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I. United States

1. DPRK on Next Round of Six-Way Talks

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA WILLING TO STAY IN SIX-WAY NUCLEAR TALKS: SKOREAN FM," 03/24/04) reported that the DPRK is willing to stay in six-nation talks aimed at resolving a

standoff over its nuclear weapons drive despite its cancellation of inter-Korean meetings, Seoul's foreign minister said. Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon said Pyongyang has hinted it would take part in working groups to be set up as an agreed follow-up to the second round of talks held last month. New talks are planned for summer. "I don't think North Korea will boycott the six-way talks," Ban told a weekly briefing. "North Korea has reaffirmed what was agreed during the second round of six-way talks and has hinted it would participate in the working groups during consultations through diplomatic channels," Ban said.

The Associated Press ("N KOREA MAY SKIP NEXT ROUND OF NUCLEAR TALKS," Hong Kong, 03/24/04) reported that the DPRK may skip the next round of international negotiations on its nuclear program due to the possibility that a new US administration - which could go easier on the DPRK- may win the November presidential election, an expert said Wednesday. "For the North Koreans, whether or not they actually show up for the next round of six-party talks is in doubt," former US State Department official Charles Pritchard said at a banking conference in Hong Kong. "What are they going to do there? Now, is anybody going to strike a deal?" said Pritchard, who visited the DPRK's secretive Yongbyon nuclear site on Jan. 8 as part of an unofficial US delegation. Pritchard said it is unlikely the administration of US President George W. Bush will offer a deal before the November 2 presidential election. But he said Bush's opponent, US Senator John Kerry, would likely start a direct dialogue with the DPRK if he wins. Pritchard expressed fears that the current US leadership may abandon talks and take a more confrontational approach. "There is no telling where that would go," he said.

2. DPRK on Six-nation Working Group

BBC ("BAN KI-MOON: N KOREA HINTS AT WILLINGNESS TO JOIN WORKING GROUP FOR TALKS," Seoul, 03/24/04) reported that the DPRK has hinted at its willingness to take part in a working group for the six-nation talks on the DPRK's nuclear activities, South Korea's foreign minister said Wednesday. Minister Ban Ki-moon also expressed regret that inter-Korean talks failed to take place as planned recently after the DPRK demanded changes in the talks' schedules citing the political situation in the ROK and regular military exercises between the ROK and the US. These developments, however, do not mean the DPRK is trying to cut off inter-Korean dialogue completely and therefore, will not have much impact on the nuclear issue, the minister said. "I don't think the North will boycott the six-party talks," he said during his weekly press briefing.

3. DPRK-PRC Ministerial Meeting

Korean Central News Agency ("N KOREA REPORTS KIM'S TALKS WITH PRC FOREIGN MINISTER," Pyongyang, 03/24/04) reported that Kim Jong-Il, general secretary of the Korean Workers' Party and chairman of the National Defence Commission of the DPRK, Wednesday, March 24 received Li Zhaoxing, foreign minister of the PRC, and his party on a visit to the DPRK. Present there were Kang Sok-ju, first vice-minister of foreign affairs, and Wu Donghe, PRC ambassador to the DPRK. Li conveyed warm greetings of Hu Jintao, general secretary of the Central Committee of the PRC Communist Party and president of the PRC, and other senior party and state officials of China to Kim Jong-il before presenting him with a gift prepared by himself.

4. DPRK Response to US-ROK Military Drills

Yonhap News ("N KOREANS STAGE RALLIES AGAINST US-SOUTH KOREA MILITARY DRILLS," Seoul, 03/24/04) reprted that North Koreans held rallies in Pyongyang denouncing the US military

for holding annual joint military exercises with the ROK, the DPRK's state-run media reported. The DPRK said workers of the 26 March Plant and students of Kimhyongjik University of Education held separate rallies Tuesday. They were the first of their kind in the DPRK since the ROK and the US began this year's large-scale joint military drills. Expressing strong anti-US feelings, participants in the rallies criticized the exercises as an "unpardonable military provocation towards the North" and "behaviour hindering peace and reduction of tension on the Korean Peninsula," the KCBS said.

