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1. DPRK on Nuclear Status

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA TOUTS FIRST-STRIKE CAPABILITY ", 2006-03-21) reported that the DPRK suggested Tuesday it had the ability to launch a pre-emptive attack on the US, according to the DPRK's official news agency. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said the DPRK had built atomic weapons to counter the US nuclear threat. "As we declared, our strong revolutionary might put in place all measures to counter possible U.S. pre-emptive strike," the spokesman said, according to the Korean Central News Agency. "Pre-emptive strike is not the monopoly of the United States." The DPRK's spokesman said it would be a "wise" step for the US to cooperate on nuclear issues with the DPRK in the same way it does with India.

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2. Kim Dae-jung on Six Party Talks

Korea Times ("KIM DAE-JUNG CALLS FOR US INITIATIVE IN 6-WAY TALKS", 2006-03-21) reported that former President Kim Dae-jung said on Tuesday that the US needs to present a proposal to answer the DPRK's promise of scrapping its nuclear weapons programs. ``North Korea has already declared that it will abandon its nuclear programs and Pyongyang even showed its intention to allow Washington to inspect (its nuclear sites),'' Kim said during a special lecture at Yeungnam University in Taegu. ``Now it's time for Washington to present its own initiative and the six-party talks should search ways to jointly guarantee how to implement the U.S. proposal,'' he said. Kim said the US should lift its sanctions on Pyongyang while guaranteeing the DPRK's security.

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3. Inter-Korean Reunion Sessions

Korea Times ("TENSIONS ARISE OVER NK'S PRESS CENSORSHIP ", 2006-03-21) reported that tensions have mounted between the DPRK authorities and ROK joint press corps covering the family reunion events here Tuesday over what the ROK journalists consider as the DPRK's censorship of the press. The friction first began Monday, when some of the DPRK officials who were present at the reunion sessions protested ROK broadcast journalists' description of a DPR Korean as an ``abductee.'' The discord became exacerbated on Tuesday as the DPRK demanded that journalists of the two broadcasting stations stay away from reunion sessions. In protest, members of the joint press corps refused to report on the events altogether, which caused a delay in the second session of reunions scheduled in the morning.

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4. UN on DPRK Aid Package

Yonhap News ("UN PREPARING ECONOMIC PACKAGE FOR N. KOREA", 2006-03-21) reported that the UN is working to help the world prepare an economic package for the DPRK and help resolve the dispute over the state's nuclear arms program, a former deputy chief of the world body said Tuesday. ``The United Nations has concentrated on helping the international community to prepare an economic package (for the North) that could help resolve the nuclear issue,'' Maurice Strong, former vice secretary general of the UN, said in a special lecture here. The economic package, according to Strong, would at least include fuel for the DPRK, but the aid would not come directly from the UN. The former UN envoy said the DPRK would prefer to deal with international donors individually.

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5. DPRK Defector Repatriated

Chosun Ilbo ("CHINA REPATRIATES ANOTHER N.KOREAN REFUGEE ", 2006-03-21) reported that a DPRK defector who repeatedly sought shelter in Korean schools in the PRC last December was deported to the DPRK on Feb. 25, diplomats said Tuesday. A ROK diplomat said Seoul's Embassy was given the news by the PRC Foreign Ministry and registered its protest. Lee Chun-shil had entered the Korean school in the Dalian area on Nov. 31 last year and asked school administrators for shelter, but to no avail.

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6. Thai PM on DPRK Refugees

Chosun Ilbo ("THAI PM CALLS FOR CRACKDOWN ON N.KOREAN REFUGEES ", 2006-03-21) reported that Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has called on local authorities in Thai border provinces to take stricter measures against an influx of refugees from the DPRK, the Bangkok Post reported Tuesday. The paper reported defection attempts from the DPRK are on the rise, with 212 DPR Koreans arrested in Thailand since 2004.

