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I. United States

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("U.S. ENVOY ON NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR ISSUE MEETS TOP DIPLOMATS IN SEOUL AMID STALLED DISARMAMENT TALKS", 2004-12-08) reported that a key US envoy on the DPRK nuclear issue met officials in Seoul on Wednesday amid a flurry of diplomacy aimed at persuading Pyongyang to return to six-nation talks on convincing it to abandon its nuclear ambitions. "Hopefully, we will resume these talks very quickly," DeTrani told Cho during the meeting in Seoul.

(return to top) Reuters ("U.S. WANTS N.KOREA TALKS TO RESUME VERY QUICKLY", 2004-12-08) reported that the US and the ROK agreed on Wednesday to keep pushing the DPRK to join some form of talks on Pyongyang's nuclear programs before the end of the year, Yonhap news agency reported. "The two sides agreed to continue to sound out the DPRK about holding any format of six-party meeting before the end of the year," Yonhap quoted Cho Taeyong as saying. (return to top)

2. US Policy Toward the DPRK

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. AIDE SAYS REGIME CHANGE IN NORTH NOT AN AIM", 2004-12-08) reported that in a meeting with visiting ROK legislators, Stephen Hadley, who is slated to become the head of the Bush administration's National Security Council, said the US is not seeking regime change in the DPRK, but hoping for a "transformation" of the DPRK. The US policymaker denied Tuesday that the US hoped to see Kim Jong-il, the DPRK's leader, fall. And he dismissed reports the Bush administration is split over its approach to Pyeongyang. He said US President George W. Bush solely decides policy on the DPRK.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. REVISES POLICY TO REGIME 'TRANSFORMATION'", 2004-1--08) reported taht the US aims to encourage "regime transformation" rather than see the DPRK collapse, said White House National Security Advisor designate Stephen Hadley Tuesday to a delegation of ROK lawmakers in Washington, in an apparent attempt to allay fears on both sides of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). (return to top)

3. DPRK Reform

Korea Times ("NK ADOPTS MARKET-FRIENDLY CRIMINAL LAW", 2004-12-08) reported that the DPRK has strengthened legal measures to protect private property in a recent revision of its criminal law, while stiffening penalties for anti-state crimes, according to a copy obtained by a local broadcaster. DPRK experts in Seoul said the revision, the fifth since 1950, can be understood as Pyongyang's efforts to achieve two goals at the same time safeguarding its regime and boosting its

impoverished economy.

(return to top) International Herald Tribune ("NORTH KOREA TOUGHENS LAWS ON DISSENTERS", 2004-12-08) reported that the DPRK has revised its criminal code, the ROK's National Intelligence Service said Wednesday, in what appeared to be an effort to deter antistate activities. The revisions also reduced sanctions against DPRK defectors who left the country for economic reasons. (return to top)

4. DPRK Economic Reform

Reuters ("GOLF DRIVES OUT MILITARY BASE IN NORTH KOREA", 2004-12-08) reported that in a variation on the swords-to-plowshares theme, the DPRK is swapping heavy artillery for golf clubs. It's a new scheme to attract golf-crazy ROK citizens to an enclave in the DPRK just across the Demilitarized Zone border. Due to open in two years, the 7,500-yard Diamond Country Club course will host golfers amid the scenic, mountainous Kumgang resort.

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5. US Researchers on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Donga Ilbo ("LET'S GIVE NORTH KOREA AN INCENTIVE TO REMOVE PLUTONIUM", 2004-12-08) reported that with the emergence of the second George W. Bush administration ahead, the "Task Force on the Korean Peninsula," comprising 26 Korean Peninsula experts in the US, came up with a policy proposal to resolve the DPRK nuclear issue. The proposal advised, "Negotiate the plutonium issue with Pyongyang first, and deal with the uranium issue in the last stage after building trust through mutual concessions at each stage."

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6. Roh on DPRK Collapse

Chosun Ilbo ("DON'T DISCUSS ISSUE OF NORTH KOREAN COLLAPSE", 2004-12-08) reported that while in France, President Roh Moo-hyun delivered his view Sunday that comments on the DPRK's collapse would not be welcomed by stating that, "If the Korean government has to get red in the face at someone, we have no other way but to do so." One day earlier in Poland, he said, "Because China supports North Korea and because we don't want [to see it fall], there is almost no possibility that it will collapse."

