

NAPSNet Daily Report 16 April, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 16 April, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 16, 2008,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-16-april-2008/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. ROK, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Program

The Financial Times (Raphael Minder and David Pilling, "SEOUL BACKS TALKS ON NUCLEAR-FREE N KOREA", 2008/04/15) reported that the ROK and Japan are backing the latest attempt by the US to negotiate an end to the DPRK's nuclear ambitions, although they insist any deal must take their concerns into account. Han Seung-soo, prime minister of the ROK, is wary that the DPRK believes it could achieve better terms by talking to Washington and keeping Seoul out of the negotiations. He described it as a "very old idea. Going over the shoulder of [South] Korea is not going to succeed." Japan remains officially supportive of efforts to reach an agreement on denuclearisation, though privately there is concern that the US may sign a deal without adequate guarantees.

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, "KIM NAMED TOP OFFICIAL FOR SIX-PARTY NUCLEAR TALKS DIPLOMAT", 2008/04/15) reported that the ROK's Foreign Ministry named Kim Sook, the ministry's former North American bureau director, as Seoul's new chief negotiator for the six-party nuclear talks with the DPRK. Kim replaces current chief envoy Chun Young-woo. Since 1978, Kim, 56, has served in the ministry's U.S.-related units, including the ROK Embassy in the United States, the ROK consulate in San Francisco and the ministry's North American Bureau.

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3. DPRK Military

The Associated Press ("NKOREAN LEADER PROMOTES GENERALS", Seoul, 2008/04/15) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il promoted 35 generals Tuesday as the country marked one of its biggest national holidays, the birthday of his late father. On Tuesday, two officers were promoted to lieutenant generals and 33 to major generals, the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency said. Kim and top military officials paid homage to the late Kim at the mausoleum where his body is displayed, KCNA reported.

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4. DPRK Economy

Yonhap (Shim Sun-ah, "N. KOREA MARKS LATE LEADER'S BIRTHDAY AMID ECONOMIC HARDSHIP ", Seoul, 2008/04/15) reported that the DPRK marked the birthday of its late national leader Kim Il-sung Tuesday in a less festive mood than usual amid concerns over deepening economic hardship. With neither foreign artists singing in praise of Kim, who is dubbed the "Sun of mankind" by the DPRK, nor the standard massive gymnastic display performed by about 100,000 people on show, the DPRK started the two-day holiday in a low-key manner. Pyongyang has scaled down the previously annual event to a biennial in what analysts said is a measure to save badly needed foreign currency because of worsening hardships facing the country.

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5. DPRK Counterfeiting

Xinhua ("DPRK REBUFFS SENIOR U.S. OFFICIAL'S REMARKS ON COUNTERFEITING ", Pyongyang, 2008/04/15) reported that the DPRK's official news agency KCNA rebuffed a senior U.S. official's accusations that the country is producing counterfeit U.S. currency. "Conservative hardliners intend to tarnish the image of the DPRK and deliberately strain the situation," said the KCNA, referring to the remarks regarding the DPRK's alleged counterfeiting activities made by U.S. Treasury Department official Stuart Levey at a hearing of the U.S. Senate Finance Committee on April 1. "Taking note of the fact that the issue of the frozen funds at Banco Delta Asia put the six-party talks in a stalemate for more than one-and-a-half years, his reckless behavior can not be allowed to go unnoticed," it said.

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6. DPRK Human Rights

The Associated Press (Foster Klug, "REPORT SAYS NORTH KOREANS WITH RELIGIOUS TIES FACE TORTURE ", Washington, 2008/04/15) reported that a federal commission said that DPRK refugees suspected of meeting with religious groups are often marked for harsh interrogation, torture and long detentions without trial after they are forced by the PRC to return to the DPRK. A report by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom called for nations to press PRC to stop sending DPRK refugees back to their homeland. The report is based on interviews with 32 refugees who fled the DPRK to the PRC from 2003 to 2007 and with six former DPRK security agents who defected to the ROK during the past eight years.

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7. US-ROK Security Alliance

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "SEOUL, WASHINGTON NEAR ACCORD TO HALT U.S. TROOP CUT", 2008/04/15) reported that a Seoul official said that the ROK and the US were near an agreement to suspend the reduction of U.S. troops on the peninsula. "South Korea and the United States have

nearly reached an accord to maintain the U.S. troops at the current level of 28,500, halting the planned drawdown of 3,500 troops, the last portion of the U.S. troop reductions," the Defense Ministry official said on condition of anonymity. "The accord may be finalized in the South Korea-U.S. summit later this week," he said.

