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I. United States

1. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL CALLED SKEPTIC ON ARMS TALKS", 2005-03-02) reported that an unnamed Japanese Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying that despite recent optimism that Pyeongyang would soon return to the negotiations, the DPRK's leader, Kim Jong-il, had recently expressed deep skepticism over the process. The Tokyo official told the Joong-Ang Ilbo that Mr. Kim had questioned the effectiveness of the six-party talks in a meeting in Pyeongyang with Wang Jiarui on Feb. 21. Mr. Kim reportedly told Mr. Wang that it was meaningless for the DPRK to return to the negotiation table because he sees no changes in the Bush administration's DPRK policy.

(return to top) Korea Times ("PYONGYANG HINTS AT REJOINING NUKE TALKS", 2005-03-02) reported that the DPRK hinted that it would return to the six-party talks sometime in the future as all other nations in the forum, including ROK and the US, stepped up efforts to advance the date for a new round of negotiations. While meeting with PRC envoy Wang Jiarui, the DPRK's leader Kim Jong-il said his country would go to the negotiation table once certain "conditions" were met. (return to top) Reuters ("N.KOREA DEMANDS U.S. APOLOGY FOR 'TYRANNY' COMMENT", 2005-03-02) reported that the DPRK Wednesday demanded an apology from the US for labeling it as one of the "outposts of tyranny" and said the US must withdraw the comment before Pyongyang would consider attending nuclear talks. "The US should apologize for his above-said remarks and withdraw them, renounce its hostile policy aimed at a regime change in the DPRK and clarify its political willingness to co-exist with the DPRK in peace and show it in practice," the DPRK's official KCNA news agency said quoting from the memorandum. "It is foolish of the US to calculate that the DPRK will come out to the talks and yield to it under its military pressure." (return to top)

2. PRC, ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Times ("NK DEMANDS 'BETTER ATMOSPHERE' FOR TALKS", None) reported that the DPRK wants a "better atmosphere" rather than any concrete "conditions" for it to return to the six-party talks on its nuclear weapons program, a senior official said Wednesday. The ROK and PRC shared the understanding about what the DPRK really wants during a meeting between their top negotiators, the official told reporters. "The two countries understand that North Korea is talking about an 'atmosphere' rather than 'preconditions,'" the official, deeply involved in the nuclear issue, said on condition of anonymity.

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3. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("N. KOREA WILL BE GRANTED DIRECT TALKS WITH U.S.: FM", 2005-03-02) reported that the DPRK will be granted one-on-one negotiations with the US if it returns to the six-party talks on its nuclear program, ROK's foreign minister said Wednesday. "In light of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's remarks that he expects direct talks with the US within the six-party framework, I think such concerns and demands by the North will well be accepted," Ban Ki-moon said during his weekly press briefing.

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4. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("TOP CHINA AIDE SAYS NEW DYNAMIC IN N.KOREA NUKE TALKS", 2005-03-02) reported that the PRC's top nuclear negotiator said Wednesday there was a new dynamic in talks to end the DPRK's nuclear ambitions. Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei was speaking as he met ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon in Seoul, part of intensive efforts by regional powers to coax Pyongyang back to the table. "Since there is a new change to the situation now, (Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing) sent me to exchange views with the South Koreans," the PRC envoy said.

(return to top) Kyodo ("CHINA FACES DIPLOMATIC BALANCING ACT OVER N. KOREA", 2005-0--02) reported that the PRC, the host of multilateral talks aimed at resolving the DPRK nuclear standoff, is facing a tricky diplomatic balancing act as it tries to revive the stalled negotiations by acting as a go-between for two key players. "China seriously wants to resume the talks, but it is in an awkward position," being caught between the conflicting demands of the US and DPRK, said Jin Canrong, professor at Beijing's Renmin University. (return to top)

5. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("US SAYS HAS NO PLAN TO ATTACK N.KOREA, WANTS TALKS", 2005-03-02) reported that the US on Wednesday accused the DPRK of using a perceived threat from the US to stall nuclear disarmament talks, saying US President George W. Bush has said he has no intention of attacking the DPRK. "One of North Korea's excuses for not returning to the talks is an alleged 'hostile US policy'", US ambassador Jackie Sanders said. "The president of the United States has said that we have no intention of attacking or invading North Korea," Sanders told the IAEA's board. "We are ready to return to the six-party talks at an early date without preconditions, and hope North Korea will reconsider its Feb. 10 statement and do the same," Sanders said.

