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Korean Peninsula

1. US ROK Schoolgirls Apology

US President George W. Bush has apologized to the ROK people for the death of two schoolgirls killed by US soldiers in a traffic accident. The June 13 deaths inflamed anti-US passions here and the acquittal of the soldiers last week of negligent homicide sparked widespread protests. "President Bush, who has visited Korea and has a special feeling for the Korean people, has been touched by this tragedy," US ambassador Thomas Hubbard told a press conference on Wednesday. "Just this morning, the president sent me a message asking me to convey his apologies to the families of the girls, to the government of the Republic of Korea and to the people of Korea. "He asked me to express, and here I quote, his 'sadness and regret over this tragic incident' and to reiterate the US commitment to work closely with the Republic of Korea to help prevent such accidents from occurring in the future." Activists have staged regular protests outside US military installations since the deaths of the two 14-year-old girls in a traffic accident on June 13, burning US flags and scuffling with riot police. Two US soldiers accused of killing two ROK schoolgirls in a traffic accident issued public apologies before departing for the US. Sergeant Fernando Nino offered his "deepest and most heartfelt condolences" to the families of the 14-year-olds girls who were crushed to death by a 50-tonne vehicle on June 13. "I am so sorry for the grief and pain you have felt at the loss of your daughters," said Nino, the vehicle's navigator and commander, who was cleared of two counts of negligent homicide last week in a US court martial. "Even though it was by accident, I have to live with the anguish of knowing that two individuals died as a result of the accident," he said in a statement. The second soldier, Sergeant Mark Walker, also expressed "great remorse" over the deaths. "I know my mental turmoil is surely nothing compared to your sadness and pain. In my year here in Korea I have really come to love and respect the Korean people," he said.

"US ROK Schoolgirls Apology" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

2. ROK Anti-US Protests

More than 50 protesters broke through a chain link fence today around a strategic US military post in a commuter town several miles north of Seoul, and paraded for 35 minutes with banners demanding that US troops leave the ROK. The protesters chained themselves together during the final few minutes of the march in Camp Red Cloud, headquarters for the US Army's Second Infantry Division. ROK policemen swarmed through the main entrance to the base and arrested the marchers. Lt. Col. Steven Boylan, spokesman for the Eighth Army in Seoul, said the demonstrators "walked through shouting, 'U.S. troops out of Korea!' " It was, he went on, "reasonable to assume there is concern" about the security of US bases in view of the incident. US Army officers said there were no injuries and almost no damage, but they were confounded by how easy it had been for protesters to cut through a fence surrounding the post from which the Army coordinates defenses on the main invasion route to Seoul.

"ROK Anti-US Protests" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

3. ROK Presidential Race

ROK presidential election race officially kicked off with liberal candidate Roh Moo-Hyun and conservative standard-bearer Lee Hoi-Chang engaged in a tight two-horse race dominated by the DPRK and the economy. Roh, 56, had the edge over Lee, 67, in the final opinion polls published as candidates registered their challenges with the National Election Commission that bans further opinion surveys during the three-week campaign. A JoongAng daily survey gave Roh a 43 percent to 35 percent margin over Lee, while SBS-TV had Roh leading Lee 46 percent to 39 percent. Roh, a former human rights lawyer, emerged Monday as the single candidate for his Millennium Democratic Party (MDP) and the National Alliance party of his former rival for the centrist vote, Chung Mong-Joon. The merger gave Roh an immediate bounce in support, putting him ahead of the long-time frontrunner Lee of the Grand National Party (GNP). The most immediate issue confronting the two candidates is what to do about the DPR. Conservative candidate Lee has maintained a hardline on Pyongyang but surprised many observers on Wednesday when he said he hoped to hold summit talks with DPRK leader Kim Jong-Il if elected president on December 19. Roh, however, has been a strong supporter of president Kim's DPRK policy and wants unconditional negotiations between the US and the DPRK to settle all issues concerned.

