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I. United States

1. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("CHINESE PRESIDENT SAID TO OFFER HELP RESTARTING NUCLEAR TALKS WITH NORTH KOREA", 2005-03-23) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao met with the DPRK's premier on Wednesday and offered to help restart nuclear talks, the PRC's government said, a day after the premier indicated the DPRK might be willing to return to negotiations. Hu told Premier Pak Pong Ju that Beijing is willing to "play a constructive role in restarting the six-party talks," the government's Xinhua News Agency reported.

[\(return to top\)](#) The Associated Press ("N. KOREA IS WILLING TO RETURN TO NUCLEAR TALKS, CHINA SAYS", 2005-03-23) reported that PRC officials said that the DPRK's premier had told them the country might be willing to return to nuclear disarmament talks, despite its threat to indefinitely boycott the negotiations and its claim that it had 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 Chu told his PRC counterpart, Wen Jiabao, on Tuesday, a spokesman for the PRC Foreign Ministry said. [\(return to top\)](#) Donga Ilbo ("HU JINTAO LIKELY TO VISIT NORTH KOREA IN NOVEMBER", 2005-03-23) reported that on March 23, it was disclosed that during a call from DPRK Cabinet Minister Park Bong Ju, who is currently visiting Beijing, PRC President Hu Jintao emphasized the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. A source in Beijing forecasted, "President Hu's concrete plans and a time for visiting North Korea will be discussed through diplomatic channels between the two countries," and added, "If the six-party talks resume, he might visit North Korea before participating in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit meeting held in November in Busan." [\(return to top\)](#)

2. Sino-DPRK Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, DPRK VOW TO ADVANCE FRIENDSHIP", 2005-03-23) reported that two top officials of the PRC and the DPRK vowed Wednesday to advance friendship between the two countries. The PRC and the DPRK have been witnessing growth of their friendship in recent years, Jia Qinglin, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), told visiting DPRK Premier Pak Bong Ju. PRC leader Hu Jintao and DPRK leader Kim Jong-il have reached important consensus on bilateral ties and many other issues of common concern, Jia said. It is in the common interests of both sides for them to consolidate and develop their friendship, he added.

[\(return to top\)](#) KCNA ("DPRK PREMIER TOURS CHINESE BEER FACTORY", 2005-03-23) reported that Premier of the DPRK Cabinet Pak Pong-ju on an official goodwill visit to the PRC today visited the Yanqing Beer Factory on the outskirts of Beijing. He was accompanied by Vice-Premier Ro Tu-chol and other members of his party. After being briefed on the history of the factory, the premier and his party went round the raw material, fermenting and packing processes with keen interest. The premier and his party visited the Nokia Co., Ltd. on 22 March. [\(return to top\)](#)

3. Inter - Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREA TO EASE RESTRICTIONS ON CROSS-BORDER TRAFFIC", 2005-03-23) reported that the ROK will ease regulations on inter-Korean trade and cross-border traffic as the two Koreas move towards greater economic cooperation, the Unification Ministry said Wednesday (23 March). Under the new regulations, which are expected to go into effect next week, the ROK will abolish military inspections for its vehicles crossing over to the DPRK border town of Kaesong. In addition, ROK citizens will be allowed to visit the Kaesong industrial park simply by undergoing inspections at immigration and the quarantine offices. The ROK also plans to simplify the procedures for bringing goods produced in the DPRK's industrial park across the border, the officials said.

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4. Russian Oil Exports to the DPRK

Donga Ilbo ("RUSSIA COULD RESUME CRUDE OIL SHIPMENTS TO NORTH KOREA", 2005-03-23) reported that DPRK and Russia are seeking for cooperative measures on energy by using railways. It shows that it is probable for Russia's oil supply to the DPRK, which was blocked in 1990, to resume. The new Russian railway company RZD's president, Gennady Fadeyev, who is currently visiting Far East Asia, said on March 22, "Russian companies are planning to invest in the joint railway project connecting Hasan, Russia, and Najin, North Korea," Fadeyev said, "it is under way based on the consultation of the concerned parties," showing that the DPRK has already agreed to this project.

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5. DPRK Economic Reforms

Korea Times ("NK CRAWLS TOWARDS MARKET ECONOMY", 2005-03-23) reported that Pyongyang has reduced idle manpower in its ruling system and picked up young experts to run economy-related institutions, the Korea Institute for National Unification (KINU) said Tuesday. Business owners in Pyongyang are frequently found to be soliciting foreigners, said Kim Young-yoon, a KINU official in charge of researching the DPRK's economy. The introduction of a salary system was one of the biggest reform measures established in June 2002. "Now applicants have to pass economics and politics exams to become public officials," Kim said. Economic changes in the DPRK will be visible "in the near future" as universities are teaching market economy and young technocrats in their 40s are taking charge of economy-related policymaking bodies, he said.

