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I. NAPSNet

- 1. Kim Dae-jung's DPRK Visit
  2. Kim Dae-jung on DPRK, US Policy
  3. International Doha Talks on DPRK
  4. DPRK-PRC Bilateral Talks
  5. Inter-Korean Rail Cooperation
  6. Inter-Korean Summit Anniversary
  7. DPRK Defectors
  8. US-ROK Free Trade Agreement
  9. US-ROK Security Alliance
  10. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute
  11. USFK Troop Realignment
  12. ROK-Japan Relations
  13. Japan on ROK, PRC Relations
  14. US-Japan Security Alliance
  15. Japan-PRC Relations
  16. US on Cross Strait Relations
  17. US-PRC Trade Relations

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. Kim Dae-jung's DPRK Visit

Chosun Ilbo ("KIM DAE-JUNG TO TALK REUNIFICATION IN PYONGYANG", 2006-05-23) reported that former president Kim Dae-jung said Tuesday he will “discuss how to reunite a race unjustly divided … and the role that we need to play in the formation of a peaceful and ordered world” when he meets with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il next month. But Kim told a meeting of international surgeons in Seoul this was “in every respect a personal visit, and I'm not traveling as an envoy of the government so I don’t carry its agenda." An aide to the former president, Choi Kyung-hwan, said later these were "standard remarks that fit the theme of the talk," and stressed, "The former president was not saying that he intends to discuss a concrete plan for reunification."

(return to top) Yonhap ("PRIME MINISTER VOICES HOPE FOR INTER-KOREAN SUMMIT", 2006-05-23) reported that the ROK’s prime minister said Tuesday she hopes former President Kim Dae-jung will help to arrange another summit between the leaders of the two Koreas when he visits Pyongyang in June. A summit would provide an opportunity for a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations, deadlocked since the six-way talks on the DPRK’s nuclear weapons program came to a standstill, Prime Minister Han Myung-sook said during a luncheon meeting with reporters. (return to top)

2. Kim Dae-jung on DPRK, US Policy

Associated Press ("FORMER SOUTH KOREAN PRESIDENT URGES NORTH KOREA TO GIVE UP NUCLEAR WEAPONS", 2006-05-23) reported that former ROK President Kim Dae-jung on Tuesday urged the DPRK to give up its nuclear programmes ahead of a trip to the DPRK. Kim made the remark during a speech at an academic conference, calling for a "give-and-take'' deal between the DPRK and the US to resolve their nuclear standoff. "North Korea should give up its nuclear (programs) completely and in return, the United States should guarantee North Korea's security and lift financial sanctions,'' Kim said.

(return to top)

3. International Doha Talks on DPRK

Reuters ("IRAN, NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR CRISES IN FOCUS AT ASIA TALKS", 2006-05-23) reported that efforts to block Iran and the DPRK’s nuclear programmes will be in the spotlight when ministers and officials from 28 Asian and Middle Eastern countries begin talks in Doha on Tuesday. ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon is due to meet his PRC and Russian counterparts, Li Zhaoxing and Sergei Lavrov, to find ways to end a months-long deadlock in six-way talks on the DPRK’s nuclear programme.

(return to top)

4. DPRK-PRC Bilateral Talks

JoongAng Ilbo ("NORTH'S FOREIGN MINISTER SCHEDULES VISIT TO CHINA", 2006-05-23) reported that the DPRK’s Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun will visit the PRC from May 30 until June 6, the PRC Foreign Ministry said yesterday, days after a similar visit from the US chief negotiator for nuclear disarmament talks. Mr. Paek is scheduled to meet with PRC officials to discuss bilateral issues as well as regional matters that concern both countries, said Liu Jianchao, the PRC Foreign Ministry's spokesman.

(return to top)

5. Inter-Korean Rail Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("CROSS-BORDER RAILWAY TEST TO GO AHEAD", 2006-05-23) reported that the ROK will conduct test runs of cross-border railways without guarantees of safe passage from the DPRK military after talks between top brass from both sides collapsed last week. Seoul on Monday proposed fresh working-level military talks about the test scheduled for Thursday, but there has been no response from the DPRK. Seoul will give Pyongyang a list of passengers who will be on the trains, but it will not seek written agreement from the DPRK military.

(return to top)

6. Inter-Korean Summit Anniversary

Chosun Ilbo ("TWO KOREAS MEET TO PREPARE FOR SUMMIT ANNIVERSARY", 2006-05-23) reported that the ROK and the DPRK started working-level talks at the DPRK border city of Kaesong on Tuesday to prepare for an upcoming celebration marking the June 15th Joint Declaration six years ago. The commemorative event will take place in the ROK's southwestern city of Gwangju from June 14 to 17.

(return to top)

7. DPRK Defectors

Korea Times ("US-BOUND DEFECTORS", 2006-05-22) reported that Washington's acceptance of DPRK defectors as refugees seems to have opened the gate for a stream of asylum seekers. Reports say negotiations are under way between the US and the PRC over the fate of four DPR Koreans, who recently broke into the US consulate in Shenyang. This is the first case of handling defectors, which involves the ROK, the PRC and the US simultaneously. And how the three governments deal with this diplomatic hot potato will set an important precedent.