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S. TO WITHDRAW F-16 SQUADRON BY YEAR'S END", 2008/04/15) reported that the US has notified the ROK government it will withdraw one squadron of some 20 F-16 fighters by the end of this year. The fighter squadron is a key component of the U.S. Air Force Korea, whose withdrawal was not included in the original reduction plan to be completed by year's end. The Defense Ministry is reportedly busy working out a response. They take the view that the abrupt notice of the withdrawal has something to do with the U.S.'s demand that the ROK bear more upkeep cost for the USFK.

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8. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("KOREA, EU TO MEET FOR FREE TRADE UPDATE", 2008/04/15) reported that top trade officials from the ROK and the European Union plan to meet in Japan next week to discuss how both sides will carry out the ongoing free trade negotiations, Seoul's chief negotiator for the talks said yesterday. According to chief negotiator Lee Hye-min, the ROK's trade minister Kim Jong-hoon and EU trade commissioner Peter Mandelson will meet in Japan next Tuesday to discuss how the two sides can help the free trade negotiations progress smoothly.

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9. ROK Bird Flu Outbreak

Korea Times (Kim Tae-jong, "BIRD FLU SPREADS TO GYEONGGI AREA", 2008/04/15) reported that the quarantine authorities said they are investigating a suspected bird flu outbreak in Pyeongtaek, Gyeonggi Province, just 70 kilometers southwest of Seoul. It was the first report of a suspicious outbreak of avian influenza near the capital and adds to growing concerns that the disease could be spreading across the nation. The number of suspected bird flu cases rose to 36 as of Tuesday, according to the Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. Among them 20 cases are confirmed as the deadly H5N1 strain that can also be deadly to humans.

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10. Japan Politics

Reuters (Linda Sieg, "JAPAN BY-ELECTION HOLDS CLUES TO PM FUKUDA'S FATE ", Iwakuni, 2008/04/15) reported that voter Kunio Fukuda wants straight answers for tough questions from candidates battling in a heated by-election in southwestern Japan, the outcome of which will likely affect the prime minister's fate far away in Tokyo. The race between Shigetaro Yamamoto, backed by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and the Democratic Party's Hideo Hiraoka, to fill a lower house seat is being watched for clues to whether Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, 71, can hold onto his job. "If the LDP loses, Fukuda is at risk," Yukihisa Fujita, a Democratic Party upper house lawmaker who was in Iwakuni stumping for Hiraoka, told Reuters at Hiraoka's headquarters. "Moves (in the

LDP) to replace him will speed up because it will be clear he can't win elections," Fujita said, echoing the view of political analysts back in Tokyo.

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11. Japan Whaling Issue

Mainichi Shimbun ("JAPAN WHALING FLEET LIMPS INTO PORT AFTER PROTESTS WITH HALF ITS CATCH", Tokyo, 2008/04/15) reported that Japan's top whaling ship returned to port Tuesday, leading an embattled fleet that killed just 55 percent of its season target of 1,000 whales amid violent protests in the Antarctic. The Nisshin Maru made a special stop in Tokyo so the coast guard could inspect it for possible damage sustained during heated clashes in which animal rights activists tossed containers of rancid acid at the whalers. Japanese whaling officials criticized protesters for interfering, but vowed to press ahead with the hunt, which is allowed under international rules as a scientific program despite the 1986 ban on commercial whaling.

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12. EU-PRC Relations

Agence France-Presse ("EUROPEANS SEE CHINA AS BIGGEST THREAT TO GLOBAL STABILITY: POLL ", London, 2008/04/15) reported that Europeans see the PRC as a bigger threat to global stability than the United States, Iran or the DPRK, according to a poll published Tuesday. The Harris survey for the Financial Times showed that an average of 35 percent of voters in Britain, France, Germany, Spain and Italy saw the PRC as the biggest threat to global stability, compared to 29 percent who thought the same of the US. Only in Spain was the United States regarded as a bigger threat than the PRC, by a 41 percent to 28 percent margin.

