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I. United States

1. DPRK Multilateral Talks Status

The Associated Press ("DPRK NUCLEAR TALKS IN LIMBO," Seoul, 12/10/03) reported that six-nation talks on resolving the DPRK nuclear crisis are up in the air, the ROK's foreign minister said Wednesday, after the US rebuffed the communist government's proposal to freeze its atomic weapons program. "It is still too early to determine whether North Korea will join a second round of talks within this year or not, just based on yesterday's statement," Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan told reporters. "We are still studying North Korea's intentions and what North Korea tried to say through last night's statement." Yoon said he did not believe Tuesday's DPRK proposal was a direct response to a US-backed plan, which was penned with Japan and the ROK, then forwarded to the Chinese on Monday for relay to the DPRK. He said there probably hadn't been enough time for it

to be delivered and for the DPRK to prepare a detailed counterproposal.

2. ROK Political Corruption

Agence France-Presse ("AIDE TO FORMER SKOREAN OPPOSITION PARTY CHIEF JAILED IN SLUSH FUND CASE," 12/10/03) reported that a top aide to Lee Hoi-Chang, a failed conservative candidate in last year's presidential elections in South Korea, has been charged with receiving millions of dollars in illegal campaign funds, prosecutors said. Seo Jeong-Woo, who served as a legal adviser to Lee, the former head of South Korea's opposition Grand National Party (GNP), was formally charged and sent to a prison late Tuesday, prosecutors said. He is charged with receiving some 15 billion won (13 million dollars) from South Korea's second largest conglomerate, LG Group. Prosecutors said an LG executive delivered a truckload of cash in boxes to Seo at a highway gas station in November last year. He is suspected of delivering the money to Lee's campaign office. Seo, a lawyer, served as vice chairman of a supporters' group for Lee before the December presidential poll last year. The arrest came as state prosecutors have been widening an inquiry into the illegal funding of politicians by large business groups including SK, LG, Hyundai and Samsung. Allegations over illegal campaign funds also implicated close associates of President Roh Moo-Hyun.

3. ROK DPRK Humanitarian Aid

Korea Herald ("SEOUL OFFERED N.K. $125 MIL AID THIS YEAR," 12/11/03) reported that the ROK provided $125 million in direct economic and other aid to the DPRK in the first eleven months of the year, Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun said yesterday. The figure breaks down to $62 million in government-sponsored aid and $63 million in assistance in the form of items such as medical equipment and medicine, he said. "The government will continue efforts to resolve North Korea's nuclear program peacefully through dialogue while actively getting involved in economic, social, and cultural exchanges with the communist state," Jeong said in the text of a speech to be delivered to a forum. The government-sponsored aid includes donations to international relief organizations and 200,000 tons of fertilizer and 100,000 tons of corn, while private-level assistance to North Korea includes medical equipment and medicine.

4. Inter-Korean Trade Ties

Financial Times (Andrew Ward, "TRADE TIES GROW BETWEEN THE TWO KOREAS," Seoul, 12/10/03) reported that the ROK is on track to overtake the PRC as the largest importer of DPRK goods this year, showing how growing economic ties between the two Koreas are becoming increasingly important to the DPRK's survival. Economic support from the PRC has for years been considered the main factor preventing the DPRK's economy from collapse. But trade figures published by the ROK government yesterday showed that Seoul is challenging Beijing's status as Pyongyang's leading trade partner. DPRK exports to the ROK were up by a third in the first 10 months of this year at Dollars 233.64m (Euros 191m, Pounds 134m) compared with Dollars 231.52 to the PRC, according to Seoul's ministry of unification. The ministry said the ROK was also the largest humanitarian aid donor to the the DPRK and its biggest investor, although this was difficult to verify.

5. PRC DPRK Refugees

New York Times (James Brooke, "REPORT SAYS CHINA IS RETURNING REFUGEES TO NORTH KOREA," Seoul, 12/10/03) reported that on the heels of a Russian offer to take in able-bodied DPRK

refugees, a leading ROK human rights group has released a report estimating that the PRC is forcibly repatriating 100 refugees to the DPRK each week. As of Friday, 852 North Koreans were detained in four Chinese camps, awaiting deportation, according to the report, which was released by the Commission to Help DPRK Refugees, a private group here.

