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I. NAPSNet

- 1. DPRK Nuclear Program
2. US, ROK on DPRK Peace Treaty
3. DPRK-Japan Working Group Meeting
4. DPRK Floods
5. ROK Candidate on DPRK Policy
6. ROK Role in Iraq
7. ROK-Russian Economic Relations
8. ROK-EU Trade Relations
9. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission
10. US, Japan, Australia Security Meeting
11. Cross Strait Relations
12. PRC Cyberattacks
13. PRC Media Control
14. PRC AIDS Issue

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Financial Times ("N KOREA OPENS UP TO NUCLEAR INSPECTION", 2007-09-07) reported that the DPRK has invited nuclear experts from the US, PRC and Russia to survey its nuclear facilities next week, increasing momentum behind efforts to dismantle an atomic weapons programme that has bedevilled north-east Asia for 15 years. The four-day visit, starting on Tuesday, is aimed at studying DPRK nuclear facilities to determine what steps are needed to put them out of use.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("US NUCLEAR EXPERTS HEADED TO NKOREA", 2007-0--10) reported that US technical experts arrived in the ROK, en route to the DPRK to discuss disabling a nuclear programme which has already produced at least one atomic bomb. The US team led by Sung Kim, State Department director for Korean affairs, will join Russian and PRC delegates in Pyongyang Tuesday to begin a five-day survey of key nuclear facilities. The ROK and the US agreed that steps to disable the facilities "must be taken in an efficient and very swift manner," he added. (return to top)

2. US, ROK on DPRK Peace Treaty

Donga Ilbo ("ROH'S REQUEST FOR A CLEAR MESSAGE IRRITATES BUSH", 2007-09-10) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun asked President Bush for a clear message regarding a peace treaty between the US and DPRK. Roh said, "When you delivered your opening remarks, President Bush, you did not mention the possibility of a peace treaty or declaration ending the Korean War that we discussed in the unofficial talks." The Korean interpreter translated, "I think I might be wrong. I think I did not hear you mention a declaration to end the Korean War just now. Did you say so, President Bush?" Roh continued, "North Korean leader Kim Jong Il and the South Korean people want to hear what you have to say regarding that." The US envisions a "Pyongyang-Washington Peace Treaty" as a legality that comes after the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through long-term efforts, whereas the ROK government thinks that the US could announce a "verbal declaration" before denuclearization.

(return to top)

3. DPRK-Japan Working Group Meeting

Reuters ("JAPAN-NORTH KOREA TALKS END WITHOUT PROGRESS", 2007-09-06) reported that Japan and the DPRK wrapped up two days of talks on establishing diplomatic relations without visible progress in disputes over key issues that have hampered efforts to improve bilateral ties. Japan's chief negotiator, Yoshiki Mine, said the DPRK had refused to take action to resolve the abduction row. A DPRK delegate said his team had repeated the DPRK's position that the case on abductions was closed.

(return to top) Yonhap ("N. KOREA WARNS NORMALIZATION TALKS COULD COLLAPSE OVER FINANCIAL SANCTIONS ", 2007-09-10) reported that a senior DPRK diplomat warned talks on normalizing diplomatic relations with Japan would collapse if it extends financial sanctions on the DPRK beyond the October deadline. "If Japanese media reports prove true, the relationship between the two sides would face irrevocable consequences," Song Il-ho, the chief DPRK envoy to normalization talks, said. Song indicated that if Japan's financial sanctions are extended, the DPRK will boycott the Japan-DPRK Working Group talks. (return to top)

4. DPRK Floods

The Financial Times ("N KOREA FLOOD DAMAGE UNDERSTATED", 2007-09-06) reported that the floods that struck the DPRK last month have had a much more devastating effect than Pyongyang's state media have reported, with livestock deaths and a disrupted ration system adding to widespread food shortages, according to the United Nations' World Food Programme. "These floods occurred in the 'rice bowl' of the country, causing extensive damage to the farms that supply grain to the country as a whole but also wiping out kitchen gardens that have become an important coping mechanism for people," Tony Banbury, the WFP's Asia director, told the FT.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("SKOREA STARTS SENDING AID TO NORTH", 2007-09-10) reported that the ROK sent 60 trucks to flood-ravaged DPRK, the first shipment of additional aid to help the DPRK rebuild devastated regions, the Unification Ministry said. The 5-ton trucks, sent via a reconnected road link on the western section of the inter-Korean border, are part of the ROK's new aid package worth $39.8 million, said Lee Nam-jo, a ministry spokesman. The shipment includes cement, reinforcing rods, construction machinery and fuel, Lee said. (return to top) Yonhap ("RUSSIA AIRLIFTS EMERGENCY AID TO N. KOREA", 2007-09-06) reported that Russia has airlifted 25 tons of emergency aid to the DPRK to help the DPRK to cope with the damage from flash floods, a Russian government-funded radio station reported. "The Russian transport plane delivered 25 tons of rice and large tents in humanitarian aid to North Korea," Voice of Russia said. The aid is part of Russia's promise to extend US$300,000 in cash to the flood-stricken DPRK, as well as airlift tents, food and grocery in three separate transport planes. (return to top)

5. ROK Candidate on DPRK Policy

Joongang Ilbo ("LEE MYUNG-BAK OUTLINES PLANS FOR NORTH KOREA", 2007-09-10) reported that Grand National presidential candidate Lee Myung-bak introduced a detailed plan to help the DPRK boost its per capita income to $3,000 within 10 years under the condition that Pyongyang dismantle its nuclear program and open up to the international community. Although Lee said he wanted to continue humanitarian aid, he said the program aimed to eventually help the DPRK stand on its own feet. The goal, he said, is to "build a foundation for the kind of peaceful unification that will absorb unification costs and associated social dislocations."

