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I. United States

- 1. DPRK on Nuclear Issue
2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue
3. DPRK on UN Sanctions
4. ROK on UN Sanctions on the DPRK
5. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks
6. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks
7. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks
8. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks
9. Defector on Sino-DPRK Relations
10. ROK-US on DPRK Nuclear Issue
11. ROK-PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue
12. ROK Aid to the DPRK
13. US Aid to the DPRK
14. MIA Joint Recovery Operations
15. ROK History Dispute
16. Inter-Korean Relations
17. DPRK Hydroelectric Project
18. DPRK on Human Rights
19. ROK on DPRK Human Rights
20. ROK Lobbyist in Oil-For-Food Case
21. Japan and India on UNSC Reform
22. Japan on Russian Oil Pipeline

23. France on PRC Arms Ban, Anti-Secession Law
24. Sino-Japanese Relations

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. DPRK on Nuclear Issue

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA ASKS U.S. TO CHANGE ITS POLICY TOWARD THE NORTH TO RESOLVE NUCLEAR CONFLICT", 2005-04-21) reported that the DPRK said that the international standoff over its atomic weapons program could be resolved if the US abandoned alleged plans to overthrow its DPRK with a nuclear attack. "If the United States shows sincerity by its actions - such as changing its policy of squashing to death by nuclear (weapons) and assuring peaceful coexistence - the nuclear issue between (DPRK) and the United States can be resolved smoothly," the DPRK's newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in an editorial.

(return to top)

2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France Presse ("RICE SAYS US MILITARY IS A DETERRENT TO NKOREA NUKES, UN SANCTIONS AN OPTION", 2005-04-21) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Thursday US forces present a "significant deterrent" against any DPRK nuclear threat, and she may yet seek UN Security Council sanctions against Pyongyang. "The North Koreans are not confused about the fact that the United States maintains a significant deterrent against North Korean nuclear weapons if indeed they have gotten to that state," she told Fox television in an interview here. "Now we reserve the right and the possibility of going to the Security Council, should it be necessary, of putting other measures in place, should it be necessary."

(return to top)

3. DPRK on UN Sanctions

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREAN OFFICIAL: U.N. SANCTIONS OVER NUCLEAR ISSUE WOULD AMOUNT TO DECLARATION OF WAR", 2005-04-21) reported that the DPRK would treat UN sanctions over its nuclear weapons ambitions as tantamount to a declaration of war, a DPRK diplomat said Thursday in an interview. "If the United States refers the nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council and that means sanctions, we have already clarified that we will regard sanctions as a declaration of war," So Chol, an officer in the European department of the DPRK Foreign Ministry, told Associated Press Television News in the DPRK capital, Pyongyang.

(return to top)

4. ROK on UN Sanctions on the DPRK

Joongang Ilbo ("FOR NORTH, SEOUL SEES NO UN OPTION", 2005-04-21) reported that the ROK

government took pains yesterday to say it would object to presenting the crisis over the DPRK's nuclear arms program to the UN Security Council, but a top official offered no option other than pursuing efforts to revive the stalled six-party negotiations. Song Min-soon, the government's top envoy to the nuclear disarmament talks said yesterday, "Referring the matter to the UN Security Council is not a universal remedy."

(return to top)

5. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL PLAYS DOWN N.KOREA DEADLINE RUMORS", 2005-04-21) reported that Assistant Vice Foreign Minister Song Min-soon played down rumors that the US will take a harder line with the DPRK if it fails to return to six-party nuclear disarmament talks by June. Appearing on a CBS program, Song said the rumors “could be thought of as a sort of psychological line people have.” “One could change the cup the moment it no longer holds water, but now isn't that time,” he said. Song warned taking the dispute to the UN Security Council, as the US has said it might, “isn't a panacea” and could make things more difficult.

