

NAPSNet Daily Report 20 February, 2009

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 20 February, 2009", NAPSNet Daily Report, February 20, 2009,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-20-february-2009/>

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MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. Peace and Security Working Group Meeting

Yonhap News ("SIX-WAY MEETING ON PEACE REGIME OPENS IN MOSCOW ", Moscow, 2009/02/19) reported that the six-party talks members began a two-day meeting of working-level officials in Moscow to discuss peace and security in Northeast Asia. "A draft of the guiding principles of peace was drawn up as the first step in forming this mechanism. It was dispatched to all the participants in the 'sextet,'" Grigory Loginov, the ambassador at large at the Russian Foreign Ministry, told Itar-Tass. Delegates expect no immediate tangible outcome from the meeting.

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2. DPRK-US Relations

The Financial Times (Christian Oliver, "N KOREA ACCUSES US OF PLANNING NUCLEAR ATTACK", Seoul, 2009/02/19) reported that the DPRK accused the US administration of planning a nuclear attack under the guise of diplomacy. "The US bellicose quarters are pushing ahead with the moves for rounding off the preparations ... in a bid to make a pre-emptive nuclear strike," the DPRK's official KCNA news agency said. "The US is talking about what it called 'dialogue' and 'peace' on the Korean peninsula but, in actuality, seeking to escalate the military confrontation," the agency said.

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3. US on DPRK Leadership

The Washington Post (Glenn Kessler, "CLINTON ADDRESSES POTENTIAL SUCCESSION CRISIS IN N. KOREA", Seoul, 2009/02/19) reported that a potential succession crisis in the DPRK appears be hampering efforts to restart talks on its nuclear program, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said, adding she will seek guidance from both the ROK and PRC about how to proceed if DPRK leader Kim Jong Il is incapacitated. "There is an increasing amount of pressure because if there is succession, even if it is a peaceful succession, that creates even more uncertainty and it also may encourage behaviors that are even more provocative as a way to consolidate power within the society," Clinton said.

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4. DPRK Leadership

Yonhap News ("N.K. LEADER'S YOUNGEST SON TO ACQUIRE PARLIAMENTARY POST: SOURCES", Beijing, 2009/02/19) reported that the DPRK leader's youngest son, Kim Jong-un, has registered as a candidate for the upcoming parliamentary elections, informed sources said, in what could be a decisive step toward power if confirmed. After the March 8 vote, the DPRK will officially promote Jong-un, who turned 26 in January, as the successor of leader Kim Jong-il, said the sources in Beijing, who requested anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News ("SEOUL CALLS ON PYONGYANG TO RESPECT INTER-KOREAN PEACE ACCORD", Seoul, 2009/02/19) reported that the ROK urged the DPRK stop raising tension and come back to the dialogue table as it marked the anniversary of a 1991 non-aggression accord that Pyongyang has declared void. "Our government believes this agreement should be respected by the South and the North and that it should be implemented through discussion," Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Ho-nyoun said in a briefing. "Our government urges North Korea to entirely suspend its denunciations and provocative behavior and come forward to hold dialogue as soon as possible," the Seoul spokesman said.

Xinhau News ("INTER-KOREAN CLASH MAY BREAK OUT AT ANY MOMENT, WARNS DPRK", Pyongyang, 2009/02/19) reported that the official news agency of the DPRK warned Thursday that an inter-Korean conflict may break out at any moment. "Now that the political and military confrontation between the North and the South has gone into extremes, a physical clash may break out at any moment," the Korean Central News Agency said. "North-South relations have reached such a pass that there is no way to improve them or bring them under control," it added.

The Los Angeles Times (John M. Glionna and Ju-min Park, "MANY IN SOUTH KOREA SAY NORTH IS JUST CRYING WOLF", Seoul, 2009/02/19) reported that after 50 years of chest-thumping and bluster, if the DPRK was going to make any kind of serious military move, it surely would have done it by now, many South Koreans say. A 2008 survey of 1,000 residents by the Korea Institute for National Unification showed that 34% of those polled believed a DPRK attack was likely and 4% said it was "very possible." Nearly 60% of those polled believed that such an attack was "unlikely" or "less likely."