(return to top) Choson Ilbo ("N.KOREA'S FRESH NUKE DECLARATION 'RHETORIC': WHITE HOUSE", 2005-03-02) reported that the White House on Tuesday downplayed reports that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il told an official PRC visitor that Pyongyang has nuclear weapons, saying such remarks were "a lot of rhetoric." "We hear a lot of rhetoric coming out of North Korea from time to time, and what our focus is on is working with the other parties to the six-party talks to get North Korea to come back to the table and talk about the way forward on the proposal that we outlined on the last round of talks," While House spokesman Scott McClellan told reporters. (return to top)

6. IAEA on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("IAEA TO ISSUE STATEMENT URGING N. KOREA'S RETURN TO SIX-WAY TALKS", 2005-03-02) reported that the governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency agreed to issue

a chairman's statement to express concerns over the DPRK's nuclear development program. A chairman's statement is considered a step more serious than the chairman's summary the international nuclear watchdog had previously issued on the DPRK's weapons program, the sources said. The statement will also urge the DPRK's return to the nuclear nonproliferation treaty (NPT), as well as its return to the stalled six-nation talks aimed at defusing the nuclear standoff, the sources said.

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7. Pakistan on DPRK Nuclear Program

Kyodo ("MUSHARRAF ACKNOWLEDGES NUCLEAR KNOW-HOW TRANSFER TO N. KOREA", 2005-03-02) reported that Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has acknowledged that the country's disgraced nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan may have given centrifuges or nuclear know-how to the DPRK and Iran. "He may have given some centrifuges or know-how, but they developed their nuclear programs from Western technology," Musharraf said in an interview Tuesday with Kyodo News.

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8. Japan Maritime Insurance Regulations

Asahi Shimbun ("INSURANCE CHECKS BEGIN AT ALL PORTS", 2005-03-02) reported that government inspectors on Tuesday began checking all foreign ships calling at ports in Japan to enforce a tough new ban on uninsured vessels-a step effectively targeted at the DPRK. Since only 2.5 percent of DPRK ships visiting Japan in fiscal 2003 carried such insurance, officials said the toughened law likely will result in a dramatic drop in port calls from that country. Targeting the DPRK in this fashion is intended to ratchet the pressure on Pyongyang to resolve the abduction issue once and for all, a government source said.

(return to top) Los Angeles Times ("REGULATING ITS SCRAP WITH N. KOREA", 2005-03-02) reported that for the last 20 years, fishing boats from the DPRK have made the overnight run across the sea separating the two countries, chugging into Sakaiminato and a few other Japanese ports to swap cargos of crab and clams for anything that might have value back home. These days, that means even Japanese garbage. Broken refrigerators and old kerosene stoves. Blackened bananas. Busted cassette players. But now Tokyo aims to choke off the flow as punishment for what it says is the DPRK's implausible explanation of what happened to at least eight Japanese citizens kidnapped by Pyongyang's agents in the 1970s and '80s. (return to top)

9. Japan - DPRK Trade Relations

Yomiuri Shimbun ("ORIGIN OF N. KOREAN CLAMS HIDDEN", 2005-03-02) reported that asari short-necked clams from the DPRK account for about 40 percent of the annual consumption of such clams in Japan. But, according to an Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry's survey in January on labels for asari clams at 650 retail stores, none were labeled as being from the DPRK. The clams from the DPRK are suspected of being relabeled domestic or PRC products to circumvent a consumer campaign to boycott DPRK marine products, launched in protest of the abduction of Japanese.