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6. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

Pravda ("NORTH KOREA WANTS BOTH PEACE AND PROGRESS", 2005-03-23) reported that DPRK Prime Minister Pak Pong Ju met with PRC Prime Minister Wen Jiabao as Beijing continues efforts to convince Pyongyang to return to stalled nuclear disarmament talks. PRC state television quoted Mr. Pak as telling his host that the DPRK does not oppose the six-party talks, nor has it abandoned the process. The announcer quoted the DPRK official as saying Tuesday that his country is ready to return to talks as soon as conditions are "mature." However, there were no details on what he meant by that.

[\(return to top\)](#) Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREAN PREMIER DELIVERS KIM'S LETTER TO HU", 2005-03-23) reported that DPRK Premier Pak Pong-Ju met PRC President Hu Jintao and gave

him a letter from reclusive leader Kim Jong-Il, after the Stalinist state said it is still committed to talks about its nuclear program. Pak met Hu at the Great Hall of the People after spending the morning at Yanjing Brewery, one of PRC's most successful beer producers, on the second day of a six-day visit. In talks with Premier Wen Jiabao Tuesday, he said his country was ready to resume six-party talks on curbing its nuclear weapons programs, but only when conditions were right. ([return to top](#))

7. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Japan Times ("U.S. URGES N KOREA TO RETURN TO TALKS", 2005-03-23) reported that the US on Tuesday reiterated its call for the DPRK to return to the six-party talks on its nuclear ambitions after DPRK Premier Pak Pong Ju's statement that Pyongyang would return when "conditions are mature." "We believe that North Korea should come back to the talks immediately, that conditions are ideal, that there's no reason to stay away from the talks," State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said.

([return to top](#)) Reuters ("U.S. SETS JUNE DEADLINE FOR N.KOREA TALKS - SOURCE", 2005-0-23) reported that the US has set a de facto deadline of late June for the DPRK to return to six-party talks on ending its nuclear arms program, a diplomatic source in Tokyo said on Wednesday. "Obviously, one of the options that the United States has in mind beyond that is to refer the matter to the U.N. Security Council," the source added. Rice gave her strongest hint yet on Monday that Washington might resort to sanctions against the DPRK, telling a news conference in Beijing that it would have to consider other means if Pyongyang continued to prevaricate over the talks. ([return to top](#))

8. US - ROK Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("SOUTH KOREAN LINKS TO U.S. CALLED FRAYED", 2005-03-23) reported that on her return from an eight-day trip to the US, Park Geun-hye, chairwoman of Grand National Party, told reporters yesterday that relations between the ROK and the US are far worse than Koreans imagine they are. "I met various politicians," said Ms. Park. "If the mistrust that prevails among the politicians spreads to the general public of the United States, bilateral ties between the two countries will face greater problems."

([return to top](#)) Chosun Ilbo ("NEW AMBASSADOR SAYS PARK 'CONFUSED AMERICA,'" , 2005-0-23) reported that the ROK's Ambassador to the US Hong Seok-hyun said Tuesday that Grand National Party chairwoman Park Geun-hye's comments on the DPRK nuclear dispute during her recent US visit left Americans confused. Hong said Park's call for the US to make the DPRK "a bold offer" and deploy a special envoy to the DPRK to resolve the dispute seemed to have left US figures baffled at how little the DPRK policies of the ROK's opposition party differ from those of the government. But he added Park's comments highlighted the importance of bipartisan diplomacy. ([return to top](#))

9. ROK on ROK-US Relations

Korea Times ("ROH ON TIGHTROPE BETWEEN US, CHINA", 2005-03-23) reported that in what may be an apparent shift in policy, President Roh Moo-hyun has indicated that the nation would no longer be locked into its alliance with the US and Japan. Roh is seeking to maintain closer relations with the PRC instead of sticking to the trilateral alliance in a bid to more efficiently cope with the changing security environment surrounding the Korean Peninsula, government sources said. "We will play a 'balancing role' to help ensure peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia and on the Korean

Peninsula," Roh said in his speech delivered at a commencement ceremony of the Korea Third Military Academy Tuesday.

