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1. Six Party Talks Joint Agreement

The Los Angeles Times ("MANY QUESTIONS ON NORTH KOREA ACCORD", 2007-02-14) reported that questions over the DPRK's motives are but one in a list of problems that must be overcome to reach the goal of a Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons. These include the future of the the DPRK's suspected uranium enrichment program and existing plutonium stockpiles, how much access international monitors will enjoy, issues with Tokyo over the DPRK's abduction of several Japanese citizens and the potential message the deal sends to other nuclear proliferators. "Obviously, we have a long way to go, but we're very pleased with this solid step forward," a tired but satisfied Christopher Hill. "This is not the end of the process. It's the end of the beginning of the process."

(return to top) The Associated Press ("NUCLEAR AGENCY INSPECTORS READY FOR NORTH KOREA MISSION IF THEY ONLY KNEW WHAT IT WAS", 2007-02-14) reported that the deal between the DPRK and five negotiating partners reserves a key role for experts from the Vienna-based IAEA. But how that will be done and just how much IAEA involvement the DPRK will allow, if and when the inspectors' boots touch the ground appeared to be pure guesswork at agency headquarters Tuesday, just hours after the deal was announced. (return to top) The New York Times ("PRIVATE TALKS HELD IN BERLIN SPURRED SIDES TO REACH DEAL", 2007-02-14) reported that a Berlin meeting in January was critical in resuscitating the talks and in shaping the agreement reached Tuesday in Beijing, according to a senior US official familiar with the US negotiating team. In Berlin, the two envoys, Christopher R. Hill and Kim Kye-gwan, held their first private discussions outside the framework of the six-nation negotiations in Beijing. The two negotiators used it to hash out differences. "We basically teed up an agreement -- what you saw today," the official said. (return to top)

2. DPRK on Six Party Talks Joint Agreement

Joongang Ilbo ("PYONGYANG PUTS SOME SPIN ON 6-WAY TALKS AGREEMENT", 2007-02-14) reported that Pyongyang's state-controlled media have given what may be a signal that Pyongyang is prepared to reinterpret Tuesday's agreement at the six-party nuclear talks in Beijing even before the ink on it is dry. The Korean Central News Agency reported that participants had agreed to supply the DPRK with 1 million tons of heavy fuel oil in return for a "temporary" suspension of operations at the DPRK's nuclear facilities. It was not clear, however, whether the reports were intended as a definitive statement of the DPRK's interpretation of the agreement or, as one ROK official suggested yesterday, a bit of domestic propaganda to demonstrate to its populace that its nuclear programs had boosted the nation's prestige.

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3. US on Six Party Talks Joint Agreement

Reuters ("BUSH CALLS NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR DEAL "UNIQUE"", 2007-02-14) reported that President George W. Bush said the agreement reached with the DPRK on its nuclear program was "unique" and an important step in the right direction. "At the six-party talks in Beijing, North Korea agreed to specific actions that will bring us closer to a Korea peninsula that is free of nuclear weapons," Bush said. "This is good progress, it is a good first step, there's a lot of work to be done to make sure that the commitments made in this agreement become reality. But I believe it's an important step in the right direction."

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4. ROK on Six Party Talks Joint Agreement

Yonhap ("ROH CALLS FOR INTER-KOREAN NEGOTIATIONS ON PEACE TREATY", 2007-02-14) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun, now on a state visit to Spain, said the settlement of the DPRK's nuclear problem would lead to inter-Korean negotiations on the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. The president said the inclusion of a clause calling for the inter-Korean talks on establishing permanent peace treaty among the agreements of the just-ended six-party denuclearization talks would have "far-reaching effects."

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("SIX-PARTY DEAL CLEARS WAY FOR FRESH INTER-KOREAN TALKS", 2007-02-14) reported that agreement at six-party nuclear talks in Beijing on Tuesday offers the two Korea a chance to resume bilateral contacts, which have been on ice since the DPRK's missile tests in July. President Roh Moo-hyun hailed the conclusion of the talks and pledged that the ROK will do its best to implement its part of the Beijing agreement, taking "prompt measures" to ensure a "smooth implementation." The remarks hint that the government plans to resume rice and fertilizer aid to the DPRK immediately and reopen inter-Korean talks. (return to top)

5. Japan on Six Party Talks Joint Agreement

Kyodo News ("JAPAN THINKS US TO KEEP NORTH KOREA ON TERROR LIST UNTIL ABDUCTIONS RESOLVED", 2007-02-14) reported that Japan believes the US will maintain the DPRK's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism until the issue of the DPRK's abductions of Japanese nationals is resolved, Tokyo's top spokesman said. "The agreement was to begin the process of removing the designation, not on removing it (immediately)," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki said.

