



NAPSNet Daily Report 8 December, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 8 December, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, December 08, 2008,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-8-december-2008/>

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I. Napsnet

1. Six-Party Talks

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "NEGOTIATORS PREPARE TO HOLD NKOREA TALKS", Beijing , 2008/12/08) reported that envoys from the six-party talks gathered in Beijing Monday for the latest round of negotiations. Japan's Akitaka Saiki said, "After hearing about what was discussed between the U.S. and North Korea, it appears a big gap still remains. Regarding how to narrow the gap, it's up to each party's efforts from tomorrow. I think negotiations are going to be tough. The ROK's Kim Sook stated, "I am not optimistic at all." Referring to the US-DPRK meeting in Singapore, Kim said "there was no explicit outcome or new compromise."

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2. DPRK-Japan Relations

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "NKOREA WARNS IT WILL IGNORE JAPAN AT NUCLEAR TALKS", Seoul, 2008/12/06) reported that the DPRK said Saturday it will ignore Japan at upcoming six-nation talks. "We will neither treat Japan as a party to the talks nor deal with it even if it impudently appears in the conference room," an unidentified Foreign Ministry spokesman said, according to the Korean Central News Agency. Japan "has neither justification nor qualification to participate in the talks. On the contrary, it only lays a hurdle in the way of achieving the common goal," KCNA quoted the spokesman as saying

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3. US-DPRK Relations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "KISSINGER INVITED TO VISIT PYONGYANG", 2008/12/05) reported that Ri Kun, DPRK foreign ministry director for the North American bureau, proposed that former U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger visit the DPRK, Grand National Party Rep. Chung Mong-joon told ROK reporters based in Washington D.C. Kissinger was quoted as answering that he

would visit Pyongyang if two conditions were met: a U.S. president officially asks him to do so as an envoy, and the DPRK pledges to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs.

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4. Inter-Korea Relations

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "NGO TO STOP SENDING ANTI-NK LEAFLETS", Seoul, 2008/12/05) reported that leaders of the Fighter for Free North Korea (FFN) and Abductee's Family Union (AFU) pledged Friday to stop anti-DPRK leaflets for the time being. In a statement, they said they would wait and see if there is a change in the DPRK's attitude toward the ROK. They made the decision shortly after wrapping up their meeting with governing Grand National Party (GNP) chairman Park Hee-tae at the party headquarters.

Korea Herald ("PYONGYANG SLAMS SEOUL'S REACTION TO BORDER CROSSING PLAN", Seoul, 2008/12/07) reported that the DPRK on Saturday lashed out at the ROK's reaction to its move restricting inter-Korean border crossings. "The puppet authorities are trying to hard to shift the blame for the deteriorated inter-Korean relations onto the DPRK," the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland said in a statement.

Korea Herald ("LEE REITERATES CALL FOR INTER-KOREAN DIALOGUE", Seoul, 2008/12/05) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak on Friday renewed his call on the DPRK to restart inter-Korean governmental dialogue to pave the way for "genuine reconciliation." "South and North Korea have to meet again for dialogue. The North will eventually realize our genuine attitude through dialogue," Lee was quoted by presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan as saying at a meeting with key members of the National Unification Advisory Council. "I don't have any intention to politically utilize inter-Korean relations. My government will do its best to pave the way for true reconciliation and co-prosperity between the two Koreas," he said.

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5. DPRK Leadership

Yomiuri Shimbun (Yoshinari Kurose, "WASHINGTON PREPARING FOR POST-KIM REGIME", Washington, 2008/12/06) reported that the US has begun drawing up plans to deal with a new Pyongyang leadership on the assumption that Kim Jong-il could fall from power or die, an informed U.S. source said. Dennis Wilder, senior director for Asian Affairs at the White House National Security Council, said on Nov. 21 that Kim had suffered "some sort of health crisis." The source stated, "You should read that as code language for '[Kim] could potentially not recover, could potentially die from this.'" "The chance of him returning to a full leadership role is very, very thin," the source said.

Korea Times (Sunny Lee, "S. KOREA, CHINA NEED POST-KIM JONG-IL PLAN", Beijing, 2008/12/05) reported that Susan Shirk, former US deputy assistant secretary of state, said in an interview, "There are now a lot of questions on the domestic situation in North Korea. China, along with South Korea and the United States, don't want to see a violent collapse of the North Korean government. So, I think it's really important for all of these countries to have some discussions ahead of time

about different scenarios to make sure there is no misunderstanding afterwards." Internally, the U.S. government has been talking about a post-Kim North Korea scenario since the mid-1990s, according to Shirk. However, it didn't do so with the PRC government, "at least not during the time I was serving in the Clinton administration."