(return to top) Donga Ilbo ("INFLUENCE OF NORTH KOREAN OVERSEAS TRADE: RISING CHINA, FALLING JAPAN", 2005-03-02) reported that Japan has put restrictions on DPRK ships entering

Japanese ports starting March 1. Japan is trying to cut DPRK exports to Japan. However, it is doubtful how effective their independent sanctions against the DPRK will be. As a matter of fact, the sanctions could result in the PRC gaining much more influence over the DPRK. If Japan imposes sanctions on the DPRK, they have no choice but to rely more on the PRC. Japan may be relieved at this point right now if such an action takes place, but a few years down the road, Japan may lose all influence over the DPRK's economy. (return to top)

10. DPRK Exports to the ROK

Choson Ilbo ("NORTH KOREAN CIGARETTES SELL LIKE HOTCAKES ", 2005-03-02) reported that at a street stall in a traditional market in Dongdaemun, Seoul, tons of cigarettes from the DPRK were piled up in red-cartons Wednesday afternoon. The packs are marked, "Ryongsong Cigarette Company, MADE IN DPR KOREA." The cigarettes from the DPRK, which cost only half as much as ROK cigarettes, are selling like hot cakes in Seoul.

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11. US-ROK Joint Military Exercises

Korea Herald ("JOINT SOUTH KOREA-U.S. DRILL TO BE SCALED DOWN; AMERICAN MARINES TO SKIP ANNUAL EXERCISE", 2005-03-02) reported that US Marines will not be taking part in the peninsula's largest annual US-ROK military exercise this spring because of pressing military demands elsewhere, removing a key element from a drill that has long been a target of DPRK ire. The ROK-US Combined Forces will hold an RSOI - Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration exercise and the Foal Eagle drill previously known as Team Spirit - from March 19 to 25, a military source said. The scale of the exercise in terms of the number of participating US troops and logistics material will be considerably smaller apparently because US troops are overstretched with their heavy deployment in Iraq and in relief operations in South Asian countries devastated by the Dec. 26 earthquake-tsunami disasters.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("US, SOUTH KOREA TO STAGE WEEK-LONG WAR GAMES", 2005-03-02) reported that US and ROK troops will launch joint military exercises this month as part of annual war games designed to deter the DPRK, officials said. The annual exercise, called RSOI/FE 05, focuses on a mock battle aimed at evaluating command capabilities to receive US forces from abroad, with troops mobilized for anti-commando operations and computer war games. The US says the exercise is "defense oriented" and designed to improve the ability of allied forces to defend the ROK against external aggression. (return to top)

12. DPRK on Military Defense

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN LEADER VOWS TO COUNTER ENEMY'S GUN WITH CANNON", 2005-03-02) reported that the DPRK vowed to strengthen its "self-defense" military power, saying that it is foolish to expect mercy from the US, the DPRK's state-run Internet Web site said Wednesday. "In order to crush the US imperialists' ambitions, any nation in this world should take thorough self-defensive measures," the North's main newspaper, Rodong Sinmun, said in an article. "It's foolish to expect mercy from the US imperialists who wields powerful military power, including nuclear weapons."

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13. US Global Democracy Bill

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. DRAFT BILL SEEKS 'GLOBAL DEMOCRACY"", 2005-03-02) reported that two US lawmakers have completed a draft bill that aims to achieve "global democracy" by 2025. The bill, which lawmakers from both sides of the aisle have been working on since August, targets dictatorships such as the DPRK and has been known as the "end dictatorship and support democracy bill." Broken up into six chapters, it defines the promotion of democracy around the world as a fundamental goal of US foreign policy, claiming that it will protect US security and interests and ultimately lead to world peace.

(return to top) Donga Ilbo ("U.S.: 45 DESPOTIC COUNTRIES TO BE ERADICATED BY 2025 ", 2005-03-02) reported that on March 3, The Advance Democracy Act of 2005 will be introduced to both the US Senate and the House of Representatives. This bill will put the State Department's International Affairs vice-minister in charge of administering a plan to spread and increase democracy around the world. The bill will also create a Democracy Movement Performance division within the Department of State. A human rights delegate will be sent to American legations in despotic countries, and the US president will have the right to freeze or seize American assets in those states. The administrators of the law have been saying that "this law is not only for North Korea," but that "North Korea may be a primary target." (return to top)

14. ROK on Human Rights Conference

Korea Times ("AMERICAN NGO MEETING ON N. KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS ANNOYS SEOUL", 2005-03-02) reported that the ROK expressed its displeasure on Wednesday at Washington's decision to organize an international conference on the DPRK's human rights situation, saying that it will only aggravate inter-Korean relations. The US State Department reportedly decided to provide $1.7 million to Freedom House, a pro-democracy NGO in the US, this year to help it organize the conference at a yet-to-be-determined place. Friction between the ROK government and civic groups is expected to come to the fore as human rights activists in the ROK want to host it in Seoul for maximum effectiveness.

