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I. United States

1. US - ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("ALLIES NEED SHARED GOALS FOR SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2005-02-08) reported that when President Roh Moo-hyun and US President George W. Bush over the weekend discussed the DPRK nuclear issue, they reaffirmed that the six-party talks should be resumed soon, and that there must be positive bilateral cooperation to make that happen. The positions of all parties involved, after all, remain unchanged. The gap between the ROK and the US has not narrowed. For the six-party talks not to fail again, that chasm between the ROK and the US must be narrowed first.

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2. PRC - US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Agence France-Presse ("US ENVOYS DISCUSS NORTH KOREA IN TALKS WITH CHINA", None) reported that two White House officials have visited Beijing to discuss the DPRK nuclear issue, a US diplomat said as momentum builds on persuading Pyongyang to attend another round of six-party talks. They were here "for discussions on a wide range of regional and international issues including the US desire to see progress on the six-party talks," a US embassy spokeswoman told AFP. They also discussed "the way forward in the second Bush administration to advance the goals of peace and stability in the region," she said.

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3. Japan, ROK, US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, S KOREA AGREE TO TALKS ON N KOREA WITH US", 2005-02-08) reported that Japan and the ROK agreed Tuesday to a plan to hold trilateral talks with the US on how best to resume the stalled six-nation talks on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, Japanese officials said, Kyodo news agency reported. Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura proposed the talks during a telephone conversation with ROK Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Ban Ki Moon, who supported the idea, according to Kyodo. Ban was quoted as telling Machimura that he will stress the need for Japan, ROK and the US to work closely toward that end when he meets with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice next week.

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4. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("REPORTS SAY N. KOREA UNDECIDED ON SIX-WAY TALKS", 2005-02-08) reported that the DPRK has not decided whether it will return to the six-way talks on its nuclear problem, because

US policy towards it still remains unclear, a Russian news agency quoted an unidentified DPRK diplomat in Beijing as saying. "So far, North Korea is undecided about whether it will agree to resume negotiations, because in his Feb. 2 State of the Union message ... Bush did not clearly specify Washington's position," the diplomat told Interfax. Pyongyang was using diplomatic channels to clarify the US position and "did not rule out a possible resumption of the talks by the end of February," said the source.

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5. Japan on Abductee Issue

Kyodo ("JAPAN TO COUNTER N. KOREA'S ABDUCTEE ASSERTION LATER THIS WEEK", 2005-0-08) reported that Tokyo's top spokesman said Tuesday that later this week Japan will counter the DPRK's assertion that Tokyo's findings on materials the DPRK provided as evidence of the fates of some Japanese abductees are fabricated. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda unveiled the plan, saying the Japanese public is calling for the government to impose economic sanctions on Pyongyang.

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6. DPRK on Abductee Issue

Yonhap ("N. KOREA ACCUSES JAPAN OF EVADING RESPONSIBILITY FOR COLONIAL RULE", 2005-02-08) reported that the DPRK repeated its criticism Tuesday that Japan took issue with the DPRK's abduction of its nationals to evade responsibility for Tokyo's harsh rule of the Korean Peninsula. "Though the abduction issue had already been settled between the DPRK and Japan, the right wing conservatives of Japan are still raising a hue and cry over it, and kicking up a frantic racket of confrontation with the DPRK," the DPRK's official news agency, KCNA, said in a commentary. "Lurking behind this row is a sinister aim to paint an assailant as a victim in a bid to evade their responsibility for the past crimes at any cost," the article said, referring to Japan's annexation of Korea from 1910-1945.

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7. Japan on Sanction Issue

Reuters ("JAPAN UNDER PRESSURE FOR SANCTIONS ON NORTH KOREA", 2005-02-08) reported that Japan's government came under pressure on Tuesday to impose economic sanctions on DPRK after it received a petition signed by five million people calling for punitive steps against the DPRK. Calls for economic sanctions grew after Pyongyang accused Tokyo last month of fabricating DNA test results on the remains of Japanese citizens abducted by the DPRK decades ago. "Mindful of their feelings, we have been negotiating. We must carry on negotiations tenaciously with dialogue and pressure," Koizumi told reporters after receiving the petition.

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8. Inter - Korean Economic Cooperation

The New York Times ("2 KOREAS FORGE ECONOMIC TIES TO EASE TENSIONS", 2005-02-08) reported that for the two Koreas, the opening of the DPRK's first economic zone is filled with real and symbolic significance, which was not lost on the many shoppers who snapped up pots to give to

relatives, friends and ROK citizens whose ancestral towns are in the DPRK. To many government officials and businessmen here, the opening of the economic zone represents a major step in further engaging the DPRK, which has carried out market reforms and established diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with many Western nations in recent years. That has put the ROK uncomfortably at odds with the Bush administration's policy of confrontation and isolation in its campaign to force the DPRK to abandon its nuclear program.