5. KEDO DPRK Nuclear Project

Kyodo News ("INTERNATIONAL GROUP TO DISCUSS N KOREAN REACTOR PROJECT," Tokyo, 03/23/04) reported that the Executive Board of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) will meet Friday to discuss the stalled project to build two light-water nuclear reactors in North Korea, KEDO officials said Tuesday. The meeting at KEDO headquarters in New York is the second board meeting after one in late January since the organization froze the project last December. The board will "discuss matters relating to the implementation of the suspension of the light-water reactor project", KEDO said in a statement. "KEDO continues to take measures to preserve the construction site at the Kumho District, South Hamgyong Province, and currently is conducting preservation and maintenance activities."

6. ROK Presidential Impeachment Hearing

Agence France-Presse ("ROK PRESIDENT REFUSES TO APPEAR AT IMPEACHMENT HEARING," 03/24/04) reported ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun has rejected a court request to appear in person to defend himself at the first public hearing on his impeachment next week, his aide said. Roh refused to attend the hearing at the Constitutional Court scheduled for Tuesday, fearing his presence would only provide fodder to opposition parties seeking to attack him in the court, said his former advisor for civil affairs Moon Jae-In. Moon, who heads his legal team, said Roh was under no legal obligation to appear in person. "We've asked the president not to attend the court hearing and he accepted the advice," Moon said. Roh, 57, was suspended from office following an unprecedented impeachment motion passed by the opposition-controlled National Assembly on March 12. The Constitutional Court has summoned Roh to defend himself in person at the hearing on his impeachment. The court has up to 180 days to decide whether to endorse or reject the impeachment for alleged election law violations, corruption and incompetence.

7. DPRK-Japan Abduction Talks

Kyodo ("DISCORD IN N KOREA CITED OVER DELAY IN ABDUCTION TALKS," 03/24/04) reported that Japan's Foreign Ministry believes disagreement among DPRK officials on how to address its abduction of Japanese nationals can be blamed for a delay in setting the next round of talks on the abduction issue between the two countries, ruling party lawmakers said Wednesday. "There is a group which considers promoting Japan-DPRK talks, but there is also another group that does not," a senior Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying. Akitaka Saiki, deputy director-general of the Foreign Ministry's Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau, made the comment at a joint meeting of the Liberal Democratic Party's foreign affairs-related panels. Saiki's remarks apparently suggest that Japan has received information about the internal clash within the DPRK, in which some see talks between Japan and the DPRK as important, while others put priority in negotiations with the US.

8. OPEC DPRK Humanitarian Aid

Yonhap ("OPEC TO PROVIDE AID TO NORTH KOREA FOR WATER SUPPLY, SANITATION," Seoul, 03/24/04) reported that the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) has reportedly decided to provide 250,000 US dollars to the DPRK to help improve water supplies and sanitation. The aid, which will be provided through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), is aimed at providing safe drinking water to DPRK people by improving sanitation facilities in the country's eastern and northern regions, the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency said. The UN agency has pushed for emergency relief to provide water supplies and overhaul sanitation facilities for North Koreans in cooperation with other international organizations as the quality of drinking water declines and the danger of water-borne diseases increases. OPEC's commitment of aid to the DPRK comes a week after UNICEF executive director Carol Bellamy said here that water treatment stations are not working adequately in the DPRK, nor the pumps that deliver the water, due to power shortages.

9. PRC on US Fingerprint Plan

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA THROWS OUT US PLAN TO FINGERPRINT ITS CITIZENS," 03/24/04) reported that the PRC rejected plans by the US to fingerprint its citizens applying for non-immigrant visas, calling it a discriminatory move that infringed on human rights. "This measure has caused strong dissatisfaction among the PRC people and in different social circles," the foreign ministry said on its website, a day after it called off its human rights dialogue with the US. The foreign ministry statement said the PRC had made "solemn representations" to the US through diplomatic channels on the fingerprinting issue. "They pointed out that this measure is discrimination against PRC citizens. It has harmed the PRC citizen's dignity and right to privacy. It is a method that infringes on their human rights." it said. The US embassy in Beijing began on Monday collecting fingerprints as biometric identifiers for non-immigrant visa applicants. The program was mandated by the US Congress in its Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002, and other US consulates general in the PRC are scheduled to begin the process within the next few weeks.

