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I. United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Washington Post ("RICE: U.S. AND ALLIES DISCUSSED 'OPTIONS' AGAINST N. KOREA", 2005-0--22) reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Monday that she had raised the prospect with Asian allies over the weekend of imposing economic or political penalties against the DPRK if its government persisted in refusing to return to six-nation talks aimed at ending its nuclear ambitions. In remarks at the conclusion of her week-long tour of Asia, Rice said she had discussed using "other options in the international system" against the DPRK, the first time a senior US official has publicly acknowledged the possibility of shifting to an aggressive campaign to isolate the DPRK if the talks remain dormant.

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2. US, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap news ("U.S., JAPAN HINT AT JUNE DEADLINE FOR N.K. TO REJOIN NUCLEAR TALKS", 2005-03-22) reported that speculation that the US may impose a June deadline for the DPRK to return to stalled nuclear disarmament talks is rapidly gaining ground following Washington's suggestion of referring the issue to the UN for sanctions. Winding up her six-country swing through Asia, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in Beijing Monday that "Washington would have to look at other options" if the DPRK does not return to the negotiating table.

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3. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Kyodo News ("JAPAN HOPES N. KOREAN PREMIER'S CHINA TRIP SEES NUKE ISSUE PROGRESS", 2005-03-22) reported that Japan has strong hopes that Tuesday's trip by DPRK Premier Pak Pong Ju to the PRC will result in headway in dealing with Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda said Tuesday. "We are hoping that some sort of progress will be made," Hosoda, Tokyo's top spokesman, said at a press conference. "Unless there is progress at this point, North Korea's international position gets worse and worse," he said.

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4. DPRK on Japan Role in DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("N.KOREA WANTS JAPAN DITCHED FROM SIX-WAY ATOM TALKS", 2005-03-22) reported that Japan should be ejected from the stalled six-way talks on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions because its presence does more harm than good, one of Pyongyang's main newspapers said on Tuesday. A

commentary in the state-run daily Minju Joson said Tokyo followed US policy and had contributed nothing to the multilateral talks comprising the two Koreas. "Japan has neither the justification nor eligibility to attend the six-party talks," the official KCNA news agency quoted Minju Joson as saying. Accusing Tokyo of seeking territorial expansion in the region, notably in its claim over the ROK-held Tokto islands, the daily added: "It is clear that Japan's participation will make things worse rather than make things better."

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5. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("N. KOREAN PREMIER HINTS AT NUCLEAR TALKS ", 2005-03-22) reported that the DPRK's visiting premier said Tuesday that Pyongyang might be willing to return to nuclear talks, a PRC spokesman said, following the DPRK's claim to have expanded its atomic arsenal. "If conditions are right in the future, North Korea is willing at any time to participate at the six-party talks," Premier Pak Pong Ju told his PRC counterpart, Wen Jiabao, according to a spokesman for the PRC Foreign Ministry. The spokesman, Liu Jianchao, did not say what those conditions would be.

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6. Sino - DPRK Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, DPRK VOW TO FURTHER TIES", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC Premier Wen Jiabao and his DPRK counterpart Pak Bong Ju vowed to further the countries' "friendly cooperative ties," including economic cooperation and coordination on major issues, during talks here on Tuesday. Relations between the PRC and the DPRK have seen "sound progress" with the direct care from the two countries' leaders, Wen told Pak in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The PRC and DPRK "maintained frequent high-level exchange, expanded economic and trade cooperation along with increasingly active exchanges in other fields," Wen said.

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7. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The New York Times ("CHINA BALKS AT PRESSING THE NORTH KOREANS", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC government leaders have offered Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice no assurances that they will step up pressure on the DPRK to return to nuclear disarmament talks, senior officials traveling with her said Monday. If the PRC does not increase the pressure on the DPRK, it could undermine what has been a central plank of President Bush's strategy to enlist the help of the DPRK's neighbors to contain its nuclear program. A refusal by the PRC to take more aggressive steps could also empower those in the administration who believe that negotiations with the DPRK are futile.

