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I. United States

1. DPRK-ROK Cabinet-Level Talks

Yonhap ("NORTH, SOUTH KOREA TO HOLD CABINET-LEVEL TALKS," Seoul, 01/26/04) reported that the ROK and the DPRK will hold cabinet-level talks here next month, which are expected to focus on, among other things, the DPRK's nuclear arms program and cross-border economic projects, said the Unification Ministry Monday. During the 3-6 February talks, the ROK appears likely to renew its position that the DPRK must abandon its nuclear program while reviewing the progress of major inter-Korean economic projects such as the reconnection of severed inter-Korean rail lines and roads. Other projects under way include a tourism venture at Mt Kumgang, a scenic resort on the North's east coast, and the construction of a major industrial complex for ROK manufacturers in the DPRK's border city of Kaesong. ROK officials have repeatedly warned that tourism and other current inter-Korean economic cooperation projects could suffer unless the nuclear crisis is resolved promptly through dialogue.

2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Diplomacy

Korea Herald: (Seo Hyun-jin, " SEOUL URGES N.K. NOT TO SET CONDITIONS FOR TALKS," Seoul, 01/26/04) reported that ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck said yesterday that the DPRK should attach no strings to its consent to rejoin six-party talks on its nuclear weapons development. He also said it was in the DPRK's interests to follow the example of Libya, which recently decided to scrap its nuclear weapons program. Lee returned home earlier in the day, wrapping up consultations with his US and Japanese counterparts in Washington on January 21 and 22 on how to restart the nuclear talks after a five-month suspension. The three countries agreed to continue efforts to convene the second round of talks at an early date and that the impending talks would address "any issues and ideas without setting any preconditions." "We believe North Korea should come to the negotiation table without setting any preconditions, and discuss all the relevant issues at the table," Lee stated. Asked whether the second round of six-party talks could begin in February, the senior diplomat said the countries "hope so, but nothing has been decided yet."

3. Japan DPRK Economic Sanctions

Associated Press (Audrey Mcavoy, "JAPAN LAWMAKERS AGREE ON NORTH KOREA BILL," Tokyo, 01/26/04) reported that Japan's ruling coalition and top opposition party agreed Monday on legislation that allows Japan to unilaterally impose economic sanctions. The measure is aimed at pressuring the DPRK into resolving a diplomatic standoff over its past abductions of Japanese citizens. The legislation authorizes the government to independently halt remittances, stop trade, and impose other restrictions on the flow of money and goods to and from another country. Japanese law currently only allows such steps if they are made in response to a U.N. resolution or another multinational agreement. The bill - which amends the foreign exchange law - doesn't specifically target the DPRK, but was drawn up with the DPRK in mind. "We want to pass the bill promptly," said Jin Murai, a lawmaker from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party after meeting opposition party officials on the amendment. "We need to do so to most powerfully express the will of Japan." The LDP aims to have both chambers of Parliament approve the bill within the next few weeks.

4. PRC and US Differences on DPRK Nuclear Freeze Offer

Donga Ilbo ("US AND CHINA ARE SPLIT OVER NORTH KOREA'S NUKE OFFER," 01/25/04) reported that the US and the PRC are in dispute over the DPRK's offer to freeze its nuclear activities as part of a solution to its nuclear standoff with the US, making the outlook of a second round of six-party talks bleak. The US insists the DPRK's proposal should include all nuclear activities, both before and after a 1994 US-DPRK accord, but the PRC maintains it should only cover those in the post-pact period. The DPRK wants economic assistance and regime security in specific terms in return for its offer to freeze its nuclear program at the next six-way talks.

5. Japan Anti-Iraq Troop Deployment Rallies

Agence France-Presse ("RALLY HELD TO PROTEST KOIZUMI'S FINAL ORDER FOR TROOP DEPLOYMENT IN IRAQ," 01/25/04) reported that some 4,000 people have staged a rally against sending Japanese troops to Iraq, as Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is set to give the final go-ahead for the dispatch of the core group of ground troops. Demonstrators flocked to Hibiya Park near Tokyo's Imperial Palace, carrying banners which read: "Stop sending the Self-Defense Forces to Iraq. We don't need a war." The rally, featuring speeches, a dance show and rock concerts ahead of a demonstration march, came on the eve of Koizumi's planned order on Monday for the dispatch of

the main contingent of Japan's 600-strong force. "I'm very disappointed that Prime Minister Koizumi is going to make such a silly decision," said Yukari Nojima, a 20-year-old student taking part in the demonstration. "What people in Iraq need is foods, medicines and comfortable places to live, not weapons and troops," Nojima said. Rei Shiba, an organizer of the rally, said: "A majority of Japanese oppose the dispatch, while the constitution bans us from sending troops, and then Prime Minister Koizumi ignores the facts. I doubt democracy in Japan works well."

6. Japan Iraq Ground Troop Orders

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN ORDERS GROUND TROOPS TO IRAQ AS DEBATE RAGES ON ABOUT WEAPONS," 01/27/04) reported that Japan formally ordered ground troops to Iraq in their first deployment to a combat zone since World War II, as debate raged on about US and British claims of Saddam Hussein's alleged arsenal of banned weapons. In Iraq, the US military searched for three soldiers still missing 24 hours after a helicopter crashed and a boat capsized in the Tigris river, while the US-backed leadership announced the creation of a new security service to battle crime and insurgency. But US-led rebuilding efforts remained dogged by the Shiite Muslim majority's campaign for direct elections and a US report that oil revenues are forecast to be well below reconstruction needs. However, the coalition did receive a boost with Japan ordering 600 troops to Iraq after Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and the leader of the junior ruling coalition party agreed to the controversial mission. Over the next two months, the troops will join an advance party which arrived last week to assess the situation in the southern town of Samawa. The core group "will leave Japan at the appropriate time to build bases and to offer humanitarian assistance, such as providing medical services, supplying water, and to rehabilitate public facilities," Japan's Defence Agency said. The first soldiers would leave around February 3, according to the Jiji Press agency.