10. PRC-US Human Rights Dialogue

Agence France-Presse ("US SAYS IT'S NOT BOTHERED BY CHINA'S CANCELLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE," 03/24/04) reported that the US said it was not bothered by the PRC's abrupt decision to suspend a bilateral dialogue on human rights and that the discussions had actually been a waste of time. Beijing suspended the dialogue on Tuesday following the US' proposed resolution condemning the PRC for alleged human rights abuses at the ongoing annual meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. "The fact that they have canceled -- that they don't want to have another round of discussions -- doesn't bother us quite so much, since the last three or four rounds of discussions we had didn't lead anywhere," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher told reporters. "So we'll see."

11. Japan SDF Constitutional Revision?

Agence France-Presse ("CONSTITUTION CHANGE NEEDED FOR JAPAN TO HAVE ARMY: KOIZUMI," 03/25/04) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi hinted that he would seek to change the country's outdated constitution to allow for Japan's Self-Defence Forces to be called an army. "Under the Japanese constitution we are not allowed to call the Self-Defence Forces (SDF) an army, but to the eyes of anyone outside the country, they are an army," Koizumi said in an interview with London's Times newspaper. "Several points in the constitution are not quite logical in

the light of commonsense," he said. "In the future, when the amendment of the constitution comes up, this question of the naming of the Self-Defence Forces will also become part of the debate," he said. Japan has sent some 550 ground troops to the southern Iraqi city of Samawa as part of the US-led coalition's humanitarian work.

12. DPRK on US Neo-Conservatives

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA PREDICTS HITLER-LIKE END FOR US NEO-CONS," Seoul, 03/24/04) reported that the US neo-conservatives are modern-day barbarians who are more "bellicose, cruel and ferocious" than Hitler and will meet the same end as the German dictator, the DPRK said on Wednesday. The DPRK has recently stepped up anti-US propaganda in what diplomats said was one of its periodic campaigns to rally its people behind the communist state. "Drawing close is the day neo-conservatism will be thrown into the dumping ground of history along with its defeat in the war on terrorism just as Hitler Fascism met destruction along with its defeat in the Second World War," said the KCNA news agency. The rambling KCNA commentary did not link its attack on American neo-conservatives to a specific issue.

13. US Marine DMZ Training

Yonhap ("US MARINES, IN LARGEST FORCE IN 10 YEARS, TRAINING NEAR DMZ," Seoul, 03/24/04) reported that the US Marines, in their largest numbers in 10 years, are engaging in joint military exercises with ROK troops near the tense border with the DPRK, officials said Thursday. US Marine forces recently began their fourth training in South Korea, dubbed the Korea Integrated Training Program (KITP), with ROK Marines near the Demilitarized Zone, which bisects the Koreas, and other areas, said an official at the US military command in Seoul, requesting anonymity.

II. Japan

1. Japan Iraq Troops Dispatch

Kyodo ("CHIEF OF GSDF MISSION VISITS SCHOOLS," Samawah, Iraq, 03/17/04) reported that the head of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) humanitarian relief mission in the southern Iraqi city of Samawah visited two suburban elementary schools to take requests for repairs. Classrooms with peeling paint, damaged roofs and so on "can be repaired within our capacity," Colonel Masahisa Sato said after viewing the schools. About 30 students who had just finished their morning classes were excited to see the unexpected visitors.