(return to top) Choson Ilbo ("CHINESE PRESIDENT'S N. KOREA VISIT CONFIRMED: OFFICIAL", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC President Hu Jintao will visit the DPRK this year, Beijing confirmed at the start of a six-day PRC visit by DPRK Prime Minister Park Bong-ju. A high-ranking PRC official said Tuesday President Hu’s visit to Pyongyang would not be affected by other political issues like the prolonged suspension of six-party talks on the DPRK nuclear disarmament. The statement is being read as a signal that the PRC will not use Hu’s scheduled visit, announced earlier this year, as a negotiating card in efforts to bring the DPRK back to the talks. (return to top) Xinhua ("6-PARTY TALKS "A REALISTIC CHOICE" TO RESOLVE DPRK ISSUE: PREMIER WEN", None)

reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao said here Tuesday that the six-party talks offered "a realistic choice" to peacefully resolve the Korean nuclear issue through dialogue. "The talks are in the interests of all parties so it should continue," Wen told visiting Premier Pak Bong Ju of the DPRK during their talks. He urged all sides to show flexibility, sincerity and patience. Proceeding from objective and fair stance, the PRC will continue to actively promote the talks and make unremitting efforts for the realization of a lasting peace in northeast Asia. (return to top)

8. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Choson Ilbo ("SOUTH'S AID TO NORTH DEPENDS ON TALKS", 2005-03-22) reported that with direct contact between the two Koreas almost nonexistent, Chung Dong-young, the ROK's minister of unification, said yesterday that the DPRK should have no expectation of receiving fertilizer aid from Seoul unless Pyeongyang resumes bilateral talks. Mr. Chung, who also heads the National Security Council, said the two Koreas' governments have always held talks over procedures of the routine fertilizer aid to the DPRK before shipments were made. "Unless there are talks between the two Koreas' authorities, it is difficult to make a decision on giving fertilizer or food aid," he said.

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9. ROK on Aid to the DPRK

Yonhap news ("S. KOREAN LABOR GROUPS TO DELIVER FERTILIZER TO N. KOREA", 2005-03-22) reported that the ROK's two umbrella labor groups will deliver 200 tons of free fertilizer to the DPRK on Wednesday, officials said Tuesday. The aid will be shipped in eight 25-ton trucks to the DPRK's Mount Geumgang resort. A 16-member delegation from the Federation of Korean Trade Unions (FKTU) and the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) will accompany them, officials said.

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10. DPRK on Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo ("NORTH CLAIMS IT HAS BOLSTERED NUCLEAR ARSENAL", 2005-03-22) reported that in its first response to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's efforts to revive the six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear arms program, Pyeongyang stepped up its bellicose rhetoric yesterday and claimed it has built greater numbers of nuclear weapons. "In order to counter provocative war scheming by our enemies that is increasing day by day, the North Korean Army and the North Korean people are combat ready and have also taken the important step of increasing our nuclear arsenal," said the commentary by the DPRK's Korean Central Broadcasting Station.

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11. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters ("N.KOREA NUCLEAR BOAST SEEN AS RESPONSE TO PRESSURE", 2005-03-22) reported that the DPRK's announcement it has increased its nuclear arsenal is Pyongyang's way of toughening its stance against the US and expressing anger about war games in the ROK, a ROK official said on Tuesday. The DPRK said last week it might increase its arsenal to maintain a balance of power in East Asia and help prevent a US attack. A DPRK radio commentary late on Monday was the first time Pyongyang said it had done so.

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12. US on DPRK Nuclear Transfer Allegation

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. EMBASSY DENIES ALLIES WERE MISLED", 2005-03-22) reported that the US Embassy in Seoul yesterday disputed an article published by The Washington Post, which indicated the US had misled Asian allies about nuclear exports by the DPRK. "The United States has not misled allies or anyone else about the matter. United States officials informed allies of the intelligence community's assessment of the most likely source of certain nuclear material that was transferred to Libya through the A.Q. Khan network."

