NAPSNet Daily Report 2 December, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 2 December, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, December 02, 2008, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-2-december-2008/

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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. Six-Party Talks

Reuters (Arshad Mohammed, "HILL TO MEET DPRK OFFICIALS IN SINGAPORE THIS WEEK", Washington, 2008/12/01) reported that U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Chris Hill will meet DPRK officials in Singapore ahead of December 8 multilateral talks in Beijing on persuading the DPRK to abandon its nuclear programs, a U.S. official said on Monday. Hill plans to meet Japanese and ROK officials in Tokyo before going to Singapore. He then travels to Beijing for talks expected to focus on getting a written agreement on how to verify what DPRK has disclosed about its nuclear programs.

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2. DPRK Leadership

Associated Press ("DPRK RELEASES NEW PHOTOS OF KIM JONG IL", Seoul, 2008/12/01) reported that a new batch of images sent Monday from DPRK show its leader, Kim Jong Il, appearing fit while touring a military unit. The images, aired on state-run DPRK TV and distributed by ROK's Unification Ministry, show Kim smiling during a visit to an air force unit. The report did not specify when Kim made the visit or where the military unit is located. The latest photos show Kim clapping, though the thick gloves make it hard to gauge his use of his left hand.

Mainichi Japan ("MOVE TO HAVE KIM JONG IL'S ELDEST SON SUCCEED HIM AS LEADER

REJECTED", Beijing, 2008/12/01) reported that a move to have the eldest son of DPRK leader Kim Jong Il succeed him as the reclusive country's next leader failed due to a power struggle within DPRK's ruling party late last year, the Mainichi has learned. Chang Song Taek, 62, a high-ranking official at the Worker's Party of DPRK, asked fellow party official Lee Je Gang to agree to endorse Kim's eldest son, Kim Jong Nam, 37, as his successor around the end of last year. However, Lee rejected Chang in favor of Kim's second son, 28-year-old Kim Jong Chol instead, according to sources close to the DPRK government. The failed agreement between Chang -- Kim Jong Il's brother-in-law -- and Lee -- a senior aide to Kim -- has reportedly thrown the party into disarray over who will succeed Kim Jong Il.

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3. US Policy Toward the DPRK

Reuters ("OBAMA FOCUS ON IRAN, DPRK, MIDDLE EAST PEACE", Washington, 2008/12/01) reported that President-elect Barack Obama on Monday gave a sense of his foreign policy priorities by saying he sees much work to do on reining in Iranian and DPRK nuclear programs and promoting Middle East peace. "There is much to do, from preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to Iran and North Korea, to seeking a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, to strengthening international institutions," Obama said as he announced his choice of Sen. Hillary Clinton to be his secretary of state.

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4. DPRK Economy

Kuwait News Agency ("KUWAIT FUND FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, NORTH KOREA TO SIGN LOAN AGREEMENT", 2008/11/29) reported that the Kuwait Fund for Economic Development (KFAED) stated here on Sunday that it will sign a loan agreement with the DPRK in a few days which is valued at KD 6.2 million (USD 21.7 million) to help in financing a sanitation system project. In a statement to the media FKAED added the suggested project contributes in improving the environment and public health by raising the performance of city sewage systems.

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5. DPRK Natural Resources

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA SAYS IT FOUND "PROMISING" RESERVES OF NATURAL RESOURCES", Seoul, 2008/11/30) reported that the DPRK said its geological survey teams recently discovered potential reserves of natural resources such as coal and iron. "An exploration team in South Pyongan Province has secured a number of fields for natural resources, including coal, while the teams in South Hwanghae and Kangwon provinces made progress in locating iron ore," the DPRK's Korean Central Broadcasting Station reported.

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6. Russo-DPRK Rail Link

Vostok -Media ("SPECIALISTS FROM NORTH KOREA INTERN AT THE FAR EASTERN RAIROAD", Khabarovsk, 2008/12/02) reported that specialists from the Ministry of Railroad, DPRK will intern at the Far Eastern Railroad. While interning, guests will visit the transportation monitoring centre, Far Eastern Railroad University, Training Centre in Khabarovsk, locomotive shed and the station Khabarovsk-2. Besides, guests will watch the transportation hub Grodekovo, Nakhodka-Vostochniy and container terminal of the port Vostochniy.

