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1. US on Six Party Talks

Yonhap News ("U.S. WON'T COMMENT ON SUPPLYING FUEL OIL TO NORTH KOREA", 2007-0--05) reported that the U.S. State Department declined to comment on press reports that the DPRK indicated its willingness to freeze its nuclear facilities and stressed again that Washington needs to see action when nuclear talks resume later this week. Department spokesman Sean McCormack would not go into details about the six-party negotiations, which reopen in Beijing on Thursday. "We need to translate," he told reporters instead. "Now the specific task for this round of talks is to translate the good work that's been done...into agreement and action."

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2. US Fiscal Budget 2008 on DPRK

Yonhap News ("U.S. SEES FINISHING NORTH KOREA DENUCLEARIZATION TALKS BY EARLY 2008", 2007-02-05) reported that the US Fiscal Year 2008 budget targets improving ROK workers' right to strike next year after concluding the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) this year, and also aims at development of environmental cooperation mechanism (ECMs) with Seoul. Assuming that the nuclear talks continue throughout 2007, the goal for FY 2008 is to "complete nuclear-related dismantlement negotiations with North Korea by early calendar year 2008," the summary said. In FY 2007, the U.S. hopes to "further refine the operational requirements for dismantling the DPRK's nuclear program and its associated dismantlement verification regime and, if appropriate, take steps to secure necessary long-lead critical items." Further, the U.S. would continue to monitor chemical transactions by the North and potential violators of a U.N. Security Council resolution that bans transfer in and out of Pyongyang of items and technology related to weapons of mass destruction.

(return to top) Korea Times ("NEW US BUDGET ALLOCATES $2 MILLION IN AID TO NORTH KOREA", 2007-02-05) reported that the U.S. fiscal year 2008 budget request released Monday allocates $2 million in economic support for the DPRK in recognition of the country's special conditions. However, the budget request made by the U.S. State Department calls for additional funding to the Treasury Department to financially pressure regimes like Pyongyang. The economic aid fund recognizes that under special economic, political or security conditions, it is in the U.S. national interest to provide economic assistance. While focused primarily on rebuilding and development, the fund is also spent on health services, in countries in transition to democracy, and to finance economic stabilization programs. Previous budgets in the fiscal year 2006 and 2007 did not include DPRK-specific support funds. (return to top)

3. Japan on DPRK Energy Aid

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA ENERGY AID NOT YET BROACHED", 2007-02-06) reported that the U.S. and Japan have not discussed providing energy aid to the DPRK ahead of talks aimed at getting the isolated communist nation to abandon its nuclear program, officials from the two countries said Tuesday. Despite reports that the DPRK plans to demand crude oil in exchange for shutting down a nuclear reactor and allowing limited inspections, Christopher Hill, the chief U.S. envoy to the six-party talks that begin Thursday in Beijing, said in Tokyo that negotiators from Pyongyang had not raised the issue.Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso also said the issue had not been discussed, and said Japan had no plans to provide energy aid. "There has been no progress on nuclear or abduction issues, and it is selfish (for North Korea) to only ask for energy support without making any concessions," he said.

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4. US-ROK Security Alliance

Yonhap ("SEOUL, WASHINGTON SET FOR SPI MEETING ON U.S. TROOP RELOCATION, ROLE OF U.N. COMMAND", 2007-02-06) reported that the ROK and the US will hold a new round of military talks in Seoul this week on plans to relocate US troops here to a base south of Seoul and the future role of the United Nations Command (UNC). The two-day talks beginning Wednesday are the 11th in the Security Policy Initiative (SPI), a working-level consultation channel between the allies to fine-tune their military policies.

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5. US-Japan Security Alliance

Kyodo ("LDP OKS BILLS FOR REALIGNING U.S. FORCES, FACILITIES AGENCY", 2007-02-06) reported that the Japanese government was given formal approval by the ruling party to submit to the ongoing Diet session bills to promote the realignment of US forces in Japan and abolish the scandal-tainted defense facilities agency, party lawmakers said. Under the bill for 10-year legislation to promote the US military realignment, the government would provide subsidies to municipalities that host bases where the presence of US forces is expected to be greater under the realignment plan that Japan and the US finalized last May.