(return to top) The New York Times ("JAPAN MAINTAINS HARDLINE STANCE TOWARD NORTH KOREA", 2007-02-14) reported that the Japanese government struggled today to maintain its hardline stance toward the DPRK. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was criticized today both by opposition leaders and by members of his own party over his government's refusal to join in providing aid to the DPRK under the agreement. Japanese negotiators said at the talks that unresolved cases of Japanese citizens abducted by the DPRK over the years must be cleared up before Japan can offer any aid. Critics said that the government's narrow focus on this issue, seemingly at the expense of regional stability, put it out of step with the PRC, Russia, ROK and the US. (return to top)

6. Russia on DPRK Debt

Chosun Ilbo ("RUSSIA TO WRITE OFF MORE N.KOREAN DEBT ", 2007-02-14) reported that Russia has decided to write off more than 90 percent of the US$8 billion it is owed by the DPRK, Russian government officials said on the condition of anonymity Monday. Russian chief negotiator to the six-party nuclear talks Alexander Loshukov explained that Russia had reached an agreement with the DPRK already and the debt write-off could be used as leverage when the six-party attempts to end the DPRK's nuclear program in return for energy aid hit a snag.

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7. US-ROK Trade Relations

Korea Times ("KOREA-US FTA TO REMOVE TARIFFS ON 70 GOODS", 2007-02-14) reported that the ROK and the US have agreed to remove tariffs on some 70 industrial goods, including TVs, bring machines and optical lens, during bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) talks. The two countries, now meeting in their seventh round of talks in Washington, D.C., said tariffs on 78 export items from the ROK and 70 export items from the US will be abolished as soon as a bilateral agreement is signed. But the two sides failed to reach an agreement on scrapping tariffs on exports of automobiles.

(return to top) Donga Ilbo ("KDB EXCLUDED FROM KOR-U.S. FTA ", 2007-02-14) reported that on the second day of the seventh round of the talks on the ROK-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA), both countries made progress in finding common ground on some key issues. Both sides are trying to agree on excluding state-invested institutions, such as the Korea Development Bank (KDB) and the Industrial Bank of Korea, from the FTA framework. Instead, negotiators are considering a "package deal" that allows US firms operating in the ROK to gain access to and transfer business information in the ROK except for client information to their headquarters in the US. (return to top)

8. USFJ Base Realignment

Kyodo ("JAPAN, U.S. REAFFIRM ACCORD TO REALIGN U.S. MILITARY FORCES IN JAPAN", 2007-02-14) reported that Japan and the US reaffirmed in senior working-level talks that they will implement their May 2006 accord on the realignment of US military forces in Japan, the Foreign Ministry said. Tuesday's agreement comes after Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma stirred controversy over his recent remark that the US lacks understanding about talks with Okinawa Prefecture over relocation of the US Marine Corps Futemma Air Station within the prefecture.

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9. Whaling in Japan

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN RALLIES WHALING NATIONS DESPITE PROTESTS", 2007-02-14) reported that Japan held talks with dozens of countries to plot the future of the global whaling body, but most Western states boycotted the meeting as a charade aimed at resuming commercial hunting. Japan invited all 72 members of the International Whaling Commission (IWC) to take part but, in a sign it is nearly split down the middle, 34 countries showed up. Tokyo called the meeting to "normalise" the IWC -- which it believes is supposed to manage whale hunting rather than ban it -- but said it had sought to hear from those on both sides of the debate.

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10. PRC on Space Weapons Treaty

The Associated Press ("CHINA SEEKS TALKS ON SPACE WEAPONS TREATY ", 2007-02-14) reported that the PRC called for talks on a space weapons treaty, a day after its defense minister reportedly said the country had no plans for a repeat of last month's test of an anti-satellite weapon. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said the PRC joined with Russia and other states in urging negotiations for an agreement under the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva.

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11. India-Russia-PRC Joint Statement

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA, INDIA, RUSSIA PLEDGE COOPERATION ON REGIONAL DISPUTES", 2007-02-14) reported that the foreign ministers of India, Russia and the PRC pledged to avoid confrontation and work together to solve disputes on issues ranging from energy to insurgencies after talks. The three foreign ministers exchanged "views on how international relations are being presently conducted," according to a joint statement. All three agreed that international terrorism, which continued to pose a grave threat, should be combated "under central and coordinating role of the UN," the statement said.

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12. Taiwan Leadership

The Associated Press ("TAIWANESE OPPOSITION LEADER INDICTED", 2007-02-14) reported that prosecutors indicted presidential hopeful Ma Ying-jeou on corruption charges Tuesday, dealing a blow to the Harvard-educated lawyer widely considered to be a front-runner. Ma denied the charges in a televised speech and announced that he would run for president next year. Many have high hopes he will be able to improve Taiwan's rocky relations with the PRC.

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13. PRC Anti-Corruption Drive

BBC News ("CHINA STEPS UP CORRUPTION FIGHT", 2007-02-14) reported that the PRC plans a new corruption agency after almost 100,000 party members were disciplined for misconduct last year. The new national anti-corruption body will have offices in many of the country's far-flung provinces. It's often there, far from the eyes of Beijing, that most of the PRC's illegal land deals and bribery take place.

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14. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("CHINA FAILS TO MEET ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS", 2007-02-14) reported that the PRC's environmental watchdog admitted the country had failed to reach any of its pollution control goals for 2006 and had fallen further behind as the economy picked up speed. The PRC has some of the most polluted cities in the world after two decades of breakneck economic growth, and the government has been losing ground in recent years in trying to balance environmental concerns with economic growth.

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