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I. NAPSNet

- 1. Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC
2. Expert on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC
3. DMZ Build-up
4. DPRK-US Relations
5. Expert on Agreed Framework
6. US Aid Worker Receives DPRK Medal
7. Book Reviews of DPRK

II. CanKor

- 8. Report #232

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM JONG-IL STARTS POLITICAL LEG OF SECRETIVE CHINA TRIP ", 2006-01-16) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il seems to have finished what is being interpreted as an economic study trip of the PRC's boomtowns and may be discussing resumption of stalled six party talks with his hosts. Once done with a visit to the city of Guangzhou, the poster city for the PRC's economic reform programs, Kim is tipped to go on to Beijing on Tuesday, where he will meet President Hu Jintao, a source in Beijing said Monday. That meeting is likely to focus on US sanctions against DPRK.

(return to top) Joongang Ilbo ("KIM'S CHINA TRIP LONGEST THUS FAR", 2006-01-16) reported that the much highlighted trip of DPRK leader Kim Jong-il to PRC is becoming by far the longest trip of the leader to his ally, in what some observers say is proof that the DPRK regime is under the firm grip of Mr. Kim. Some analysts say that Mr. Kim's confidence in his power in the DPRK is the main reason for his long stay. "It was the norm for Mr. Kim not to leave Pyongyang for more than a week," said a diplomatic source familiar with the DPRK regime who added that possible threats from within had encouraged the DPRK leader to abide by this unwritten rule until now. (return to top)

2. Expert on Kim Jong-il's Trip to PRC

The Korea Times ("KIM IN CHINA TO ATTRACT INVESTMENT", 2006-01-15) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's trip to the PRC, believed to have begun Tuesday, was intended to attract more PRC investment to his country in the form of economic cooperation, a DPRK expert in Seoul said. Ryoo Kihl-jae, professor of the University of DPRK Studies, said in an interview with The Korea Times that it is necessary to monitor whether the secret visit will eventually lead Pyongyang to develop another set of economic reform measures.

(return to top)

3. DMZ Build-up

The New Yrok Times ("KOREANS FIND PRIME PROPERTY NEAR THE DMZ ", 2006-01-15) reported that six miles from the heavily mined and guarded zone that divides the DPRK from the ROK, workers at LG.Philips LCD are starting to produce liquid-crystal display screens at a new $5 billion plant. Nearby, apartment buildings are on the rise. And in the shadow of an old hilltop machine-gun nest, a cheery blue and red billboard announces that English Village, a new 65-acre language-teaching theme park, will open in March. "The northern part of the province is really growing because of the real estate prices," said Sohn Hak Kyu, governor of Gyeonggi, the province that surrounds Seoul like a donut.

(return to top)

4. DPRK-US Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("N.KOREA 'WILL USE NUKES AGAINST INVADERS'", 2006-01-16) reported that the DPRK has threatened to use nuclear weapons if the US invades it, CBS television reported on its website Saturday. The threat was made by the DPR Korean three-star general Ri Chan-bok, also the representative for the truce village of Panmunjum, to the US broadcaster's anchor Dan Rather, who recently visited the DPRK for"60 Minutes". "Tell the American people that you met the general. If the United States invades our country and starts a war, the People's Army will fight to the death and defend ourselves, taking appropriate revenge," Gen. Ri said. "What we can say to you definitely right now is that we currently have nuclear weapons."

(return to top) Washington Post ("U.S.-NORTH KOREA TIES DISAPPEARING", 2006-01-16) reported that even as the US-led effort to end the DPRK nuclear program inches along, there remains little of whatever official ties the two had in the past. Programs such as the recovery of the remains of US war dead, feeding hungry DPR Koreans and building civilian nuclear power plants have ended in the past eight months, reports USA Today. "The official U.S. connections have atrophied," says former US Ambassador to the ROK, Donald Gregg. (return to top)

5. Expert on Agreed Framework

The Korea Times ("AGREED FRAMEWORK CONTAINED SERIOUS FLAWS ", 2006-01-13) reported that the US-DPRK agreement that was intended to resolve the first DPRK nuclear crisis of 1994 had two serious flaws, at least one of which the US knew of but could not do anything about, a former nuclear watchdog deputy said. Pierre Goldschmidt, former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), disputes that non-compliance by states like the DPRK and Iran indicates failure of the non-proliferation regime. To blame the regime is to “deflect attention from where the real problem lies: the weak will and short-sighted nuclear policies of the international community,” he argued in a policy outlook published Tuesday by the Carnegie Endowment.

(return to top)

6. US Aid Worker Receives DPRK Medal

The Korea Times ("NK AWARDS MEDAL TO US AID WORKER", 2006-01-16) reported that the DPRK has for the first time conferred a medal to a US citizen, a news report said Sunday. On Tuesday, Han Song-ryol, deputy chief of the DPRK’s mission to the United Nations, awarded a ``goodwill’’ medal to the widow of Ellsworth Culver, co-founder and former president of Mercy Corps, an international aid agency, at a ceremony in Portland, said the Minjok Tongshin, a news agency based in Los Angeles.

(return to top)

7. Book Reviews of DPRK

Japan Times ("CHECKING BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN", 2006-01-16) reported that the subtitles of these books, “KOREA: The Struggle Against American Power”, by Tim Beal and “NORTH KOREA: The Paranoid Peninsula”, by Paul French reveal the sharply differing points of departure on DPRK. For Beal, the DPRK is a product as much of US ill will as it is of its own internal ideology. For Beal, the current nuclear crisis was deliberately engineered by the Bush administration to enable it to renege on Clinton's 1994 Framework Agreement to use KEDO to build two light-water reactors in exchange for the DPRK’s freezing and dismantling graphite-moderated reactors capable of producing weapons-grade plutonium.

(return to top)

II. CanKor

8. Report #232

CanKor ("CURRENT EVENTS", 2006-01-13) More clues surface about a secretive visit by DPRK leader Kim Jong Il to China. The fact that his final destination seems to be Guangdong Province, the epicenter of Chinese economic reforms, fuels speculation that the main purpose of the visit is to learn from China's example. The World Food Programme says it plans to resume food aid to the DPRK, but at a smaller level. Staff at the Pyongyang offices will be reduced by "about half" from its current level of 32 internationals, according to the WFP, although other sources guess that fewer than a third of the staff would remain. The Republic of Korea evacuates its 57 staff members from the construction site of the KEDO-sponsored light water reactors in the DPRK, citing concerns about personal security in light of the de factor termination of the project.

(return to top) CanKor ("FOCUS", 2006-01-13) This week's FOCUS section features the English-language version of the New Year's "joint editorial", the DPRK equivalent of a "State of the Union" address. Since his death in 1994, the joint editorial replaces what used to be Kim Il Sung's annual New Year's speech that outlined government policies for the coming year. News articles from China and South Korea both comment on the lack of any mention of the nuclear issue or the Six-Party Talks. The editorial does, however, promote agriculture as the continuing national priority, economic modernization and profitability in management and business strategies, innovation in cultural construction, and a renewed push for inter-Korean cooperation while opposing US intervention and domination. (return to top)

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