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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
  - 1. US-DPRK Relations
  - 2. DPRK on US-ROK Joint Military Exercise
  - 3. DPRK Military Exercise
  - 4. US, ROK Energy Aid to the DPRK
  - 5. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks
  - 6. US on DPRK Nuclear Program
  - 7. Russo-DPRK Trade Relations
  - 8. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation
  - 9. Inter-Korean Relations
  - 10. DPRK Economy
  - 11. DPRK Leadership
  - 12. Japan Politics
  - 13. PRC on Japan Elections
  - 14. Sino-Japanese Economic Relations

- 15. Cross Strait Relations
- 16. US on PRC Human Rights

- II. PRC Report
  - 17. PRC Environment
  - 18. PRC Energy Supply
  - 19. PRC Civil Society

- III. ROK Report
  - 20. Inter-Korea Relations
  - 21. DPRK Nuclear Issue & Six-Party Talks
  - 22. DPRK Nuclear Program
  - 23. US, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. US-DPRK Relations

Xinhua ("DPRK NEWSPAPER ACCUSES U.S. OF SPREADING WMDS", Pyongyang, 2008/09/23) reported that the DPRK's official daily Minju Sojon has accused the United States of spreading weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) and sparking off an arms race. "The U.S. policy of exporting weapons overseas serves as a catalyst to spark off armed conflicts and arms race by threatening peace and security and upsetting the balance of forces in the world," said a commentary carried by the newspaper Tuesday.

(return to top)

2. DPRK on US-ROK Joint Military Exercise

Xinhua ("DPRK VOWS TO "MERCILESSLY PUNISH" U.S., S.KOREAN AGGRESSORS", Pyongyang, 2008/09/23) reported that leading newspapers of the DPRK slammed the joint military exercises by the US and ROK as being a prelude to war against the country, vowing to mete out "merciless punishment" to the "aggressors." "The military exercises now underway in and around South Korea are a direct product of the U.S. imperialists' unchanged policy to stifle the DPRK and the Lee Myung Bak group's policy of confrontation with it," said a commentary carried jointly by the official Rodong Sinmun daily and the Minju Joson daily.

(return to top)

3. DPRK Military Exercise

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA CONDUCTS MASSIVE AIR FORCE EXERCISE: SOURCES", Seoul, 2008/09/23) reported that the DPRK recently conducted a massive aerial exercise near its border with the PRC and around its western coast, a military source said Tuesday, a drill rare in its scale for the energy-starved country. "North Korea recently held a large-scale flight exercise over the West Sea, involving its MIG-21 fighter jets and other combat aircraft," the source said, asking not to be identified.

(return to top)

4. US, ROK Energy Aid to the DPRK

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "SOUTH KOREA, U.S. TO CONTINUE ENERGY AID TO PYONGYANG", 2008/09/23) reported that the ROK and the US have agreed to continue their energy and economic aid to the DPRK, despite the DPRK's escalating defiance of the aid-fo--denuclearization deal worked out at the six-party talks. "At the current stage, I think the promised provision of heavy fuel oil and materials (needed to build energy plants) will continue," ROK Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan told reporters. The US also said it has no immediate plan to suspend its provision of heavy fuel oil to the DPRK. "We're not there at this point yet, but again, we're going to be having discussions with our allies in the six-party framework, and see where we go from here," State Department deputy spokesman Robert Wood said in a press briefing.

(return to top)

5. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("CHINA URGES "FLEXIBILITY" ON N.KOREA NUCLEAR MOVES", Beijing, 2008/09/23) reported that the PRC urged "flexibility" in the DPRK nuclear dispute, avoiding harsh words a day after Pyongyang made fresh moves toward possibly restarting a nuclear complex at the heart of the dispute. "Under the present circumstances, we hope the concerned parties enhance contacts and show flexibility, and together make efforts to resolve the salient problems as soon as possible," PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a regular news conference.

(return to top)

6. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters (Sue Pleming , "U.S. SAYS N.KOREA ACTIONS ARE PART OF TOUGH TALKS", New York, 2008/09/23) reported that the United States' envoy for the DPRK said that Pyongyang's recent actions over its nuclear program were part of the "rough and tumble" of hard disarmament negotiations. "Now this corresponds, of course, to, I think, the widely reported issues involving the health of the leadership there. How much it relates to that is hard to tell at this point but we feel we need to keep our focus on the verification protocol," he said. Hill said any restarting of the reprocessing facility at Yongbyon would require extensive testing and this could take months.