"ROK Presidential Race" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

4. DPRK-ROK Military Relations

The DPRK dealt another blow to inter-Korean rapprochement by scuppering high-level military talks with the ROK on reducing tensions. The DPRK and the ROK agreed in October to hold a meeting of defense ministers in November but the DPRK had failed to confirm participation in the talks by a Wednesday deadline, the ROK's defense ministry said on Wednesday. "There has been no formal response to our request by the 10:00 am (0100 GMT) Wednesday deadline," a ministry spokesman told AFP. "We believe the proposed meeting will not take place this year," he said, indicating the subject of military talks could be passed on to the successor of President Kim Dae-Jung, who is to step down in February.

"DPRK-ROK Military Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

5. DPRK New Industrial Zone

The DPRK announced plans Wednesday to set up a special industrial zone near the border with the ROK as part of efforts to attract badly needed foreign investment. The DPRK's Supreme People's Assembly, adopted a law on November 20 to create the zone near Kaesong, a border town with the ROK, said the country's foreign news outlet, the Korean Central News Agency. Kaesong, where negotiators first met to craft the armistice agreement that ended the Korean War in 1953, is just outside the northern boundary of the 4-kilometer- (2.5-mile)-wide Demilitarized Zone that separates the two Koreas. The law made good on the DPRK's long-held verbal promise to set up a free trade and industrial zone near the border, mainly for ROK investment. However, tension over its nuclear program and investors' doubts about the wisdom of doing business in a communist nation with a moribund economy could delay the project. The 46-article DPR law allows developers to lease the land for the industrial zone for 50 years and says they must be responsible for infrastructure. The DPRK already has designated the ROK's Hyundai group as the developer of the industrial zone. The ROK's state-run Korea Land Corp. is also involved in the project.

"DPRK New Industrial Zone" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

6. DPRK on Mount Kumgang Special Tourism Zone

The Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK promulgated a decree on setting up Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone. The decree dated October 23 says: Mt. Kumgang is a famous mountain of Korea and a world famous mountain. This mountain of superb scenic beauty has turned into a wonderful cultural resort for the people and a world tourist attraction thanks to the popular policy of the Workers' Party of Korea and the DPRK Government. Mt. Kumgang tourism is going on amid the great expectation and concern of the whole nation. The Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly has adopted the following decision to pep up Mt. Kumgang tourism according to the general plan for land construction: 1. Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone of the DPRK shall be set up in Mt. Kumgang area in Kosong county and some areas of Thongchon county of Kangwon Province with main stress on tour of ecology of scenic spots. 2. Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone shall include Kosong township, some areas of Onjong-ri and Songbuk-ri of Kosong county, Samil Lagoon, the area of Sea Kumgang and some areas of Thongchon county of Kangwon Province. 3. The DPRK sovereignty shall be exercised over the Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone. 4. The DPRK shall permit free investment of corporate bodies, individuals and economic organizations for the development of the Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone and protect their properties by law. 5. The central institution guiding the tourist zone shall take relevant steps to increase the number of new tourist attractions in keeping with the progress made in the development of the Mt. Kumgang Tourist Zone. 6. The DPRK Cabinet and relevant institutions shall take practical steps to implement the decree.

"DPRK on Mount Kumgang Special Tourism Zone" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, US)

7. Inter-Korean Railway Project

Border mine clearing work for a railway between ROK and DPRK has hit a snag that will delay the landmark reconciliation project. The report said that in a setback to ROK efforts to maintain relations with its neighbor amid international tensions over DPRK's nuclear program, Pyongyang has rejected agreed mine clearing verification procedures. At working-level talks on road and railway reconnection held from November 18 to 20 at Mt. Geumgang, ROK and DPRK agreed to jointly conduct land surveys to finalize the connecting points of inter-Korean railways from November 26 to 30. On November 26 to 27, the two sides will conduct a joint survey on the Donghae Line on the East Coast, and the same will follow for the Gyeongui Line November 29 to 30, said the report.

"DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, PRC)

8. Inter-Korean Railway Vulnerability?

A US army general said the DPRK could make use of transportation corridors under construction between the ROK and the DPRK as ready-made invasion routes to the ROK. US Major General James Soligan was responding to the DPRK's refusal to continue work on the road and rail links unless the US-led United Nations Command (UNC) gives up its control of the corridors in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that divides the two Koreas. "The North Koreans would like to create this corridor outside the demilitarized zone and outside the authority of the armistice agreement," Soligan said in an interview with cable television YTN. "That way, if they elected to, they could move combat forces into this corridor and challenge the security of South Korea. North Korea is very uncomfortable being held accountable for their violations of the armistice agreement," said Soligan. "So they would like to create an area that is outside the armistice agreement, so the world cannot hold them accountable for their actions." The US military official accused the DPRK of delaying the inter-Korean railway and road project that he fully supports. "It is North Korea who is electing not to move the process forward," he said.

"Inter-Korean Railway Vulnerability?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, US)

9. PRC Commentary on DPRK-ROK Relations

China Daily carried a commentary on the DPRK and ROK bilateral clashes on the maritime line saying that the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea between the ROK and the DPRK is becoming a flashpoint for conflicts between the two countries. Looking back at the past clashes around the controversial sea border from the early 1950s to the latest incident happened on November 20, the article said that over a long period of time, the ROK and the United Nations Command (UNC) mistook that DPRK accepted the maritime line however in 1973 the DPRK drew up a new sea border including five islands under ROK control, declaring that ROK vessels should obtain its approval before passing the water around the islands. Since then, the two countries have criticized each other for entering the other side's territorial waters. In conclusion, the article said that with the disputed border continuing to be the focus of ROK-DPRK confrontations, which are disharmonious with the improvement of inter-Korean ties mainly in the economic field, the two countries on the Korean Peninsula should sit at the negotiation table to redesign the line in order to avoid further conflicts.

"PRC Commentary on DPRK-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, PRC)

10. US, ROK Relations with DPRK

US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on November 18 that US has no intention of invading the DPRK and is willing to help the DPRK if it abandons its nuclear weapons program. The DPRK and the US have accused each other of violating the 1994 agreement, the report said. In a clear effort to dispel Pyongyang's growing concerns over US threats, Powell reiterated that the US had no intention of invading the DPRK. In another development, the US and ROK agreed on November 19 to push ahead with a landmark inter-Korean railway project, officials said. Representatives from ROK, the US and the US-led United Nations Command (UNC) agreed to end a row with the DPRK over procedures for crossing the inter-Korean border to allow the project to go ahead.

"US, ROK Relations with DPRK" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, PRC)

11. DPRK on Non-Aggression Pact

The DPRK today asked the ROK to join it in pressing the US to sign a nonaggression treaty, in an unusual appeal apparently aimed at reducing its isolation. "At a time when the destiny of the nation is at stake, the ROK authorities should lodge a legitimate protest with the US against its infringement upon the fundamental interests of the nation," the DPRK's official Korea Central News Agency said today in its new appeal for ROK support. "Let the whole nation come out to firmly uphold the patriotic army-based policy," the agency said.

"DPRK on Non-Aggression Pact" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

12. DPRK US Army Defector

The US ambassador to Tokyo is planning to meet the Japanese wife of an alleged US Army deserter living in the DPRK, an official said Saturday - a meeting that is expected to be an emotional plea for the man's amnesty from US prosecutors. The status of the woman's husband, Charles Robert Jenkins, has become a politically charged issue because the Japanese government wants him to come to Japan without risking arrest by U.S. officials on desertion charges. The wife, Hitomi Soga, is one of five Japanese abducted decades ago to the DPRK who is now in Japan for a reunion with long-lost relatives. The couple has been separated since Soga returned to Japan with the other abductees October 15. Soga petitioned US Ambassador Howard Baker for an audience earlier this week so she could make a personal appeal to be reunited with Jenkins. The Japanese government had earlier requested that Jenkins be given special immunity, but has not yet received a reply.