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7. DPRK on Macau Abductee

Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA SAYS IT HAS NO KNOWLEDGE OF ALLEGED KIDNAPPING OF MACAU WOMAN", 2006-03-21) reported that the DPRK on Tuesday denied a Japanese newspaper report that its agents abducted a woman from Macau, calling it a Japanese smear campaign against the country. Japan's Sankei newspaper on Monday quoted Choi Un-hee, a ROK actress who escaped to the ROK years after being kidnapped to the DPRK, as saying she had met an abductee from Macau many times in the DPRK.

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8. DPRK Human Rights Conference

Chosun Ilbo ("EU CAPITAL SEES MAJOR MEET ON N.KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS ", 2006-03-21) reported that the European Union capital Brussels will see a major conference on human rights in

the DPRK starting Wednesday, coinciding with the testimony of defectors from the country before the European Parliament.

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9. DPRK on Human Rights

Itar-Tass ("PYONGYANG DUBS US ATTACKS OVER HUMAN RIGHTS AS POLITICAL RACKET", 2006-03-21) reported that Pyongyang has urged the US to immediately stop attacks on the republic concerning the violation of human rights in the DPRK, the central Nodong Shinmun wrote on Tuesday. Its commentary said “the United States has no right to reason about human rights in other countries,” and dubbed its attacks as “a political racket” against the DPRK.

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10. PRC on Population Growth

Xinhua ("FAMILY PLANNING POLICY HELPS PREVENT 400 MLN BIRTHS", 2006-03-21) reported that The family planning policy has helped the PRC prevent 400 million births in the past three decades, Zhang Weiqing, minister in charge of the National Population and Family Planning Commission, said Tuesday. In an interview at the PRC's central government website, Zhang said it took about 30 years for the PRC to achieve the population control target which was realized by developed countries in more than 100 years.

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11. PRC on Refugee Issue

Xinhua ("FM SPOKESMAN: CHINA HOPES TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION WITH UNHCR", 2006-03-21) reported that the PRC hopes to strengthen cooperation with the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), PRC Foreign Ministry Spokesman Qin Gang said here Tuesday at a regular press briefing. Responding to question about the so-called DPRK refugees in the PRC, Qin said they were not refugees since they entered the PRC illegally.

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12. PRC-Russia Partnership

Xinhua ("CHINESE RUSSIAN PRESIDENTS HOLD TALKS", 2006-03-21) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao and visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin held talks at the Great Hall of the People here Tuesday afternoon, agreeing to seek stronger bilateral ties. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of PRC-Russia strategic partnership of coordination. Over the past decade, PRC-Russia relations have undergone all-round and rapid progress, producing a series of important achievements, Hu said.

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13. Russia on One-China Policy

Xinhua ("RUSSIA REITERATES ONE-CHINA POLICY IN JOINT STATEMENT", 2006-03-21) reported that the PRC and Russia signed a joint statement in Beijing on Tuesday, with Russia reiterating its

adherence to the one-China policy. "The Russian side will continue to adhere to the one-China policy and recognize the government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legitimate government of the whole of the PRC," the statement says.

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14. PRC-Russia Gas Negotiations

New York Times ("FOR CHINA, A LONG WAIT FOR RUSSIAN GAS SUPPLY", 2006-03-21) reported that President Vladimir Putin kicked off the "Year of Russia in the PRC" celebration Tuesday by bringing roughly 1,000 Russians in his entourage to Beijing. While many Russians will surely be in the PRC for the celebratory year, not much more Russian energy is going to make it to that country this year than last. Analysts say that internal Russian conflicts in the energy sector and intentionally ambiguous export strategies are holding up supplies.

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15. PRC, Russia on Iran

International Herald Tribune, Reuters ("RUSSIA AND CHINA BLOCK UN STATEMENT ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM", 2006-03-21) reported that Russia, backed by the PRC, has blocked agreement on a UN Security Council statement aimed at quashing Iran's nuclear ambitions, despite a ministerial meeting on Tehran's atomic programs, diplomats reported. Senior foreign affairs officials from Germany and the five veto-holding Security Council members - the United States, Britain, France, Russia and the PRC - met for more than four hours Monday to discuss strategy on how to handle Iran.

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16. PRC-US Relations

International Herald Tribune, Associated Press ("CHINA BLASTS U.S. OVER REPORT", 2006-03-21) reported that the PRC lashed out Tuesday at Washington over a U.S. report that accuses Beijing of failing to release enough details of its military buildup and criticizes its ties to countries with poor human rights records.

