NAPSNet Daily Report Tuesday, September 13, 2005

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Tuesday, September 13, 2005", NAPSNet Daily Report, September 13, 2005, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-tuesday-september-13-2005/

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I. United States

1. Six Party Talks

The Associated Press ("TALKS ON N. KOREAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM RESUME", 2005-09-13) reported that six party talks resumed Tuesday, but prospects for progress were uncertain as Pyongyang remained insistent on its right to a civilian atomic program. "If each party can be a little more flexible in its position there will be good results, but if they stick to their current position, good results will be hard to expect," ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon said as he arrived in Beijing. Kenichiro Sasae, Japan's top envoy, said it was important first that the DPRK "shows its determination in detail regarding dismantlement of their nuclear programs." "If this happens, I think it is possible that we could be more flexible in discussing the interests that North Korea has as the next step," he said.

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2. ROK on Six Party Talks

Xinhua ("ROH MOO-HYUN VOICES CONFIDENCE IN SOLVING NUCLEAR ISSUE", 2005-09-12) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun has said that he was confident the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula can be resolved through dialogue. "Neither North Korea nor the United States wants to continue with this problem and conflict, or to let the conflict develop into a confrontation, and nor are they in a situation in which they can handle such a conflict," Roh told the Yonhap News Agency on Tuesday. "This is why I believe this problem is headed toward a solution," Roh said.

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3. DPRK on Six Party Talks

Xinhua ("DPRK INSISTS ON PEACEFUL NUCLEAR ACTIVITY", 2005-09-13) reported that the head of the DPRK delegation, Kim Gye-gwan, said on Tuesday that the DPRK will repeat its standpoints on peaceful nuclear activity, but will "take flexibility when necessary" in the second phase of the fourth round of the six party talks. "The DPRK has right on peaceful nuclear activity. This right is neither awarded nor needs to be approved by others," Kim told Xinhua. "We have this right, and the more important thing is that we should use this right," Kim stressed, adding that "if the United States tries to set obstacle to the DPRK's using this right, we can utterly not accept that."

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4. Expert on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France Presse ("NORTH KOREA NEEDS POWER, BUT SHOULD IT BE NUCLEAR?", 2005-09-12) reported that according to energy experts, the DPRK's power grid is too primitive to handle the capacity that would be provided by the nuclear plants it is demanding. The DPRK wants the international community to complete construction of two light-water reactors, under the auspices of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organizaton (KEDO). "To consume the electricity generated by such reactors, North Korea would need a power grid 10 times the size of what they now have," said ROK nuclear expert Kang Jungmin.

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5. DPRK-US Relations

KCNA ("U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT'S REPORT ATTACKING DPRK REFUTED", 2005-09-13) reported that a recent report by the US Department of State unreasonably listed the DPRK as a state violating the convention banning biological weapons. The Rodong Sinmun said on Monday that "The U.S. mud-slinging was nothing but a plot to isolate the DPRK in the international arena by bringing all sorts of charges to it and justify its policy to stifle the DPRK." The KCNA stated that the US would be well advised to stop such rash acts as hurting its dialogue partner in a bid to chill the climate for building confidence between the DPRK and the US and becloud the prospects of the six party talks and the settlement of the nuclear issue.

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6. Expert on DPRK-US Relations

RIA Novosti ("U.S. AND NORTH KOREA NEARING A SOLUTION—EXPERT,", 2005-09-12) reported that according to a Russian political expert, the DPRK and US are at the point of finding a solution to their bilateral problems. "Relations between the U.S. and North Korea are moving in the same direction because [both countries] are interested in reducing tensions and reaching a compromise," said Mikhail Titarenko, director of the Institute of Far East Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. According to the expert, a compromise would be possible if the DPRK stopped its development of nuclear weapons, and if the US promised to offer economic support and eased the embargo.

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7. DPRK-US Bilateral Talks Before Six Party Talks

Yonhap News ("NO BILATERAL U.S.-N. KOREA MEETING AHEAD OF FULL SIX-PARTY TALKS: HILL", 2005-09-13) reported that the US has no plan to hold bilateral contacts with the DPRK ahead of six party talks, its chief delegate said. Christopher Hill said, however, that he was willing to meet his DPRK counterpart, Kim Gye-kwan, during a dinner to be hosted by the PRC for all delegations later in the day.

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8. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("HYUNDAI CHAIRWOMAN SPEAKS OUT ON N. KOREA PROJECTS", 2005-09-12) reported that Hyundai Group chairwoman Hyun Jeong-eun has taken the unusual step of posting her feelings about Hyundai Asan's embattled DPRK tourism projects on the company website. Hyun said the two sides had come to a watershed where they must decide whether to continue with the tourism projects. The chairwoman said that she could not decide the matter on her own as the projects were not only the lifetime projects of the group's late founder Chung Ju-yung and her late husband Hyundai Asan chief Chung Mong-hun, but also "projects of the unification earnestly desired by the whole people."