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7. ROK Environment

JoongAng Daily (Ser Myo-ja , "ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP LEADERSHIP STEPS DOWN", 2008/12/02) reported that the leaders of the Korean Federation of Environmental Movement stepped down yesterday as a part of reform measures following corruption allegations involving its former head. The nation’s leading environmental activist group pledged to distance itself from large-scale corporate and government contributions. “We will be reborn as a transparent organization, only operating on membership fees and small donations,” the group said.

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8. ROK Role in Iraq

Associated Press (Chelsea J. Carter, "ROK AMONG COUNTRIES ENDING IRAQ DEPLOYMENT", Irbil, Iraq, 2008/12/01) reported that ROK troops are leaving Iraq, bringing to an end a mission that focused on rebuilding hospitals, roads and schools but divided ROK's people. A ceremony to mark the end of the ROK mission was held Monday in Irbil, the capital of the Kurdish self-ruled region 220 miles north of Baghdad. The pullout will begin Wednesday and conclude by Dec. 20, the ROK military said.

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9. ROK Government

Korea Times (Park Si-soo, "CIVIC GROUPS CALL FOR AXING NATIONAL SECURITY LAW", Seoul, 2008/12/01) reported that Human rights activists and other civic group members gathered in Seoul to call for the abolishment of the National Security Law, calling it an "obsolete relic'' of the Cold War. They also denounced the government's recent attempt to intensify the law which marked its 60th anniversary Monday. Amnesty International said, "The security law was initially designed to punish pro-north activists posing a threat to South Korean security. But it has arbitrarily been used to punish those staging a rally in a peaceful manner and restrict their freedom of expression, which goes against international law.''

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10. Japan Nuclear Weapons

Kyodo News ("EX-AIR FORCE GENERAL CALLS FOR DEBATE ON NUCLEAR DETERRENT",

2008/12/01) reported that the former air force general recently sacked over his controversial essay called for an open debate Monday on whether Japan should acquire nuclear weapons, arguing that such a debate alone would enhance deterrence against nuclear attacks. "While it would be good to have the issue of whether Japan should have nuclear weapons discussed, I think that merely by having such a debate (Japan's) nuclear deterrence would be enhanced," former Air Self- Defense Force Chief of Staff Toshio Tamogami told a news conference in Tokyo.

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11. Comfort Women Issue

Kyodo News ("JAPAN SHOULD ACKNOWLEDGE SEX SLAVES' PAIN: BRITISH MPS", 2008/11/30) reported that Japan should acknowledge the importance of Second World War “comfort women” as a “painful and emotive” issue in the ROK, an influential committee of British parliamentarians said. The Foreign Affairs Committee said that improving relations between Japan and the ROK could play an important part in resolving the nuclear stand-off involving the DPRK.

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12. Japan Climate Change

Bloomberg (Alex Morales, "JAPAN, U.S. SEEK TO DIVIDE DEVELOPING NATIONS AT CLIMATE TALKS", 2008/12/01) reported that Japan and the U.S. will try to jumpstart global-warming talks this week by proposing that some of the biggest developing countries, including PRC and India, agree to limit their emissions of greenhouse gases. The time has come for a few developing countries to join industrialized nations, such as Japan, that already have caps on releasing heat-trapping gases, said Hiroaki Takiguchi, director of Japan’s Office of International Strategy on Climate Change, in an interview. Japan’s proposal to the United Nations, would divide the developing world into three groups: countries most vulnerable to climate change, such as small islands at risk of rising sea levels; an intermediate group; and the most-polluting of the developing nations. The last group would be forced to slash emissions based on pollution per capita or per unit of economic output, Takiguchi said, without naming specific countries.