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6. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

DongA Ilbo ("INTER-KOREAN RAIL PROJECT PROCEEDS DESPITE TENSION", 2009/02/19) reported that construction work continues around the station to reconnect Gyeongwon Railway. Workers were busy at work to lay the railway bed to increase the level of land 10 meters above normal, with a sign warning of landmines. Site supervisor Kim said, "I really would like to see South and North Korea join forces to reconnect the Gyeongwon Line as soon as possible, and link the line to North Korea's railway network, and then to the Trans-Siberian Railway to cross the Eurasian continent."

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7. Sino-DPRK Relations

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA GETS YAKS AND CAMELS FROM CHINA", Beijing, 2009/02/19) reported that the Xinhua news agency said a zoo in the northern PRC city of Dalian had exported two yaks and four camels to the DPRK. "This is the first time wild animals have been exported to North Korea from either Dalian or Liaoning," the brief report said.

Xinhua News ("CHINA, DPRK TO BOOST CULTURAL CO-OP", Pyongyang, 2009/02/19) reported that the PRC and the DPRK will strengthen cultural exchange and cooperation in 2009, PRC Ambassador to the DPRK Liu Xiaoming said. A total of 68 cultural, educational, sports and health delegations from both countries exchanged visits in 2008, according to the ambassador. Bilateral cultural links will grow even stronger in 2009, the "Year of China-DPRK Friendship," Liu added.

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8. DPRK Food Supply

Yonhap News ("N. KOREAN FOOD SUPPLY SHORT 1 MILLION TONS, GRIP ON ECONOMY TIGHTENING: REPORT", Seoul, 2009/02/19) reported that the DPRK's food supply will fall 1.17 million tons short of demand this year, while Pyongyang is tightening control of the market and economic activities, Seoul's Unification Ministry said. The DPRK produced 4.31 million tons of grain last year, up 7 percent from the previous year thanks to improved weather conditions. But the country likely needs 5.48 million tons to feed its 2.3 million people, the ministry said in a report submitted to the National Assembly's foreign affairs, trade and unification committee.

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9. ROK Anti-Piracy Operations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "KOREA TO SEND WARSHIP TO SOMALIA IN MARCH", 2009/02/19) reported that the National Assembly's National Defense Committee approved a motion to deploy a warship to Somali waters to fight pirate attacks. The motion is expected to pass in a vote

by lawmakers during a plenary session next week. If passed, the Navy will deploy a 4,500-ton, 310-strong warship, the Munmu the Great destroyer, to waters off Somalia in mid-March to protect ROK ships and crewmembers, Minister of National Defense Lee Sang-hee said during the committee session.

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10. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA-EU FREE TRADE TALKS ON HOLD", 2009/02/19) reported that  the eighth round of free trade talks between the ROK and the European Union originally scheduled for the first week of March has been postponed by two to three weeks. The ROK's chief trade negotiator Kim Jong-hoon says his EU counterpart Catherine Ashton requested the delay as a consensus has yet to be reached among the 27 EU member states over the broader terms of trade.

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11. Japan-Taiwan Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN, TAIWAN TO ESTABLISH FLIGHTS BETWEEN DOMESTIC AIRPORTS: REPORTS", Taipei, 2009/02/19) reported that Japan and Taiwan have agreed to link up two major domestic airports, with flights between Tokyo's Haneda airport and Taipei's Songshan Airport commencing within the year, local media reported. The agreement was reached in two days of talks between Taiwanese and Japanese aviation officials that ended Wednesday in Tokyo, the reports said.