Agence France-Presse ("US MULLS MISSION FOR TALKS ON 'SERIOUS' NKOREA ISSUE", Washington, 2008/09/23) reported that the US is mulling sending an official delegation to Asia to try to resolve a "serious" crisis with the DPRK, which has said it wants to relaunch its nuclear program. "The seriousness of the issue probably warrants travel, but to where in the region, I don't know," a State Department official told reporters, asking to not to be named.

(return to top)

7. Russo-DPRK Trade Relations

ITAR-TASS ("N KOREA-RUSSIA RAILWAY RECONSTRUCTION TO BE STARTED OCT 3-OFFICIAL", Vladivostok, 2008/09/23) reported that reconstruction of the railway section between the DPRK's port Rajin and Russia's station Khasan in the Primorye territory will be launched on October 3, press secretary of the Vladivostok branch of the Far Eastern Railway Alexander Artamonov told Itar-Tass. A delegation of Russian Railways visited Pyongyang on March 11-15, 2008, during which the two sides discussed the technical issues related to the establishment of the joint venture and agreed to implement the projects as soon as possible.

(return to top)

8. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap News (Shin Hae-in, "OPPOSITION PARTY CALLS FOR NORMALIZED INTER-KOREAN PROJECTS", Seoul, 2008/09/23) reported that the ROK's main opposition party on Tuesday called on the government to put more effort into getting stalled inter-Korean economic projects back on track during a meeting with leaders of related business groups here. "The Mount Geumgang tour and the Kaesong industrial complex have been serving as showcases reflecting peace on the Korean Peninsula," Chung Sye-kyun, chairman of the Democratic Party told business leaders Tuesday. "The government must withdraw its hard-line policy toward North Korea and normalize for the sake of these projects."

(return to top)

9. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap News (Shim Sun-ah, "S. KOREAN GROUPS RESUME VISITS TO N. KOREA FOLLOWING TOURIST'S DEATH ", Seoul, 2008/09/23) reported that ROK began allowing liberal civic groups to resume sending large-scale delegations to the DPRK some two months after the shooting death of a tourist in the DPRK. A group of 15 activists, advocates of the inter-Korean summit agreement of 2000, left for Pyongyang early Tuesday with permission from Seoul. They will discuss ways to enhance exchanges with their northern counterparts in Pyongyang, officials said.

(return to top)

10. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("CHOSUN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRUST COMPANY' HANDLING

OVERSEAS BUSINESS FOR DPRK", 2008/09/23) reported that the DPRK's Chosun International Development Trust Company, founded less than four years ago, is quickly emerging as the center for all of the DPRK's overseas business transactions. This was made public in an article published in the September 18 edition of the Chosun Sinbo. The trust seeks capital, particularly PRC capital in Beijing and Jilin, and invests this foreign capital in the building and operating of a leaf tobacco processing plant, a hygienic products production plant, food processing facilities, automobile repair facilities, and other joint venture and cooperative venture projects.

(return to top)

11. DPRK Leadership

Mainichi Shimbun ("S.KOREAN SPY CHIEF SAYS N.KOREAN LEADER KIM JONG IL'S HEALTH BELIEVED TO HAVE IMPROVED", Seoul, 2008/09/23) reported that the ROK 's spy chief says DPRK leader Kim Jong Il's health appears to have improved. Lawmakers from the ROK's ruling party say National Intelligence Service chief Kim Sung-ho told them that his agency believes Kim Jong Il's health "has improved a little." No further details were available.

The New York Times (Choe Sang-Hun, "SPECULATION ON NORTH KOREAN LEADER THRIVES IN FACTUAL VACUUM", Cheorwon, 2008/09/23) reported that reports are saying that Kim Jong-il has had a stroke. Rumors about his condition run rampant. But the DPRK, which may be the world's most secretive nation, has betrayed no signs of unrest so far. Officials and analysts in Seoul, the ROK capital, say it appears to be business as usual. "We see no unusual movement from the North Korean military at all," Lt. Col. Jeon Chang-ho said.

The Los Angeles Times (Barbara Demick, "TALK OF KIM JONG IL'S REPORTED STROKE IS TABOO IN NORTH KORE", Pyongyang, 2008/09/23) reported that reports originating in the ROK and Japan that Kim suffered a stroke and is partially incapacitated have appeared around the world -- everywhere, that is, except in the DPRK, where all foreign publications and broadcasts are strictly prohibited. The state-controlled newspapers here carry daily accounts of the leader's activities, which mostly involve receiving gifts and congratulations for the 60th anniversary. There is no public indication of anything amiss. It appears that ordinary people haven't heard the reports of Kim being ill, and that the few who have are in denial.