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13. PRC Food Safety

Agence France-Presse ("PRC SAYS 294,000 CHILDREN FELL ILL FROM TAINTED MILK", Beijing, 2008/12/01) reported that PRC said Monday that a total of 294,000 children had fallen ill from consuming dairy products tainted with the industrial chemical melamine, with 154 of them still in serious condition. In a statement on its website, the health ministry also indicated the number of dead may rise from the four previously announced, saying that six deaths since September 10 may be linked to the consumption of melamine-laced milk.

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14. PRC Energy

Associated Press ("PRC'S CNPC GETS $3.29 BLN UAE PIPELINE PROJECT", Shanghai, 2008/12/01) reported that China National Petroleum Corp. has won a bid to build a $3.29 billion pipeline in the United Arab Emirates, its largest overseas construction project so far, the official Xinhua News Agency reported Monday. The deal, signed Sunday in the Emirates' capital of Abu Dhabi, calls for state-owned CNPC to build a 400 kilometer- (250 mile-) pipeline to Fujairah port from an oilfield in the western part of the country, Xinhua said. It said the pipeline would have a maximum capacity of 1.8 million barrels of crude oil per day and was due to begin operations in 2010.

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15. PRC AIDS Issue

Reuters (Lucy Hornby, "PRC'S RURAL MIGRANTS ARE NEW FRONT IN AIDS FIGHT", Beijing, 2008/11/30) reported that by the end of 2007, PRC had about 700,000 people with HIV/AIDS -- 0.05 percent of the total population -- health officials said on Sunday, ahead of World Aids Day the next day. "The epidemic is lowly prevalent in general but it is highly prevalent among specific groups such as migrant workers, and in some regions particularly remote areas and the countryside," said Wang Weizhen, deputy director of HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment at the Ministry of Health, according to state media.

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16. PRC Government

Xinhua News Service ("NEW RULES TAKE EFFECT ON HEARINGS FOR PRC GOV'T PRICING", Beijing, 2008/12/01) reported that new regulations took effect in PRC on Monday that require more openness in public hearings, and greater access to information for consumers and the media, when changes are proposed for government-set prices. The amendment to the regulation on hearings for government pricing was issued by the National Development and Reform Commission, the top economic planning agency, on Oct. 22 following public consultations in July.

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17. PRC Food Security

Xinhua News Service ("PRC FORESEES BUMPER GRAIN HARVEST THIS YEAR", Hefei, 2008/12/01) reported that PRC can expect a record-high grain output of 525 billion kg this year, sustaining a rising momentum of grain harvest for five straight years, said a top economic planner at a national work meeting on rural economy here on Monday. "The steady increase in the grain output has helped reinforced people's confidence in the country's economic and social development," said Du Ying, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission. However, he pointed out that PRC will face a hard year in the agricultural sector in 2009, as the global financial crisis started to cause turbulence in the world grain market.

Xinhua News Service ("PRC REMOVES INTERIM PRICE CONTROL MEASURES ON FOOD PRICES", Beijing, 2008/12/01) reported that PRC's top economic planner announced its decision on Monday to scrap its 11-month interim price control measures on grain and some food products starting from this month, now that the country's Consumer Price Index (CPI), the main gauge for inflation,

dropped to 4 percent last month. National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has decided to resume the rights of food producers and traders to set the prices of those products independently. "They no longer have to apply for government permission before raising prices," said NDRC in a on-line statement.

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18. PRC Environment

Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "BEIJING CLAIMS EARLY VICTORY OVER AIR POLLUTION", Beijing, 2008/12/01) reported that Beijing said Monday it has already reached its target number of 256 “blue-sky days” this year, with the help of ambitious environmental measures the city imposed to cut emissions for the Olympic Games. PRC's notoriously polluted capital of 17 million reached the clean-air day target on Sunday, 31 days ahead of schedule, Beijing's Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau said. Beijing had only 100 blue-sky days in 1998, when it introduced a clean-air campaign and began investing more than $15-billion to improve air quality, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

Xinhua Net ("US$73 MLN EARMARKED FOR RURAL ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION", 2008/11/29) reported that the PRC has decided to allocate 500 million yuan (US$73 million) from the central fund for rural environment treatment, the Ministry of Environment Protection said Friday. The fund would help lift 600 villages out of severe environment problems and award 100 others which play exemplary roles in ecology. The program would directly benefit 4 million people, the ministry said.

