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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
 - [1. Six Party Talks](#)
 - [2. DPRK Nuclear Program](#)
 - [3. Inter-Korean Relations](#)
 - [4. ROK on DPRK Human Rights](#)
 - [5. DPRK-Japan Relations](#)
 - [6. US-ROK Security Alliance](#)
 - [7. ASEAN on Six Party Talks](#)
 - [8. US-Japan Security Alliance](#)
 - [9. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation](#)
 - [10. Sino-Japanese East Sea Gas Dispute](#)
 - [11. US on PRC Military](#)
 - [12. Cross Strait Relations](#)
 - [13. Sino-Pakastani Energy Trade](#)
 - [14. Tibet Unrest](#)

- [15. PRC Labor](#)
- II. ROK Report
 - [16. DPRK Nuclear Problem](#)

[Preceding NAPSNet Report](#)

I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("FOREIGN MINISTER URGES RESUMPTION OF SIX-PARTY TALKS BY MAY ", Seoul, 2008/04/14) reported that the ROK's foreign minister that six-nation talks on the denuclearization of the DPRK should be resumed before the end of May to produce further progress by August. "It is difficult to predict when the six-party denuclearization talks will resume, but given the time necessary to discuss details of the next steps for denuclearization and the inspection issue, it should be held before late May," Yu Myung-hwan said. "The momentum of the six-party talks can be kept only when an agreement is made on the third phase of the denuclearization before August," he said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("BUSH OKS SINGAPORE AGREEMENT: WH ", Washington, 2008/04/14) reported that the White House indicated that President George W. Bush has "agreed" to terms reached at the latest round of U.S.-DPRK nuclear talks, suggesting progress in a process stalled for months. "I believe so, yes," White House spokeswoman Dana Perino responded when asked if Bush approved of the agreement in Singapore. But she did attach the usual conditions cited by U.S. officials that Pyongyang must submit a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear inventory.

The Financial Times (Demetri Sevastopulo, "US SOFTENS DEMANDS ON NORTH KOREA", Washington, 2008/04/13) reported that the DPRK no longer needs to provide a complete declaration of its nuclear activities under a tentative deal reached with the US towards de-nuclearising the DPRK, according to US officials. The US previously insisted the declaration include details about past uranium-enrichment activities and the proliferation of nuclear technology to Syria. After struggling for months to persuade the DPRK to provide a full declaration, however, the US has decided to compromise. Christopher Hill, the US negotiator on the DPRK, has reached a tentative deal under which Pyongyang would only "acknowledge" US concerns about uranium and proliferation, in a secret side-agreement. Meanwhile, the public document would only include a "complete" declaration about its plutonium nuclear programme.

Washington Post (Glenn Kessler, "U.S. READY TO EASE SANCTIONS ON N. KOREA", 2008/04/12) reported that the US is prepared to lift two key economic sanctions against the DPRK under a tentative deal reached with that country this week, which requires Pyongyang to acknowledge U.S. concerns and evidence about a range of nuclear activities, U.S. and Asian diplomats said. The agreement requires the DPRK to finish disabling its main nuclear facility and provide a full accounting of its stockpile of plutonium. That paves the way, diplomats said, for President Bush to remove the DPRK from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism and to exempt it from the Trading With the Enemy Act.

Kyodo ("N. KOREA DECLINES TO DISCLOSE FACILITIES OTHER THAN YONGBYON ", Washington, 2008/04/12) reported that the DPRK has told the US it does not need to disclose information on its nuclear facilities other than those in Yongbyon, saying it already declared them to the International Atomic Energy Agency in the 1990s, sources related to the six-party talks on the DPRK nuclear issue said. If the DPRK gets its way, facilities related to producing, testing and storing nuclear weapons will be left out of the declaration as the DPRK succeeded in producing nuclear arms after the declaration to the IAEA and conducted a nuclear test in October 2006, the sources said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

3. Inter-Korean Relations

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA CALLS SKOREAN PRESIDENT 'MERCHANT'", Seoul, 2008/04/14) reported that the DPRK, launching its latest attack on the ROK's new President Lee Myung-Bak, described him as a merchant who treats cross-border relations as a commodity to bargain over. The ruling party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary that Pyongyang would never "associate or make any deal" with what it called a "treacherous" group. Lee is "a businessman who is counting on the abacus while trying to make national and North-South issues an object of bargaining like a merchant," it said.