(return to top)

12. Japan Politics

Agence France-Presse (Shingo Ito, "JAPAN INCOMING PM ON OFFENSIVE FOR ELECTIONS", Tokyo, 2008/09/23) reported that Japan's premier-designate Taro Aso vowed to take action to revive the economy and lashed out at the opposition as irresponsible, going on the offensive ahead of high-risk general elections. Aso was finishing his cabinet line-up and cemented a coalition deal a day after the brash conservative handily won the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) leadership election. "Looking back at the past year, I wonder what the opposition has done. They've just opposed everything," Aso said.

(return to top)

13. PRC on Japan Elections

Reuters ("CHINA AVOIDS DIRECT COMMENT ON NEW JAPAN LEADER ASO ", Beijing, 2008/09/23) reported that the PRC avoided commenting directly on the election of hawkish Taro Aso as Japan's new leader, with a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman saying on Tuesday only that good ties were in the interests of both countries. Aso, a former foreign minister, has been wary of the PRC and wants Japan to wield more regional clout. "Japan's election is its own internal affair," Jiang told a regular news briefing. "To maintain healthy and stable Sino-Japanese relations accords with the interests of both countries and peoples."

(return to top)

14. Sino-Japanese Economic Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA PLEDGES CLOSER ECONOMIC TIES WITH JAPAN", 2008/09/23) reported that the PRC would deepen economic and trade cooperation and step up strategic and mutually beneficial relations with Japan, PRC President Hu Jintao said on Sunday. "China hopes the two sides would work together to enhance economic and trade cooperation, aiming at realizing mutual benefit and development," Hu told members of a delegation from the Japan-PRC Association on Economy and Trade (JCAET).

(return to top)

15. Cross Strait Relations

Central News Agency ("CHINESE TOURISTS GIVE TAIWAN 91% APPROVAL", 2008/09/23) reported that PRC tourists who have visited Taiwan since July 4 have given an average approval rating of 91 percent to tourism in Taiwan, the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC) reported. Since the first PRC tourist group arrived in Taiwan July 4 via direct cross-strait charter flights and the formal launch of the program July 18, a total of 540 groups comprising 14,190 tourists had visited Taiwan as of Sunday, according to the MOTC.

(return to top)

16. US on PRC Human Rights

BBC News ("'CHINA REPRESSION GROWS', SAYS US", 2008/09/23) reported that repression of religious freedom in some parts of the PRC has intensified over the past year, the US government says. The state department's annual report on religious freedom around the world criticised Beijing's actions in remote Xinjiang province and Tibetan areas. "The government reportedly continued to detain Uighur Muslim citizens for possession of unauthorised religious texts, imprison them for religious activities determined to be 'extremist', and prevent them from observing certain sacred religious traditions," the report said.

(return to top)

II. PRC Report

17. PRC Environment

China Youth (Zhang Wenling, "NO GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL APOLOGIES FOR THE YANGZONG SEA POLLUTION INCIDENT", 2008/09/23) reported that after the news that Yangzong Sea of Yunan province had been polluted by the hazardous metal – As was released, citizens of Kunming city have paid great attention on the disposal of this incident. Though relevant officials have expressed "shocked, pained and anxious", no one has apologized for it to the public. Accordingly, Yunnan province has launched the administrative accountability to fully investigate all levels of the sectors. The relevant person who should be responsible for this incident will be severely punished.

(return to top)

18. PRC Energy Supply

China News Network ("CHINA TO SET UP THE FIRST LARGE DESERT PV POWER STATION", 2008/09/23) reported that according to the official of China Energy Bureau, the PRC will set up the first Large Desert PV Power Station in Gansu province. In recent years, the PRC has become the world's fastest-growing country of photovoltaic products. The output of solar cells has already overtaken Japan and becomes the world's NO.1. But the development of the PRC PV industry is quite unbalanced with the market development. Most of the products are exported to Europe and America. As a result, promoting the PRC's photovoltaic power generation market is becoming the most urgent issue of the industry.

(return to top)

19. PRC Civil Society

Xinhua News Agency (Song Xiaohua, "SOFTWARE TALENTS DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION ESTABLISHED IN JIANGSU PROVINCE", 2008/09/23) reported that Jiangsu Software Talents Development Foundation was established on Sep.22. The Foundation aims to promote the development of Jiangsu software talents by all kinds of commonweal activities. It will organize the software enterprises to held job fairs all around the country. The funding targets are the excellent graduate and undergraduate students who major in Software Engineering.