6. Taiwan Referendum Status

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN PRESIDENT DEFENDS REFERENDUM PLANS AFTER US REBUKE," 12/11/03) reported that undaunted Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian said he would press ahead with plans for a referendum next year that provoked a stern rebuke from the US and angered the PRC. Chen denied he was trying to alter the cross-strait status quo by holding the "anti-missile, anti-war" vote on the same day as March 20 presidential elections, insisting the move was intended to avoid war. "Referendum is a normal practice in democratic countries and is a basic rights of the people which they cannot be deprived of," Chen told a press conference on Wednesday. Chen, leader of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, said on Sunday the referendum would ask the PRC to dismantle ballistic missiles targeting Taiwan and to renounce the use of force against the island. The proposed vote has outraged the PRC and on Tuesday saw US President George W. Bush voice Washington's strong disapproval of the ballot. "We oppose any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo," Bush said after talks with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

7. Cross-Straits Relations

The Associated Press (William Foreman, "PRESIDENT: TAIWAN WON'T PROVOKE CHINA," Taipei, 12/10/03) reported that Taiwan's president assured Washington on Wednesday that he has no plans to provoke the PRC by seeking a permanent split with the communist giant, responding to the sharpest rebuke from America since Chen Shui-bian took office three years ago. But Chen refused to back down on the issue that's causing the rare friction with the US - plans to hold a March 20 "defensive referendum" demanding that China remove hundreds of missiles pointing at Taiwan. "We ... urge the international community not to treat China's military threats and its deployment of missiles as a natural state of affairs," Chen said. "A defensive referendum is for avoiding war and to help keep the Taiwanese people free of fear," Chen said. "It is also for preserving the status quo" with China.

8. PRC Media on US-Taiwan Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE STATE PRESS ALL BUT IGNORES BUSH-WEN MEETING," 12/10/03) reported that Chinese dailies have nearly universally ignored the stunning redefinition by President George W. Bush of US commitments on Taiwan made during talks with visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Most leading government-run newspapers failed to report Tuesday's landmark meeting between the two men, including the Communist Party-run People's Daily and the military-run People's Liberation Army Daily. Only the English-language China Daily, published for overseas readers, carried a full front page report on the meeting in which Bush said he would oppose plans by Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian to hold a referendum on the island's independence. The more racy and colorful Beijing News and Beijing Morning Post picked up the story, but ran it on the inside pages. Only the China Daily and Beijing Morning Post carried pictures of Wen and Bush.

9. Japan on Iraq Reconstruction

AsiaNet ("JAPAN GOVT DECIDES ON MEASURES FOR RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE IN

IRAQ," Tokyo, 12/10/03) reported that on December 9, 2003, Japanese government decided the basic plan regarding the measures on humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq. After deciding the plan, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi asked for the understanding and the support of the people of Japan at the press conference. The content of the opening statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi at the press conference is as follows: Today, based on the Law Concerning Special Measures on Humanitarian and Reconstruction Assistance in Iraq, the Cabinet has decided to dispatch the Self Defense Forces (SDF) to Iraq, in order to engage in humanitarian and reconstruction assistance activities in Iraq. Details will be determined in an implementation guideline to be compiled later and the SDF will be dispatched after sufficient preparations have been made. First of all, this dispatch of SDF is for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq. They will not engage in the use of force. They will not participate in combative activities. They are not going to war. The US of America, the United Kingdom and other countries are cooperating to create a stable democratic administration in Iraq. I believe that, as a responsible member of the international community, Japan must also fulfill its responsibility in the creation of an environment that will allow the people of Iraq work to rebuild their own country with optimism. For that purpose, I have decided that there is a need for Japan to provide not only financial assistance, but also material assistance and personnel assistance, including the dispatch of SDF.

