NAPSNet Daily Report 17 March, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 17 March, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, March 17, 2008, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-17-march-2008/

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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. US-DPRK Talks

Reuters ("U.S., NORTH KOREA STAY IN CONTACT IN GENEVA", Geneva, 2008/03/14) reported that U.S. officials remained in Geneva for further contacts with DPRK officials a day after the two countries had substantive on the progress of declunearization talks. Christopher Hill, told reporters he was departing for Warsaw, but leaving the state department's head of Korean affairs, Sung Kim, who visited the Yongbyon facility that is at the centre of negotiations and is currently being disabled. "There's a growing understanding of the issues that need to be resolved," said Hill, who is pushing North Korea to speed up the pace of the talks.

Korea Times ("NUCLEAR ENVOY BRIEFS RICE ON NK TALKS", Washington, 2008/03/16) reported that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was briefed on nuclear negotiations with the DPRK in Geneva, the State Department said Friday. "I do know that Chris (Hill) has spoken several times with the secretary immediately following his press conference in Geneva, and also just this morning as well," department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

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2. Japan-DPRK Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("JAPAN SET TO EXTEND NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS", Seoul, 2008/03/17) reported that Japan will likely extend its economic sanctions against the DPRK amid a deadlock on Pyongyang’s nuclear drive and a row over kidnappings, reports said Sunday. The government’s No. 2, Nobutaka Machimura, met Saturday with families of Japanese abducted by the communist state and suggested sanctions would be prolonged for another six months, Jiji Press and the Yomiuri Shimbun said.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA DENOUNCES RADIO BROADCASTS FROM THE SOUTH", Seoul, 2008/03/16) reported that the DPRK on Sunday accused ROK conservatives of stepping up propaganda radio broadcasts against Pyongyang in collaboration with the US and Japan. A spokesman for the Central Committee of the Democratic Front for the Reunification of the Fatherland, a communist party-run body, warned the broadcasts would only increase tension in inter-Korean ties. The spokesman said recently launched ROK radio channels were teaming up with Japanese and US-funded radio broadcasts like "Radio Free Asia" and "Voice of America" to beef up their campaigns against Pyongyang.

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4. Inter-Korean Tourism

Korea Herald ("TOURISTS CROSS INTER-KOREA BORDER BY CAR FOR FIRST TIME SINCE WAR", Seoul, 2008/03/17) reported that ROK tourists on Monday crossed the heavily fortified inter-Korean border in their own cars for the first time in more than five decades, tour organisers were quoted as saying by AFP. A convoy of 15 cars and sports utility vehicles (SUVs) reached Mount Kumgang resort, said Hyundai Asan, the Seoul company which runs the tours.

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5. ROK-Australia-NZ Relations

Korea Times ("S. KOREA TO HOLD SECURITY TALKS WITH AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND", 2008/03/14) reported that the ROK will hold annual security policy talks with Australia and New Zealand separately next week. "At the security policy coordination talks, the countries will each explain their policies and views on current security issues and discuss ways to increase exchange and cooperation between their militaries," said a Foreign Ministry statement, "(including) current security issues surrounding the Northeast Asian region, including the Korean Peninsula, as well as their activities in Iraq and Lebanon," it added.

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6. US-ROK Military Relations

Yonhap ("KOREA TO BEAR MAJORITY OF USFK RELOCATION COST", Washington, 2008/03/15) reported that the ROK has agreed to pay the majority of the expenses for moving U.S. forces out of Seoul to the tune of approximately US$10 billion, Gen. Burwell Bell, head of the U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), told the House budgeting committee. Bell also said the two countries agreed to equally split the cost of relocating the 2nd Infantry Division.

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7. Blair in Japan for Climate Talks

BBC ("BLAIR IN JAPAN FOR CLIMATE TALKS", 2008/03/14) reported that former UK prime minister Tony Blair has arrived in Japan for talks aimed at ending the "deadlock" over global greenhouse gas targets. He said there was a "consensus" that a deal had to be reached - with a 50% cut in carbon emissions needed by 2050. During his visit to Tokyo Mr Blair will meet climate change experts from China, Japan, Europe and the US.

