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I. NAPSNet

- 1. ROK on Six Party Talks
2. Inter-Korean Military Meeting
3. Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks
4. Inter-Korean Youth Meeting
5. ROK Youths Surveyed on DPRK
6. Japan on DPRK Sanctions
7. Japan on DPRK-Japan Bilateral Talks
8. Japan on Abductees in DPRK
9. PRC Internet Issue
10. PRC-Russia Relations
11. Hong Kong-PRC Relations
12. PRC-Japan Government Relations
13. Japan-PRC Government Relations
14. Japan-PRC Trade Relations
15. Yasukuni Shrine Issue
16. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation
17. Japan-PRC Security Relations
18. Japan on UNSC Reform
19. Natural Gas Reserve in Japan
20. Taiwan-US Relations

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. ROK on Six Party Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("SIX-PARTY TALKS COULD RESUME IN LATE MARCH ", 2006-02-21) reported that a high-ranking ROK government official says countries in six-party talks on the DPRK nuclear program are looking at the end of March or beginning of April to resume the stalled negotiations. “There have been various contacts between the U.S., North Korea and China” which established that the talks can resume as soon as a solution to Washington’s financial sanctions that have stalled progress arise, the official said. “But whether the talks are really held at that time will depend on the progress made between North Korea and the U.S.,” he added. Pyongyang is boycotting the talks over sanctions Washington has slapped on a bank it says was the DPRK’s main money-laundering channel.

(return to top)

2. Inter-Korean Military Meeting

Chosun Ilbo ("SOUTH, NORTH KOREAN GENERALS TO MEET AT LAST ", 2006-02-21) reported that the DPRK and the ROK have at last agreed to organize talks between top brass of their militaries next week. The generals will meet for two days on the DPRK side of the armistice line in the Panmunjeom truce village. The meeting will come a year and nine months after the second round of talks between generals from the two sides in Seoraksan in June 2004. The agenda will be packed, topped by a military agreement on reopening the Gyeongui and East Sea railway lines and roads between the DPRK and the ROK, as well as establishing a joint fishing area to help prevent inadvertent skirmishes caused by ships straying across the Northern Limit Line. They will also discuss plans for a meeting between the defense ministers of the two sides and other measures to reduce military tensions and build trust. Former president Kim Dae-jung plans to use the inter-Korean railway when he visits the DPRK in June, so the talks will help ensure his safe passage.

(return to top)

3. Inter-Korean Red Cross Talks

Chosun Ilbo ("NORTH-SOUTH RED CROSS TALKS UNDERWAY ", 2006-02-21) reported that at the DPRK’s Kumkang Mountain on Tuesday, at the seventh round of Red Cross meetings, the DPRK side is known to have repeated their previously stated claim that, "There are no POWs or abductees (from the South) living in North Korea". An official from the ROK said there is a wide rift between the two sides on the issue.

(return to top)

4. Inter-Korean Youth Meeting

Chosun Ilbo ("S. KOREAN YOUTH DELEGATES VISIT N. KOREA ", 2006-02-21) reported that a 100-member ROK delegation is visiting the DPRK under an agreement to promote cross-border

exchanges made in June 2000. Consisting of university students and other young supporters of the country's political parties, the delegates, who arrived Monday, will take part in commemorative events and hold seminars on peaceful reunification. The delegation will propose forming a joint cheering squad for the football World Cup in Germany. For this, they will propose using the trans-Korean railway, the Gyeongui Line, to travel to Germany via the PRC and Russia.

(return to top)

5. ROK Youths Surveyed on DPRK

Korea Times ("48% OF YOUTH WOULD SUPPORT N. KOREA IN CASE OF US ATTACK", 2006-0--21) reported that in a survey of 1,000 youngsters aged between 18 and 23, conducted by The Korea Times and its sister paper the Hankook Ilbo on Feb. 16-19, nearly 48 percent of respondents said that if the US attacked nuclear facilities in the DPRK, Seoul should act on Pyongyang's behalf and demand Washington stop the attack. But 40.7 percent of them said Seoul should keep a neutral stance in the event of such attacks, while 11.6 percent said the ROK needs to act in concert with the US. A political expert in Seoul said that the poll results should not be interpreted as meaning ROK youths are anti-US. ``To me, the survey does not hint at our youngster's hatred for the United States,'' Kim Soo-jin, politics professor of Ewha Womans University in Seoul, said in a telephone interview. ``I interpret it as their opposition to any attempt to solve the nuclear crisis by armed force.''

(return to top)

6. Japan on DPRK Sanctions

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO TIGHTEN CONTROL ON N. KOREA, NO ECONOMIC SANCTIONS FOR NOW ", 2006-02-21) reported that Japan plans to apply regulations tightly to issues related to the DPRK to put pressure on Pyongyang after bilateral talks made little headway on the abduction and other bilateral issues -- without imposing economic sanctions for the time being, government sources said Monday. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe told a press conference Monday, without elaborating, ''Pressure is necessary to resolve the issues. We would like to study what kind of pressure should be used.''

(return to top)

7. Japan on DPRK-Japan Bilateral Talks

Kyodo News ("KOIZUMI SENT MESSAGE TO N. KOREA AT BEIJING TALKS ", 2006-02-21) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said Wednesday he had sent a message to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il in which he expressed his hopes that the DPRK would negotiate with Japan in a sincere manner during their latest bilateral talks earlier this month. Earlier in the day, speaking at his regular press conference, Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe denied that the premier had sent such a message during the bilateral talks in Beijing from Feb. 4 to 8.