(return to top)

8. US-ROK Free Trade Agreement

Yonhap ("FIRMS TO SEEK U.S. RECOGNITION OF KAESONG GOODS AS S. KOREAN-MADE", 2006-05-23) reported that a group representing the ROK's small businesses said Tuesday it will ask the US this week to recognize goods produced at an inter-Korean industrial park in the DPRK as ROK-made, an official for the group said Tuesday. The labeling of products from the Kaesong industrial park as made in the ROK is likely to be one of the thorniest issues at the first round of free trade agreement (FTA) talks between the ROK and the US scheduled for June 5-9 in Washington.

(return to top)

9. US-ROK Security Alliance

Joongang Ilbo ("REPORT ENVISIONS A NEW KOREA-U.S. ALLIANCE BY 2015", 2006-05-23) reported that Seoul and Washington should finish the "comprehensive transformation," of their alliance by 2015 and build a "complex alliance," the East Asia Institute said in a report released yesterday in which 19 experts, including Kim Kyung-won, the former Korean ambassador to

Washington, weighed in. The Seoul-based think tank suggested the new alliance would broaden the scope of activity by the two countries, encompassing regions around the Korean Peninsula, but the basis for it would still be the defense of the peninsula.

(return to top)

10. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA RESUMES PROJECT TO NAME SEABED NEAR DOKDO", 2006-05-23) reported that the government is preparing to submit ROK names for seafloor features in the Dokdo area to the International Hydrographic Organization. The government decided to resume the project, a high-ranking government official said Tuesday on condition of anonymity.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("TOKYO 'PLANNED SURVEY NEAR DOKDO SINCE LAST YEAR'", 2006-05-23) reported that the Japanese government methodically planned its attempted sea survey mission in the ROK's territorial waters last month, which nearly turned into a diplomatic crisis, a Japanese daily says. It quotes a source as saying Tokyo's attempt to send survey ships into the ROK waters last month was sanctioned by senior government figures. (return to top)

11. USFK Troop Realignment

Washington Post ("IN S. KOREA, A STUBBORN STAND AGAINST U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE", 2006-05-21) reported that the rabble-rousing rice farmers of this tiny village are engaged in their own little war against the US military. With American forces in the midst of their largest regional realignment in decades, the farmlands of Daechuri have been condemned to make room for the expansion of a nearby US base. While about half the residents have quietly accepted a lucrative cash-for-land deal being offered by the ROK government, a core group of about 70 holdouts have rebuffed all efforts to buy them out.

(return to top)

12. ROK-Japan Relations

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN, JAPAN TO HOLD EEZ TALKS NEXT MONTH", 2006-05-23) reported that the ROK and Japan agreed Tuesday to resume talks next month to discuss their shared maritime border in the East Sea, ROK officials said. The two sides agreed to hold the negotiations on their respective exclusive economic zones (EEZ) from June 12-13 in Tokyo, they added. Seoul and Tokyo also decided to bolster non-political exchanges separate to their continued diplomatic stand-off.

(return to top)

13. Japan on ROK, PRC Relations

Kyodo ("JAPAN'S RELATIONS WITH CHINA, S. KOREA WILL THAW: KOIZUMI", 2006-05-23) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi expressed optimism Tuesday that Japan's relations with the PRC and the ROK will improve, despite Beijing and Seoul suspending top-level exchanges with Tokyo. "A breakthrough will come in due course," Koizumi told reporters. "There's nothing to worry about."

(return to top)

14. US-Japan Security Alliance

Reuters ("US-JAPAN MILITARY PACT STILL STRONG, SAYS LAWLESS", 2006-05-23) reported that Japan's increasing military role was indicative of US support for a continued US-Japan alliance, Richard Lawless, the US deputy defense undersecretary for Asian and Pacific Affairs, said. "Japan in effect has agreed to transform the alliance with us and assume more responsibility for the alliance -- more responsibility for roles, missions and capabilities," he told Reuters during a visit to the US Pacific territory of Guam.

(return to top)

15. Japan-PRC Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINESE, JAPANESE FMS TO MEET IN QATAR WITH SHRINE VISITS ON AGENDA", 2006-05-23) reported that the foreign ministers of the PRC and Japan will hold their first talks for more than a year at a regional forum in Qatar, the PRC foreign ministry said. The PRC's Li Zhaoxing is scheduled to meet his Japanese counterpart Taro Aso on the sidelines of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue in Doha, ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said.

(return to top)

16. US on Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA STANDS TO GAIN FROM US-TAIWAN TRADE TIES: US OFFICIAL", 2006-05-23) reported that the US believes deeper trade ties with Taiwan will pay off not just for each of the allies but also for the island's arch-rival PRC, a senior US official said. Deputy US Trade Representative Karan Bhatia said the PRC has nothing to fear. "We want to see that trade relationship grow and be strengthened," he told reporters, a day before leaving for Taipei for talks to review the two sides' Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA).

(return to top)

17. US-PRC Trade Relations

Reuters ("CHINA HOPES US WILL EASE HIGH-TECH EXPORT LIMITS", 2006-05-23) reported that the PRC on Tuesday said it hoped the US would start relaxing its restrictions on exports of high-tech products to the PRC, responding to signs from the Washington that it could be willing to abandon some controls. Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said he was hopeful the two could work to normalize trade in high technology, long a thorn in the side of relations between them.

(return to top)

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