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10. US on DPRK Nuclear Transfer Allegation

Korea Herald ("U.S. DENIES COVERING UP N.K. NUKE SALE", None) reported that the US State Department yesterday denied a recent Washington Post report that it misled allies about the DPRK's nuclear export to increase pressure on the DPRK. In a statement released by the US Embassy in Seoul, the State Department said the story was "inaccurate." "The United States government has no evidence that the Government of Pakistan authorized the transfer," the statement said. The Washington Post reported the Bush administration told its Asian allies earlier this year that Pyongyang had exported nuclear material to Libya. The report alleged it was Pakistan that sold the material to Libya, citing two officials "with detailed knowledge of the transaction."

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11. US Nuclear Sub in the ROK

Choson Ilbo ("GREENS SEE RED AT U.S. NUCLEAR SUB IN KOREAN WATERS", 2005-03-23) reported that environmental activists Green Korea United and the Defense Ministry on Wednesday exchanged verbal broadsides Wednesday over a US nuclear-powered submarine anchored at the naval base in the southern port city of Chinhae. Green Korea United says the sub SSN-688-LA's mooring at the Chinhae naval base breaches the 1992 Joint Declaration on Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Defense Ministry denies this. A USFK spokesman agreed. "It's true that a nuclear-powered submarine is anchored at a Korean naval base to take part in a military exercise. But no nuclear weapons are loaded on the submarine," he said.

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12. DPRK on US Troop Realignment

Yonhap news ("N. KOREA ACCUSES U.S. OF WARMING UP FOR PREEMPTIVE STRIKE", None) reported that the DPRK's official newspaper on Wednesday accused the US of planning a preemptive attack on Pyongyang by restructuring its forces in the ROK, the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency reported. Rodong Sinmun claimed in a commentary that the 2nd US Infantry Division is undergoing a structural reform to enhance its military capabilities in possible conflicts in the region, the KCNA report said. The DPRK newspaper argued the change are preparations to "take preemptive nuclear strikes" against the DPRK as well as Russia and the PRC, if necessary, and said the US forces are trying to make the ROK a permanent foothold for its military presence.

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13. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Itar-Tass ("RUSSIAN MINISTER, NORTH KOREAN ENVOY DISCUSS SIX-WAY TALKS", 2005-03-23) reported that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Alekseyev and the DPRK ambassador to Moscow, Pak Ui-chun, have discussed "issues linked with the resumption of the six-way talks on settling the nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula", ITAR-TASS has learnt from the Russian Foreign Ministry today. Moscow "is in favor of resuming, as soon as possible, the six-party talks on

the nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula and reaching solutions which satisfy all the sides", Aleksandr Alekseyev said.

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14. Ireland on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Associated Press ("IRISH PRESIDENT SUPPORTS FOR PEACEFUL RESOLUTION TO NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR CRISIS", 2005-03-23) reported that visiting Irish President Mary McAleese on Wednesday pledged support for a peaceful resolution to the DPRK nuclear crisis during a meeting with ROK President Roh Moo-hyun, the president's office said. McAleese also expressed hope for the creation of a cooperative structure among Asia-Pacific nations similar to the European Union, Roh's office said in a statement.

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15. ROK on Inter-Korean Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("SOUTH'S AID TO NORTH DEPENDS ON TALKS" ", None) 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 Pyongyang resumes bilateral talks. In an interview with the Joongang Ilbo, 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.

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16. International Aid to the DPRK

Agence France Presse ("N KOREAN CONTROLS BLOCK AID GROUPS FROM HELPING NEEDY: MSF", 2005-03-23) reported that the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) said on Wednesday that DPRK authoritarianism was blocking aid groups from helping those in need. The French group was one of the rare aid organizations with a presence in the DPRK for three years until leaving in 1998. "If we could have ability to access the needs and work directly in contact with the population and be able to measure the impact on the population we work with, we would certainly consider going back," said Marine Buissonniere, secretary general of the humanitarian group.

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17. DPRK Climate Change

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG MAY BECOME AS WARM AS JEJU ISLAND IN FUTURE: REPORT", 2005-0-23) reported that if climate change continues at its current rate, Pyongyang will be transformed in a few decades into a warm place like the ROK resort island of Jeju, a DPRK broadcaster said Wednesday. Marking World Meteorological Day, the (DPRK) Korean Central Television Station (KCTVS) broadcast an in-depth report on how the weather in the DPRK has changed in recent years and affected the lives of the DPRK people and their economy. The country has been experiencing milder winters, with its average winter temperature rising 4.8 degrees over the past 100 years, the KCTVS said. Its overall yearly temperature increased 1.9 degrees during the same time span, three times higher than the 0.6 degree rise for the entire world.