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15. ROK Accidental Weapons Discharge

Yonhap ("UN COMMAND TO PROBE FIRING INCIDENT ON INTER-KOREAN BORDER", 2005-0--02) reported that the US-led UN Command (UNC) has launched an investigation into a ROK soldier's firing of live rounds into the DPRK, the Defense Ministry said Wednesday. The ROK said one of its solider accidentally fired tracer rounds. "As soon as the UNC's investigation is over, we will send its result to the North via telegram," said Shin Hyun-don, a spokesman at the Defense Ministry. The DPRK is demanding the ROK punish the guard who allegedly fired the shots and extend a promise not to permit similar accidents.

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16. DPRK - Indonesian Relations

KCNA news agency ("INDONESIAN ENVOY HIGHLIGHTS CLOSE TIES WITH NORTH KOREA AT BIRTHDAY RECEPTION", 2005-03-02) reported that a reception was given by Indonesian ambassador to the DPRK Hendrati Sukendar Munthe on 1 March on the occasion of the birthday of

leader Kim Jong-il. The ambassador pointed out that the friendly relations between the two countries provided by President Sukarno and President Kim Il-sung have been carried forward and developed under the care of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and leader Kim Jong-il and the two countries will further expand and develop the cooperative relations in all fields including politics, economy and culture in the future.

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17. Sino - ROK Joint Ecological Project

Asia in Focus ("CHINA, S.KOREA JOIN TO HELP PRESERVE YELLOW SEA", 2005-03-02) reported that the Yellow Sea, located between the ROK and PRC, is to be the focus of a joint ecological project run by the two countries. The program, dubbed "the Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem Project," is crucial for conserving the Yellow Sea surrounded by large population and fast-growing industrial centers. Under the US$24.29 million program, ROK and PRC researchers will conduct on-site research on five major areas - undersea resources, ecology, pollution, investment, ecological diversity - in the Yellow Sea until 2009. The collected data will be used to determine which course of action the two countries should take to preserve the ecosystem of the sea.

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18. Russo-ROK Defense Relations

The Vladivostok News ("S. KOREAN MILITARY DELEGATION LANDS IN KHABAROVSK", 2005-0--02) reported that a ROK Armed Forces delegation arrived on a four-day goodwill visit in the Russian Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk on Monday to observe local military training facilities. The ROK officials have been invited to visit the Far Eastern military training center where they will be shown the conditions under which Russian soldiers and officers serve, the press service of the Far Eastern military district said. The two sides are expected to discuss the possibility of increased cooperation between the defense ministries of their respective countries, the press center reported.

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19. ROK on ROK-Japanese Relations

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL TO HONOR SOUTH KOREA-JAPAN NORMALIZATION PACT", 2005-03-02) reported that the ROK's foreign minister said Seoul would honor its 40-year-old normalization agreement with Japan, amid calls to scrap the pact after President Roh Moo-Hyun urged Tokyo to offer compensation for its colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. "The South Korean-Japanese treaty has served as the basic framework for bilateral ties in various aspects over the past 40 years," Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon said. "It is not realistic to negotiate the treaty again."

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20. Japan on ROK-Japanese Relations

Choson Ilbo ("TOKYO DOWNPLAYS ROH'S COMPENSATION DEMAND", 2005-03-02) reported that the Japanese government on Wednesday downplayed remarks by President Roh Moo-hyun that Japan must face its historic responsibility and if necessary compensate ROK victims of colonial rule. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Hosoda Hiroyuki told a press conference, "I understand [Roh's comments] were that the two nations needed to work a bit harder." But the island nation's media

devoted extensive and largely sympathetic coverage to Roh's remarks in his March 1 Independence Movement Day address on Tuesday.

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21. Russian Sea-Based ICBM Test

Xinhua ("RUSSIA TO TEST SEA-BASED MISSILE SYSTEM", 2005-03-02) reported that Russia will begin flight tests of a new sea-based intercontinental ballistic missile, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov said on Tuesday, according to Itar-Tass news agency. The minister did not say when the test of the strategic missile system, which could be armed with a nuclear warhead and modernized for land-based use in the future, will start.