"DPRK US Army Defector" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

13. Pakistan-DPRK Nuclear Connection?

Last July, US intelligence agencies tracked a Pakistani cargo aircraft as it landed at a DPRK airfield and took on a secret payload: ballistic missile parts, the chief export of DPRK's military. The shipment was brazen enough, in full view of US spy satellites. But intelligence officials who described the incident say even the mode of transport seemed a subtle slap at Washington: the Pakistani plane was an American-built C-130. It was part of the military force that President Pervez Musharraf had told President Bush last year would be devoted to hunting down the terrorists of Al Qaeda, one reason the administration was hailing its new cooperation with a country that only a year before it had labeled a rogue state. But several times since that new alliance was cemented, US intelligence agencies watched silently as Pakistan's air fleet conducted a deadly barter with the DPRK. In transactions intelligence agencies are still unraveling, the DPRK provided General Musharraf with missile parts he needs to build a nuclear arsenal capable of reaching every strategic site in India. In a perfect marriage of interests, Pakistan provided the DPRK with many of the designs for gas centrifuges and much of the machinery it needs to make highly enriched uranium for the country's latest nuclear weapons project, one intended to put at risk the ROK, Japan and 100,000 US troops in Northeast Asia.

"Pakistan-DPRK Nuclear Connection?" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

14. DPRK Bans US Dollars

DPRK officials plan to ban the use of US dollars inside the DPRK beginning next month as a standoff with the US over its nuclear weapons program drags on, the PRC's official Xinhua News Agency reported Saturday. US Dollars will not be accepted in foreign exchange shops and foreign residents must convert US dollars in their bank accounts into Euros or other currencies, Xinhua said in a dispatch from Pyongyang. Bank accounts will be converted automatically if their owners don't make the switch by the end of November, it said, quoting a statement from the DPRK's Trade Bank on Friday. Similar requirements have been in place for DPRK citizens since last Monday, it said. The report could not be independently verified.

"DPRK Bans US Dollars" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

People's Republic of China

1. PRC-US Relations

PRC President Jiang Zemin met with former US Defense Secretary William Perry and former US National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft on November 22 in Beijing. Jiang said that the bilateral relations have gained a good momentum and the two countries also shared common ground on the Taiwan question. Vice-Premier Qian Qichen also met with the US guests, exchanging views with them on international issues, PRC-US relations and the Taiwan question. PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan talked on the telephone on November 21 with US Secretary of State Colin Powell, saying that the Sino-US relationship is showing a positive growth and the two sides should conscientiously follow through on the consensus, strengthen dialogue and co-operation, and maintain the good momentum on the growth of bilateral ties. PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said on November 21 that friendly military exchanges between PRC and US will help enhance mutual understanding and promote bilateral ties. Kong said that the latest PRC-US summit has "reached a series of important consensus including resumption of military exchanges," adding that the two countries are still discussing specific issues concerning the military exchange.

"PRC-US Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, PRC)

2. PRC-ROK Relations

In a meeting with Roh Tae-woo, former president of the ROK, PRC President Jiang Zemin said that the PRC firmly supported all efforts conducive to promoting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. According to the report, Jiang welcomed Roh's visit on the 10th anniversary of the establishment of Sino-ROK diplomatic relations, saying that bilateral ties had proceeded smoothly over the past decade. ROK President Kim Dae-jung's 1998 PRC visit resulted in the formation of a co-operative partnership for the 21st century, Jiang said. Roh conveyed his congratulations on the success of the 16th Party congress and President Kim Dae-jung's greetings to Jiang. The ties between the ROK and PRC had made conspicuous strides over the past decade, Roh said, expressing the hope that the ties would continue. "PRC-ROK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, PRC)

3. PRC-US Military Ties

The US and the PRC moved toward renewing strained military ties Sunday with a carefully staged visit by a US warship to a PRC port. With the two nations' flags flapping from the mast and sailors standing at attention on deck, the USS Paul F. Foster churned into the eastern city of Qingdao on a crisp morning, beginning a five-day visit that will give its sailors a glimpse of the PRC. The port call was the first by US Navy vessel since last year. The USS Paul F. Foster's visit is the first in a slew of contacts in coming weeks aimed at cementing the recent warming of ties. "We are part of renewed relations, improved relations between our two countries. I'm excited about the prospects of the future," said Cmdr. "PRC-US Military Ties" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