2. Japan Anti-war Protest

The Japan Times (Nao Shimoyachi, "PEACE MOVEMENT REVIVES FOR PROTESTS ON IRAQ WAR," 03/21/04) reported that tens of thousands of people took to the streets around Japan on Saturday, the first anniversary of the start of the US-led war on Iraq, to call for the end of the occupation and the withdrawal of Self-Defense Forces (SDF) troops. With nearly 100 peace rallies and events, part of an internationally coordinated peace action, the demonstrations signaled a revival of Japan's peace movement that suffered from a severe sense of defeat after the US and Britain invaded Iraq. In Tokyo, thousands of protesters, some traveling by chartered buses from as far away as Yamanashi and Fukushima prefectures, gathered at Hibiya Park in Chiyoda Ward despite cold, rainy weather. After the outbreak of the war last year, the mass antiwar movement quickly lost steam. "The sense of

defeat was so overwhelming," said Ken Takada, a leading peace-campaign organizer before and after the war. After reaching a peak of 50,000 participants at a March 21, 2003, rally in Tokyo, his World Peace Now campaign withered away to a scant 600 by the summer, Takada said. Yet the seeds of individualism in the peace movement given birth by the protest against the Iraq war carried on and gradually grew toward the end of the year as Japan's plan to send the SDF personnel to Iraq came closer to reality.

The Asahi Shimbun ("WAR PROTESTERS NATIONWIDE DENOUNCE OCCUPATION," 03/22/04) reported that tens of thousands of people joined protests at more than 100 locations across the country on Saturday. All told, about 60,000 attended rallies at Hibiya and Shibakoen parks in Tokyo, organizers said. Members of some organizations spoke about their activities in Iraq. "As far as we know, more than 10,000 people have died since the start of the war led by the United States," said Yuka Hoshino, 35, a committee member of World Peace Now, a coalition of 51 citizens groups. "We are also in peril now that the government has dispatched Self-Defense Forces troops to Iraq," Hoshino said. "Some people claim that the war was meant for US national interests," said Michiya Kumaoka, president of the Japan International Volunteer Center. "But in reality, the war is tearing apart the national interests. The war has been a way of serving the private interests of certain organizations that are trying to make a profit on reconstruction assistance." In Shibakoen Park, groups connected with the Japanese Communist Party organized their own anti-war protest.

3. Japan-PRC Yasukuni Controversy

The Japan Times (Reiji Yoshida, "FUKUDA GETS TESTY OVER YASUKUNI SHRINE QUESTIONS," 03/16/04) reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda got annoyed with a reporter who asked him about the PRC's latest protest over Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's repeated visits to Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine. "Should I make a comment every time (some foreign leaders) talk about it?" the government's top spokesman asked. "I've already discussed Prime Minister Koizumi's way of thinking (on this matter) many times in the past. Please refer to it." The issue was also taken up by visiting Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo during talks with his Japanese counterpart, Yukio Takeuchi. "The two countries should make an effort to remove the (Yasukuni) difficulty and further develop the bilateral relationship," Dai was quoted as telling Takeuchi. Meanwhile, Koizumi said that his Yasukuni visits did not hinder bilateral ties, claiming the Japanese government has nurtured a "good relationship" with Beijing. "I will gladly visit (China) if the Chinese side wants me to make a visit," Koizumi told reporters in trying to play down the PRC Premier Wen Jiabao's criticism. Koizumi's advisers have given up trying to persuade him to heed the PRC's protests, the official said. "He is a person who sheds tears for the kamikaze pilots. He will never change his mind," the official said.

4. Japan Yasukuni Shrine Lawsuit

Mainichi Daily News ("COURT DODGES RULING ON KOIZUMI VISITS TO WAR CRIME SHRINE," Matsuyama, 03/16/04) reported that the Matsuyama District Court in Japan spurned a demand filed by more than 100 people that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi abandon his regular visits to Yasukuni Shrine, saying they violated the Constitution. A total of 133 people, consisting mostly of those who lost relatives in World War II, and two religious organizations filed the suit with the court against Koizumi, the national government and the shrine itself. Claiming that Koizumi's visits to the shrine in 2001, 2002 and 2003 violate the Constitution that bans the state from carrying out religious activities, the plaintiffs demanded the prime minister abandon the practice, and pay 10,000 yen in compensation to each of the claimants. In the ruling, the district court acknowledged that the three visits paid by Koizumi were done so in an official capacity, but turned down all of the plaintiffs'

demands without saying whether the visits infringe upon the Constitution or not. The plaintiffs immediately appealed.