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL VOWS TO DEAL CALMLY WITH NORTH KOREA THREATS ", 2008/04/13) reported that the ROK will deal calmly with the DPRK despite recent actions which have raised cross-border tensions, President Lee Myung-Bak vowed. "With various changes happening at home and abroad, inter-Korean relations are going through an adjustment period in which the decade-old established framework is being formed anew," Lee said. "From such a point of view, the government has been handling North Korea's recent provocative remarks and acts in a principled, calm and resolute way."

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN CARGO SHIP VISITS ULSAN ", Seoul, 2008/04/14) reported that a DPRK-registered cargo ship carrying coal arrived in the ROK's port city of Ulsan Sunday amid increased cross-border tensions, according to maritime police. The 2,496-ton freighter Changseong carrying a 29-member crew docked at the port, South Gyeongsang province, around 10:20 a.m. earlier in the day. The ship carried 4,000 tons of coal, the first batch of 12,000 tons to be delivered by April 25, the police said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

4. ROK on DPRK Human Rights

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja and E Choong-hyoung, "NEW BRIEFINGS ON PYONGYANG'S RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS BEGIN", 2008/04/14) reported that the National Human Rights Commission yesterday made the first of what will be routine reports on human rights in the DPRK, a clear indication of the Lee Myung-bak administration's tougher policy toward Pyongyang. "North Korea's human rights issues are included in our six major tasks of this year," Kim Hyung-wan, who oversees the rights commission's policies, said yesterday. "Because we are engaged in an increasing number of projects on the matter, we concluded that it was necessary to have routine reviews."

[\(return to top\)](#)

5. DPRK-Japan Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA DONATES US\$2 MILLION TO PRO-PYONGYANG GROUP IN JAPAN: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/04/14) reported that impoverished DPRK has donated US\$2 million in free educational funds for a group of Korean residents in Japan loyal to the DPRK, the DPRK's media said. Despite its dire economic situation, the DPRK has periodically sent free educational funds to help support the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, a pro-Pyongyang Korean residents' organization in Japan. Kim Jong-il "sent 205 million yen as educational aid fund and stipends to the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan for the democratic national education of the children of Koreans in Japan," the Korean Central News Agency said in a report, monitored in Seoul.

[\(return to top\)](#)

6. US-ROK Security Alliance

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. DEMANDS POURING IN FOR NEW GOVERNMENT", 2008/04/14) reported that the US has been making a series of demands of the ROK government, taking advantage of a new government in Seoul that has pledged to consolidate their alliance. For one thing, the U.S. wants the ROK to send troops to Afghanistan again. At a U.S. senate hearing, U.S. Forces Korea commander Gen. Burwell Bell and Lt.Gen. Walter Sharp, the director of the Joint Staff who is to replace Bell, have also stressed the need for Seoul to participate in a U.S.-led missile defense system. Another long-standing request from the U.S. is that the ROK join the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Yonhap (Byun Duk-kun, "BELL SAYS ENHANCED COMMAND CAPABILITY REQUIRED FOR OPCON TRANSFER ", Seoul, 2008/04/14) reported that the ROK and the US need to enhance their military command capabilities before Seoul retakes the wartime operational control of its troops from Washington, as the DPRK's asymmetric warfare or nuclear capability continues to grow, the commander of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) said. "Therefore, it is extremely important that what we do here in transformation not only enhances the alliance security mechanism, but also enhances our leading edge combat proven capabilities and technologies," the USFK commander said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

7. ASEAN on Six Party Talks

Agence France-Presse (P. Parameswaran , "US PUSH FOR NEW SECURITY MECHANISM IRKS SOUTHEAST ASIA ", Washington, 2008/04/13) reported that US-led moves to turn a forum grappling with the DPRK nuclear crisis into a permanent security mechanism are frustrating Southeast Asia's bid to become a key player in regional security, experts say. The US is pushing for the six-party nuclear talks, also involving the PRC, Russia, Japan and the two Koreas, to be transformed into a permanent Northeast Asian mechanism for resolution of regional security issues. But officials in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are worried such a mechanism could undermine its role in regional security management. "There is a concern in Southeast Asia that such a Northeast Asia forum would actually undermine the ARF," Muthiah Alagappa, an Asian expert at the Hawaii-based East West Center told a conference.

