

NAPSNet Daily Report 7 January, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 7 January, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, January 07, 2008,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-7-january-2008/>

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I. Napsnet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Associated Press (Jae-soon Chang, "NKOREA SAYS IT GAVE US NUCLEAR LIST", Seoul, 2008/01/04) reported that the DPRK said Friday it gave a list of its nuclear programs to the United States in November, claiming it tried to meet commitments under an international disarmament agreement and accusing the U.S. of not doing its part to deliver aid. "As far as the nuclear declaration on which wrong opinion is being built up by some quarters is concerned, the DPRK has done what it should do," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement carried by the country's official Korean Central News Agency. The DPRK also said that because of the delays by the U.S. and other parties to the six-nation talks, it was slowing the pace of disabling its nuclear facilities. US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters that the DPRK has yet to provide a complete nuclear declaration. "They're engaging the international media, in their own way," McCormack said. "It is an important point that in none of this have any of the parties been backing away at all from their commitment to the process."

Reuters (Teruaki Ueno, "ENVOY URGES PATIENCE ON NORTH KOREA DEADLINE", Tokyo, 2008/01/07) reported that US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said on Monday that the DPRK's failure to meet a deadline to declare its nuclear activities needs to be confronted with patience and perseverance. "They were prepared to give a declaration which wasn't going to be complete and correct and we felt that it was better for them to give us a complete one even if it's going to be a late one," Hill told reporters. "We understand that this is always a difficult process, one that is rarely completed on time. So I think we have to have a little sense of patience and perseverance," he added.

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2. US-DPRK Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA STEPS UP ANTI-US PROPAGANDA AMID STALLED TALKS", Seoul, 2008/01/07) reported that the DPRK's Rodong Sinmun on Sunday lashed out at what it called the US strong-arm policy in international affairs. "It is an anachronistic dream for the US to try to bring to its knees and dominate other countries through high-handed practices," Rodong said. "Looking back on history, all those who tried to conquer other countries through high-handed practices met a miserable end without exception."

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3. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap ("INCOMING GOV'T TO RECONSIDER SOME INTER-KOREAN ECONOMIC PROJECTS", Seoul, 2008/01/07) reported that ROK President-elect Lee Myung-bak's transition team asked the Unification Ministry to slow down on major inter-Korean economic projects to match the pace of the six-party talks, but vowed not to link humanitarian projects, including rice and fertilizer aid, to the

nuclear talks. "We decided to conduct on-site surveys before reviewing some projects that require an ... enormous budget over a long period," Lee Dong-gwan, spokesman for the team, told reporters after his team received a policy briefing from the ministry.

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4. ROK-Japan Relations

Asahi Shimbun (Yoshihiro Makino, "S. KOREA'S LEE MOVES TO REVITALIZE RELATIONS", Seoul, 2008/01/07) reported that ROK president-elect Lee Myung Bak is sending a special envoy to Japan this month in hopes of reviving top-level talks, sources close to Lee said. In a personal letter to Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, Lee is expected to suggest that the leaders from the two countries meet frequently. Another aim is to resume the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group involving Japan, the United States and the ROK, which has not met since 2003. The sources said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade hopes to obtain funds from Japan for the international fund to assist the DPRK's economy when Tokyo and Pyongyang normalize diplomatic relations.

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5. ROK-PRC Relations

JoongAng Ilbo ("AMID STRIFE LEE SENDS PARK OFF TO BEIJING", Seoul, 2008/01/07) reported that President-elect Lee Myung-bak on Saturday tapped former Grand National Party chairwoman Park Geun-hye to lead his delegation to the PRC. "National interests are national interests," Park said in a telephone interview with the JoongAng Ilbo on Saturday. "I have to do what I can to help the country as a whole." "Park believes that national interests and the party's nomination process for the legislative elections are two separate matters," Lee Jeong-hyeon, Park's spokesman, said yesterday. "She believes she must do everything that she can to help the nation, regardless of the job."

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6. ROK Peacekeeping Operations

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "SEOUL MULLS CREATING STAND-BY PKO FORCE", Seoul, 2008/01/06) reported that the ROK is considering organizing a 1,000-strong stand-by force to support international peacekeeping operations (PKO) at the request of the United Nations, an official of the Ministry of National Defense said Sunday. Plans to support heavy equipment, transport helicopters and ships for U.N. peacekeeping missions are also under consideration, the official said, adding these plans are to be reported to the presidential transition committee Tuesday. "To that end, we will seek to revise laws pertaining to the deployment of peacekeeping troops to foreign countries," he added.

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7. ROK Politics

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "ROH NAMES SPECIAL PROSECUTOR IN PROBE OF PRESIDENT-ELECT LEE", Seoul, 2008/01/07) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun Monday appointed Chung Ho-young, former chief of the Seoul High Court, as the independent counsel in the probe into allegations of President-elect Lee Myung-bak's financial irregularities. "I will do my best to find out the truth about all allegations involving President-elect Lee. My team will be impartial in the probe," Chung said.

Korea Times ("JUSTICE MINISTRY CALLS INDEPENDENT PROBE INTO LEE 'UNCONSTITUTIONAL'", Seoul, 2008/01/07) reported that the ROK Justice Ministry on Monday expressed its opposition to an upcoming independent probe of financial fraud allegations against President-elect Lee Myung-bak, citing the unconstitutionality of the law. Cited as unconstitutional is a clause that gives the head of the Supreme Court the right to nominate a special prosecutor, which violates the principle of the separation of power between the judiciary and the prosecution, according to the ministry. The law also is liable to human rights violations, as its focus is the wide-ranging probe of a suspect, rather than a case, the ministry said in the opinion letter.

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8. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Kyodo ("FUKUDA HOPES TO RESOLVE JAPAN-CHINA GAS FIELD ROW IN SPRING", Tokyo, 2008/01/07) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda expressed hope on Monday to resolve a dispute with the PRC over oil and gas exploration rights in the East China Sea around the time when PRC President Hu Jintao visits Japan next spring, New Komeito party leader Akihiro Ota said. However, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsushige Ono, who briefed a meeting of the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito party, said the premier did not present any specific timetable although he showed willingness to resolve the issue.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

International Herald Tribune (David Lague, "CHINA PLANNING TAIWAN STRAIT ROUTE FOR COMMERCIAL AVIATION", Beijing, 2008/01/06) reported that the PRC plans to open a new commercial aviation route through the Taiwan Strait. The new route between Hong Kong and Shanghai would track just inside the PRC side of the unofficial dividing line through the middle of the Taiwan Strait, an area that both sides have mostly avoided since the 1950s, security and aviation specialists in Taiwan said. Security officials in Taiwan said that regular commercial aviation services along or near the dividing line would constrain the training and operations of the island's military, particularly its air force. "It is a grave concern to people on our side," said Andrew Yang, secretary general of the Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, an independent security policy institute based in Taipei. "Taiwan is trying to alert the U.S. and other countries to what we interpret as a very provocative and intimidating action in the Taiwan Strait area."

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10. Taiwan Politics

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN GEARS UP FOR VOTE WITH 'SUPER SUNDAY' RALLIES", Taipei, 2008/01/07) reported that Taiwan's leading politicians held rallies Sunday with less than a week to go before parliamentary elections seen as a key indicator of who could take the presidency in March. President Chen Shui-bian warned that the nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) would sell Taiwan out to the PRC by amending the island's laws if they win Saturday. KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou said he would do his utmost to "help Taiwan's farmers sell their fruits to the mainland."

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Nautilus Institute

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

nautilus@nautilus.org