People’s Daily online ("DESERTIFICATION CAUSES YEARLY LOSS OF 54 BILLION YUAN IN CHINA", 2008/11/29) reported that Tang Yuan, general director of the Research Department for Industry, Transportation and Trade, of the State Council Development Research Center, disclosed on November 25 that the direct economic loss from desertification reaches 54 billion yuan every year. This has already affected the lives and productivity of nearly 400 million people. While attending the Fourth Maritime Power Strategy Forum held in Tianjin, Tang said the PRC is one of the countries suffering from the worlds most serious desertification problems. The PRC's desertified land accounts for 18.1% of the country's total land area.

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II. PRC Report

19. PRC Civil Society and AIDS Issue

International Online (Ren Jie, "RED RIBBON RISES IN 'BIRD’S NEST'", 2008/12/01) reported that on November 30, three red ribbons which were 20 meters high and 17 meters wide were raised at the National Stadium, also named the “bird’s nest”. The red ribbon is an international logo for AIDS prevention. On the same day, the big public welfare campaign on AIDS Day “One Dream – A World without Discrimination”, which was co-sponsored by China Red Cross Society and UNAIDS, was also launched at the bird’s nest. During the activity, many international organizations, government agencies, and civil organizations who engage in AIDS prevention have set up consulting desks to

answer questions about AIDS by the public.

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20. PRC Civil Society

NGO Communication Net ("FIRST NGO MEDIA GUIDE MANUAL COMES OUT IN BEIJING", 2008/11/30) reported that "Grassroots Organizations Media Guide Manual" which was co-written by Germany's Boll Foundation and the China Association for NGO Cooperation was published on Nov.25. This is the first guide manual written for NGO media. The print version of this guide manual will be freely sent to NGO staff across the country; at the same time, there will be an electronic version for online reading and download. The guide manual aims to help the grassroots organizations which lack experience and resources learn how to communicate and interact with the media.

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21. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

China News Network (Ai Guangde, "SHIJIAZHUANG LAUNCHES 'CHARITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION' SIGNATURE CAMPAIGN", 2008/12/01) reported that on the morning of Nov.30, thousands of university students joined the “Charity and Environmental Protection” Signature Campaign in Shijiazhuang city, Hebei province. The sponsors are Hebei Charity Federation and Hebei Environmental Protection Association. They hope such kind of campaign can arouse love and a sense of responsibility among university students and make them plough into public welfare activities such as charity and environmental protection.

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III. ROK Report

22. Inter-Korea Relations

PRESSian ("CORPORATIONS IN GAESONG, 'STOP RELEASING DPRK PROPAGANDA BILLS!'", 2008/12/01) reported that Park Sang-hak, the representative of the Liberate DPRK Movement Union, said that they would release propaganda bills toward the DPRK on December 2. Park said on a radio program that it is nonsensical for them to disregard the human rights and the lives of 20 million DPRK people. Concerning the remark, Yoo Chang-keun, the deputy representative of corporations’ council in Gaesong Complex said since their influence on the ROK is huge and Standard and Poor might lower the ROK’s credit rating, an incredible amount of economic damage is inevitable.

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23. U.S. Policy Toward DPRK

Peace Network (Jung Wook-sik, "WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN MAY 2009?", 2008/11/28) said in a column that although the Obama Administration is going to talk with the ROK, they would not revise their DPRK policy as the Lee Administration wants it to be, if the government keeps their hard attitude toward the DPRK. It is apparent that the Lee Administration is not able to stop the improvement of the DPRK-US relationship and the denuclearization process. The Lee Administration's DPRK policy will maximize the tension on the Korean Peninsula, which will bring negative effects on the inter-Korean relationship, ROK-US relationship, and ROK-North East Asia relationship. The Lee Administration should learn from what the Bush administration did. While maintaining a quiet attitude, they virtually shifted their policies gradually. Despite the neo-con's criticism, most media, experts and even Obama complimented Bush's strategy.

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