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9. DPRK on Maritime Borders

Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREA WARNS SOUTH KOREA OF DANGERS OF SEA BORDER DISPUTE", 2005-02-08) reported that the DPRK has issued a fresh warning to the ROK over what it claimed was the ROK's repeated intrusion into its waters, saying it was pushing the inter-Korean stand-off to a "touch-and-go" situation. Military tension was escalating in the Yellow Sea off the western coast due to the ROK's "premeditated provocative acts", said a press release carried by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency. "We warn the South Korean military authorities against acting rashly, mindful that if they persist in their reckless military provocations, it will cause unpredictable consequences," it said.

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10. DPRK on Investment from Abroad

Asia Pulse/Yonhap ("N. KOREA TO LEGISLATE ON INVESTMENTS FROM OVERSEAS KOREANS", 2005-02-08) reported that the DPRK is allegedly moving to legislate a special law meant to expedite investments from overseas Korean businesspeople. Cho Rong-je, vice chairman of the World-OKTA (Overseas Korean Traders Association), told reporters at his office in Seoul Tuesday that Pyongyang recently informed him of its move to enact a new law promoting investments from OKTA members and other overseas Koreans. "The North Korean government is very serious about luring investors from abroad through the legislation of a new special law," said Cho. "The new law is being pushed separately from the North's existing laws on foreigners' investments. It will also help promote inter-Korean economic cooperation," he said.

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11. DPRK Military

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN MILITARY LEADERS PLEDGE LOYALTY TO KIM JONG-IL", 2005-02-08) reported that the top brass of the DPRK military pledged their "absolute" loyalty to leader Kim Jong-il in a public gathering in Pyongyang Monday to celebrate his 63rd birthday, which falls on Feb. 16, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said. The top military brass, while praising Kim's leadership, also made a public pledge to safeguard socialism and the DPRK regime, it noted. They also stressed that leader Kim is devoted to reinforcing the military's combat strength.

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12. DPRK on ROK Defector

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG CLAIMS U.S. MILITARY CAUSED S. KOREAN TO DEFECT", 2005-02-08) reported that a ROK man who the DPRK claimed defected to the DPRK left his country due to a

conflict with his American superiors at the US military, the DPRK's official television station reported Tuesday. In late December, the DPRK said Kim Ki-ho, 59, who once worked for US military bases in the ROK defected to the DPRK to seek asylum.

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13. Russo - DPRK Cultural Exchange

ITAR-TASS ("EXHIBITION DEVOTED TO KIM JONG IL OPENS IN PYONGYANG", 2005-02-08) reported that an exhibition of paintings depicting the activity of DPRK leader Kim Jong Il has opened at Pyongyang's International Center of Culture. It is timed for the 63rd birthday of the leader, which is marked here as the nation's major holiday. The exhibition shows about 60 pictures in the Socialist Realism genre depicting different periods of Kim Jong Il's activity.

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14. Japan - DPRK World Cup Match

Kyodo ("SPECTATORS QUEUE FOR JAPAN-N KOREA FOOTBALL MATCH TICKETS", 2005-02-08) reported that scores of spectators with non-reserved seats for Wednesday's World Cup qualifying match between Japan and DPRK arrived Tuesday at Saitama Stadium amid cold rain to line up for seats. Some 2,000 police officers and 1,400 private security guards will be mobilized at the venue and its environs Wednesday to avoid any mishaps, particularly considering the strained ties between Japan and the DPRK.

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15. Japan Space Program

The Associated Press ("JAPAN TO PUT SATELLITE IN ORBIT", 2005-02-08) reported that grounded for more than a year, Japan's space agency has begun the countdown to launch its domestically built H2-A rocket later this month - a high-stakes move officials hope will reopen the way for everything from putting spy satellites in orbit to moving ahead with ambitious scientific missions. The launch, scheduled for Feb. 24, is crucial to Japan's space program.

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16. Russo - Japanese Territorial Dispute

The Japan Times ("EX-RESIDENTS WANT RUSSIAN-HELD ISLES BACK", 2005-02-08) reported that Japanese who used to live on the islands of Shikotan, Kunashiri and Etorofu and the Habomai islets will only accept the total return of the territories from Russia, not just two of the islands as Moscow is proposing, according to Toshio Koizumi, chairman of a group of former islanders. "Our principle to collectively seek the return of the four islands that originally belonged to Japan is unshakable," Koizumi said in an interview. "Any proposal other than a return of all four islands cannot be accepted." Koizumi added that the four Russian-held islands off Hokkaido do not necessarily have to be returned at the same time if Moscow first recognizes Japan's sovereignty over all four.