(return to top)

8. Japan on Abductees in DPRK

Kyodo News ("ABDUCTEES' KIN, SUPPORTERS TO BOOST CALLS FOR INT'L COOPERATION ", 2006-02-21) reported that the relatives of Japanese abducted to the DPRK and their supporters said

they agreed Sunday in Tokyo to reinforce their calls to the international community for cooperation in seeking the return of any abductees remaining in the DPRK. They also said the relatives of abductee Kaoru Matsuki, who the DPRK says died in the country, are planning to file a complaint Friday with the Tokyo police against two people who are the wives of Japanese who hijacked a Japan Airlines plane to the DPRK in 1970.

(return to top)

9. PRC Internet Issue

Washington Post ("BLOGGERS WHO PURSUE CHANGE CONFRONT FEAR AND MISTRUST", 2006-02-21) reported that many have used the Internet to produce essays, books and even underground films that question the PRC Communist Party's authority. But surveys show most Internet users are members of the urban elite who are benefiting from the PRC's booming economy and have avoided writing about politics.

(return to top)

10. PRC-Russia Relations

China Daily ("CHINA: PUTIN LIKELY TO VISIT IN MARCH", 2006-02-21) reported that Russia's President Vladimir Putin will likely visit the PRC in March for talks with top leaders on bilateral and international issues, Beijing said Tuesday.

(return to top)

11. Hong Kong-PRC Relations

Reuters ("HONG KONG AIMS TO BUILD GOLD WAREHOUSE FOR CHINA", 2006-02-21) reported that Hong Kong may be about to build a bonded warehouse at its airport to store gold and make the PRC territory a regional trading hub while feeding rising demand from the mainland PRC, industry officials said on Tuesday.

(return to top)

12. PRC-Japan Government Relations

BBC News ("CHINA TO DISCUSS JAPAN TENSIONS", 2006-02-21) reported that PRC Premier Wen Jiabao is to meet Japan's trade minister this week, for the highest level talks between the two sides since a row broke out last year. The meeting, confirmed hours before Trade Minister Toshihiro Nikai headed for Beijing, suggested the two sides wanted to tackle their differences.

(return to top)

13. Japan-PRC Government Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA EXCLUSIVE: CHINA, JAPAN SEEK TO REPAIR SOURED TIES THROUGH RULING PARTY DIALOGUE", 2006-02-21) reported that senior officials from the ruling parties of the PRC and Japan discussed a wide range of issues on Tuesday, aimed at repairing the ties soured by Japanese prime minister's repeated visits to a shrine worshipping WWII war criminals.

(return to top)

14. Japan-PRC Trade Relations

Washington Post ("JAPAN'S TRADE WITH CHINA RISES IN 2005", 2006-02-21) reported that Japan's trade with the PRC rose 12.7 percent in 2005 to $189.4 billion, marking the seventh straight year of growth, a government-affiliated trade organization said Tuesday.

(return to top)

15. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Crisscross News ("KOIZUMI DOESN'T WORSHIP WAR CRIMINALS AT YASUKUNI: LDP POLICY CHIEF", 2006-02-21) reported that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's policy chief, Hidenao Nakagawa, suggested Tuesday that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi does not worship the 14 Class-A war criminals enshrined at Yasukuni Shrine when he visits there.

(return to top)

16. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation

Japan Times ("MISSILE-SHIELD NOSE CONE READY FOR TESTING", 2006-02-21) reported that Japan and the US will conduct next month their first joint test of Japanese-developed technologies for an advanced interceptor missile under a joint missile defense project, sources familiar with Japan-U.S. relations said Monday.

(return to top)

17. Japan-PRC Security Relations

China Post ("JAPANESE FM BACKS AWAY FROM CHINESE SPYING ACCUSATION", 2006-02-21) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso on Monday backed away from an earlier claim that the PRC lured a consular official with a female spy, saying he offered the account only as a possible scenario.

(return to top)

18. Japan on UNSC Reform

TMC ("JAPAN, GERMAN TO COOPERATE ON UNSC REFORM DESPITE DIFFERENCE ", 2006-0--21) reported that visiting German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier acknowledged Tuesday there is a slight difference in the efforts of his country and those of Japan in pursuing reforms of the UN Security Council but said he and his Japanese counterpart, Taro Aso, have agreed to continue their dialogue and cooperation on the matter.

(return to top)

19. Natural Gas Reserve in Japan

ITAR-TASS: News Agency ("SIGNS OF LARGE-SCALE RESERVES OF NATURAL GAS FOUND OFF

JAPAN ", 2006-02-21) reported that the signs of large-scale reserves of natural gas have been found near the shores of Japan. The press reported on Tuesday that a group of researchers, among them specialists of Tokyo Univesity and the National Agency for the Ocean Study and Exploration, have discovered large deposits of methane hydrate (also known as crystalline hydrate) on the bed of the Sea of Japan at a depth of about 900 metres, approxiamtely 30 kilometres north-west of the port of Naoetsu (Niigata Prefecture).

(return to top)

20. Taiwan-US Relations

Asia Times ("CHEN RISKS TAIWAN-US CHILL", 2006-02-22) reported that recent statements by Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian have given rise to another round of criticism from Beijing and revived US mistrust toward Chen.

(return to top)

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