(return to top)

III. ROK Report

20. Inter-Korea Relations

PRESSian (Kim Ki-jung, Professor of Yonsei Univ, "KOREAN PENINSULA NEEDS PEACE",

2008/09/24) said in a column that the key to solve the problem on the Korean Peninsula is to use peaceful methods. The two Koreas need to find ways to 'coexist' rather than to 'confront' one another, he added. Almost a year has past since the 10.4 inter-Korean joint agreement. It was highly meaningful for the two Koreas to agree on a truce and to establish peace on the peninsula from a long-term point of view. The most practical strategy for us at the moment is to bring everlasting peace on the peninsula.

(return to top)

21. DPRK Nuclear Issue & Six-Party Talks

Tongilnews ("WHERE WILL SIX-PARTY TALKS HEAD FOR?", 2008/09/23) said in an editorial that the crisis the six-party talks is facing is because of the U.S. postponement of removing the DPRK from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Therefore, the U.S. has to find ways to solve the problem, with the PRC mediating between the two parties. Concerning the verification protocol, it is highly likely to solve the problem by readjusting the standard according to what is agreed on during the six-party talks, rather than to follow the international (or IAEA's) standard as the U.S. initially proposed. If the U.S. suggests a modified proposal to the PRC, by negotiating directly with the DPRK, it will make sure where the six-party talks will be heading.

Hankook Ilbo ("DPRK'S RESURRECTION OF NUKE REPROCESSING FACILITIES, FOR WHAT?", 2008/09/24) wrote that it is highly worrisome for the DPRK to require the IAEA to remove the monitoring cameras and seals at the Yongbyeon nuclear reprocessing facilities. Experts say that it is another way to pursue their 'bluffing' strategy. However, it is highly possible for the driving force for the negotiation to be weakened far more, considering variables such as the U.S. coming presidential election and Kim Jong-il's illness. Furthermore, it is unfortunate that the ROK is unable to display any influence on the DPRK due to tension on the Korean peninsula. Since it is unhelpful for any nations to drive the nuke issue back to what it was like initially, all parties of the six-party talks need to put more effort to break the impasse. The DPRK, too, needs to know how dangerous and foolish such action is.

(return to top)

22. DPRK Nuclear Program

Kyunghyang Shinmun ("DPRK-U.S. SHOULD THINK FROM EACH OTHER'S POINT OF VIEW", 2008/09/24) repored that the DPRK finally started playing the wild card with the 'Yongbyeon' nuclear reprocessing facilities. Both the U.S. and the DPRK have to find ways to compromise unless they want the situation to become even worse. In that sense, the U.S. needs to be more flexible when dealing with issues such as 'short-notice' inspection. The DPRK too, has to find ways to accept the proposal as much as they can, rather than merely to turn down the suggestion with no reason.

Segye Ilbo ("DPRK SHOULD BUILD CREDIBILITY BY ACTION-FOR-ACTION PRINCIPLE", 2008/09/24) reported that the DPRK removed the seal installed by IAEA to stop their monitoring of the Yongbyeon nuclear facilities. The reason why the DPRK's action is crucial is because it was done while the foreign affairs ministers of the ROK, the U.S. and the PRC were discussing ways to resolve the problems of the six-party talks in New York. It seems that the DPRK rates their requirements such as removal from the list of sponsors of terrorism far more highly than the Bush Administration.

Also, the reason why they actually commence the rebuilding process even after they started refocusing on the reprocessing facilities is because they still have room to negotiate with the U.S. However, since the DPRK has been emphasizing the principle for action-for action over time, it is unlikely for their unreasonable demand to be accepted.

Chosun Ilbo ("WHO DECIDED TO REQUIRE THE REMOVAL OF NUKE FACILITIES SEALS?", 2008/09/24) reported that if the DPRK removes the seal installed at the nuclear reprocessing facilities and banishes the U.S.'s disabling team and IAEA inspectors, the six-party talks will totally break down. Fortunately, it does not seem likely for the DPRK to ruin the whole thing immediately since they have not take such actions yet. However, the DPRK's reaction does not necessarily seem to be their typical strategy for negotiation. The situation becomes more serious if it is the DPRK military who tries to turn the whole nuclear issue back to what it was like in the past on behalf of Kim Jong-il, who almost lost his power to control the nation. The most urgent things at the moment for the ROK are to investigate the DPRK's current situation and predict where they are heading for.

(return to top)

23. US, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Program

Seoul Shinmun ("BUSH-HU FOCUS ON WAYS TO PERSUADE DPRK ON NUKES", 2008/09/24) wrote that it was appropriate for George W. Bush and Hu Jin-tao to agree to keep on finding ways to persuade the DPRK to denuclearize at the moment. As the two parties have agreed, all participating nations of the six-party talks need to find ways to collaborate with each other until they can encounter a more persuasive and creative resolution.

(return to top)

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