4. PRC Political Dissent

The PRC has arrested a prominent dissident who organized a petition from almost 200 activists calling for sweeping political reforms. Zhao Changqing was detained in the northern city of Xian just before the Communist Party's key 16th Congress earlier this month, although police have refused to confirm they are holding him, his half-sister Cao Xuemei told AFP on Wednesday. "I last saw him on November 5. On the 22nd, I went to his home and the landlord told me that he had been arrested two days before the Congress" which began on November 8, she said. Zhao disappeared shortly after he put together a petition of 192 activists around the PRC calling for greater democracy, the release of prisoners of conscience and an official reassessment of the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy protests, among other demands. "PRC Political Dissent" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

5. Cross-Straits Direct Links

The PRC said that its policy towards Taiwan would not change with a new leader. "I should make clear after the 16th Party Congress, that in particular the report of the 16th Party Congress said clearly our basic policy on Taiwan has not changed," said Zhang Mingqing, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council. "That is, we will continue to implement peaceful reunification, 'One Country Two Systems' and Comrade Jiang's eight-point proposal for Taiwan," he said on Wednesday. During Wednesday's briefing, Zhang also urged Taiwan authorities to allow direct charter flights between the PRC and Taiwan before the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday in February, also known as the Spring Festival. "The problem now is with the Taiwan side," Zhang said. "Our attitude and position are very clear. Now we have to see if the Taiwan side has sincerity to talk about cross-straits direct flights." "Cross-Straits Direct Links" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

6. Yang Bin Bribery Charges

Yang Bin, one of the PRC's richest tycoons was charged Wednesday with bribery and fraud, the PRC announced, nearly two months after his house arrest stopped him from launching an ambitious free-enterprise zone across the border in the DPRK. Yang's prosecution underscores the PRC's focus both on its fight against corruption and its delicate relations with its neighbor and ally. Police in Shenyang, a northeastern city, accused Yang of running investment scams, offering bribes, using fraudulent contracts and illegally occupying farmland, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It was unclear if the arrest was part of a wider campaign against corporate crime or a legal move to slap down the voluble 39-year-old Yang and derail cash-strapped North Korean hopes of luring foreign investment. The Xinhua report did not say what penalties Yang could face or when he might be put on trial. The PRC government, though, has been known to deal particularly harshly with high-profile entrepreneurs singled out as part of its anti-graft efforts. Yang, listed as China's second-richest businessman, had been under investigation since early October, Xinhua said. "Yang Bin Bribery Charges" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

7. Russia-PRC Relations

Russian President Vladimir Putin and PRC Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan on November 23 pledged to further the strategic partnership of cooperation between the two countries. At a meeting in the Kremlin, Tang Jiaxuan told Putin that PRC will make unremitting efforts to develop PRC-Russian strategic partnership and continue consolidating and strengthening bilateral cooperation with Russia, aiming at substantiating the bilateral strategic partnership. Tang said President Putin's upcoming visit to PRC on December 1 to 3 is a big event in the Sino-Russian relations for the year and PRC attaches great importance to the visit. Putin hopes to expand Russian-PRC cooperation in the fields of energy, transport and aviation. Tang also expressed PRC's readiness to further strengthen cooperation with Russia in combating terrorism.

"Russia-PRC Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

8. PRC Military Transfers

The PRC denied involvement Tuesday in an alleged transfer of sophisticated radar systems from Ukraine to Iraq, responding to U.S. and British investigators who cited a "credible possibility" that a transaction took place through an intermediary. The sale of the Kolchuha radar systems, which can be used to track Western aircraft in Baghdad's no-fly zones, would violate U.N. sanctions imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. "There is no such question of China transferring radar systems to Iraq," Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan told reporters at a regularly scheduled briefing. "The Chinese government has strictly implemented the relevant sanctions by the U.N. on Iraq." Kong added that cooperation between the PRC and Ukraine in various areas - including the military - is in accord with international conventions. The US has not said which country it believes acted as an intermediary in the alleged weapons transfer. But the US Ambassador to Ukraine, Carlos Pascual, said Tuesday that the PRC was of "special concern." Investigators probing an alleged Ukrainian arms deal with Iraq are now focusing on the PRC's possible role in the transaction, the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine said Tuesday.

