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I. United States

1. EU-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TOP EU DELEGATE SAYS NORTH KOREA TRIP 'GOOD FOR ALL,'" 12/12/03) reported that a top EU delegate, who arrived in the ROK from talks in the DPRK, said his trip was "very good for all" amid efforts to coax Pyongyang to new six-party nuclear crisis talks. Italy's Guido Martini, head of a nine-member European Union team, walked across the tense inter-Korean border on his way to brief ROK officials on the four-day stay in the Stalinist state. "(The trip was) very good for all of us," Martini said at the border village of Panmunjom, 65 kilometers (40 miles) north of Seoul, after crossing the demarcation line that has divided the peninsula since the 1950-53 Korean war. The EU delegation held "political" dialogue with top DPRK officials during their stay in Pyongyang since Tuesday, the DPRK's official media said. The visit came amid intense diplomatic efforts to jump-start six-nation talks aimed at breaking the 14-month impasse over the DPRK's nuclear weapons drive. The ROK's Yonhap news agency, citing an unnamed senior official, said talks could take place in mid-January as hopes diminished for a new round this year. "It's hard to say for certain. That depends on (DPRK leader) Kim Jong-Il," ROK Foreign Ministry spokesman Kim Sun-Heung told AFP.

2. PRC-Taiwan Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE PREMIER ACCUSES TAIWAN PRESIDENT OF DECEPTION," 12/12/03) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao accused Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian of deception and manipulation, but the island's leader vowed he would never ditch his referendum plans. Referring to the Taiwanese people as "our blood brothers and sisters", Wen said in a CNN interview that Chen was using talk of democracy to disguise a push for independence, which threatens the status quo between Taipei and Beijing. "We respect the desire of the Taiwan people to develop and pursue democracy," Wen said. "However, we firmly oppose the attempts by certain separatist forces in Taiwan to pursue Taiwan independence under the disguise of promoting democracy in an attempt to cut off Taiwan from the mainland. "The purpose of the so-called defensive referendum that Chen Shui-bian has been going after is to undermine the status quo ... In fact, the democracy is just a disguise, an excuse. And so his efforts look to be quite deceptive." Wen has just wrapped up a three-day trip to the US during which he extracted from President George W. Bush public criticism of Chen's call for a March 20 "anti-missile, anti-war" referendum over Beijing's military threat to the island. In a separate CNN interview, Chen, leader of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), stood firm, saying he would not be swayed from his plans to hold the referendum. He noted that as Bush made his comments "he also at the same time told the premier (Wen) that he opposes any use of force against Taiwan". "On behalf of the 23 million people of Taiwan I want to emphasize again that we do not intend to change the status quo, and I think our stance and direction is in accordance with the Bush administration," Chen said. He reiterated his demand that the PRC immediately withdraw some 496 ballistic missiles targeting the island and renounce the use of force against Taiwan, which Beijing views as a breakaway province.

3. Japan-ASEAN East Asian Community

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN, ASEAN LEADERS SET TO DECLARE EFFORTS TO CREATE EAST ASIAN COMMUNITY," 12/12/03) reported that Japan and 10 Southeast Asian nations entered a second and final day of summit talks, set to sign a joint declaration envisaging an East Asian community pulled together by possible free trade pacts. The leaders, who gathered here to commemorate three decades of Japan-ASEAN ties, are scheduled to sign a Tokyo Declaration, proposing the creation of a common East Asian community as a long-term vision. They are also expected to pledge efforts to strengthen economic partnerships, possibly through free trade pacts to pave the way for the common community. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Thursday agreed with leaders from Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines to start free trade talks early next year on the sidelines of the special summit. Japan already has a free trade agreement -- its first -- with Singapore, which took effect in November last year, and it is also in free trade talks with South Korea. These pacts set no deadlines for the negotiations and similarly noted the both sides should pay "due consideration" to sensitive areas. Japan and ASEAN aim to form a free trade zone possibly by 2012.

4. Public Disapproval of Japan Iraq Troops

Agence France-Presse ("SUPPORT FOR KOIZUMI DOWN TO 41 PERCENT AFTER DECISION ON TROOPS," 12/12/03) reported that public support for Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's cabinet fell six points from last month to 41 percent after he decided to send Japanese troops to Iraq, according to an opinion poll. The disapproval rate rose to 41 percent, up four percentage points from November, according to the survey conducted by the Asahi Shimbun. The telephone poll was conducted on Wednesday and Thursday by the daily of randomly selected eligible voters nationwide. Fifty-five percent, or 1,824 people, gave valid responses. The daily said the approval rate decline reflected people's dissatisfaction with Koizumi's decision on Tuesday to send up to 600 troops to Iraq on a humanitarian mission, the nation's most dangerous deployment of military personnel since

World War II. The poll showed that 55 percent of respondents said they are opposed to the decision to send troops to Iraq, with 34 percent supporting it, the daily said. Some 90 percent said they believe Japanese troops will be involved into combat in Iraq, the survey showed, adding that 64 percent said they are not satisfied with Koizumi's reasons for sending troops to Iraq.

5. PRC-Canada Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA AND CANADA AIM TO DOUBLE TRADE BY 2010," Ottawa, 12/11/03) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao said that he and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien had set a goal of doubling their countries' bilateral trade by 2010. Wen told a lunch of Canadian and Chinese business leaders that bilateral trade currently stood at about eight billion US dollars a year. But he said this should increase because Canada "is richly endowed with natural resources and high technology" and PRC "has a large pool of labour" and a growing consumer market. Earlier, the prime ministers witnessed the signature of agreements including an order by the China National Chemicals and Export Cooperation (Sinochem) to buy 1.65 million tons of potash next year and the sale by the Canadian Wheat Board of 500,000 tons of wheat, worth 100 million dollars (75 million US). Other agricultural sector agreements signed included increasing phyto-sanitary cooperation, establishing a working group on microbiological and chemical residue in animals used for human food, and dairy farm cooperation to help the PRC improve its milk quality. Canada is to provide five million dollars (3.75 million US) to help Canada reform its judiciary system. Wen, in his speech to businss leaders, noted that China was now Canada's third largest trading partner and Canada ranked 10th among China's trading partners. Outside Thursday's agreement, Wen said PRC was already importing more than one million tons of Canadian potash every year. Sales of Chinese-made consumer goods in Canada are also growing rapidly. "The two economies are highly complementary and both stand to gain in the mutually-beneficial cooperation," Wen said.

6. US DPRK Humanitarian Aid Reversal

The Associated Press (Christopher Marquis, "IN REVERSAL, US MAY SEND ADDITIONAL FOOD AID TO NORTH KOREA," Washington, 12/12/03) reported that the US is considering releasing roughly 66,000 tons in additional food aid to the DPRK this year as that country faces a winter famine, administration officials said Thursday. Administration officials had withheld the aid to protest the DPRK's failure to comply with international monitors seeking to ensure that the provisions go to the people who need it. But given predictions of an imminent humanitarian crisis and a plea for more donations from the United Nations agency that distributes food aid, the officials said they were rethinking their stance. "We are still considering whether to provide additional food aid to North Korea through the World Food Program under the 2003 appeal," a State Department official said. The new stance on food aid comes as the DPRK continues to defy calls to dismantle its nuclear weapons program. But Bush administration officials said they would not let political differences with the DPRK interfere with their decisions on food aid. The US, which has sent food to North Korea since 1996, has already provided about 44,000 tons of food to the country this 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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