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8. PRC-Japan Relations

Yomiuri ("CHINA SENDS BACK 8 GEOGRAPHY TEXTBOOKS", Tokyo, 2008/03/17) reported that eight geography books seized at Shanghai customs that had been destined for a school for Japanese children residing in the PRC have been sent back to Japan probably because they depicted the disputed Senkaku Islands as belonging to Japan, the Japanese Education, Science and Technology Ministry said. The Japanese Consulate General in Shanghai informed the Shanghai authorities of its dissatisfaction over the return of the books, the ministry said.

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9. PRC-Russia Military Hotline

Xinhua ("CHINA, RUSSIA OPEN DIRECT MILITARY HOTLINE", Beijing, 2008/03/14) reported that the PRC and Russian Defense Ministries opened their direct telephone line to enhance bilateral cooperation. In their first telephone conversation over the line, PRC Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan told his Russian counterpart Anatoly Serdyukov that the newly opened link reflects the level of political trust and strategic coordination between the two countries, a statement said.

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10. Tibetan Unrest

BBC ("DEATHS REPORTED IN TIBET PROTESTS ", Lhasa, 2008/03/15) reported that Tibet protests have turned violent - many people have been hurt and an unspecified number have died. The rallies began earlier this week when a number of Buddhist monks were reportedly arrested after a march marking the 49th anniversary of a Tibetan uprising against PRC rule. Hundreds of monks took to the streets to demand their release. The protests have gathered momentum over the past four days and campaign groups say ordinary people are now involved. The Dalai Lama, who heads Tibet's government-in-exile in India, released a statement expressing deep concern. The situation is causing concern among Western governments - with senior US and UK officials urging both sides to show restraint.

Associated Press (Tini Tran, "TIBET PROTESTS SPREAD TO OTHER PROVINCES", Beijing, 2008/03/17) reported that violence in Tibet spilled over into neighboring provinces Sunday where Tibetan protesters defied a PRC government crackdown. Protests against Chinese rule of Tibet were

reported in neighboring Sichuan and Qinghai provinces and also in western Gansu province. All are home to sizable Tibetan populations. "Whether intentionally or unintentionally, some kind of cultural genocide is taking place," said the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader.

Agence France-Presse ("OLYMPIC OFFICIAL: ATHLETES MULLING BEIJING BOYCOTT", Berlin, 2008/03/16) reported that International Olympic Committee vice-president Thomas Bach said a number of top athletes were considering boycotting the games in the PRC over the bloody crackdown on protesters in Tibet. Bach told Bild am Sonntag newspaper he understood the athletes' concerns about the situation in Tibet but said he was advising them to participate. "They will realise when they assess the situation that it is better to make an appearance than to stay away. That is a symbol that will be noticed by the public," he said.

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11. Taiwan Politics

BBC News (Caroline Gluck, "TAIWANESE RALLY AHEAD OF ELECTION", Taipei, 2008/03/16) reported that hundreds of thousands of people took part in rival political rallies across Taiwan this past weekend. The events - organised by the two main political parties - were also aimed at expressing public opposition to the PRC's anti-secession law. Government officials have warned that the violent events in the past few days in Tibet have implications for Taiwan - showing Beijing would not give up the use of force against the island to resolve disputes.

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12. PRC Internet

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA OUTSURFS THE US: RESEARCH FIRM", Beijing, 2008/03/14) reported that the PRC's Internet population has overtaken the United States' to become the world's biggest with about 220 million web surfers. The PRC figure dates from late February, when the US online population was estimated at about 217 million, according to BDA China, a Beijing-based technology consulting and research firm. BDA expects that by the end of 2008, the PRC is expected to have 280 million Internet users.

