NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, September 17, 2007

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, September 17, 2007", NAPSNet Daily Report, September 17, 2007, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-monday-september-17-2007/

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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("SURPRISE DELAY RAISES SPECTER OF UNCERTAINTY ON 6-PARTY TALKS", 2007-09-17) reported that the next round of the six-party nuclear talks have been suspended, a government official said. The talks were to have resumed tomorrow, but Beijing officially notified the countries involved yesterday of the delay, the official said. A new date will be set after consultations. A source close to the talks said that the DPRK had not given an official answer as to whether it was ready to resume the talks and thus the resumption was put on hold. The source said the talks could still resume this week or early next week.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Chosun Ilbo ("NUCLEAR EXPERTS RETURN FROM N.KOREA INSPECTION", 2007-09-17) reported that nuclear experts from the US, PRC and Russia have wound up a five-day visit to the DPRK, where they inspected the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. On Sunday, they reached a draft agreement with DPRK officials ensuring that the facilities cannot work for several years once they have been disabled. The DPRK was cooperative, even showing them blueprints of the key facilities, including the 5-megawatt atomic reactor.

(return to top) Kyodo ("N. KOREA ADMITS FOR 1ST TIME PROCUREMENT OF ENRICHMENT EQUIPMENT", 2007-09-17) reported that the DPRK told the US earlier this month that it procured materials related to centrifuges used for uranium enrichment from a third country, diplomatic sources said. The DPRK's revelation regarding aluminum pipes marks the first time that Pyongyang has admitted to allegations about a secret uranium enrichment program which sparked the current DPRK nuclear standoff. During the Geneva talks, the DPRK's chief delegate to the six-party talks, Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan, admitted to his US counterpart Christopher Hill, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, that the DPRK had procured aluminum pipes from a third country, the sources said. (return to top) Hankook Ilbo ("DPRK OPENED THE NUCLEAR COMPLEX PLAN TO THE DENUCLEARIZATOIN TEAM", 2007-09-16) reported that the DPRK opened their three nuclear complexes, including a 5MW nuclear reactor, to a team of U.S, PRC, and Russian nuclear experts when the team visited Yongbyon. ROK officials said there was only close negotiation about the actions needed to denuclearization, not an agreement on this. However they have an idea on disabling the facilities, and it will be talked about at the six-nation talks. Translated from Korean. (return to top)

3. Alleged Syria-DPRK Nuclear Deal

The Associated Press ("US WARY OF SYRIA-NORTH KOREA TIES", 2007-09-17) reported that the US is keeping close watch on Syria and the DPRK, the Pentagon chief said, amid suspicions the DPRK is possibly cooperating with Syria on a nuclear facility. A senior US nuclear official said that DPRKoreans were in Syria and that Syria may have had contacts with "secret suppliers" to obtain nuclear equipment.

(return to top) Yonhap ("KIM MYONG-GIL, 'NOT TRUE' ON THE NUKE DEAL BETWEEN DPRK AND SYRIA", 2007-09-16) reported the DPRK's deputy ambassador to the United Nations, Kim Myong-gil strongly rejected the reports of transfer of nuclear materials to Syria. He said it is a habitual claim and he has nothing to say about it. His statement implies that DPRK will deny completely the whole claim on the nuclear connection with Syria. (return to top) Korea Times ("FOREIGN MINISTER SONG DISMISSES REPORTS ON ALLEGED NK-SYRIA", 2007-09-17)

reported that ROK Foreign Minister Song Min-soon dismissed recent reports of alleged nuclear cooperation between the DPRK and Syria, saying no one has any concrete evidence to prove the allegation. Song also pointed to conflicting reports on the level of cooperation between the countries. "If Syria received nuclear materials from North Korea, it must have a facility to store the nuclear material, but as far as I know, Syria does not have any nuclear (storage) facility," Song told reporters. (return to top)

4. Korean War Peace Treaty

Korea Times ("'PEACE SYSTEM NEGOTIATION CAN BEGIN THIS YEAR'", 2007-09-17) reported that Song Min-soon, minister of foreign affairs and trade, said that negotiation for a peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula can begin this year if the DPRK disables its nuclear facilities. "The timing of the peace system negotiation on the Korean Peninsula can be this year, depending on the disablement of North Korean nuclear facilities," Song was quoted as saying by Rep. Choi Sung of the pro-government United New Democratic Party (UNDP). Song also said that he will discuss when the negotiations can start during his planned visit to the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, later this month.

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5. ROK Trade Relations

Yonhap News ("U.S. TRADE PACT TO AFFECT TAX REVENUE", 2007-09-17) reported that the free trade agreement with the US will likely reduce tax revenues from tariffs by an average of about 860 billion won ($926.4 million) each year, a government report revealed. According to the report to the National Assembly, the ROK is likely to see tax revenues related to tariffs reduced by about 729.1 billion won each year during the first five years after the agreement takes effect. An annual decrease in such income is likely to widen to about 993.9 billion won between 2015 and 2019, it said.