(return to top)

6. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Herald ("U.S. STRESSES FOCUS STILL ON SIX-WAY TALKS ", 2005-04-21) reported that the US shrugged off talk that it is looking at other options than dialogue to stop the DPRK from pursuing its nuclear weapons development, stressing the focus is to get the DPRK back to the six-party negotiating table. The White House and the State Department echoed each other by saying the US priority is a resumption of the six-way talks. "Our focus is on getting North Korea back to the talks. I think that's the focus of all parties in the region," White House spokesman Scott Mclellan said. State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said the US focus remains unchanged. "We're very, very much engaged in trying to restart the six-party talks. And I think it's premature at this point to speculate about other approaches," he said.

(return to top)

7. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

The Associated Press ("JAPAN EXPRESSES REGRET OVER STALLED NORTH KOREA TALKS", 2005-04-21) reported that Japan's foreign minister expressed regret over the stalled disarmament talks on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions and suggested it might be necessary to bring the issue to the UN Security Council. Nobutaka Machimura, in Jakarta to attend the Asian-African Summit, also said the repeated delays have served only to benefit the DPRK, which may have used the time to produce nuclear weapons.

(return to top)

8. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Xinhua ("CHINA TO CONTINUE MEDIATION FOR NEW ROUND OF SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2005-0--21) reported that the PRC will continue to mediate the new round of six-party talks, and hopes the relevant sides, especially the major parties, would show flexibility and sincerity to resume the talks at an early date. Qin Gang, a spokesman of the PRC Foreign Ministry made the remarks at a regular

press conference. He said with the purpose of safeguarding peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula, the PRC has advocated the nuclear issue in the area should be resolved through dialogue, and meanwhile, the reasonable security concern of the DPRK should be paid attention to.

(return to top)

9. Defector on Sino-DPRK Relations

The Associated Press ("CHINA HOLDS KEY TO CHANGING N KOREA - N KOREAN DEFECTOR", 2005-04-21) reported that the PRC holds the key to breaking down the DPRK, which has been kept alive only because of Beijing's support, the highest-ranking defector from Pyongyang said. "The reason North Korea has sustained for this long is because China is backing it," said Hwang Jang Yop, a former chief of the DPRK's parliament who once mentored DPRK leader Kim Jong Il. "But as soon as China breaks its alliance, it will be like a death notice" to Pyongyang.

(return to top)

10. ROK-US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

The Associated Press ("US ENVOY HILL TO VISIT SOUTH KOREA TWICE THIS MONTH", 2005-0--21) reported that the top US envoy on the DPRK nuclear issue will visit the ROK twice this month amid efforts to resume stalled disarmament talks with the DPRK, the ROK's Foreign Ministry said. Christopher Hill, new US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, will arrive in the ROK Saturday and stay through Tuesday, and return to Seoul again April 28-30, the ministry said. Hill is also expected to visit the PRC and Japan.

(return to top)

11. ROK-PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Korea Times ("ROH TO MEET HU IN MOSCOW", 2005-04-21) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun will have a summit meeting with PRC President Hu Jintao in Moscow on May 9 on the occasion of a ceremony to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the World War II, according to Chong Wa Dae officials Thursday. "We are seeking ways to realize the meeting," Chong Wa Dae spokesman Kim Man-soo told The Korea Times. He said the two leaders will discuss issues of mutual concern including the continuing standoff over the DPRK nuclear weapons program and security in Northeast Asia.

(return to top)

12. ROK Aid to the DPRK

Chosun Ilbo/Arirang TV ("S. KOREA TO SEND AID TO N. KOREA", 2005-04-21) reported that the timetable for the ROK's shipment of aid supplies to the bird flu-stricken DPRK has been set. Seoul's Unification Ministry announced the first batch of goods would depart Incheon on Friday for the DPRK's Nampo seaport. Three ROK aid workers and a technician will also be crossing the border. Ministry officials say the supply goods are worth W720 million, roughly US$714,000, which include bird flu testing kits and sterilization solutions, among others. Further assistance is likely, as Seoul plans to spend a total of US$2.5 million helping the DPRK combat avian influenza.