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6. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("JAPAN ASKS CHINA FOR 'ACCEPTABLE EXPLANATION' ON SHIP IN EEZ", 2007-02-06) reported that Japan has demanded that the PRC provide an "acceptable explanation" for a PRC ship that operated in an exclusive economic zone claimed by Japan, as it is not satisfied with the PRC's response on the issue, the top government spokesman said. "The Chinese side was basically just repeating its own stance regarding the Senkaku Islands and that is not something we can accept," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki said.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("CHINA WARNS JAPAN NOT TO 'SENSATIONALISE' ISLAND DISPUTE ", 2007-02-06) reported that the PRC has warned Japan against "sensationalising" research activities by a PRC vessel in disputed resource-rich waters, the foreign ministry in Beijing has said. "The Diaoyu islands have been Chinese soil since ancient times, and China has indisputable sovereignty over the area," a PRC official, unidentified, was quoted as telling the Japanese diplomat.
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7. PRC African Diplomacy

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU FORGES AHEAD WITH AFRICA DRIVE WITH PRETORIA TALKS", 2007-02-06) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao arrived in South Africa to cement ties with Beijing's key trading partner on the continent and a crucial ally in pushing the interests of the world's have-nots. The PRC leader is also due to announce a 2.6-million-dollar grant to support a homespun South African programme aimed at achieving more rapid and balanced economic growth.

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8. Sino-Russian Trade Relations

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIA TO DIVERSIFY EXPORTS TO CHINA - FIRST DEPUTY PM", 2007-02-06) reported that Russia plans to diversify its exports to the PRC by adding high-tech equipment to its traditional export commodities, oil and gas, Russia's first deputy prime minister said Friday. Dmitry Medvedev said: "To us it is extremely important to develop trade and economic cooperation in other areas, such as engineering products, IT, and other high-tech goods. These must change the structure of Russian exports to China and bring the volume of trade to a more adequate level."

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9. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN PRESIDENT SEES MILITARY BALANCE WITH CHINA SLIPPING", 2007-02-06) reported that the PRC's military strength is growing exponentially, making it imperative for rival Taiwan to upgrade its weaponry to maintain the military balance, Taiwan's president said. "This year, (China) will have the readiness to respond to an emergency military conflict. By 2010, it will be prepared to fight a large-scale war, and before 2015, it will achieve the decisive capability to win a war," President Chen Shui-bian said.

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10. PRC Media Control

The Associated Press ("CHINA TIGHTENS CONTROLS ON OWN MEDIA", 2007-02-06) reported that at a time when the PRC's government has granted the foreign media greater freedom, it is tightening controls on Chinese who write about politically sensitive or embarrassing topics, human rights activists and journalists say. International PEN, a writer's organization, said that local police prevented 20 Chinese writers from attending its international conference in Hong Kong over the weekend. The crackdown came just weeks after the government relaxed decades-old restrictions on foreign media, giving them greater freedom to report the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

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11. PRC Climate Change

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO KEEP RELYING ON DIRTY FUELS DESPITE GLOBAL WARMING", 2007-02-06) reported that the PRC said it had no plans to radically change its reliance on coal and other dirty fuels, as it insisted the responsibility for global warming rested with developed countries. In the first official PRC response to a stark UN report issued last week on climate change, foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu appeared to take aim at the US as she highlighted the importance of the Kyoto Protocol.

(return to top) BBC News ("CLIMATE CHANGE 'AFFECTING' CHINA", 2007-02-06) reported that at least 300,000 people in north-west PRC are short of drinking water because of unseasonably warm weather, which officials link to climate change. Parts of Shaanxi province face drought after January saw as little as 10% of average rainfall, state media say. Frozen lakes are melting and trees are blossoming in the capital Beijing as it experiences its warmest winter for 30 years, the China Daily reported. (return to top)

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