(return to top) The Korea Herald ("NORTH KOREA GIVES HYUNDAI COLD SHOULDER IN GAESEONG TOUR", 2005-09-14) reported that the DPRK put more strain on its ties with Hyundai Asan by proposing yesterday that Lotte Tours Co. to take part in the tours to Gaesong. "The action that the North has taken is clearly a management intervention, and their offer to Lotte is a clear breach of trust," said Im Wan-geun, the director of the Inter-Korean Economic Association. Hyundai Asan officials call for exclusive rights to the tours, saying it signed a contract with the DPRK government in 2000 that includes Gaesong as one of its exclusive tours. The DPRK contends that the recent change is due to alterations made to its tourism policies. Lotte officials say they need time to consider the offer. (return to top)

9. Inter-Korean Ministerial Talks

Donga Ilbo ("NORTH-SOUTH MINISTERIAL MEETING TO BE HELD IN PYONGYANG TODAY", 2005-09-13) reported that the issue of peace on the Korean peninsula has been added to the official agenda of the 16th inter-Korean ministerial meeting starting September 13. Kim Cheon-Shik, the spokesman for the ROK delegation said, "This round of ministerial meetings can be seen as a preliminary session before the two Koreas engage in full-fledged discussions about the promotion of peace on the peninsula following the resolution of the North Korea nuclear issue." If the talks on the peace regime are successfully completed, they will be followed by discussions on the issue of changing the current armistice into a peace treaty. The presence of foreign troops will likely be mentioned in the discussions; the DPRK has raised question as to why US forces are needed on the Korean peninsula at a time when both countries are in the process of building a peace regime.

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10. Inter-Korean Women's Statement of Peace

Yonhap News ("WOMEN OF BOTH KOREAS CALL FOR 'WAR-FREE, PEACEFUL' PENINSULA", 2005-09-12) reported that hundreds of women from both the ROK and DPRK adopted a statement calling for "not war but peace" on the Korean Peninsula. "We confirm that women can play a major role in efforts for reunification of the divided peninsula.... We oppose any war and will make efforts to protect peace on the peninsula," the four-point statement said.

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11. DPRK-Japanese Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("KOIZUMI VOWS TO NORMALIZE TIES WITH N. KOREA", 2005-09-12) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said on Monday that he vowed to do everything in his power to normalize diplomatic ties between Tokyo and Pyongyang in the course of his new term in office. Koizumi said a 2002 Pyongyang Declaration provides for normalization talks and it was time to make them happen. Koizumi said while the possibility of another visit to the DPRK could not be

ruled out, chances were extremely low.

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12. DPRK Invitation to Russia

The Korea Times ("KIM JONG-IL INVITED TO MOSCOW", 2005-09-11) reported that the Russian government has invited Kim Jong-il to Moscow, said Russia's deputy foreign minister. According to Alexander Alexeyev, the DPRK leader accepted the invitation, although the time frame has not been set. Russia is ready to give Kim a warm welcome if his visit is realized, said Alexeyev.

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13. Bush-Hu Meeting

Agence France Presse ("EMBATTLED BUSH FACES HEAVY AGENDA AT UN", 2005-09-13) reported that US President George W. Bush was to travel to the United Nations on Tuesday. The US president was to meet with the PRC President Hu Jintao, who saw a prized visit to the White House last week postponed indefinitely because of the chaos wrought by Katrina. Bush aides have emphasized that this meeting will not replace the earlier visit but have not said whether it will now take place before the US president heads to the PRC in November.

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14. ROK Military

Agence France Presse ("SOUTH KOREA UNVEILS PLANS 25 PERCENT TROOP CUT ", 2005-09-13) reported that the ROK has unveiled a military reform program describing a 26 percent cut in troop numbers and a drastic increase in fire-power following a change in security ties with the US. The country's 680,000-strong military would be reduced to 500,000 by 2020, with the number of three million reserve troops to be halved, but the defense ministry said it would offset the reduction with high-tech equipment.

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15. Japanese Elections and Relations with the ROK, PRC

The New York Times ("A 'NOW WHAT?' SHADOWS JAPAN LEADER'S VICTORY", 2005-09-13) reported that with little to gauge how Mr. Koizumi might use his mandate outside Japan, there was general caution in the PRC and ROK. "The reaction here has been that Koizumi's big victory will cause relations between South Korea and Japan to keep going in the wrong direction," said Ho Jeon Jin, an expert on ROK and Japan at Kwang Woon University in Seoul. "Furthermore, there is a sense that Japan will move faster toward the right and, because of his control over the Parliament, will be able to revise its pacifist Constitution."

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16. Japanese Remilitarization

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN LAWMAKERS FAVOUR CHANGING CONSTITUTION", 2005-09-13) reported that nearly 85 percent of Japan's new lower house, elected this week in Prime Minister

Junichiro Koizumi's landslide, have been surveyed as saying they support changing the pacifist 1947 constitution. A survey by the Mainichi Shimbun found that 402 of the 480 lawmakers in the new lower house back reform of the constitution against just 36 legislators or eight percent who were against, with the rest holding mixed views.

