to its economic development, a senior World Bank official said Thursday. The PRC is now the world's second largest oil importer, and it suffers from poor efficiency in turning oil into economic output - just 1/7 that of Japan, Huang said at a seminar organized by Singapore's Institute for Southeast Asian Studies. If the PRC "cannot improve in terms of its efficiency the cost will be unbearable," Huang said.

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28. PRC Population

The Associated Press ("CHINA POPULATION REACHES 1.3 BILLION MARK", 2005-01-06) reported that a baby boy delivered in a Beijing maternity ward early Thursday became the PRC's 1.3 billionth citizen, the government said, using the occasion to tout its contentious one-child policy. The PRC would have reached 1.3 billion citizens four years earlier if it weren't for its family planning policy, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

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