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1. Six Party Talks

Associated Press ("U.S. NUCLEAR NEGOTIATOR TO VISIT S. KOREA", 2006-05-17) reported that the top US nuclear negotiator will visit the ROK next week to focus on ways to resume the stalled six-way talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons program, officials said Wednesday. During his two-day trip, US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill ''plans to discuss important issue between South Korea and the United States, including six-party talks,'' the ROK's Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon told reporters.

(return to top) Korea Times ("NK URGED TO ABANDON NUKES FOR 'BRIGHTER FUTURE' ", 2006-05-17) reported that Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday urged Pyongyang to return to the six-party talks, saying the DPRK will have a much ``brighter and better'' future should it give up its nuclear weapons programs. (return to top)

2. Kim Dae-jung's DPRK Visit

Korea Times ("NK AGREES TO KIM DAE-JUNG'S VISIT IN JUNE ", 2006-05-17) reported that the ROK and the DPRK Wednesday agreed that former President Kim Dae-jung will visit Pyongyang at the end of next month for four days but the two sides have yet to agree on the exact dates and the means of transportation. They will meet late this month in Kaesong, DPRK, to finalize the details of Kim's schedule and the means of transportation, a Unification Ministry spokesman said Wednesday.

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3. Inter-Korean Military Summit

KBS News ("N. KOREA INSISTS ON MARINE BORDER DISCUSSION", 2006-05-17) reported that the DPRK has insisted on discussing the inter-Korean maritime border in the Yellow Sea in the inter-Korean military talks. The DPRK on Wednesday said no reason exists on postponing the discussion and demanded that the two sides take up the matter in the talks at the truce village of Panmunjom. Pyongyang also refused to recognize Seoul's principle of respecting the border, saying the 1992 inter-Korean agreement on cooperation and reconciliation makes no mention of it.

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4. Inter-Korean Group Reconciliation

Asahi Shimbun ("THE 'HISTORIC' MEETING, TWO KOREAN GROUPS AGREE TO RECONCILE", 2006-05-17) reported that the leaders of pro-Seoul and pro-Pyongyang Korean residents in Japan shook hands Wednesday, gave each other a hug and agreed to end decades of confrontation between their groups. The agreement was reached in what Ha Byung Ok, leader of the pro-Seoul Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan), and So Man Sul, chairman of the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryun), described as "a historic meeting" at Chongryun headquarters in Tokyo.

(return to top) Kyodo News ("EXPERTS SEE INTER-KOREAN RECONCILIATION EFFECT IN MINDAN, CHONGRYON", 2006-05-17) reported that the reconciliation effort by the DPRK and the ROK must have been the major reason the two Korean residents' groups in Japan agreed Wednesday to end their decades-old conflict, experts say. The meeting between the leaders of the pro-Seoul Korean Residents Union in Japan, or Mindan, and the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, or Chongryon, "reflects the relationship of the two Koreas," said Toshio

Miyatsuka, professor of modern Korean history at Yamanashi Gakuin University. (return to top)

5. ROK-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement

Dong-a Ilbo ("ONE HUNDRED GAESONG PRODUCT ITEMS RECOGNIZED AS “MADE IN KOREA”", 2006-05-17) reported that on May 16, the ROK and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) reached an agreement on the modality for freeing their goods, a core part of a free trade agreement (FTA). Under the agreement, the goods produced in the DPRK’s Gaesong industrial complex will be recognized as RO Korean if the products meet certain terms. Only 100 items out of the products made in Gaesong industrial complex will be recognized as “Made in Korea,” as long as more than 60 percent of the materials from which they are made are of ROK origin or if the added value of ROK materials put in the product is more than 40 percent.

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6. DPRK Abduction Issue

Kyodo News ("N. KOREA REACTS TO BUSH'S MEETING WITH YOKOTA WITH CRITICISM", 2006-05-17) reported that the DPRK on Wednesday criticized Japan and the US over last month's meeting between US President George W. Bush and the mother of a Japanese citizen abducted by DPRK agents, calling it part of the countries' campaign to "stifle" Pyongyang. "Both the U.S. and Japan are colluding with each other in the smear campaign over the (abduction) issue as they share interests in pursuing a hostile policy toward the DPRK," the DPRK’s official KCNA said in a commentary.

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7. Japan-ROK Relations

Mainichi Shimbun ("FOREIGN MINISTERS OF JAPAN, S. KOREA TO MEET IN DOHA IN LATE MAY", 2006-05-17) reported that Japan and the ROK, which eye a meeting of their foreign ministers on the sidelines of an international forum to be held in Doha, Qatar, have agreed on a date, ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon said. Japan and the ROK have earlier agreed to hold their foreign ministers' meeting on the sidelines of a meeting of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue to be held in Doha, Qatar, May 23-24.

(return to top) Kyodo News ("UN CHIEF ANNAN URGES JAPAN, S KOREA TO IMPROVE STRAINED TIES", 2006-05-17) reported that UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called on Japan and the ROK to improve their relations in his talks Wednesday in Tokyo with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. After his meeting with Koizumi at the premier's official residence, Annan told reporters that the two ''talked about Korea-Japan relationships and the need to reduce tensions and improve relations.'' (return to top)

8. Japan Iraq Role

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN TELLS UN IT IS READY FOR IRAQ AIRLIFTS", 2006-05-17) reported that Japan said it was willing to transport goods and personnel in Iraq to support the UN as its historic troop mission in the war-torn country winds down. The air transport proposal was aired earlier this month in Japanese newspapers, which said the government was looking at a way to stay engaged in Iraq without maintaining ground troops.

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9. Japan-ROK Territorial Dispute

Donga Ilbo ("JAPAN COULD GET 'TAKESHIMA' TEXTBOOKS", 2006-05-17) reported that Japanese vice ministers argued that primary, junior high, and high school textbooks should state Takeshima or Dokdo as Japanese territory at a Parliamentary undersecretaries' meeting, Sankei Shimbun reported on May 12. Hiroshi Hase, Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, said at a meeting the day before, "Of 91 kinds of Japanese primary and secondary school textbooks, only 29 books touched upon Takeshima issue and merely three of them clearly stated the issue."

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10. PRC Dissident Trial

The Los Angeles Times ("WRITER CHARGED WITH SUBVERSION IS SENTENCED", 2006-05-17) reported that a freelance writer was sentenced to 12 years in a PRC prison on subversion charges. Yang Tianshui was convicted of posting articles on foreign websites, receiving money from abroad and helping a would-be opposition party, said his lawyer, Li Jianqiang, who maintained that his client was innocent.

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11. PRC Protests

Reuters ("PROTESTERS BREAK SILENCE ON CULTURAL REVOLUTION", 2006-05-17) reported that dozens of Shanghai residents protested on Wednesday over their forced relocation to a remote corner of the PRC in the 1960s, defying the official silence on the 40th anniversary of the chaotic Cultural Revolution. The 150 or so protesters, many carrying signs reading "there's nothing wrong with petitioning", gathered outside the Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, which includes a petitions office where citizens can bring complaints to the government.

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12. PRC Typhoon

BBC News ("THOUSANDS FLEE FROM CHINA TYPHOON", 2006-05-17) reported that more than 600,000 people have been evacuated from the southern PRC as Typhoon Chanchu surges towards the Guangdong province. Typhoon Chanchu is expected to make landfall in Guangdong province later on Wednesday or early on Thursday.

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