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17. ROK - Japanese Territorial Dispute

Korea Herald ("GOVERNOR PROTESTS TO JAPAN OVER DOKDO", 2005-02-08) reported that North Gyeongsang Governor Lee Eui-geun sent a written protest to Sumita Nobuyoshi, governor of Shimane Prefecture, regarding the prefecture's designation of Feb. 22 as Takeshima Day, celebrating the 100th anniversary and airing TV commercials promoting Dokdo, or Takeshima, as belonging to Japan. The tiny rocky island in East Sea, which has been effectively under the control of the ROK, has long been the subject of a dispute over territorial sovereignty between the the two countries.

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18. Russia Energy Auction

Moscow Times ("38 SIBERIAN OIL AND GAS FIELDS SLATED FOR AUCTION", 2005-02-08) reported that the government has unveiled a preliminary list of eastern Siberian oil and gas fields that it wants to auction off this year for exploration and development. The list includes 38 fields and exploration blocks, some of which must be approved by either the Defense Ministry or regional authorities or both, an official in the Natural Resources Ministry said Monday. Analysts, however, said that the move itself indicates that the government is pushing forward with a long-delayed plan to build a natural gas pipeline from eastern Siberia to supply the PRC, ROK and other Asian markets.

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19. PRC Arms Purchase

The Associated Press ("CHINA STOCKS ARSENAL WITH RUSSIA WEAPONS", 2005-02-08) reported that blocked from buying US and European arms, Beijing has stocked its arsenal with Russian-made supersonic fighters and other high-tech weapons, and is investing in the development of its own cruise missiles. That doesn't leave much on Beijing's wish list, said Robert Karniol, the Asia-Pacific editor for Jane's Defense Weekly. "The Chinese have been getting, largely from the Russians, pretty well everything that they're interested in," Karniol said.

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20. US on PRC Missile Tech Exports

The Associated Press ("BOLTON VOWS MOVE TO BLOCK ARMS TECHNOLOGY", 2005-02-08) reported that the Bush administration lashed out at the PRC before an international audience on Monday for not stopping its munitions companies from selling missile technology to Iran and other rogue states. Speaking to a conference in Tokyo sponsored by Japan, Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton said the Bush administration would move aggressively to suspend business with companies that provide sensitive weapons technology to Iran and other countries seeking to build weapons of mass destruction. Last year, he said, PRC companies were cited for having provided ballistic missile technology to Iran, Pakistan, the DPRK and Libya.

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21. US on PRC Human Rights

Agence France Presse ("US SAYS NO DECISION YET ON CHINA RESOLUTION AT UN HUMAN RIGHTS MEETING", 2005-02-08) reported that the US said no decision had been made on whether to back a UN resolution on the PRC's human rights record, despite an apparent new willingness by Beijing to consider more lenient treatment for political prisoners. "We have not made a decision regarding tabling a China specific resolution at the upcoming UN High Commission for Human Rights meeting in Geneva (in March)," a US embassy spokeswoman told AFP. "We are aware of the comments by the Dui Hua Foundation of the possible clemency of political prisoners. We have seen the list passed by the Chinese government to the Dui Hua Foundation, but we have no comment at this time."

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22. PRC Nuclear Power

Financial Times ("CHINA SET TO PIONEER MELTDOWN-PROOF REACTOR AND TAKE LEAD IN NUCLEAR RACE", 2005-02-08) reported that the PRC is poised to develop the world's first commercially operated "pebble bed" nuclear reactor after a PRC energy consortium chose a site in the eastern province of Shandong to build a 195MW gas-cooled power plant. If successfully commercialized, the pebble bed reactor would be the first radically new reactor design for several decades. It would push the PRC to the forefront of development of a technology that researchers claim offers a new "meltdown-proof" alternative to standard water-cooled nuclear power stations.

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23. PRC Trade Surplus

The Associated Press ("CHINA REPORTS \$6.5 BILLION TRADE SURPLUS", 2005-02-08) reported that the PRC's exports surged 42.2 percent in January from the same period a year earlier, pushing the country's trade surplus to \$6.5 billion for the month, the government said Tuesday. The PRC has reported trade surpluses for nine consecutive months. It recorded a \$30 million trade deficit in January 2004.

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24. Nonproliferation Workshop in Tokyo

Agence France Presse ("NUCLEAR EXPERTS DISCUSS WAYS TO PUNISH NATION FOR DESERTING", 2005-02-08) reported that nuclear experts and diplomats from 20 nations looked Tuesday at ways to punish countries deserting the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, at the end of a two-day meeting here on strengthening the pact. "Some participants argued we should increase the costs of withdrawal for a deserting country" by requiring them to return materials and equipment received for peaceful use of atomic power upon joining the treaty, a Japanese government official said. Other ideas discussed included holding an emergency general meeting to step up international pressure on a runaway nation and a ban on pullout by a country which has failed to abide by the pact, the official said.

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