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18. DPRK on Wind Energy

KCNA ("DPRK DEVELOPS WIND POWER TO EASE ELECTRICITY SHORTAGES", 2005-03-23) reported that the Natural Energy Development and Utilization Centre under the Academy of Sciences of the DPRK has developed a new type of wind power water pump. It has already paid off in various parts on the west coast including Kwail County, South Hwanghae Province for the supply of drinking, industrial and irrigation water. The government has directed many efforts to research for making an effective use of natural energy in accordance with the world trend of developing wind-power water pump, taking into consideration the electricity shortage of the nation.

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19. ROK-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Joongang Ilbo ("ROH SEES 'DIPLOMATIC WAR' WITH JAPAN ", 2005-03-23) reported that using unusually strong language, President Roh Moo-hyun criticized Japan yesterday, saying that Tokyo's policies and offenses have reached a point that ROK can no longer tolerate. In a letter to the public, released in a Blue House gazette, Mr. Roh said that a "diplomatic war" is conceivable between the two countries. The ROK, he said, would ask Japan to reconsider its record of justifying past damage it had done to its neighbors. "We cannot sit back and watch Japan justify its history of aggression and colonization and pursue hegemonic power again," Mr. Roh said.

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20. Fischer Case

Reuters ("REPORT: JAPAN TO LET BOBBY FISCHER GO TO ICELAND", 2005-03-23) reported that Japan will release former world chess champion Bobby Fischer, wanted in the US, so he can go to Iceland where he has been granted citizenship, Kyodo news agency said on Wednesday, quoting Japan's Justice Ministry. Fischer has been held in Japan since July, when he was arrested for traveling on what US officials said was an invalid passport. Justice Ministry officials were not immediately available to comment on the report.

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21. EU on PRC Arms Ban

Washington Post ("E.U. WAVERS ON ALLOWING ARMS SALES TO BEIJING", 2005-03-23) reported that the European Union's consensus to lift a 15-year embargo on arms sales to the PRC has fallen apart under increasing pressure from the US, a new PRC threat to Taiwan and intensified criticism at home, officials and analysts said Tuesday. While President Jacques Chirac of France remained committed to resuming weapons sales, officials said the leaders of Britain and several other European countries are backing away from making an immediate decision.

[\(return to top\)](#) The Associated Press ("EU OFFICIAL CALLS CHINA EMBARGO 'UNFAIR'", 2005-0-23) reported that maintaining the European Union's 15-year arms embargo against PRC, imposed after the 1989 clampdown on democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square, is "unfair," and European leaders are leaning toward lifting it, the bloc's foreign policy chief said Wednesday. Javier Solana told reporters at an EU summit that the 25-nation bloc was still assessing the issue but was moving

toward "a political decision to end a situation that we think is unfair to maintain sanctions against China so many years after" the event for which they were imposed. [\(return to top\)](#)

22. PRC on Arms Ban

The New York Times ("EUROPE'S SHIFT ON EMBARGO PLACES TAIWAN AT CENTER STAGE", 2005-03-23) reported that reports of a shift in European plans to lift an arms embargo on the PRC have sent a sobering message to the PRC's new leadership, underscoring the sensitivity of its Taiwan policy and the continued dominance of the US, PRC analysts say. US and EU officials said this week that the EU might now delay its plan to lift the embargo until next year at the earliest, dealing a blow to one of the PRC's major foreign policy goals.

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23. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("REPORT: CHINA FACES SEVERE WATER SHORTAGES", 2005-03-23) reported that the PRC's already severe water shortages are worsening due to heavy pollution of lakes and aquifers and urban development projects with a big thirst for water, such as lawns and fountains, state media reported. More than 100 cities have inadequate water supplies, with more than half "seriously threatened," the official Xinhua News Agency cited Qiu Baoxing, a vice minister of construction, as saying. "The uneven distribution of the limited resource and serious pollution further deteriorate the situation," Qiu said.

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24. PRC Media Control

The Associated Press ("CHINA WARNS JOURNALISTS WHO TAKE BRIBE", 2005-03-23) reported that the PRC has warned journalists that they will be banned from reporting for at least five years if they are found taking bribes, making up stories or are convicted of crimes. A regulation issued by the Communist Party's publicity department and the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television says that journalists face "severe penalties" for corruption and false reporting, the official Xinhua News Agency said in a report late Tuesday.

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Nautilus Institute

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

nautilus@nautilus.org