Joongang Ilbo (Ahn Sung-kyoo, "RAIL TRAIN OF KIM JONG-IL HAS STAYED AT STATION", Seoul, 2008/12/08) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il's special train has remained idle over three months, according to analysts who observe satellite photos. "Kim's train never left Yongsong train station near Pyongyang since reports about the ailing leader spread to the outside world in late September," an ROK source said.

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6. ROK Military Readiness

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "MINISTER STRESSES MILITARY INDEPENDENCE", Seoul, 2008/12/08) reported that ROK Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee on Monday called for military commanders and serviced-members to become more self-reliant and less dependent on the U.S. military. "Our military has become numb to the need of developing our capabilities to plan war and conduct independent missions because we have become too comfortable with the joint defense system forged with the United States," he said. "Being prepared means being fully ready to counter any present threats under any conditions with available power," the minister said. "We must therefore continue to be fully ready to overcome all provocations even if the fight starts tonight."

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7. ROK Military Procurements

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "KOREAN AIR TO DEVELOP UNMANNED SPY PLANES", Seoul, 2008/12/07) reported that the ROK Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) has selected Korean Air as the main developer of an indigenous medium-altitude unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to start missions after 2016, a military source said Sunday. The proposed UAV will be designed to perform missions as high as 50,000 feet (some 15 kilometers) for more than 24 hours and will have similar specifications to the MQ-1 Predator medium-altitude, long-endurance UAV of the U.S. Air Force, ADD officials said.

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8. ROK Foreign Aid

Donga Ilbo ("KOREA RANKS LAST IN HELPING POOR COUNTRIES: SURVEY", Seoul, 2008/12/06) reported that the Washington-based Center for Global Development ranked the ROK last among the 22 most wealthy nations in the 2008 Commitment to Development Index, Bloomberg said Friday. The ROK is running a small number of overseas aid programs, has higher export barriers to less developed countries, and allows a small number of unskilled workers from poor countries, the think tank said. Japan ranked second to last despite having the world's second-largest economy.

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9. Korean War Atrocities

Associated Press (Charles Hanley and Jae-Soon Chang, "CHILDREN 'EXECUTED' IN 1950 SOUTH KOREAN KILLINGS", Seoul, 2008/12/08) reported that ROK government investigators have confirmed that dozens of children were among many thousands shot by their own government early in the Korean War. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has thus far verified more than two dozen mass killings of leftists and supposed sympathizers, among at least 100,000 people estimated to have been hastily shot and dumped into makeshift trenches, abandoned mines or the sea. Declassified records show U.S. officers were present at one killing field and that at least one U.S. officer sanctioned another mass political execution if prisoners otherwise would be freed by invading DPRK forces.

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10. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Associated Press ("JAPAN URGES CHINESE SHIPS TO LEAVE DISPUTED WATERS", Tokyo, 2008/12/08) reported that Japan's coast guard is urging PRC survey ships to leave waters near the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The coast guard Monday said the ships entered waters surrounding the islands earlier in the day.

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11. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun ("CHINA NOT ON PUBLIC'S HIT PARADE", Tokyo, 2008/12/08) reported that more than 70 percent of Japanese, the highest percentage on record, say Japan-PRC relations are in poor shape, according to a nationwide survey by the government. Government officials cited highly publicized cases of contaminated food imported from China as a likely reason for the negative results.

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12. Alleged Japan-Pakistan Nuclear Connection

Kyodo ("DISGRACED PAKISTANI NUCLEAR SCIENTIST CLAIMS TO HAVE VISITED JAPAN", Islamabad, 2008/12/08) reported that Pakistani nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan obtained key components essential to Pakistan's nuclear program from Japan, a family friend claimed. "He visited Japan in 1984 and met many bosses of big firms," the friend said. "One of the company executives he met was chairman of a trading company who had served as naval attache in Berlin during the Second World War." Another source familiar with Pakistan's nuclear program said Khan also visited Japan in 1977 and bought a so-called "uninterrupted power supply" device from a Japanese company for the uranium enrichment facility he was building.

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13. US Military in Japan

Asahi Shimbun ("TENS OF THOUSANDS VISIT U.S. AIRCRAFT CARRIER", Yokosuka, 2008/12/08) reported that the USS George Washington, the first nuclear-powered aircraft carrier deployed to Japan, drew about 30,000 visitors to its first open house Saturday. City authorities said more than 7,000 people had inquired about getting a look at the George Washington since late November.