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7. Japan on DPRK Abductees

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN THREATENS TO CUT AID TO NKOREA AFTER FALSE EVIDENCE ON KIDNAPPED GIRL", 2004-12-08) reported that Japan threatened Wednesday to cut off food aid to the DPRK after concluding the DPRK handed over other people's ashes to prove the death of a Japanese woman abducted by Pyongyang agents at age 13. "The bones belonged to a number of other people," said the top government spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda. "We will promptly lodge a stern protest."

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8. ROK Aid for Ryongchon Blast

Yonhap ("SK DONATES ASPHALT FOR EXPLOSION-HIT RYONGCHON IN N. KOREA", 2004-12-08) reported that SK Corp., the ROK's largest oil refiner, on Wednesday donated asphalt to pave the streets of Ryongchon in the DPRK, the town that suffered a massive train explosion in April, the company said. Earlier in the day, the company shipped 2,000 tons of asphalt worth 600 million won (US$575,400) from its Ulsan plant to the town via the PRC to seal approximately 24 kilometers of Ryongchon's streets, it said.

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9. DPRK Diplomats Detained

The Associated Press ("TWO NORTH KOREAN DIPLOMATS DETAINED IN ISTANBUL FOR ALLEGED DRUG-SMUGGLING", 2004-12-08) reported that Turkish authorities have detained two DPRK diplomats suspected of smuggling hundreds of thousands of narcotic pills into Turkey from neighboring Bulgaria, police said Wednesday. Istanbul police also confiscated 621,000 narcotic pills, which were destined for Arab countries, the statement said.

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10. Japan Military

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN DROPS PLAN ON LONG-RANGE MISSILE AFTER ALLY PROTESTS, OFFICIAL SAYS", 2004-12-08) reported that Japan has dropped a proposal to develop its first long-range surface-to-surface missile due to protests from a Buddhist-oriented party in the ruling coalition, an official said Wednesday. The Defense Agency planned to study building the new missile amid growing concern about neighbors DPRK and PRC, in a move that could effectively end Japan's self-imposed ban on offensive weapons.

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11. Japan on Cyber Terror

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN TO STEP UP DEFENSES AGAINST ISLAMIC, NKOREAN, COMPUTER THREATS", 2004-12-08) reported that Japan will set up a special unit against cyber terrorism and needs to be on guard against threats from Islamic militants and DPRK agents, police said. The government will set up a new anti-cyberterrorism team of about 30 computer experts by April, with the number of personnel to be doubled two years later, said an official with the IT Security Office of the Cabinet Office.

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12. Japanese Space Program

The Associated Press ("JAPAN TO RESUME SPACE ROCKET LAUNCHES", 2004-12-08) reported that a government panel Wednesday approved plans to send a weather satellite into Earth's orbit by February 2005, in the first scheduled launch for Japan's troubled space program since late last year, an official said.

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13. Jenkins Case

The Associated Press ("U.S. DESERTER WANTS JAPANESE CITIZENSHIP", 2004-12-08) reported that US Army deserter Charles Jenkins, settling in northern Japan after his release from a military prison and four decades in the DPRK, has expressed hopes of becoming a Japanese citizen, a newspaper reported Wednesday.

(return to top) Yomiuri Shimbun ("SOGA AND FAMILY ARRIVE IN SADO", 2004-12-08) reported that former abductee Hitomi Soga and her family arrived in her hometown of Sado, Niigata Prefecture, on Tuesday after leaving the US Army's Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture. The family plans to live in a Sado municipal government-run residence, in which Soga currently lives. (return to top)

14. Japan on Iraq Extension

Yomiuri Shimbun ("SDF IRAQ TOUR EXTENSION SET FOR THUR", 2004-12-08) reported that the Cabinet on Thursday will approve the extension of the Self-Defense Forces' mission to Iraq for one year, government sources said. The current SDF mission to Iraq expires on Dec. 14.

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15. ROK on Iraq Extension

The Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA PANEL OKS IRAQ TROOP EXTENSION", 2004-12-08) reported that a parliamentary committee on Wednesday approved a government proposal to extend the deployment of 3,600 ROK troops in Iraq for another year. The National Assembly's Defense Committee sent the proposal for final approval at a plenary session that convenes Thursday.

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16. Roh Iraq Visit

Chosun Ilbo ("ROH BUOYS KOREAN TROOPS WITH SURPRISE IRAQ VISIT", 2004-12-08) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun, on his way home from a three-nation tour of Europe, paid a surprise call on ROK troops stationed in Irbil, Iraq, Wednesday. After departing Paris Tuesday evening, Roh touched down at Kuwait's Abdullah Al Mubarak Air Base where he transferred to a ROK Air Force plane and was spirited to the base of the ROK's Zaytun Unit in northern Iraq.