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13. PRC Environment

Reuters ("CHINA AGAIN VOWS CLEANER AIR FOR BEIJING", Beijing, 2008/03/14) reported that the PRC promised clean air for this year's Beijing Olympics again on Wednesday, two days after marathon record holder Haile Gebrselassie said he would not compete in the race because of fears about pollution. Zhang Lijun, deputy chief of the State Environmental Protection Administration, said he had full confidence in anti-pollution plans drawn up for the capital and five surrounding provinces. International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge said last year that events such as the marathons and distance cycling could be rescheduled if conditions were too bad.

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14. EU on US-PRC Emissions

Associated Press ("EU WARNS US, CHINA ON CLIMATE CHANGE", Brussels, 2008/03/14) reported that European Union leaders threatened the United States and PRC with trade sanctions Friday if the world's two biggest polluters don't commit to ambitious cuts in greenhouse gases by next year. "Our main concern is to set up a mechanism that would allow us to strike against the imports of countries that don't play by the rules of the game on environmental protection," French President Nicolas Sarkozy told reporters. Still, Germany and Britain were wary about the threat of sanctions, fearing that waving a big stick at the Chinese and Americans could make it harder to strike a compromise.

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II. ROK Report

15. Inter-Korean Relations

The Peace Foundation (Kim Hak-rin , "INTER-KOREAN RELATION AT ADJUSTMENT PHASE, CONDITION FOR SOFT LANDING", 2008/03/17) carried an article by a research professor of Dankuk Center for Dispute Resolution who wrote that in order for inter-Korean relations to shift to stability, a counter measure for accidental situations must be prepared beforehand. Second, changes cost money. Lee Myung-bak administration’s will to pay the cost will be the prior condition for successful shift in inter-Korean relations. Last, establishment of firm strategy for compromise is required. In the sense of making a soft landing for preexistent inter-Korean relation, adhering to principled negotiation instead of hard-line negotiation is a favorable way to the common benefit.

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16. DPRK Internal Situation

Good Friends ("", 2008/03/14) reported that the authority for preservation of peace in the border regions of the northern province of Hamkyung decided to concentrate all its capacity to seek out spies from March 3. It first seized the drug dealers, border crossers, and smugglers for investigation. 40-days-censoring on city and district level on non-socialist groups of the province have already begun. As soon as the censoring is complete, the censoring of non-socialist groups of the Cental party will also take place.

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17. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Peace Making (Kang Jong-il, "LEE MYUNG-BAK ADMINISTRATION’S POLICIES TOWARD DPRK AND US", 2008/03/16) wrote that the government must come up with an institutional device that can peacefully resolve DPRK nuclear development. It should make the National Assembly agree upon the ratification of “Inter-Korean Basic Agreement” agreed upon in 1991 by ROK and DPRK, register it to

UN, and on this basis, must arrange a legal ground to demand the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons. Also, a vision for policies for reunification should be proposed. Regardless of what the US demands, it should neither participate in PSI nor construct missile defense. For the sake of National Security, the Lee Myung-bak administration should avoid policies toward the US that will incite DPRK and China.

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18. ROK Human Rights Policy Toward DPRK

Education Center for Unification (Seo Bo-Hyuk, "DIRECTION AND ASSIGNMENT OF DPRK HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY", 2008/03/17) carried an article by a researcher at Research Center for Peace Studies in Ewha Academy for Advanced Studies, who wrote that the DPRK human rights policy must be progressed in greater political importance, and at the same time in balance with the assignment of policies toward DPRK in other issues—peaceful resolution of DPRK nuclear issue, regularization of inter-Korean dialogue, and economic cooperation. The ROK government should reconsider positively participating in discussions on DPRK human rights issues in UN level considering the universality of human rights and cooperation in global interest. At the same time ROK government should put its effort into strengthening inter-Korean trust through conversation and humane support and contribute to practical improvement in DPRK human rights.

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