"PRC Military Transfers" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, US)

9. PRC Internet Human Rights

Warning of tightening government controls over the Internet, Amnesty International is demanding the release of 33 people imprisoned for online subversion and says such detainees are emerging as a new category of PRC "prisoners of conscience." In a sweeping report released Wednesday, the London-based human rights group also said American companies are helping the PRC monitor the Internet through sales of software and other equipment - boosting the PRC's ability to muzzle discussion online. "Internet users are the latest group to be ensnared in the China's deadly web of arrest, detention and torture, and US corporations increasingly facilitate this repression," T. Kumar, Amnesty's Asia advocacy director said in a news release accompanying the report. The report is the first in which Amnesty identifies Internet users as a new class of dissident - alongside the religious, political and minority rights dissenters already targeted by China. "Everyone who is detained purely for peacefully publishing their views or other information on the Internet or for accessing certain Web sites is a prisoner of conscience and they should be released immediately and unconditionally," Amnesty International said. The PRC has about 60 million Internet users - one of the largest numbers of any country, though the percentage of users in the nation of 1.3 billion remains in single digits.

"PRC Internet Human Rights" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

10. International Red Cross in PRC

The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross started a three day visit to Beijing on Tuesday in the hopes of reaching an agreement to open an office and ultimately be allowed to visit detainees in the world's most populous nation. Jakob Kellenberger will meet PRC leader Jiang Zemin and other top officials during the stay, Red Cross spokesman Eros Bosisio said. It is Kellenberger's first visit to the country. The ICRC, which monitors compliance with international humanitarian law, has been trying for years to persuade the PRC to let it establish a permanent presence. It specially wants to set up a program of prison visits. The ICRC always insists on being able to visit all prisons, and meet all detainees in private. It never publicizes the findings of its visits but they are widely credited with improving conditions for detainees.

"International Red Cross in PRC" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, US)

11. Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Joint Communique

Nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) committed themselves to strengthening anti-terrorism efforts on November 24 in a joint communique released after a meeting. The meeting is to up a secretariat in Beijing and regional anti-terrorism center in Bishkek. The report said that the ministers signed interim procedures for cooperation of the SCO members with international organizations and sovereign countries. The communique called for stepping up the fight against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and means of their delivery, environmental damage, exhaustion of nature resources, massive illegal migration, poverty, backwardness and AIDS. They urged the UN to promptly adopt the comprehensive convention for the eradication of international terrorism and the convention for the prevention of nuclear terrorism. The communique also touched on peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, and the establishment of working contacts between SCO and ASEAN nations, the report said.

"Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Joint Communique" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, PRC)

12. Taiwan Domestic Politics

Taiwan Premier Yu Shyi-kun said on Sunday he would stay in office two days after he offered to resign amid a row about delayed changes to the shaky farm credit system, but he agreed to let two of his cabinet members go. Yu accepted the resignation of Finance Minister Lee Yung-san and Fan Chen-tsung, chairman of the Council of Agriculture, one day after more than 100,000 farmers protested against plans to reform the farm credit co-operatives. "The premier simultaneously agreed to the two ministers' (resignations) tonight," cabinet secretary-general Liu Shih-fan told reporters waiting outside the premier's home after Yu met the two ministers individually. It was not immediately known who would replace the two men, who took office in February.

"Taiwan Domestic Politics" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

13. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

The PRC has been sympathetic to US concerns over the DPRK's nuclear program and may have discussed the matter with its DPRK allies, the US ambassador to Beijing said Monday. The issue "presents China and the United States with an opportunity to work together toward a common, mutually beneficial goal," Clark T. Randt said in a speech to the American Chamber of Commerce's Beijing chapter. "They are very receptive to our suggestions and desires in this area and I think they've been in touch with the North Koreans," Randt said. He didn't say whether the PRC had briefed the US on those discussions.

"PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

Japan

1. Japan-DPRK Relations

Japanese and DPRK officials met for unofficial talks over the weekend but failed to agree on how to proceed with negotiations to normalize relations, the government said Monday. Japan reiterated its demand that relatives of five Japanese kidnapped by the DPRK be sent to Japan, and reiterated its concerns over the DPRK's nuclear weapons development program. "As before, there is a difference of opinion between the two sides. We will continue to negotiate strongly," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said. Hitoshi Tanaka, head of the ministry's Asia bureau, led the group of Japanese officials attending the talks held Saturday and Sunday. Fukuda added that no decision had been made on whether the two sides would meet for further unofficial talks this weekend. Japan reportedly has proposed holding the next round of formal normalization talks in early December, but the weekend meeting failed to produce an agreement on when talks might resume.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

2. Japan on US Soldier Defection

Talks between Japan and the US on the fate of an alleged US defector married to a Japanese woman kidnapped by the DPRK are in a "delicate" stage, a top Japanese official said on Wednesday. Hitomi Soga, married to former US soldier Charles Robert Jenkins, came to Tokyo from the remote northern island of Sado where she has stayed since returning to Japan last month and met officials for an update on talks with Washington. "Rather than sitting idle in Sado, I decided to come to Tokyo thinking that there may be something I can do," Deputy Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe quoted Soga as telling him. Abe, a key government point man on North Korea policy, said he told Soga that Japan was talking to the US in a bid to resolve the plight of her husband, who could face US charges if he decides to leave the DPRK. "The talks (with Washington) are in a very delicate stage. I cannot disclose the contents," Abe said after meeting Soga. Japan is pressing the DPRK to let the abductees' children come to Japan to be reunited with their parents, but Soga's case is complicated by the possibility that Jenkins could be arrested. US officials have said that there are outstanding charges against Jenkins, who they believe went to the DPR of his own will in 1965, but Japan is asking the US not to take him into custody as it will make it difficult for him to be reunited with Soga. "Since Jenkins's case is extremely special, we are asking them to consider special treatment. We would like to wait for the U.S. decision," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hatsuhsa Takashima told a separate news conference on Wednesday.

"Japan on US Soldier Defection" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

3. Japan on DPRK Abduction Victims

A parliamentary committee approved a bill Wednesday to provide a monthly stipend to the victims and families of DPRK abductions, paving the way for them to be permanently resettled in Japan. The bill, upping the stakes in an already tense standoff between the two countries, said the government must provide for the kidnapped because the abductions by DPRK were a "criminal act committed by a state." Currently, five Japanese abducted by the DPR are in Japan for the first time since they were kidnapped in the late 1970s. Their homecoming has become the focus of a diplomatic standoff between Japan and the DPRK. Japan is demanding the abductees' families be brought to Japan, while the DPRK is threatening to derail normalization talks between the two countries if the five are not returned soon. The bill, to be submitted to the full lower house Thursday, would provide each victim with 170,000 yen (US\$1,393) per month, and 240,000 yen (US\$1,967) for a two-person household, said an official with the Liberal Democratic Party who declined to be named. The aid would continue for five years. None of the five abductees has yet to declare they want to stay for good. All are waiting for their children and in one case - her US husband - to join them in Japan before making a decision.

"Japan on DPRK Abduction Victims" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 27, US)

4. IAEA on DPRK Nuclear Development

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will urge the DPRK this week to scrap its nuclear weapons program and allow inspections by the UN body. The IAEA's board of governors will issue a statement containing the requests at a meeting Thursday at its Vienna headquarters, Tuesday's major daily Mainichi Shimbun quoted several Japanese government sources as saying. The statement will "indirectly" support Japan as the country continues talks on normalising ties with North Korea, demanding among other things that the hardline communist state abandons nuclear arms development, Mainichi said. A Japanese envoy to the UN agency, Yukio Takasu, had negotiated with the IAEA and asked the organisation to express its support for Japan in talks with DPRK, the newspaper said. Japan will now present its decision on a review of the protocols to the United States at a KEDO executive board meeting in mid-December, Sankei said. Japan is considering reviewing KEDO protocols to suspend training of DPRK engineers and transport of workers in the reactor project, the report said.