[\(return to top\)](#)

8. US-Japan Security Alliance

Agence France-Presse ("US FORCES CHIEF IN JAPAN VOWS TO GET TOUGH ON CRIME ", Tokyo, 2008/04/14) reported that the new top US commander in Japan on Monday vowed to crack down on crimes by military personnel after a string of incidents that have sparked anger in local communities here. Commander Edward Rice Jr. said one of his priorities during his 10-year tenure was to "focus on unwavering professionalism." But Rice rejected the idea of revising the treaty on the status of US service-members and their families. "I don't believe that the SOFA should be revised," Rice said. "I think that we can continue to improve it operationally as we move forward and have it continue to be relevant without changing the basic document itself."

[\(return to top\)](#)

9. US-Japan Missile Defense Cooperation

RIA Novosti ("JAPAN REASSURES RUSSIA OVER MISSILE COOPERATION WITH U.S.", Moscow, 2008/04/14) reported that Japan's foreign minister reassured his Russian counterpart that Tokyo's missile defense cooperation with the United States is not targeted against Russia. Masahiko Komura told Sergei Lavrov in Moscow: "As to U.S. plans to deploy missile defense elements [in Japan], this is a measure that has been forced by Japan's close location to North Korea, which has conducted a nuclear weapon test." Lavrov said Russia accepts "Japan's explanation regarding the absence of any intention to use Japan's participation in missile defense deployment in the region together with the U.S. to the detriment of Russia's interests."

[\(return to top\)](#)

10. Sino-Japanese East Sea Gas Dispute

Kyodo ("JAPAN, CHINA REMAIN APART OVER DISPUTE OVER GAS-EXPLORATION RIGHTS", Beijing, 2008/04/14) reported that Japan and the PRC were unable to bridge differences over a long-standing dispute over gas exploration rights in the East China Sea. Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Mitoji Yabunaka and his PRC counterpart Wang Yi discussed the issue in Beijing but the dispute remained unsettled.

[\(return to top\)](#)

11. US on PRC Military

Agence France-Presse ("US FORCES CHIEF IN JAPAN: CHINA'S MILITARY INTENT UNCLEAR-AFP", Tokyo, 2008/04/14) reported that the U.S.' top military commander in Japan called for greater military transparency from the PRC, saying the reasons for its rising defense spending remained unclear. Transparency "is extremely important in terms of building trust, building confidence and preventing miscalculation and misunderstanding," said Commander Edward Rice Jr. "Their (China's) ability to operate in space, their ability to operate in what we would call cyberspace, their ability to project power beyond their borders are increasing at a very significant and rapid rate," he said. "These are all areas, certainly in the eyes of a military commander, we would like to have more information on in terms of their intent," he said.

[\(return to top\)](#)

12. Cross Strait Relations

Reuters ("TAIWAN VP-ELECT SAYS CHINA AGREES TO OFFICIAL TALKS ", Taipei, 2008/04/14) reported that the PRC and Taiwan have agreed to restart official dialogue after a gap of nearly a decade, Taiwan Vice President-elect Vincent Siew said as relations appear to thaw under a new more PRC-friendly administration. "There's a lot of ice here, so we don't want to melt it all at once and turn it into a flood," Siew said. "We need time, wisdom and will power to accumulate goodwill and mutual trust." Siew said it was too early to comment on a timetable, but that both sides wanted to start talks as soon as possible.

Agence France-Presse ("RECORD NUMBER OF TAIWANESE SAY CROSS-STRAIT TIES FRIENDLY: SURVEY ", Taipei, 2008/04/14) reported that a record number of Taiwanese considered cross-strait relations friendly after vice president-elect Vincent Siew's recent landmark meeting with PRC President Hu Jintao, a survey showed Monday. The survey, conducted among 931 residents on Sunday by Taipei-based China Times, said 39.4 percent considered cross-strait relations as friendly. That number was higher than the previous record of 32.2 percent posted in 1993 after the first top-level dialogue between the two rivals. Some 22.4 percent of the respondents said ties between the two sides remained hostile, down from a record 43.5 percent in 1995 after the PRC conducted a military drill aimed at Taiwan.