(return to top)

13. US Aid to the DPRK

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. STILL SENDING AID GOODS TO NORTH KOREA", 2005-04-21) reported that a report from the US State Department submitted to Congress on April 15 shows that despite a 1995 cutoff of official aid to the DPRK, some exceptions have been made. The report noted the US gave $242,000 in aid to help victims of the Ryongchon train explosion in the DPRK last year. Of that, $100,000 went through the Red Cross, while the rest was sent directly as medical aid. Through the World Food Program, America has donated 50,000 tons of grain from December to this month, costing $22.3 million. Another 60,000 tons of grain were sent to the DPRK in the first half of 2004, the report said.

(return to top)

14. MIA Joint Recovery Operations

The Associated Press ("U.S. TEAM HEADS TO N. KOREA SEEKING MIAS", 2005-04-21) reported that the Pentagon said it has sent a 27-man team to the DPRK to search for remains of servicemen missing in action - a mission the US has undertaken every year for a decade. The civilian and military specialists entered the DPRK last Saturday to survey two areas where some 1,300 Americans are believed to be missing from Korean War battles fought more than a half-century ago, the Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office said in a statement. The planned five-month search is one in a series of operations that since 1996 have yielded remains believed to be those of more than 200 Americans who fought in the Korean War. Twenty have been identified and returned to their families.

(return to top)

15. ROK History Dispute

International Herald Tribune ("SEOUL STRUGGLES WITH HISTORY - KIM'S", 2005-04-21) reported that Kang Man Gil, a renowned historian appointed as head of a prestigious government committee preparing for the 60th anniversary of the ROK's liberation from Japanese colonial rule, was asked a question by a reporter last week and he said what few historians dispute. When his reply was reported, however, many South Koreans called for Kang's dismissal. Kang said that Kim Il Sung, the late DPRK president, had fought against colonial Japan. It was more than enough to set off the ROK's conservatives. "It's a senile comment that we can never tolerate, given the sentiment of our people," said a statement from the Free Citizens' Alliance of Korea, a leading conservative group in Seoul. "Kim Il Sung was a war criminal. A senior public official advertising him as an independence fighter - this is something that should never happen." But Kim Min Chul, a senior fellow at the Institute for Research in Collaborationist Activities, which studies colonial-era history, chided the conservatives. "What a vulgar fuss," Kim said. "It's time for us to see a fact as a fact."

(return to top)

16. Inter-Korean Relations

Itar-Tass ("SOUTH KOREA FACILITATES VISA REGIME WITH NORTH KOREA", 2005-04-21) reported that the ROK has taken a very important step to boost contacts with the DPRK, facilitating a visa regime for ROK citizens visiting the DPRK. The move is expected to promote further development of contacts between the ROK and DPRK. The Standing Committee for unification,

foreign affairs and foreign trade of the ROK parliament has approved an amended law on inter-Korean exchange that authorizes ROK citizens to visit the DPRK on facilitated terms. If the ROK parliament approves the amended law ROK citizens will have to merely notify the government about a date of a planned visit.

(return to top)

17. DPRK Hydroelectric Project

Itar-Tass ("HYDROELECTRIC POWER STATION LAUNCHED IN NORTH KOREA", 2005-04-21) reported that a hydroelectric power station was launched in a festive ceremony in the Hangyong-Namdo province in the DPRK's northeast. The commissioning of the hydroelectric power station has made it possible to normalize energy supply to local plants and residential areas, supply them with drinking water as well as supply enough water for irrigation, the Korean Central News Agency of DPRK reported on Thursday.

(return to top)

18. DPRK on Human Rights

Chosun Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA REJECTS UN RESOLUTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD ", 2005-04-21) reported that the DPRK has rejected a recent UN resolution that criticized Pyongyang's human rights record. The DPRK's foreign ministry said the report was politically motivated and baseless. Last week, the 53-country U.N. Human Rights Commission passed a resolution condemning what it called "systematic" violations of human rights in the DPRK. The vote was 30 to nine.

