



NAPSNet Daily Report Wednesday, February 15, 2006

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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Leadership

BBC News ("WHO WILL LEAD NORTH KOREA NEXT?", 2006-02-15) reported that the DPRK

celebrates the 64th birthday of its leader Kim Jong-il on Thursday, with marches, exhibitions and a national holiday. But for the outside world, anxious about the DPRK's nuclear ambitions and economic malaise, Mr Kim's birthdays are a time to think about his succession. This year is particularly pertinent. Kim Jong-il's father, at 63, had already made it clear his son was the successor and had started manoeuvring him into power. Now the younger Mr Kim has turned 64, yet there have been no pointers as to the next leader, fuelling speculation he is unsure who to pick, or faces a power struggle behind the scenes. "I think there's a feeling that there's no obvious successor. It wasn't as clear as it was under Kim Il-sung," said DPRK watcher Paul French.

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2. US on DPRK Counterfeiting

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. DEMANDS PROOF OF END TO FAKE BILLS", 2006-02-15) reported that the US ambassador to the ROK, Alexander Vershbow, said yesterday that Pyongyang must show some "convincing evidence" that it had stopped counterfeiting US currency notes to satisfy US concerns. Specifically, he said, the North must "provide evidence that the equipment and plates for the so-called supernotes had been destroyed so that concerns about further ability [to print more notes] will be reduced."

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3. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

The Korea Times ("LEE PLEDGES DEEPER S-N ECONOMIC COOPERATION ", 2006-02-15) reported that the Ministry of Unification said Tuesday that it will attempt to deepen inter-Korean economic cooperation this year. In its report to President Roh Moo-hyun, the ministry pledged to work toward establishing reciprocal economic projects in five fields: agriculture, fisheries, forestry, light industry and mining. "By steadily pursuing these new economic cooperation projects based on the inter-Korean agreements made last year, we'll be able to secure a new driving force for the developments in inter-Korean relations," Lee Jong-seok, unification minister who took office last Friday, told reporters.

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4. DPRK-Japanese Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOIZUMI URGES KIM JONG-IL TO WORK FOR FRIENDLY TIES ", 2006-02-15) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi has sent a message to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il in a bid to speed up normalization of ties between their countries, the Asahi Shimbun reported Wednesday. Koizumi's message outlined steps the DPRK must take on the road to proper diplomatic relations and was passed on verbally when Japan's representative Koichi Haraguchi met with the North's Song Il-ho.

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5. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation

Kyodo ("U.S. NAVY TO BASE MOST ADVANCED MISSILE DEFENSE CRUISER IN JAPAN", 2006-0-15) reported that the US Navy plans to base the Aegis cruiser Shiloh, which has the most advanced capacity to defend against ballistic missiles, in Japan later this year, US Pacific Fleet Commander

Adm. Gary Roughead said Tuesday. Roughead said the 9,600-ton Shiloh will replace a similar ship already in Japan, but stressed that it "will have the most advanced ballistic missile defense capability on board."

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6. Japan on DPRK Human Rights Conference

Kyodo News ("JAPAN'S ENVOY MAY ATTEND INT'L CONFAB ON N. KOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS", 2006-02-14) reported that Fumiko Saiga, Japan's ambassador in charge of human rights, is considering participating in an international conference on the DPRK's human rights scheduled in Norway in May, Saiga told Kyodo News recently. "I am positively considering attending it," Saiga, who is also Japanese ambassador to Norway, said in New York.

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7. Japan on UNSC Reform

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVT TO LAUNCH NEW PROPOSAL TO EXPAND UNSC", 2006-02-15) reported that the government will launch a new campaign this week to seek support for its latest proposal to expand the UN Security Council by adding six seats, during a meeting in Tokyo with senior officials from a group of Caribbean nations. The two-day meeting is with vice ministerial-level officials from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Japan also plans to hold a session with foreign ministers of the regional bloc, which is expected to be a base of support for the new proposal on Security Council reform, government sources said.

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8. US on UNSG Candidates

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. SAYS IT'S TOO EARLY TO SUPPORT UN BIDS", 2006-02-15) reported that Sean McCormack, the US State Department spokesman, ducked Tuesday when he was asked at a regular daily briefing if his government supported Ban Ki-moon for the post of United Nations secretary general. Mr. McCormack said it was too early for Washington to back any specific candidate.

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9. PRC on UNSG Candidates

Xinhua ("CHINA: NEXT UN SECRETARY-GENERAL SHOULD BE ASIAN", 2006-02-15) reported that the PRC deems the next UN Secretary-General will be chosen from an Asian country, said PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan here Thursday. Kong told a news conference that the next UN Secretary-General should come from an Asian country since an Asian has not held the post for 34 years.

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10. US Pacific Naval Exercises

Agence France Presse ("AMID CHINA THREAT, US TO HOLD MAMMOTH NAVAL OPERATIONS IN

PACIFIC ", 2006-02-15) reported that amid persistent warnings about the PRC's growing military clout, the US military has said it is to hold one of its biggest naval exercises in the Asia Pacific this summer. The large-scale operations will involve several carrier strike groups, each of which includes at least three warships, an attack submarine and a support ship.

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11. PRC Internet Censorship

The Associated Press ("U.S. SAYS CHINA BOOSTS INTERNET MONITORING ", 2006-02-15) reported that a State Department official told lawmakers Wednesday that the PRC's efforts to manipulate the Internet have increased in the last year, "sending a chilling message to Internet users." The PRC's "effort to regulate the political and religious content of the Internet is counter to our interest, to international standards and, we argue, to China's own long-term modernization goals," James Keith, the State Department's senior adviser on East Asia, said in prepared testimony at a House International Relations subcommittee hearing.

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12. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("CHINA ANNOUNCES PLAN TO COMBAT POLLUTION ", 2006-02-15) reported that the PRC announced a plan Wednesday to combat widespread pollution and leave a better environment for future generations, citing the need to stave off possible social instability. The plan, approved by the State Council, or Cabinet, focuses on pollution controls and calls for the country to clean up heavily polluted regions and reverse degradation of water, air and land by 2010.

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13. PRC Coal Mines

Xinhua ("CHINA TO SHUT DOWN ALL SMALL-SIZED COAL MINES BY 2015", 2006-02-15) reported that the PRC to close down 70 percent of small-sized coal mines by 2010 and shut all down by 2015, the Ministry of Land and Resources said here Wednesday. The PRC now has about 24,000 small coal mines with an annual production output ranging from 10,000 tons to 30,000 tons each, accounting for 70 percent of its coal mines, according to official figures.

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org