5. Japan on PRC Military Expenditure

The Japan Times ("MILITARY TRANSPARENCY," 03/16/04) reported that Japan wants the PRC to make its military spending transparent, Vice Defense Minister Takemasa Moriya said. "Other countries are making clear how much they spend on maintenance costs and equipment," Moriya told a news conference. "We want China also to make (that) clear from the standpoint of transparency." The National People's Congress on March 14 passed its 2004 budget featuring an 11.6 percent rise in military spending from the year before. Moriya said Japan is keeping a watch on the PRC's moves to buy state-of-the-art arms.

6. Japan MOX Fuel Go-ahead?

Kyodo ("FUKUI GOVERNOR OKS USE OF MOX FUEL," Fukui, 03/16/04) reported that the Fukui Prefectural Government in Japan effectively gave the go-ahead for restarting a process leading to Japan's first use of reprocessed spent nuclear fuel for burning in reactors. Fukui Governor Issei Nishikawa expressed his intention to allow Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) to manufacture overseas mixed uranium-plutonium oxide (MOX) fuel for use in the No. 3 and No. 4 reactors at the Takahama nuclear plant. With the consent, KEPCO is expected to sign a contract with an overseas company by the end of this month on MOX production and to actually introduce the fuel in the reactors in fiscal 2007, starting in April that year, sources close to the utility said. The governor said he decided to restart the MOX project, which has been stalled since 1999 due to a safety data falsification scandal, after KEPCO took a series of measures last October to prevent a recurrence of data falsification. The measures included stationing KEPCO staff overseas to inspect the MOX manufacturing process, establishing a double-checking system to ensure that manufacturers strictly manage data on the nuclear fuel, and asking third parties to verify the data. Nishikawa also indicated the prefectural government will require KEPCO to submit reports on each stage of the inspection of imported MOX fuel. The national government and Riichi Imai, mayor of Takahama, which hosts the nuclear plant, earlier endorsed the measures, which prompted the prefecture to follow suit. Some antinuclear groups reacted angrily to Nishikawa's announcement.

The Japan Times ("PROTESTERS SLAM KEPCO MOX PLAN," Osaka, 03/17/04) reported that antinuclear protesters called on Kansai Electric Power Co. (KEPCO) not to restart its mixed-plutonium uranium oxide (MOX) program and demanded a public hearing before the utility signs any contracts with a French firm to manufacture the fuel. "It has been reported that KEPCO is about to conclude a contract with COGEMA to manufacture nuclear fuel," said Aileen Mioko Smith of Green Action Kyoto. "We call on KEPCO to hold a public hearing into the matter in Fukui and in the Kansai region before any such contracts are signed." Antinuclear activists are especially concerned about a possible agreement with COGEMA because, in addition to reprocessing spent fuel from commercial reactors, it is heavily involved in France's nuclear weapons program. While the fuel from Japan would not be reprocessed at the same COGEMA facility that makes atomic weapons fuel, activists question the propriety of the deal.

7. Asia-Europe Security Cooperation

The Japan Times ("EUROPE ASKS ASIA TO HELP FIGHT SMUGGLING," 03/17/04) reported that European countries participating in an international conflict prevention conference in Tokyo sought

cooperation from Asian nations to tackle human and small arms smuggling. Members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) asked Asian countries to work on a joint project to address the issues, a Japanese government official said. The participants discussed working toward nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, tackling the growing threat of terrorist attacks, and dealing with the smuggling of humans, small arms and drugs, the official said. About 180 people from more than 50 countries took part in the second Japan-OSCE conference at the Foreign Ministry, the official said. Participants included senior officials from Japan and member countries of the 55-nation OSCE and its cooperation partners, including Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, the ROK and Thailand, as well as representatives of nongovernmental organizations and academic and research institutions. Also among the participants were delegates of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), an Asia-Pacific security forum of the ASEAN and its regional partners, including Australia, New Zealand and the US.

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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