(return to top) Chosun Ilbo ("KOREA, EU LOOK FORWARD TO PROGRESS IN FREE TRADE TALKS", 2007-09-17) reported that the ROK and the European Union are expected to make rapid progress in their third round of free trade talks, which runs for five days from Monday in Brussels. Cars and agricultural products are decisive items for the trade talks. The ROK delivered a fresh concession list to the EU on Sept. 6, promising to open up the market of manufactured goods over seven years but reserving a few special products. (return to top) Korea Herald ("KOREA TO PUSH FOR FTAS WITH LATIN AMERICA", 2007-09-17) reported that the ROK will seek a free trade agreement with Latin America's Mercosur economic group, the country's top economic policy maker said. Mercosur, formed in 1991, is a regional economic bloc involving Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. At the Korea-LAC Trade and Investment Forum in Seoul, Finance Minister Kwon O-kyu said that the country will begin talks with the South American trade organization after results of the recently completed ROK-Mercosur joint feasibility study have been analyzed. (return to top) Yonhap ("S. KOREA, INDIA AGREE TO CONCLUDE TALKS ON TRADE AGREEMENT WITHIN YEAR", 2007-09-17) reported that the ROK Foreign Minister Song Min-soon and his visiting Indian counterpart, Pranab Mukherjee, on Monday stated their goal of concluding negotiations for a trade agreement within the year, and called for enhanced relations between their countries, the Foreign Ministry said. "The two ministers noted with satisfaction that bilateral relations have gained new momentum following the establishment of a 'Long-term Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity,'" the ministry said in a press release. (return to top)

6. Japan Government

The Times ("YASUO FUKUDA SURGES AHEAD IN JAPANESE LEADERSHIP RACE", 2007-09-17) reported that the battle to become the next Prime Minister of Japan has narrowed into a confrontation between an unpredictable right-winger with a penchant for comic books and a colourless and austere moderate who admits the contest has left him "flustered". Today, the second of these men, Yasuo Fukuda, was surging ahead of his rival, Taro Aso, who had appeared to be in an unbeatable position yesterday. The reversal reflects the alarm and uncertainty that has gripped the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), ever since the current Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, announced his decision to resign three days ago.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("FAVOURITE TO BE JAPAN PM PROMISES FRESH FOREIGN POLICY", 2007-09-17) reported that Yasuo Fukuda, favourite in the race to be Japan's new prime minister, vowed to strengthen ties with the PRC and suggested softening his country's hardline against the DPRK. Fukuda also said he had no plan to visit the Yasukuni Shrine, seen as a symbol of Japan's past militarism. "As a prime minister, I think I will have to refrain from making a visit," he said. (return to top)

7. Japan Space Program

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN SAYS LUNAR ORBITER LAUNCH A SUCCESS", 2007-09-17) reported that Japan's first lunar orbiter successfully blasted into space on the largest mission to investigate the moon since the US Apollo programme began nearly four decades ago, the space agency said. A domestically developed rocket launched with no glitches from a small island in southern Japan at 10:31 am (0131 GMT) carrying the country's hopes of restoring pride in its troubled space programme. The lunar orbiter, aiming to collect data for research of the moon's origin and evolution, will travel around the Earth before moving into an orbit of the moon in early October, officials said.

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8. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA PROTESTS AGAINST PROPOSED US WEAPONS SALES TO TAIWAN", 2007-09-17) reported that the PRC protested against proposed 2.2-billion-dollar US weapon sales to Taiwan, urging Washington to cancel the deal and end its ties with the island's military. "This constitutes rude interference in China's internal affairs. The Chinese side strongly protests against this and has raised solemn representations with the United States," a foreign ministry spokeswoman said.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("TAIWAN HOLDS RIVAL RALLIES FOR UN BID", 2007-09-17) reported that more than 100,000 Taiwanese rallied Saturday to demand the United Nations accept the island as a member, the most important step yet in the government-orchestrated campaign to emphasize its separation from the PRC. The demonstration in the southern city of Kaohsiung gave ballast to President Chen Shui-bian's pro-independence policies, and defied threats from the PRC. (return to top)

9. Sino-Indian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("INDIA PAVES WAY FOR PM'S CHINA VISIT", 2007-09-17) reported that

India's senior foreign ministry official opened talks in Beijing to prepare for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's first visit to the PRC, expected later this year, an official said. Shivshankar Menon, India's ambassador to the PRC from 2000 to 2003, will be discussing dates and preparations for the two-day visit, the foreign ministry official said under cover of anonymity.

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10. PRC Blue Ear Pig Disease Outbreak

Washington Post ("PIG DISEASE IN CHINA WORRIES THE WORLD", 2007-09-16) reported that moving rapidly from one farm to the next, the virus has been devastating pig communities throughout the PRC for more than a year, wiping out entire herds, driving pork prices up nearly 87 percent in a year and helping push the country's inflation rate to its highest levels since 1996. The PRC government has admitted that the swine deaths amount to an epidemic but contends that the situation is under control.

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11. PRC Illegal Land Transfers

The Associated Press ("CHINA FIGHTING ILLEGAL LAND TRANSFERS", 2007-09-17) reported that PRC officials said that a crackdown on illegally transferring householders' land to property developers was accelerating, with more than 3,000 officials punished for such actions last year. Enforcement of penalties had been haphazard in past years, and officials above the village level are rarely even investigated, said Zhang Xinbao, director of the Law Enforcement and Supervision Bureau under the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources.

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12. PRC One Child Policy

Reuters ("CHINA TO CRACK DOWN ON RICH FLOUTING ONE-CHILD RULE", 2007-09-15) reported that rich PRC people who flout the country's family planning policies, which usually limit couples to one child, will face higher fines under tougher new enforcement guidelines, state media said. The new measures, issued by the National Population and Family Planning Commission and 10 other agencies, single out the elite as needing to play their part in controlling the country's population. Violators could also see their credit ratings damaged, the paper said -- a serious threat in a society where people are increasingly taking out loans to buy homes and cars, and where banks are often prodded by authorities to restrict lending to certain groups or companies in line with policy aims.

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13. PRC Capital Punishment

The Associated Press ("CHINA ORDERS NEW LIMITS ON USE OF DEATH PENALTY", 2007-09-17) reported that the PRC has ordered judges to use the death penalty more sparingly by showing leniency for murderers who cooperate with authorities and white-collar criminals who help recoup their ill-gotten gains, the government said. The order is the latest effort by Beijing to reform capital punishment in the PRC, which is believed to carry out more court-ordered executions than all other countries combined.

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