(return to top)

19. ROK on DPRK Human Rights

Joongang Ilbo ("GROUPS FLAY RIGHTS PANEL OVER NORTH", 2005-04-21) reported that civic groups concerned with rights in the DPRK attacked the ROK's Human Rights Commission, a state agency, for shying from confronting the DPRK over what they see as a crucial issue. The groups rebuked the commission after Cho Young-hoang, president of the rights body, said yesterday the panel has no official stance with regard to the DPRK. He also said it was up to Pyongyang in the first instance, and not the United Nations or international community, to improve its own rights situation.

(return to top)

20. ROK Lobbyist in Oil-For-Food Case

Washington Post ("U.N. ENVOY TO N. KOREA STEPS ASIDE FOR PROBE", 2005-04-21) reported that the United Nations' special envoy to the DPRK, Maurice F. Strong, decided to step aside until UN-appointed investigators and federal prosecutors finish examining his financial ties to a ROK lobbyist accused of trying to bribe UN officials. The move comes less than a week after federal authorities charged Tongsun Park, a ROK businessman, with lobbying UN officials as an "unregistered agent" of Saddam Hussein. Strong, a Canadian entrepreneur and environmentalist, acknowledged Monday that Park had invested money in a business he was "associated with" in 1997 and later advised him on his dealings with Pyongyang.

(return to top)

21. Japan and India on UNSC Reform

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, INDIA SHARE SENSE OF URGENCY OVER U.N. REFORM", 2005-04-21) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura and Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh agreed to boost cooperation over UN Security Council reforms, sharing the view that they may have to wait a long time if they lose the chance for changes now, a Japanese government official said. Machimura and Singh, in Jakarta to attend meetings commemorating the 1955 Bandung Conference, agreed the two countries should boost solidarity further with Brazil and Germany, which are two other countries seeking permanent membership in the council.

(return to top)

22. Japan on Russian Oil Pipeline

Kyodo News ("JAPAN PRESSES RUSSIA TO PRIORITIZE PACIFIC-BOUND PIPELINE", 2005-04-21) reported that Japan pressed Russia on Thursday to give priority to constructing a pipeline linking eastern Siberia with near Nakhodka in the Russian Far East to ship oil to Japan, in a move to counter Moscow's possible plan to build a branch line to the PRC first, a Japanese government official said. Japanese Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Shoichi Nakagawa told Russian Industry and Energy Minister Viktor Khristenko at their meeting that Japan will not offer financial aid for the project if the likelihood of Russia's building the pipeline to near Nakhodka diminishes, the official said.

(return to top)

23. France on PRC Arms Ban, Anti-Secession Law

Agence France Presse ("FRANCE BACKS CHINA ANTI-SECESSION LAW, VOWS TO PUSH FOR END TO ARMS EMBARGO", 2005-04-21) reported that France threw its support behind a law that allows PRC to attack Taiwan while vowing to keep pushing for an end to an EU arms embargo that could open the door for Paris to sell Beijing weapons. On a three-day visit to the PRC, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin said Paris had no objections to the anti-secession law, appearing to put it at odds with the European Union. "The anti-secession law is completely compatible with the position of France," he said in a joint press conference with his PRC counterpart Wen Jiabao.

(return to top)

24. Sino-Japanese Relations

The New York Times ("MOLLIFIED BY CHINA'S MOVE TO END PROTESTS, JAPAN URGES TALKS", 2005-04-21) reported that a day after the PRC ordered an end to anti-Japanese protests, Japanese officials softened their tone toward it and urged its leaders to meet with Japanese leaders later this week. With signs that both sides were groping for ways to defuse the diplomatic crisis, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi responded favorably to calls by the PRC foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, to protesters to stop the sometimes violent marches and attacks on Japanese government offices and businesses in PRC. "You can see well that there is a tone that says it is necessary to lead it toward an improvement, and I think we share that view," Mr. Koizumi told reporters.

(return to top)

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