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13. Tibet Unrest

Agence France-Presse ("TIBETAN MONKS RESIST 'EDUCATION' CAMPAIGN, SAY RIGHTS GROUPS ", Beijing, 2008/04/15) reported that a number of monks were detained at a key Buddhist monastery near the Tibetan capital Lhasa after they resisted efforts to force them to denounce the Dalai Lama, an overseas Tibet group said. The report was the latest to indicate continued simmering tension in the Himalayan region after PRC security forces moved in to quell widespread protests against Beijing's rule last month. Security forces were called in to the Drepung monastery at the weekend after the monks protested the arrival of a "patriotic education" team, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy said.

Washington Post ("CHINESE RELENTLESSLY PATROL A SUBDUED BUT JITTERY LHASA", Lhasa, 2008/04/15) reported that one month after the explosion of violence that catapulted remote Tibet into the international spotlight, protests over PRC policies here continue to unfold in many parts of the world, undermining the PRC's effort to make the 2008 Beijing Olympics a display of progress at home and amity abroad. But here in Lhasa, the most visible outcome has been relentless street patrols by men in People's Armed Police uniforms who carry automatic rifles, check Tibetans' identification cards at random, and guard intersections and gasoline stations. Partly as a result, the

city's economic life has started to resume in commercial areas away from the main temples and Tibetan residential quarters.

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14. PRC Land Use

The Associated Press (Henry Sanderson, "CHINA CRACKS DOWN ON LAND GRABS ", Beijing, 2008/04/15) reported that the PRC has launched a crackdown on illegal land seizures for development, punishing thousands for land grabs that have caused anger and protests around the country. The government has disciplined 2,864 people and convicted 535 for seizing land illegally, said Zhang Pu, a deputy director of the Ministry of Land and Resources, according to the ministry's Web site. The punishments were the result of an inspection campaign focussing on local governments, who often side with developers. The ministry statement, posted Monday night, did not identify the people disciplined or say whether they were developers or local officials.

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15. PRC Environment

Washington Post (Maureen Fan, "CHINESE OFFICIALS ANNOUNCE PLANS TO CLEAR AIR BEFORE OLYMPICS", 2008/04/15) reported that PRC officials on Monday announced a slew of temporary measures to clean up the capital's polluted air in time for the Olympic Games. In a city teeming with cranes and round-the-clock building sites, officials plan to halt all construction and excavation by July 20. Heavy polluters and four coal-burning plants will have to further reduce emissions by 30 percent. Gas stations and tanker trucks that have not been upgraded to meet certain environmental standards will be shut down. Even outdoor spray painting will be temporarily banned.

BBC News (Roger Harrabin , "CHINA 'NOW TOP CARBON POLLUTER' ", 2008/04/15) reported that the PRC has already overtaken the US as the world's "biggest polluter", a report to be published next month says. the research suggests the country's greenhouse gas emissions have been underestimated, and probably passed those of the US in 2006-2007. Next month's University of California report warns that unless the PRC radically changes its energy policies, its increases in greenhouse gases will be several times larger than the cuts in emissions being made by rich nations under the Kyoto Protocol.

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II. ROK Report

16. DPRK Nuclear Problem

Donga Ilbo (Park Hyung-nam, "MENTIONING THE ASH LUMP ONLY MAKES DPRK SUFFER", 2008/04/16) wrote that five and six months since its occurrence, the DPRK nuclear shock still is in

progress. After years and two inter-Korean summit talks, the DPRK has not changed. Had it appreciated the humanitarian aid of rice and fertilizer to the least degree, threatening words of turning Seoul into an ash lump would not have come out. If the carrot does not work, the stick should be used. We can also show the DPRK who suffers more once inter-Korean conversation stops. ROK-US cooperation should also focus on the change of DPRK. I hope an elaborate combination of carrot and stick would finally provide an opportunity to end this never-ending cycle of nuclear development.

Unification News (Park Seok-ryul, "AGREEMENT DOES NOT NEED INDIRECT ADMISSION", 2008/04/16) carried an article by the representative of Peace Future Forum and ROK co-representative of 6.15, who wrote that just as in the past, from the Singapore meeting, all that was achieved was the verification of the common ground that questions that the US asks can be "discussed in unofficial channels." What counted was the US abolition of policy of treating the DPRK with animosity. Someone from the ROK conservative party encouraging "conflict platform" while movements of US congress and neocons always act as negative influence, is a serious lack of introspection. It is also an important factor on fulfillment of the 10.3 agreement. Properly recognizing the included content itself in the 10.3 agreement is what is most needed fundamentally in the fulfillment.

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