"IAEA on DPRK Nuclear Development" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, US)

5. Japan-DPRK Relations

Japan said Tuesday it would not give up on attempts to normalize relations with the DPRK even though deep differences with the communist state have stalled diplomatic negotiations. "We won't abandon our talks," Japan's Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi said at a news conference. "We are pursuing contacts through a number of avenues, such as our embassy in Beijing. This is important." The DPRK and Japan launched negotiations last month to normalize relations. But the talks quickly ran aground over the issue of five Japanese abducted by DPRK decades ago who are now back in Japan. The DPRK wants Japan to send the five back to the North as originally agreed. But Japan insists the DPRK send the children of the five and the US husband of one to Japan first. The dispute has kept the two countries from setting a date for a second round of talks.

"Japan-DPRK Relations" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, US)

6. Japan-US Military Cooperation

Japan and the US will issue a joint statement calling for their missile-defense initiative to be accelerated after next month's ministerial security talks in Washington. Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, Defense Agency chief Shigeru Ishiba, US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will attend the meeting, to be held at the US State Department on Dec. 16. In the joint statement, the two countries will also urge the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons program "in a prompt and verifiable manner," the Japanese and US government sources said. In addition to the issues of missile defense and DPRK, Japan and the US plan to discuss possible logistic support by the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (SDF) in the event of a US attack on Iraq. They will also address measures to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and issues concerning US military bases in Okinawa Prefecture, the sources said. The two countries will hold a working-level meeting Dec. 2 and Dec. 3 in Washington to prepare for the ministerial security talks, the sources said.

"Japan-US Military Cooperation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, JAPAN)

7. SDF-Police Cooperation

The Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) and police conducted a joint drill in a scenario of armed agents landing in Hokkaido. Some 40 senior officers of the GSDF's Northern Army and Hokkaido police took part in the exercise. It is the first time police and the SDF have held a joint exercise, and officials of the two groups said the purpose is to be ready to maintain "public order and security." The DPRK Army began simulated intelligence-gathering on reports that spies armed with rocket launchers and machineguns had landed in Hokkaido, under the premise that police alone could not handle the situation. The two bodies coordinated their roles, responding to the changing situation by tracing the movements of the intruders and subduing them, as well as guarding important installations, including vital infrastructure, and evacuating residents, the officials said. The drill was held in line with the December 2000 revision of an accord between the SDF and police on how to work together to ensure public safety. Senior prefectural police officers from throughout Japan observed the drill and are expected to consider conducting similar training with GSDF units in their areas, the officials said.

"SDF-Police Cooperation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, JAPAN)

8. US Bases in Japan

A group of local governments neighboring the US Air Force Yokota base asked the national government to take measures to suspend all flight drills from the base, local government officials said. The group, which comprises five cities, one town and the Tokyo Metropolitan Government, also called for the national government to promote noise prevention measures, the officials said, adding the group will make a similar request to the US forces in Japan. The group also asked the government to take steps to improve the environment, including the reduction and return of the land occupied by the base, the officials said. The request also calls for a review of the Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to incorporate domestic laws such as the Air Pollution Control Law in areas where US military facilities are located.

"US Bases in Japan" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 26, JAPAN)

9. Japan Anti-Terror War SDF Participation

Two Japanese naval ships carrying 350 sailors left port for the Indian Ocean on Monday to assist the US-led war on terror, Japan's Self-Defense Agency said. The supply ship Tokiwa and its escort Harusame are the first to set sail since the government decided last week to extend its non-combat logistical support of the US campaign for another six months, said an agency spokesman who asked not to be named. It is the ninth time overall navy ships have left for the Indian Ocean to support the US effort since Japan began providing rear support last November. The two ships will provide transport fuel and supplies to U.S. ships. The date of their return is undecided, the agency spokesman said.

"Japan Anti-Terror War SDF Participation" (NAPSNet Daily Report, November 25, US)

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