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22. US on PRC Arms Ban

The New York Times ("U.S. LAWMAKERS WARN EUROPE ON ARMS SALES TO CHINA", 2005-0--02) reported that senior members of Congress from both parties emerged from a meeting with President Bush on Tuesday warning Europe that if it lifts its ban on arms sales to the PRC, the US may retaliate with severe restrictions on technology sales to European companies. The warning came after Mr. Bush, on his trip to Europe last week, twice cautioned the Europeans not to lift the restrictions, in place for 15 years. His insistence was based, at least in part, on a new US intelligence assessment that Beijing is rapidly becoming better equipped to carry out a sophisticated invasion of Taiwan and to counter any effort by the US to react to such an attack, administration officials and intelligence analysts say.

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23. PRC Protests

Kyodo News ("500 PETITIONERS BELIEVED DETAINED IN CHINA AHEAD OF MEETINGS", 2005-03-02) reported that about 500 petitioners who gathered in Beijing to complain about government corruption, layoffs and other woes were detained by police on Wednesday, a day ahead of the start of the PRC's annual legislative season, sources close to the petitioners said. PRC authorities detained the petitioners from all over the PRC, including farmers and laborers, after they crowded the complaints offices at the State Council, the PRC's government, and other official buildings, according to the sources.

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24. PRC Legislative Session

The Associated Press ("CHINA'S LEGISLATURE GEARS UP FOR SESSION", 2005-03-02) reported that the annual meeting of the PRC's legislature may be little more than tightly scripted political theater, but in a country where all decisions are made in secret, it offers a rare peek behind the curtain. Government-picked delegates to the National People's Congress will gather for pomp-filled ceremonies in Beijing beginning Saturday to pass legislation already approved by the ruling Communist Party. Topping this year's agenda is an anti-secession law aimed at curbing pro-independence sentiment in Taiwan, a self-ruling island that the PRC insists is part of its territory.

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25. Taiwan on Anti-Secession Law

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN PREMIER SLAMS CHINA'S PLANNED "ANTI-SECESSION" LAW", 2005-03-02) reported that Taiwan Premier Frank Hsieh has warned the PRC's planned "anti-secession" law would hurt cross-strait ties and urged the world community to stop Beijing from enacting it. "China lacks wisdom in trying to enact the 'anti-secession' law which will destroy the basis of co-existence for the two sides... and cause negative impact to cross-strait exchanges," Hsieh told a cabinet meeting.

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26. Sino - US Relations

Xinhua ("MORE THAN HALF BELIEVE US CONTAINING CHINA", 2005-03-02) reported that more than half of the PRC said the US government is containing the PRC, while 66.1 per cent said they liked American people, a recent survey showed. The survey, done by Beijing-based Global Times in cooperation with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, found that 49.2 per cent of the responders consider the US a competitor, and 60.5 per cent said that how to resolve the Taiwan issue will definitely influence Sino-US bilateral relations.

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27. Hong Kong Official Resigns

The New York Times ("TOP HONG KONG OFFICIAL IS SAID TO BE CLOSE TO RESIGNING POST", 2005-03-02) reported that Tung Chee-hwa, Hong Kong's chief executive, is preparing to step down after coming under heavy criticism from Beijing and from local residents, two people familiar with the decision said Tuesday and Wednesday. Both declined to detail when he might resign. But a newspaper in Hong Kong, The Standard, citing unidentified sources in Beijing, reported Wednesday that Mr. Tung had submitted his resignation more than two weeks ago and that it had been accepted at an emergency meeting of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo.

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28. Sino - Australian Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE OFFICIALS BLOCK RELEASE OF CHINA/AUSTRALIA TRADE STUDY", 2005-03-02) reported that PRC officials have blocked publication of a joint study showing that big gains would be made from a free trade deal with Australia -- a move seen as signaling a hard negotiating line against Australian farm interests. Long Yongtu, a veteran PRC trade negotiator, indicated his country would not increase import quotas for Australian agricultural commodities because that would discriminate against the US and further antagonize the trade relationship between those two countries.

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