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13. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Transfer Allegation

Korea Times ("ALLIES RATTLED BY INTELLIGENCE FIASCOS", 2005-03-22) reported that in a news article, headlined "US Misled Allies About Nuclear Export," the Washington Post reported that it was not the DPRK but Pakistan that sold uranium hexafluoride to Libya. According to the report, which quoted a couple of US officials, the US delivered the false allegation to its Asian allies in an effort to increase pressure on the DPRK. "What the US aimed with the distorted intelligence is crystal clear," said Kwon Young-il, a lawmaker and former presidential candidate of the Democratic Labor Party. "It was to pressure South Korea and China to join its work of isolating North Korea and thereby bringing the country to its knees."

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14. DPRK on US-DPRK Relations

Yonhap news ("N. KOREA SAYS TENSE SITUATION ON PENINSULA MAKES NUKE WAR POSSIBLE", None) reported that the DPRK claimed Tuesday that a tense situation is developing on the Korean Peninsula because of the maneuvering by the US to invade and wage nuclear war. "The US true intention is to demolish our republic with its military power," Rodong Shinmun, the newspaper of the Workers' Party, said in an individual commentary.

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15. Russian Oil Exports to the DPRK

The Associated Press ("RUSSIAN FIRMS READY TO FINANCE RAIL LINE", 2005-03-22) reported that Russian firms are ready to finance the construction of a 28-mile railway line inside the DPRK to facilitate oil deliveries to the energy-starved country, Russia's railways chief said Tuesday. The ITAR-Tass news agency reported the head of the state-run Russian Railways, Gennady Fadeyev, saying the line with a Russian standard gauge could be built from the Russian border crossing of Khasan to an oil refinery constructed by the former Soviet Union in the nearby DPRK port of Najin. Fadeyev had said on Monday that Russian investors were interested in supplying Russian oil to the DPRK for refining.

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16. ROK - Russian Military Cooperation

Korea Times ("KOREA, RUSSIA TO INCREASE MILITARY EXCHANGES", 2005-03-22) reported that top ROK and Russian military officers agreed Monday to promote military exchanges, to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula, a military officer said. Kim Jong-hwan, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, made the agreement with his Russian counterpart Yuri Baluyevsky, during his three-day trip in Seoul, Won Tae-jae, an aide to Kim, said. "Both sides shared the view that the facilitation of Korean-Russian military exchanges will contribute to easing tension on the peninsula and to promoting peace in Northeast Asia," Won said.

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17. ROK - Japanese Territorial Dispute

The New York Times ("DISPUTE OVER ISLETS FRAYS TIES BETWEEN TOKYO AND SEOUL", 2005-03-22) reported that in what had been billed as the ROK-Japan friendship year, in recognition of 40 years of normalized relations, Japanese claims over two disputed remote islets have recently worsened relations between America's two most important Asian allies. The claims over the islets, called Tokdo in ROK and Takeshima in Japan, were regarded here as an attempt to justify Japanese colonial rule and have drawn huge protests in front of the Japanese Embassy in recent days.

(return to top) Agence France Presse ("ISLAND ROW HAMPERS JAPAN-SKOREA FREE TRADE TALKS: JAPAN FM", 2005-03-22) reported that a simmering territorial dispute has made it difficult for Japan and the ROK to resume stalled talks on a free trade agreement, Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said. The talks, which started in December 2003, had been suspended as the ROK was reportedly dissatisfied with Japan's "low-level" offer to remove or reduce import tariffs on agricultural products. "In addition, the (island) dispute has cropped up. We are considering starting the talks when the political situation calms down," Machimura said after a meeting of agriculture, trade and other cabinet ministers. (return to top)

18. PRC on Arms Ban

The Associated Press ("CHINA APPEALS TO EU TO LIFTING WEAPONS BAN ", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC appealed to the European Union on Tuesday to go ahead with plans to lift a 15-year-old arms embargo, reacting angrily to reports that action might be delayed because of Beijing's passage of a law authorizing a military attack on Taiwan. "Linking these two issues is unreasonable," said PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao. "The passage of the anti-secession law is an effort to ease tensions across the Taiwan Straits. ... The key to ease tensions is to check Taiwan's secessionary forces and to stop all secessionist activities."