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17. Sino-Japanese Relations

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN KEEPING EYE ON CHINESE WARSHIPS, PLANE", 2005-09-13) reported that Japan's navy says it is keeping a close eye on the PRC military moves after five warships were spotted near disputed gas fields and the reported incursion of a spy plane. Japan said Friday it had seen PRC warships, including a destroyer, for the first time near the gas field in the East China Sea amid high tension between the two countries. Kyodo News, citing unnamed sources in a dispatch from Washington, said a PRC spy plane was spotted twice in August over the East China Sea south of mainland Japan's southern island of Kyushu.

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18. US-Japan Military Alliance

The Associated Press ("TALKS ON U.S.-JAPAN SECURITY ALLIANCE OPEN", 2005-09-13) reported that Japan will try to reach an interim agreement with Washington on US military realignment by the end of October in what could be the most sweeping re-examination of the US-Japan security alliance in years, Japan’s defense chief said Tuesday. Yoshinori Ono, director general of Japan’s Defense Agency, said he “strongly hoped” the two sides would agree on an interim report, which could move some of the nearly 20,000 Marines off the crowded island of Okinawa and close underused bases.

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19. PRC-Mexico Relations

Agence France Presse ("CHINA'S HU SIGNS TRADE PACTS WITH MEXICO'S FOX ", 2005-09-13) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao signed several bilateral trade agreements with Mexico to boost trade between the two developing nations and said the PRC welcomed more Mexican products into the Asian giant's growing market. "China welcomes the presence of more and more Mexican products in our market," Hu said in a news conference.

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20. Sino-US Military Exchange

Agence France Presse ("US WARSHIP ARRIVES IN CHINA FOR VISIT ", 2005-09-13) reported that a top grade US guided missile destroyer arrived at one of the PRC's main ports as part of efforts by the two countries to increase military-to-military exchanges. The USS Curtis Wilbur, an Arleigh Burke class Aegis guided missile destroyer will spend several days at Qingdao, a key port of the PRC's North Fleet, officials said.

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21. PRC Unrest

Washington Post ("CHINA'S RISING TIDE OF PROTEST SWEEPING UP PARTY OFFICIALS", 2005-09-13) reported that the reason their river was going bad, the villagers were told, was that scores of mines containing an industrial metal known as molybdenum had started operating in the hills upstream, sending waste down the river. Repeatedly, the villagers complained to county authorities but with mineral prices shooting up, the lure of profits was too much to resist. In May, the enraged villagers gave up on the government and decided to organize a raid on the mines. The wiry villagers used farm tools and their bare hands to destroy more than 200 mining sites, defying a local policeman. The village Communist Party secretary and elected village chief declined to intervene, revealing a crack in the iron discipline traditionally enforced by government security organs and the party apparatus.

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22. Hong Kong Environment

Agence France Presse ("HONG KONG ISSUES HEALTH ALERT AS AIR POLLUTION REACHES HIGH LEVELS ", 2005-09-13) reported that Hong Kong issued a health warning as air pollution reached high levels, with the city cloaked in dense smog. With city air pollution index levels in the "very high" category, the government advised people with heart or respiratory illnesses to avoid outdoor activities.

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23. PRC Nuclear Power

Xinhua News ("NUKE POWER TO HIT 40 MLN KW IN 2020", 2005-09-13) reported that the PRC plans to increase its installed capacity of nuclear power to 40 million kw by the year 2020, accounting for 4 percent of the country's total installed capacity at that time, a senior government official said here Tuesday. The PRC's current installed nuclear power capacity takes up less than 2 percent of the total installed power generation capacity, compared with the world average of 17 percent, said Zhang Guobao, deputy director of the State Development and Reform Commission.

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24. PRC Natural Gas

Interfax ("ENERGY EXPERTS SKEPTICAL ABOUT CHINA'S AMBITIOUS NATURAL GAS PLANS", 2005-09-13) reported that with the international price of natural gas rising and the market tightening, energy industry insiders are skeptical about the PRC's ability to dramatically increase imports as well as the consumption of liquefied natural gas (LNG). Already, some generators feel the price of gas from the West-East Pipeline (WEP), which delivers LNG from Xinjiang in the northwest to the eastern coast of PRC, is intolerable, and the CNOOC price for imported LNG is even higher, said Chi.

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25. PRC Energy Supply

People's Daily Online ("CHINA IS ONLY 6% DEPENDENT ON FOREIGN ENERGY: NDRC", 2005-0--13) reported that Zhang Guobao, Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), said on September 10 the PRC is not only a big energy consumer but also a big energy producer. The PRC would address the energy issue mainly by relying on domestic resources. Zhang said at the China Business Summit 2005 that China supplied 94 percent of its energy demand in 2004 with only 6 percent energy supply dependent on import.

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