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17. US on PRC Currency

BBC News ("US SENATORS PRESS CHINA ON YUAN", 2006-03-21) reported that the US Senate will vote this month on a bill to impose tariffs of up to 27.5% on some PRC goods unless Beijing moves to free up its currency. Some US politicians believe the yuan is artificially undervalued, letting the PRC sell its products more cheaply abroad. The PRC has ruled out another revaluation after raising the yuan's value in July.

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18. US on Cross Strait Relations

International Herald Tribune ("U.S. PRESSES TAIWAN ON WEAPONS IMPASSE ", 2006-03-21)

reported that opposition lawmakers in Taipei refuse to release funds for weapons. Despite repeated demands from the United States that Taiwan should spend more to provide for its own defense, the arms deal has become a casualty of the deep divisions on the island over how to meet the challenge posed by the PRC.

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19. Taiwan on Military Defense

Taipei Times ("DEFENSE MINISTRY OUTLINES NEW PROPOSAL ON SUBMARINES", 2006-03-21) reported that the military is trying to move forward a proposal to purchase submarines from the US by endorsing a deal that could placate opposition lawmakers, who have criticized the subs as overly expensive. In a special report released yesterday, the Ministry of National Defense threw its weight behind a proposal championed by US Representative Rob Simmons, who recently traveled to Taiwan seeking to help overcome the impasse.

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20. Cross Strait Relations

Australian News ("TAIWAN TOPPLES CHIANG", 2006-03-22) reported that Taiwan is to remove statues of Chiang Kai-shek, the late nationalist leader who ruled the island for 26 years, from its military bases. The move was ordered by President Chen Shui-bian, who has led a vociferous and controversial campaign for full independence from the PRC. Mr Chen's decision has angered nationalist politicians in Taiwan and is likely to cause annoyance in Beijing, which condemns any attempt to perpetuate the separation of Taiwan from mainland PRC.

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21. Japan Constitution Change

Crisscross News ("JCP, SDP CHIEFS TO MEET ON WAYS TO STOP CONSTITUTION CHANGE", 2006-03-20) reported that Japanese Communist Party chief Kazuo Shii and Social Democratic Party leader Mizuho Fukushima plan to meet Wednesday to discuss how best to work together to fend off the Liberal Democratic Party's attempt to revise the war-renouncing Constitution, lawmakers of both parties said Monday.

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22. USFJ Base Realignment

Kyodo News ("KOIZUMI, NUKAGA AGREE ON POSSIBLE MINOR CHANGES TO FUTEMMA PLAN", 2006-03-21) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Defense Agency Director General Fukushiro Nukaga agreed Tuesday to possibly make minor changes to a plan to relocate a U.S. air station within Okinawa in response to local demands, Nukaga said.

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23. Japan Security

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("SPY SATELLITE DATA PUT ONLINE BY U.S. SCIENTISTS", 2006-03-21)

reported that confidential data about two government spy satellites were found to have been published on Web sites operated by astronomers overseas in a move to fix the satellites' location. According to the scientists, by using this data, the satellites' exact locations over the Earth can be pinpointed, making it possible for activities that may be considered a threat to Japan to be covered up.

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24. ROK on PRC

Reuters, China Post ("SOUTH KOREANS SEE CHINA AS THREAT LATER, NOT NORTH: POLL", 2006-03-21) reported that the ROK view the PRC rather than the DPRK as the biggest threat to their security 10 years from now, according to a survey. In the survey by the ROK-funded Korea Institute for Defence Analyses (KIDA), 37.7 percent of respondents listed leading trading partner PRC as the biggest threat to the ROK 10 years from now because of its growing strength in the region.

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25. Bird Flu

Reuters ("OIE SAYS SOME CHINA BIRD FLU VACCINES INEFFECTIVE", 2006-03-21) reported that the PRC may be using some substandard poultry vaccines to fight bird flu that could allow birds to keep spreading the virus despite not showing symptoms, a top animal health expert said on Tuesday.

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