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I. United States

1. PRC DPRK Smuggling Trial

Reuters ("CHINA PUTS SEVEN ON TRIAL FOR SMUGGLING N KOREANS," Beijing, 12/06/02) reported that the PRC has put seven people, including an ROK citizen, on trial and arrested 11 more accused of smuggling 70 DPRK aslyum-seekers across the border, state media and officials said on Friday. "Between August 2001 and April 2002, the seven suspects colluded with criminals in China and organized a number of illegal crossings along the border under instructions from overseas organizations and groups," the official Xinhua news agency said. Xinhua identified the two main suspects as Cui Fengyi from the ROK and Jin Jingri from DPRK. There was no immediate comment from the DPRK or ROK embassies about the two, whose names were likely to be spelt Choi Bong-il and Kim Kyong-lee in the Korean romanized script. The trial was underway at the Intermediate People's Court of Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in the northeastern province of Jilin, which borders DPRK, court officials said. "The verdict will be made soon. Judges on the panel are working hard to beat the deadline." The police had arrested 11 other suspects, Xinhua said, giving no date of their trial.

2. ROK Anti-US Hunger Strike

The Agence France-Presse ("PRIESTS ON FIFTH DAY OF HUNGER STRIKE IN ANTI-US CAMPAIGN IN S KOREA," 12/06/02) reported that a group of 25 Roman Catholic priests has entered the fifth day of their hunger strike near the US embassy to protest the deaths of two schoolgirls hit by a US military vehicle in June. Nearby, a group of 20 Buddhists led by a monk carried out an elaborate ritual prayer for the souls of the two teenagers, bowing, kneeling, and touching the ground with their foreheads. The priests from the Catholic Priests' Association for Justice (CPAJ) were camped out at a street corner some 50 meters (yards) from the US embassy, protected by wire fences and lines of riot police. "For the past 58 years of their presence in this country, they have not changed at all. They have no guilt feeling for their crimes," said the Reverend Mun Kyu-Hyun. "The innocent deaths of the young girls aroused South Koreans to the growing question -- what are the US troops doing in this country?" he said.

3. PRC Economic Status

The New York Times (James Brooke, "CHINA IS USING ITS NEW ECONOMIC WEIGHT TO OUTMANEUVER JAPAN," Tokyo, 12/06/02) carried an analytical article that reported that while backed by an economy four times the size of the PRC's, Japan still doles out foreign aid to its enormous - and thriving - neighbor. But to judge by the PRC's recent slights and snubs of Japan, a visitor might think that the PRC is already the economic power of Asia. One day, the PRC slapped emergency tariffs on steel imports from Japan. The next day, Nippon Steel Corporation obligingly announced a $1 billion joint venture with the PRC's largest steel maker to build a state-of-the-art rolled-sheet steel factory in China. When Lee Teng-hui, a former president of Taiwan, applied for a visa to visit Japan, where he studied in college, Japan's Foreign Ministry denied the request, citing a desire to avoid provoking PRC "rancor." In the same week, the PRC showed little concern for Japanese rancor when it expelled a Japanese defense attache and a Japanese human rights worker. "It shows a lack of confidence on the Japanese side, and strong confidence on the China side," said C. H. Kwan, an economist in Japan. Japan, rich and with an aging population, increasingly appears intimidated by the PRC, which is striving and bursting with youth. The PRC's leadership recently set an ambitious goal of quadrupling its $1 trillion economy in 20 years. Japan's goals are much more modest: ending deflation and bringing bad bank loans under control by 2005.

4. Cross-Straits Direct Links

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA CALLS FOR TALKS ON DETAILS OF INDIRECT TAIWANESE CHARTER FLIGHTS," Beijing, 12/06/02) reported that the PRC called on Taiwan on Friday to authorize private groups to begin talks with PRC counterparts on indirect charter flights that would permit Taiwanese planes to land into the PRC for the first time in over 50 years. The talks should begin as soon as possible on technical details related to the flights, tentatively scheduled for next year's Lunar New Year holiday, said a spokesman for the Civil Aviation Administration of China who gave only his surname, Yang. "We want to hold non-governmental talks but since the Taiwan side has yet to respond, no dates have been set yet," said Yang, who works in CAAC's office for Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau affairs. In Taipei, a Transportation Ministry official said technical issues, such as ground operations for planes, could be settled by the airlines themselves. Lee Lung-wen, a ministry department head, also said the PRC should make clear its terms to allow Taiwanese airlines to quickly apply for the charter flights. The PRC refuses to recognize Taiwan's government and demands all contact be termed unofficial. Although Taiwan wants to be treated as an equal, President Chen Shui-bian has earlier said he would be willing to authorize trade groups to negotiate flights. The call for talks from the PRC was the most positive sign yet for the charter flights, which both sides hope will lend momentum to stalled talks on allowing ships and planes to travel directly across the 160-kilometer-wide (100-mile-wide) Taiwan Strait.

5. Japan's Role in Iraq

The Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "JAPAN STUDYING POSSIBLE ROLE FOR TROOPS, AID IN POSTWAR IRAQ, REPORTS," Tokyo, 12/06/02) Japan may step up its logistical support for the US if war breaks out with Iraq and is outlining plans to send troops and provide aid to help rebuild the country afterward, reports said Friday. Along with support similar to what it is now providing the US military in the Indian Ocean, Japan is mulling whether to dispatch personnel to help Washington rebuild Iraq if its leader, Saddam Hussein, is ousted, according to a report by the Kyodo news service. The report had few further details, and Chief Cabinet spokesman Yasuo Fukuda on Friday would say only that a wide variety of possible responses are being considered. "It is important for us to be prepared for any contingency," he said. Japan's largest newspaper also reported Friday that officials are mulling "enhanced" support for the US if hostilities break out and stepped up aid in the effort to rebuild Iraq afterward. The Yomiuri newspaper report, based on anonymous government sources, said Japan is outlining plans for economic and humanitarian assistance, and for the funding of refugee-related operations after Saddam is overthrown.

6. DPRK-ROK Red Cross Talks

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA PROPOSES HOLDING RED CROSS TALKS WITH SOUTH KOREA," Seoul, 12/06/02) North Korea (news - web sites) proposed to South Korea (news - web sites) on Friday that the Red Cross of each country hold talks next week. The meeting would follow up on an earlier accord to set up a permanent reunion center for family members separated five decades ago. The DPRK's Red Cross suggested that the working-level talks be held at the Mount Kumgang through December 15-17, the ROK's Red Cross said in a statement. ROK Red Cross officials said they would consider the DPRK proposal, which was sent in a telephone message via the border village of Panmunjom. In September, the heads of the two Korean Red Cross Societies agreed to build a permanent reunion center for separated family members at the Diamond Mountain resort.

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of other NAPSNet resources.
We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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