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12. Japan Politics

Agence France Press ("JAPAN PM APOLOGISES FOR FINANCE MINISTER DEBACLE", Tokyo, 2009/02/19) reported that Japan 's embattled Prime Minister Taro Aso apologised for the finance minister who resigned after appearing drunk at a press conference . Aso, facing a grilling by opposition lawmakers, has also come under attack from his own party members, including popular former premier Junichiro Koizumi , and a junior legislator who publicly urged Aso to step down. "I truly regret that, while parliament is deliberating budget bills, the finance minister in charge of them had to be replaced," Aso said.

The Asahi Shimbun ("TWO-THIRDS OF LDP PREFECTURAL CHAPTERS SAY ASO SHOULD LEAD PARTY IN LOWER HOUSE ELECTION", 2009/02/19) reported that about two-thirds of the 47 prefectural chapters of the Liberal Democratic Party said Prime Minister Taro Aso should lead the party in the next Lower House election, an Asahi Shimbun survey showed. However, many of those chapters do not actually support Aso, and some simply said there isn't anyone else available now. In the LDP presidential election in September, Aso garnered 134 of the 141 votes allotted to the prefectural chapters. Some say it would now be difficult for them to remove Aso from the post of prime minister.

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13. Japan AIDS Issue

United Press International ("JAPAN HIV, AIDS CASES REACH ALL-TIME HIGH", Tokyo, 2009/02/19) reported that the number of people in Japan newly infected with the HIV virus and those contracting AIDS reached an all-time high of 1,545, Japan's health ministry reported. Of the 1,113 people diagnosed as newly positive with the human immunodeficiency virus in 2008 and 432 diagnosed with AIDS, 1,442 were male, the ministry's AIDS Trend Committee report said. The report said 964 people, or 62 percent, were infected through same-sex contact last year, while 365 became infected through heterosexual contact and 10 through sharing drug needles, Kyodo News reported.

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14. US, Japan, PRC Energy Cooperation

The Associated Press ("U.S., JAPAN SHOULD AID CHINA ON CLEAN ENERGY: CLINTON", 2009/02/19) reported that the US and Japan should work with the PRC on clean energy as it faces the heavy energy use that usually comes with industrialization, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said. She proposed that Tokyo and Washington find ways to help Beijing use energy-efficient designs for homes, office buildings and vehicles, a process that she said could help stimulate sustainable growth in all three countries. "Here is an opportunity for Japan and the United States to work in partnership with China to help ... leapfrog over the harmful pattern of development," Clinton told students at Tokyo University.

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15. Sino-Russian Relations

United Press International ("CHINA DEMANDS RUSSIA EXPLAIN SHIP SINKING", Beijing, 2009/02/19) reported that the PRC demanded Russia explain how a PRC cargo ship sank in Russian waters after reportedly being fired on by Russian coast guard ships. "We are demanding that Russia carry out a swift investigation into the cause of the incident," PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said. The PRC also pressed Russia to continue searching for eight Indonesian and PRC crew members feared dead, Jiang said.

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16. Sino-US Environmental Cooperation

Agence France Press ("CHINA SAYS WILLING TO WORK WITH US ON CLIMATE CHANGE", Beijing, 2009/02/19) reported that the PRC said it was willing to work with the United States on addressing climate change, saying such efforts were vital to fighting global warming. "Strengthening cooperation on climate change is in the interest of the two countries and conducive to our two nations contributing to international climate change cooperation," foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said. "We would like to work with the US to make concrete progress on this issue."

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17. Sino-US Military Relations

Agence France Press ("US, CHINA CONSIDER NAVAL PACT: REPORT", Hong Kong, 2009/02/19) reported that the US commander in the Pacific said the PRC and the United States have started work on an agreement designed to avoid an accidental confrontation at sea, according to a report. Admiral Timothy Keating , asked about a potential accord with the PRC similar to a Cold War agreement between Washington and Moscow, told reporters in Hong Kong there were "nascent initiatives" already underway to "address that very issue."