[\(return to top\)](#)

13. Sino-Pakastani Energy Trade

Reuters (Chris Buckley, "PAKISTAN'S MUSHARRAF PUSHES FOR CHINA OIL PIPELINE", Beijing, 2008/04/14) reported that Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf is pushing a proposal for gas and oil pipelines between his country and the PRC to bolster bilateral ties, he said, during a visit that has highlighted security concerns. The two countries have explored proposals to use Pakistan as a pipeline corridor, bringing oil and gas from the Middle East to the PRC. Musharraf told students and academics in Beijing that he had raised the idea, which has been mooted for several years, during talks with PRC President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao.

[\(return to top\)](#)

14. Tibet Unrest

The New York Times (Jim Yardley, "CHINA'S LEADER INSISTS SOVEREIGNTY IS AT STAKE OVER TIBET", Beijing, 2008/04/14) reported that President Hu Jintao defended the PRC's crackdown against the recent Tibetan protests as a necessary response to protect national sovereignty and described the demonstrations as violent crimes orchestrated by the Dalai Lama. "Our conflict with the Dalai clique is not an ethnic problem, not a religious problem, nor a human rights problem," Mr. Hu said. "It is a problem either to safeguard national unification or to split the motherland."

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "CHINA SAYS FIREARMS FOUND IN TIBETAN TEMPLE ", Beijing, 2008/04/14) reported that PRC forces found firearms hidden throughout a Tibetan temple in an ethnic Tibetan area of southwestern PRC which has been the scene of anti-PRC riots in recent weeks, state television said. And PRC police detained five air passengers, possibly Tibetans, whose "suspicious remarks" prompted the return of their flight half an hour after take-off from the southern city of Shenzhen, a newspaper reported. "At the time these firearms were scattered around, some were where the monks keep the scriptures," policeman Lan Bo told the program. "They were modified semi-automatic weapons."

[\(return to top\)](#)

15. PRC Labor

Washington Post (Ariana Eunjung Cha, "NEW LAW GIVES CHINESE WORKERS POWER, GIVES BUSINESSES NIGHTMARES", Dongguan, 2008/04/14) reported that Wei Hoqiang used to work in a toy factory that forced him to sign a contract it did not let him read. It paid him 30 cents an hour, made him work 100 days without a day off, and kept him in a room that was ice cold in winter and suffocating in summer. He said he knew he was being taken advantage of, but he was so afraid of his boss's ire that he stayed for two years. Armed with a landmark new labor contract law that went into effect Jan. 1, employees like Wei are turning the tables on employers in the PRC. The law -- designed to combat forced labor, withholding of pay, unwarranted dismissals and other abuses -- represents a major victory for PRC workers.

[\(return to top\)](#)

II. ROK Report

16. DPRK Nuclear Problem

Dong-ah Ilbo ("DPRK NUCLEAR REPORT NOT TO BE BREEZED THROUGH", 2008/04/15) reported that the nuclear report that the US and DPRK have provisionally agreed to is making others worry that it is not up to their expectation. It is said to be because the verification for doubts of UEP and nuclear proliferation to Syria has not been properly agreed on. However, Yu Myung-hwan, the ROK minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has said that "there needs to be some time for US to go over procedures in internal politics," and that "it will not have much influence to the whole situation." It seems too much easy-going. If the DPRK's insincere report gets approved, the next step—verification

and abandonment—will obviously get more difficult. President Lee Myung-bak should have intuition to see through the problems of US-DPRK negotiation and manifest strong disapproval of the DPRK nuclear program at the six-party talks.

Joongang Ilbo ("CONFUSION CAUSED BY 'IMPATIENCE FOR AGREEMENT' ON DPRK NUCLEAR PROGRAM", 2008/04/15) wrote that US President George Bush and Condoleezza Rice, the Secretary of State, have displayed strong dissatisfaction at the agreed items from the meeting representative Christopher Hill brought back. This confusion is said to be caused by the issue of "verification." It is difficult to get rid of the doubt that this situation was also caused by Hill's "impatience for agreement." Diplomats in charge of negotiation between among nations can easily become engrossed in accomplishing the agreement. His partner—the ROK's former minister of Foreign Affairs—was also once criticized for announcing policies that were not agreed on. A decent agreement can be induced only after such aspiration is gone.

[\(return to top\)](#)

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