II. Republic of Korea

1. U.S. President Rejects DPRK's Offer To Freeze Nuclear Program

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. PRESIDENT REJECTS PYEONGYANG'S OFFER TO FREEZE NUCLEAR PROGRAM," 12/10/03) reported that U.S. President George W. Bush has rejected DPRK's offer to freeze its nuclear program, stressing that what Washington wants is for DPRK to dismantle its nuclear weapons program in an irreversible and verifiable manner. President Bush said those measures fall short of what is necessary to end the year-long standoff and reiterated the need for a complete and visible dismantlement. President Bush's comments at a White House news conference with PRC Premier Wen Jiabao came hours after Pyeongyang on Tuesday offered to halt its nuclear facilities in exchange for concessions from Washington as a first step to denuclearizing the Korean peninsula. The concessions include the resumption of energy aid from the international community and its removal from a U.S. blacklist of countries supporting terrorism. DPRK extended the proposal as diplomatic efforts press ahead among the other nations to arrange a second round of six-way nuclear talks before the year's end.

2. UN Warns Of Aid Shortage For DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (Kim Jae-ho, New York, "UN WARNS OF AID SHORTAGE FOR NORTH KOREA," 12/09/03) reported that The United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Monday that food donations for about 3 million DPRK people have been stopped due to a shortage of funds. OCHA said that only a little of over half of the requested funds were raised by organizations that send aid to DPRK. According to the World Food Program (WFP), food donations for nearly 700,000 DPRK people were stopped in November, and about 2.2 million people in the west of the country will be affected in December. Unless new pledges are confirmed soon, cereal shortfalls may affect 3.8 million people across the country by May, OCHA said. It also warned that 18 food-manufacturing facilities for pregnant women and children, supported by the WFP, would run out of flour by April of 2004. OCHA added that more than 40 percent of DPRK children are malnourished, 70,000 of whom are so severely underfed as to require hospitalization. While the country was slowly recovering from t! he food crisis during the mid to late-1990s, a chronic

humanitarian emergency remains with no clear end in sight, the office said. The UN has asked the international community to raise about $221 million to support DPRK next year.

3. U.S Tries To Hold Six-Way Talks In December

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. TRIES TO HOLD 6-NATION TALKS IN DECEMBER," 12/09/03) reported that amid a stalemate in multinational efforts to hold the next round of six-nation talks on DPRK's nuclear issue, U.S. is reportedly making its push to stage those talks within this month. U.S. is looking for ways to restart talks with DPRK during this month of December. Washington has reportedly reached a concensus with Seoul, Beijing, Tokyo and Moscow and is hoping PRC can persuade Pyeongyang to return to 6-nation negotiations over abandoning its nuclear weapons program. On Monday (local time) State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said it may be possible to hold 6-party talks this month and added that the U.S. is more than ready to attend the talks without any preconditions. He said Washington is closely consulting the issue with PRC Premier Wen Jiabao who is currently visiting the U.S.. In particular, in the draft statement on the 6-nation talks, the U.S. used the term "coordinated steps" in place of simultaneous implementation regarding the nuke dispos! al in exchange for security guarantees to DPRK. Analysts believe this reflects a flexible stance on Washington's part in handling the nuclear standoff.

4. DPRK Sets New Terms For Resuming Six-Way Talks

Joongang Ilbo (Special Report Team, "NORTH SETS NEW TERMS FOR RESUMING TALKS," 12/10/03) reported that DPRK said yesterday that it would freeze its nuclear activities if U.S. took the country off its list of state sponsors of terrorism and suspended political, economic and military sanctions against it. DPRK's Central News Agency quoted a Foreign Ministry spokesman as saying that a "verbal promise" and an agreement for measures "as the first step" must be made by U.S. before a second round of six-party talks could be held. DPRK also demanded pledges of energy aid as a precondition for the talks. ROK, Japan and U.S. have proposed "coordinated steps" to induce Pyeongyang back to the negotiations. Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck said yesterday that next week was the last possible date for talks if they were to take place before the end of the year.

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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