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18. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("WARY TAIWAN MUSEUM WITHHOLDS TREASURES FROM CHINA", 2009/02/19) reported that a Taiwan's National Palace Museum museum will not lend any of its art treasures to the PRC , despite a goodwill loan of similar artifacts from Beijing , museum officials said. The museum contains 650,000 pieces of Chinese art , many of which were taken to Taiwan from the Forbidden City in Beijing when Nationalist forces fled the mainland. Directors for the two museums reached nine agreements covering future exchanges this week in Beijing but no deal on loaning relics to the PRC, Taipei museum Director Chou Kung-shin told a news conference . Taiwan fears that the PRC may not return any treasures it sends over, a museum publicist said.

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19. US and Cross Strait Relations

Kyodo News ("U.S. PUSHES FORWARD KEY MILITARY AIRCRAFT DEAL FOR TAIWAN: SOURCE", 2009/02/19) reported that the US Navy and Lockheed Martin Corp. reached agreement this week on a US\$1.3 billion deal to refurbish a dozen antisubmarine aircraft for sale to Taiwan, the "last step" forward in a major arms deal stalled since 2007, according to a senior Taiwanese legislative aide familiar with the matter. "The deal is now going very smoothly," the aide told Kyodo News on condition of anonymity.

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20. PRC Religious Freedom

The Associated Press ("EVANGELICAL CHURCH LEADERS DETAINED IN CHINA", Beijing, 2009/02/19) reported that police raided a private evangelical seminar in central PRC and detained more than 60 worshippers, with four of them still in custody a week after the roundup, a U.S.-based Christian group said. More than 30 police officers broke into the gathering Feb. 11 in Nanyang city in central Henan province, the China Aid Association said in a statement.

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21. PRC Energy

Bloomberg News (Wang Ying, "CHINA MAY APPROVE OIL REFINING STIMULUS PLAN TODAY", 2009/02/19) reported that the PRC is likely to approve a stimulus package for the oil refining and petrochemicals industries today to help spur the slowing economy, the country's energy chief said. The State Council, or Cabinet, will discuss the stimulus today, Zhang Guobao, head of the National Energy Administration, said on the sidelines of an industry conference in Beijing. "I feel there should be no problem," Zhang said.

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II. PRC Report

22. PRC Environment

China Economy Network ("ENVIRONMENTAL SECTORS SHOULD INVOLVE IN RECOVERY OF EXPIRED MEDICINE", 2009/02/19) reported that Li Chuyuan, a member of Guangdong Provincial Political Consultative Conference, appealed to environmental protection sectors to get involved in disposal of expired medicine in a proposal to the government recently. He said the expired medicine has been explicitly listed as national hazardous waste. At present, the disposal of expired medicine is mainly done spontaneously by some enterprises. If the environmental sectors can provide post pollution-free treatment, the burden of enterprises can be alleviated effectively, and the disposal initiative will be enhanced.

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23. PRC Civil Society

Jinghua Times (Zhou Yimei, "HAIDIAN DISTRICT TO ESTABLISH SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS FEDERATION", 2009/02/19) reported that Haidian District of Beijing city is to establish Haidian Social Organization Federation as the "mother's home" of social organizations, according to Haidian District government February 18. This is the first in Beijing. There are 629 registered social organizations in Haidian District, and the Federation is to absorb over 50 of those organizations to organize a council. In the future, the Federation will improve the mechanism of exchanges between the government and social organizations, and give more support to social organizations.

South Daily (Zhou Zhikun, "GUANGDONG ESTABLISHES SOCIAL ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT CENTER", 2009/02/19) reported that since this year, Guangdong province is to fully carry out the rating assessment of social organizations. Guangdong Provincial Social Organization Assessment Center was formally set up yesterday. The rating order of social organizations from high to low is 5A, 4A, 3A, 2A, 1A. Social organizations with a rating over 3A will get more government procurement, commission and authorization.

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Nautilus Institute

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

nautilus@nautilus.org