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19. EU on PRC Arms Ban

The New York Times ("EUROPEAN UNION SAID TO KEEP EMBARGO ON ARMS TO CHINA", 2005-03-22) reported that yielding to pressure from President Bush and threats of retaliation from Congress, the European Union has put off plans to lift its arms embargo on the PRC this spring and may not press the issue until next year, American and European officials said Monday. The officials said that in addition to American pressure, European nations have been shaken by the recent adoption of legislation by the PRC National People's Congress authorizing the use of force to stop

Taiwan from seceding. The PRC action, they said, jolted France and undercut its moves to end the embargo before June.

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20. PRC on UNSC Expansion

Reuters ("CHINA WANTS U.N. SEATS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC proposed on Tuesday adding an unspecified number of permanent seats for developing countries on an expanded UN Security Council, but bit its tongue on whether Japan should become a member. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appeared to back Japan on Monday for a permanent council seat as part of the most wide-ranging reforms to the world body since its creation in 1945. "I think reform of the U.N. Security Council should have its eyes on increasing work efficiency ... and at the same increasing the representation of developing countries," Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao told a news conference.

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21. PRC Censorship

Reuters ("CHINA CLAMPS DOWN ON CAMPUS BULLETIN BOARDS", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC has blocked off-campus Internet users from accessing several bulletin boards operated by universities as part of a government clampdown on outspoken domestic Web sites. Shuimu Tsinghua, a popular bulletin board run by Beijing's prestigious Tsinghua University, was among the sites sealed to outside participants last week, the Beijing Times reported over the weekend. "The Ministry of Education made the decision to shut the site because the bulletin board was only supposed to be a platform for internal exchange within the university," a Tsinghua University student who requested anonymity said on Monday.

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22. PRC on AIDS Issue

The Associated Press ("CHINA PROVINCE PUSHES AIDS TESTS FOR SOME", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC's southwestern province of Yunnan will require annual AIDS tests for people working in hotels, nightclubs and other entertainment outlets, a local official and the government's Xinhua News Agency said Tuesday. Under the new rules, announced Monday and effective immediately, those testing positive will be fired, Xinhua said, citing the text of the regulation. But Wang Yinsheng, an official with the Yunnan AIDS Prevention Center, said health authorities wouldn't insist that those found to be infected be fired. They could instead be moved to jobs not involving contact with the public, he suggested.

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23. PRC Environment

Agence France Presse ("CHINA'S ECONOMIC BOOM UNSUSTAINABLE AS ECO-COSTS SKYROCKET: ENVIRONMENTALIST", 2005-03-22) reported that the PRC's booming economic miracle is expanding at a highly unsustainable rate, creating tremendous pressures on resources while bankrupting the environment, a leading environmentalist warned. "I have a feeling we are on the edge of big changes. It is still difficult to see how this will develop but we are clearly pushing the

envelope in so many ways and all at the same time," Lester Brown, the US-based director of the Earth Policy Institute, told AFP. "I sense the Chinese leadership knows how serious the problems are but with the overriding concerns for growth and job creation, they can't give the environment the attention it deserves," Brown said.

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24. Fischer Case

The Associated Press ("FISCHER GRANTED CITIZENSHIP IN ICELAND", 2005-03-22) reported that Iceland, the country where Bobby Fischer won the world chess championship a generation ago, granted citizenship to the 62-year-old recluse Monday, a boost to Fischer's efforts to fight deportation from Japan to the US. Immigration officials in Iceland said a passport for Fischer could be ready as early as Tuesday.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org