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17. ROK Spying Allegations

Yonhap ("OPPOSITION PARTY ACCUSES RULING PARTY LAWMAKER OF SPYING FOR N.K.", 2004-12-08) reported that the main opposition Grand National Party (GNP), intensifying its bid to deter the ruling Uri Party from repealing the National Security Law, insisted on Wednesday that a ruling party lawmaker was a member of DPRK Workers' Party. Rep. Joo Sung-young of the GNP claimed that Rep. Lee Chul-woo of the Uri Party gained membership in the DPRK ruling party in 1992, while another GNP legislator, Park Seung-hwan, argued that Lee once served as an agent for the DPRK.

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18. US - ROK Military Alliance

The Associated Press ("US, S KOREA DISCUSS COMPENSATION FOR TROOPS IN PENINSULA", 2004-12-08) reported that the US and ROK negotiators are launching two days of talks Wednesday on compensation Seoul must pay Washington for the continued US military presence in the Korean peninsula. The talks come as the US military reduces the number of troops based here, but is insisting Seoul increase payments for the troops who serve as a deterrent to an attack from rival DPRK.

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19. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("PRO-INDEPENDENCE PARTIES TIPPED TO MAKE GAINS IN TAIWAN VOTE", 2004-12-08) reported that pro-independence parties are tipped to make gains in Taiwan's legislative elections this weekend and thereby anger the PRC, already threatening to take military action if the island drifts further from Beijing. The ruling Democratic Progressive Party of President Chen Shui-bian, who was re-elected in March on a pro-independence ticket, was expected to improve its showing in the 225-seat assembly from its current standing of 87 seats.

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20. PRC on Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("CHINA EYES U.S. TO REIN IN TAIWAN, AVERT CONFLICT", 2004-12-08) reported that the PRC faces an intractable problem in dealing with Taiwan's independence ambitions and is almost certainly counting on the US to rein in the island after legislative elections this weekend, analysts in the PRC say. "Chen Shui-bian is bold and aggressive due to backing from the United States," said Zhou Qing, a veteran Taiwan watcher.

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21. Sino - EU Relations

The Associated Press ("EUROPEAN UNION, CHINA AGREE TO BOOST TIES", 2004-12-08) reported that the European Union and PRC agreed to boost relations Wednesday, but the EU made clear there can be no early lifting of its 15-year-old arms embargo until Beijing improves its human rights record. The EU and PRC also signed a declaration in which both commit to the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by keeping them out of the hands of terrorists and rogue governments.

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22. PRC Property Rights

The New York Times ("FARMERS BEING MOVED ASIDE BY CHINA'S REAL ESTATE BOOM", 2004-12-08) reported that farmers in the PRC cannot be robbed of land because they are not allowed to own it. The same economic reforms that have made the RPC the world's fastest growing economy have created a two-tiered property system that favors city dwellers while handicapping the farmers once at the core of this society. One result is that a booming, private real estate market has emerged in cities. Farmers still fall under a village collective system that forbids them to own, buy or sell the

land they till.

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23. PRC Media Freedom

The Associated Press ("REPORT: CHINA RELEASES INTERNET DISSIDENT", 2004-12-08) reported that a longtime PRC democracy activist has been released after serving a two-year prison term for setting up a pro-democracy Web site, a human rights group said Wednesday. Paris-based Reporters Without Borders welcomed Ouyang Yi's release at the Dec. 4 end of his sentence. But the press freedom group protested that Ouyang was now serving a "second sentence" because he is being kept under police surveillance and is banned from publishing for two years.

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24. PRC AIDS Issue

Washington Post ("IN CHINA, AN ABOUT-FACE ON AIDS PREVENTION", 2004-12-08) reported that partly as a result of international prodding and partly as a result of last year's experience with SARS the PRC government increasingly has pushed AIDS prevention out of the closet. President Hu Jintao dramatized the shift last week by visiting AIDS patients at Youan Hospital in Beijing accompanied by television cameras, matching a similar visit last year by Premier Wen Jiabao.

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25. Bird Flu Issue

The Associated Press ("RESEARCHERS DEVELOP QUICK BIRD FLU TEST", 2004-12-08) reported that researchers said Wednesday they have developed a new test that can detect bird flu in humans within hours, compared with up to a week or more for older versions. The new test detects antigens and antibodies to the deadly H5N1 bird flu strain, as opposed to examining the virus directly by isolating it.

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