(return to top)

6. ROK Role in Iraq

Korea Times ("KOREA TILTS TOWARD EXTENDED TROOP PRESENCE IN IRAQ", 2007-09-09) reported that a summit between President Roh Moo-hyun and US President George W. Bush in Sydney has produced expectations that ROK troops will stay at least for one more year in Iraq. In his talks with Bush on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, Roh said he will look for ways to help the US as a coalition partner in Iraq, Roh's aides said.

(return to top)

7. ROK-Russian Economic Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA, RUSSIA TO COOPERATE IN DEVELOPING SIBERIA", 2007-09-10) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the APEC summit. They agreed to cooperate on development in Siberia and expand economic

cooperation by linking the Korean Peninsula and Siberia. Putin said Russia was promoting massive energy projects to funnel its energy resources to the ROK market.

(return to top)

8. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA, EU CONTINUE HAGGLING OVER MANUFACTURED GOODS", 2007-09-10) reported that the ROK will propose lifting tariffs on most European manufactured goods within seven years after a free trade agreement with the EU goes into effect. Seoul is to make the proposal in the third round of free trade talks between the two sides, which will open in Belgium on Sept. 17. A senior government official the government delivered a revised concession proposal that advances the timing of tariff removal and increases the number of goods subject to market opening. The concession list on manufactured goods is almost the final version, he added.

(return to top)

9. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

The Asahi Shimbun ("ABE PUTS JOB ON LINE FOR ANTI-TERROR BILL", 2007-09-10) reported that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe entered the extraordinary Diet session apparently prepared to resign if he fails to pass legislation allowing the Maritime Self-Defense Force to continue its anti-terrorism mission in the Indian Ocean. When asked by reporters if he was prepared to have his Cabinet resign en masse if the legislation was not passed, Abe said, "I will have to fulfill the responsibility of my position by using every resource available to me." After pausing for a few seconds, Abe said, "Of course, that means that I do not intend to cling to the responsibility of my position."

(return to top)

10. US, Japan, Australia Security Meeting

Agence-France Presse ("US, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA HOLD LANDMARK SECURITY TALKS", 2007-0--08) reported that the leaders of the United States, Japan and Australia held landmark security talks, after moving to allay the PRC's fears that the alliance is aimed at containing the regional superpower. President George W. Bush and Australian and Japanese Prime Ministers John Howard and Shinzo Abe met in Sydney over breakfast ahead of an Asia-Pacific summit. Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said the informal talks were dominated by India's growing weight in Asia, which commentators have suggested could pose a counterbalance to the PRC's rising military might.

(return to top)

11. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN LEADER RILES CHINA, U.S.", 2007-09-09) reported that tensions lately have ratcheted up over an ambitious political gambit by Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian that has rattled both the PRC and the US. At issue is Chen's plan for a public referendum next year on Taiwan seeking entry to the United Nations. Beijing views the referendum as a direct challenge to its claim that Taiwan is part of the PRC. No one expects war anytime soon, but Chen's move worries US officials enough that they have publicly criticized it.

(return to top) The Asahi Shimbun ("ASIA: TAIWAN OUT IN THE COLD AS CHINA MUSCLES IN ON CENTRAL AMERICAN NATIONS", 2007-09-10) reported that as the PRC's continuing economic boom strengthens its push to become the next global superpower, it has started flexing its muscle in Central and South America to cut Taiwan's relationship with strategically important countries in the region. Costa Rica, lured by the promise of the PRC's largesse, broke off its ties with Taiwan to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC in early June. The Taiwanese government, unable to compete with the PRC's buckets of money or its considerable trade opportunities, fears other countries will soon follow suit. (return to top)

12. PRC Cyberattacks

Agence France-Presse ("FRENCH GOVERNMENT FALLS PREY TO CYBER-ATTACKS "INVOLVING CHINA"", 2007-09-08) reported that French information systems fell prey to cyber attacks "involving China", similar to those reported by the US, British and German governments, a top French security official told AFP. "We have indications that our information systems were the object of attacks, like in the other countries," the Secretary-General of National Defence (SGDN) Francis Delon said. "We have proof that there is involvement with China. But I am prudent. When I say China, this does not mean the Chinese government. We don't have any indication now that it was done by the Chinese People's Liberation Army," he added.

(return to top)

13. PRC Media Control

The Washington Post ("FOR CHINA'S CENSORS, ELECTRONIC OFFENDERS ARE THE NEW FRONTIER", 2007-09-10) reported that PRC party censors are now turning to the PRC's booming Internet and cellphone networks with particular vigor. Given the easy access to technologies such as text messaging, censors have found it difficult to keep a grip on information. Traditionally, the censors' main concern has been keeping political expression in check. But because transmitting information of all kinds through the Internet and cellphone messages is relatively easy, the party's censorship bureaucrats also have been fighting new battles.

(return to top)

14. PRC AIDS Issue

Reuters ("CHINA REPORTS LEAP IN NEW HIV/AIDS CASES", 2007-09-09) reported that the PRC reported 18,543 new cases of HIV/AIDS in the first half of this year, state media said, near the number for the whole of 2006. Drug abuse was the main cause of new infections, Xinhua news agency quoted Han Mengjie, an official with AIDS Control Work Committee of the State Council, as saying in a report. Han also warned of the danger of the virus spreading to the general public through unsafe sex and the greater migration of the infected population.

(return to top)

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