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14. Russo-Japanese Energy Cooperation

Vladivostok Times ("JAPANESE STUDY INVESTMENT RESOURCES TO THE FAR EASTERN POWER SYSTEM", Vladivostok, 2008/12/05) reported that Valeriy Levit, the General Director of the OJSC "Far Eastern Generating Company", met representatives of the Japanese Institute of Foreign Investment (JOI) in Khabarovsk. They spoke to the possibility of the foreign capital to participate in building and development of power-generating units and terms of this participation. The goal of the Japanese specialists visit is to study the problems of the Far Eastern power system, its needs for investment and then to share this information with the Japanese business circles.

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15. Japanese Politics

Kyodo ("APPROVAL FOR ASO'S CABINET FALLS INTO 'CRITICAL' LEVEL: POLL", Tokyo , 2008/12/07) reported that the approval rating for Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso's Cabinet dropped to 25.5 percent as of this weekend, down 15.4 percentage points from the previous poll in November, according to a Kyodo News survey released Sunday. The disapproval rating rose to 61.3 percent, up 19.1 points. When asked which one they would prefer to see as leader of the nation, Ichiro Ozawa, president of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, received 34.5 percent, up 10.1 points from the previous poll, while Aso got 33.5 percent, down 17.5 points.

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16. PRC Tibet Issue

Associated Press (Gillian Wong, "CHINESE MEDIA SLAMS SARKOZY FOR DALAI LAMA MEETING", Beijing, 2008/12/08) reported that PRC media on Monday criticized French President Nicholas Sarkozy for meeting with the Dalai Lama. "For whatever the consequences of his stunt will be, the arrogant French president has only himself to blame. He asked for it," the editorial in the English-language China Daily newspaper said. It added the meeting "calls into question all his previous efforts to repair ties and his personal credibility as well." On Sunday, PRC Deputy Foreign Minister He Yafei summoned the French ambassador to China to say the meeting was "a rude intervention in Chinese internal affairs and has hurt the feelings of Chinese people gravely."

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17. PRC Social Unrest

BBC ("CHINA 'FACES MASS SOCIAL UNREST'", 2008/12/05) reported that Zhou Tianyong, a researcher at the Central Party School in Beijing, wrote in the China Economic Times that rising unemployment and the economic slowdown could cause massive social turmoil in the PRC. "The redistribution of wealth through theft and robbery could dramatically increase and menaces to social stability will grow," Zhou warned.

Der Spiegel (Wieland Wagner, "TROUBLE IN THE WORLD'S FACTORY", 2008/12/04) reported that the global economic crisis is causing factories in the PRC to run out of money, leading workers to fear they won't be paid their wages. With the authorities fearing major unrest, municipalities have been paying workers their outstanding wages. Nonetheless, more and more protests are flaring up around the country.

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II. PRC Report

18. PRC Environment

Xinhua Net (An Pei, Luo Sha, "WORLD BANK LOANS 0.12 BILLION YUAN FOR CHINA ECO-AGRICULTURE", 2008/12/04) reported that World Bank representative office in the PRC announced on Wednesday that WB board of directors has approved the 0.12 billion yuan loan to support PRC eco-agriculture. This project will benefit rural residents in Anhui, Hunan, Guangxi, Hubei four provinces and Chongqing city. The loan will be used to build methane-generating pit and rebuild kitchens, houses of livestock, and toilets of residents.

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19. PRC Civil Society and Earthquake Relief

Beijing Times (Li Qiumeng, "CHINA RED CROSS: NO MISUSE OF EARTHQUAKE RELIEF FUNDS BEEN FOUND", 2008/12/04) reported that according to the third "China Red Cross Foundation Earthquake Relief Funds and Materials Audit Report" given by Zhongwei Accounting Firm, no misuse behavior has been found. The report shows that as at October 31, China Red Cross Foundation has received monetary donation of 1.309 billion yuan, material donation amounting to 78.827 million yuan. A total of 0.468 billion yuan has been allocated. Another 0.742 billion yuan will be allocated at the end of the month.

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20. PRC Civil Society

Ningbo Daily (Yi He, "HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS CAN ENJOY FREE CHECKUP", 2008/12/03)

reported that today is the 23rd “International Volunteers Day”. Yesterday a public welfare campaign named “Share Health in a Happy City – Giving Special Love to Volunteers” was held in Ningbo city of Jiangsu province. Volunteers from anti-thief voluntary team, Baichuan love voluntary group, Ningbo urban management voluntary service team, and others came to the checkup center to receive physical examination. The sponsor hopes this kind of campaign can help promoting the whole society to care volunteers.

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