7. ROK Submarine Development

Agence France-Presse ("SOUTH KOREA PLANS TO BUILD 3,500-TON SUBMARINES," 01/26/04) reported that ROK has formed a research team to build 3,500-ton new submarines as part of efforts to reduce its reliance on US firepower, military officials said. Some 1.7 billion won (1.4 million dollars) has been set aside for a two-year study to develop the new submarines but no decision has been made yet on how they will be powered, the defense ministry said. The navy plans to deploy the new submarines from 2010, it said. The plan was unveiled after the newspaper Chosun Ilbo reported that the ROK was considering the deployment of nuclear-powered submarines from 2012. Won Jang-Hwan, head of the ministry's arms procurement bureau, said diesel engines were being considered to power 3,500-ton submarines. "There is no need to develop nuclear-powered submarines," Won told reporters. The ROK has nine 1,200-ton submarines and plans to deploy three 1,800-ton vessels worth 2.27 trillion won from 2007, all with diesel or diesel-electric engines designed by a German firm.

8. EU on PRC Arms Bans

Agence France-Presse ("EU MULLS LIFTING CHINA ARMS BAN DESPITE US CONCERNS," 01/25/04) reported that EU foreign ministers will launch discussions here on Monday on lifting the arms embargo on the PRC imposed after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, despite US opposition to such a move, diplomats say. No immediate decision is expected, but the bloc could agree to end the ban as early as March, said one source ahead of the talks. The discussions were initiated by France, which is hosting PRC President Hu Jintao this week. European officials say they

are aware that the US is against lifting the ban. Ministers will bear this in mind, but insist the bloc will take a decision based on a substantive argument among themselves. "We are conscious of the US position, and we want to avoid serious high profile differences with the US. But it's not the primary factor," said a senior diplomat with the Irish EU presidency. Diplomats say the EU states most strongly opposed to lifting the embargo are Denmark and Sweden, with the Netherlands also reluctant. On Monday ministers are likely to have only initial talks, before asking diplomats to discuss the issue further and then returning to the matter themselves at their regular monthly meetings. Britain, Washington's staunchest ally during the Iraq war, appears at least open to lifting the ban. "Our position is that we do accept the need for a review of the arms embargo. We think there probably is an issue about modernizing it," said a British source.

9. DPRK Humanitarian Aid Cuts

JoongAng Ilbo ("FOOD AID WILL BE CUT IN NORTH, AGENCY SAYS," 01/25/04) reported that the DPRK will face a severe cut in donated cereal rations in February and March, the World Food Program said in an emergency report dated last week. The United Nations relief agency said it would be forced to end food provision to all but 80,000 pregnant and nursing women and young children in day care centers. The expected arrival of corn and wheat from international donors in March and April would allow the agency to resume temporarily its food aid to other "core beneficiary groups," the report said, but 1 million North Koreans would not receive any grain rations in April and May. The number of North Koreans cut off from those rations would grow to 1.7 million in June and to 2.5 million in July, the UN agency forecast. The agency wants $171 million from international donors in 2004.

10. PRC-France Relations

Agence France-Presse ("FRANCE ROLLS OUT RED CARPET FOR PRC LEADER'S VISIT," 01/27/04) reported that France extended full honours to PRC President Hu Jintao on the first day of a visit aimed at celebrating 40 years of diplomatic relations and ensuring Paris gets a slice of Asia's fastest-growing economy. President Jacques Chirac made the unusual gesture of greeting Hu at the airport as the PRC leader stepped down from his Air China Boeing 747 with his wife and a team of ministers in tow. The Eiffel Tower, Paris' signature landmark, was lit in red for the week in honor of the PRC president, who is making his first state visit to France. Hu held a 90-minute meeting with Chirac at the Elysee palace and was to be the guest of a state banquet later in the evening. "This visit is an occasion to take our partnership to a new level," Chirac told Hu during their discussion, according to Chirac's spokeswoman, Catherine Colonna. "We want to further reinforce our relations, which are already very good in the political and cultural areas, and which could develop more in the economic area," Chirac was said to have added. Hu said nothing to the media as he left the palace with a heavy police escort. The two leaders are due to give a joint press conference Tuesday after a longer discussion.

11. ROK Political Reform

Asia Pulse ("S.KOREAN OPP. CHIEF HINTS AT CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AFTER ELECTIONS," 01/26/04) reported that the ROK's opposition leader hinted Saturday at a constitutional amendment to push ahead with political reforms after April's parliamentary election is over. "For a less costly elections, a fundamental change (in the Constitution) is necessary," said Choi Byung-ryol, head of the main opposition Grand National Party, in a breakfast meeting with party members in South Gyeongsang Province. It was the first time Choi mentioned the constitutional change this year, after

tossing the idea about late last year. However, the party's spokesman, Park Jin, played down Choi's remark. "Instead of pursuing the constitutional change immediately, his idea is one of a number of ways to prevent the recurrence of corruption scandals surrounding presidential and general election campaigns," Park said. "We discussed the idea of a constitutional amendment, but that was that," said the spokesman. Choi also said during the morning meeting that he would take responsibility for the collection of any illicit campaign funds during the presidential campaign in December 2002.

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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