

NAPSNet Daily Report 8 April, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 8 April, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 08, 2008,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-8-april-2008/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters (Melanie Lee, "U.S. SEEKS OVERDUE NUCLEAR DECLARATION FROM N. KOREA", Singapore, 2008/04/07) reported that the top US nuclear negotiator said he was unsure he would make any progress in talks with the DPRK aimed at ending its nuclear program, but that time was of the essence. "It's very hard to know when you head into these talks whether you're going to make any progress," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill told reporters, ahead of a meeting with his North Korean counterpart Kim Kye-gwan in the city-state. "We are not running out of energy but we really do have to make some progress. We can't afford any further delays," Hill said. "What is important for us to try and achieve is to get back to having six-party meetings as soon as possible."

Kyodo ("N. KOREA ENVOY NOT NECESSARILY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT TALKS WITH U.S.", Singapore, 2008/04/07) reported that top DPRK nuclear negotiator Kim Kye Gwan, who arrived in Singapore ahead of Tuesday's talks with his US counterpart, said he was not necessarily optimistic about the outcome of the upcoming discussions over Pyongyang's denuclearization process. Asked by a reporter to comment on optimism that seems to be surrounding the outlook of the bilateral talks, Kim said at Singapore's international airport, "I do not necessarily see it that way."

Yonhap ("N. KOREAN ENVOY SATISFIED WITH NUKE TALKS WITH U.S.", Singapore, 2008/04/08) reported that DPRK envoy Kim Kye-gwan on Tuesday expressed satisfaction with the outcome of his talks here with the U.S. negotiator, but refused to reveal whether a deal was produced. "Differences have been narrowed a lot," Kim told reporters after a day-long meeting with his U.S. counterpart Christopher Hill. "I would say the talks were successful."

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2. Alledged DPRK-Syrian Nuclear Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S., N.KOREA 'TO FINE-TUNE WORDING ON SYRIA CONNECTION' ", 2008/04/07) reported that the US and DPRK will talk about the DPRK's nuclear program in Singapore. A diplomatic source in Seoul said the two sides are nearing agreement on nuclear disclosure and are

fine-tuning the wording of an admission by the DPRK that it provided nuclear technology to Syria. A ROK government source predicted the meeting will bear "good results." "Settling the nuclear disclosure issue is a big progress in itself, and the two will start verifying the declaration as soon as the North completes the report," he added.

The Associated Press ("SYRIA STRIKE DETAILS TO BE RELEASED", 2008/04/07) reported that Israel and the US are co-ordinating the release of details of a mysterious Israeli air force strike in Syria, according to reports. The Haaretz newspaper says US officials might disclose details of the Sept 6 strike later this month during congressional hearings. But Israeli security officials told The Associated Press that they object to any release of details to the committee, which is to hear testimony on the DPRK's nuclear programme, including any nuclear activity in Syria. According to Haaretz, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and the Bush administration think it is now possible to disclose details because in their assessment Syria is unlikely to retaliate at this point.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

The Hankyoreh ("SEOUL TO WAIT TILL PYONGYANG'S MISUNDERSTANDING DISSIPATES: MINISTER", 2008/04/07) reported that the ROK will wait until its "true intention" of achieving cooperation and co-prosperity with the DPRK is understood, a top Seoul official said. "Some people ask why Seoul does not respond to North Korea, but we'll endure and wait," Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong said in a meeting here with a local Buddhist leader. He said the current crisis in inter-Korean ties was caused by Pyongyang's misunderstanding of Seoul's position. "Our position toward mutual respect and co-prosperity between the two Koreas remains firm," Kim said.

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4. DPRK on Relations with the US

Xinhua ("DPRK SLAMS U.S. NUCLEAR POLICY AMID STALLED SIX-PARTY TALKS", Pyongyang, 2008/04/07) reported that the DPRK blasted the U.S. nuclear policy amid the stalled six-party talks. The United States is proliferating nuclear weapons to the world and should be condemned, the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in a signed commentary. Citing the U.S. deployment of nuclear weapons in the ROK, the article accused Washington of transferring nuclear technology to a number of countries. The United States is not entitled to say anything about the "nuclear issue" of others, it added.

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5. DPRK Military

Korea Herald ("N. KOREAN LEADER VISITS MILITARY UNITS AMID TENSION WITH S. KOREA", 2008/04/07) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il touted his country's "invincible" army during a visit to a military base, state media reported. The DPRK's official Korean Central News Agency said Kim expressed satisfaction with the military's combat readiness, saying his soldiers could "beat back the enemy's invasion at a single stroke." Kim also called his isolated country a fortress and urged the soldiers to become warriors during another inspection to a military boot camp, the news agency said

in a separate report without saying when Kim visited the unit.

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6. ROK, Japan on DPRK Nuclear Program

Mainichi Shimbun ("JAPAN, S. KOREA AGREE TO STEP UP EFFORTS TOWARD PYONGYANG'S DISARMAMENT OBLIGATION", Tokyo, 2008/04/07) reported that Japan and the ROK agreed Friday to step up joint efforts to push the DPRK to fulfill its nuclear disarmament obligations amid rising tension on the Korean peninsula. Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura and his ROK counterpart, Yu Myung-hwan, met in Tokyo for the first time since a new conservative government took office in Seoul in February. Komura and Yu agreed the two countries should take joint action to accelerate international efforts aimed at ridding the DPRK of its atomic weapons.

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7. DPRK-Russian Relations

Donga Ilbo ("N.KOREA'S BUSINESSES THRIVING IN RUSSIA ", Moscow, 2008/04/04) reported that the DPRK leadership's determination to expand businesses can also be seen from the Primorsky region which shares the border with the DPRK. In order to prepare for the APEC, the Primorsky regional government plans to issue work permits to 12,000 DPRK workers in 2008, four times higher than the number of those last year. As it becomes increasingly difficult for them to find a job in Primorsky, DPRK workers, who came to this region last year, have begun to move to Moscow and smaller cities where construction businesses are still booming. Recently, DPRK companies, such as Daedong River, Neungra, Baekdu and Goonpyo, have established their offices in many parts of Russia. Joint ventures between Russia and the DPRK, which went into hibernation after the US froze the DPRK's account at Macau's Banco Delta Asia in 2005, have recently resumed their activities.

Kyodo ("S. KOREA, RUSSIA TO PRESS AHEAD WITH PROJECTS INVOLVING N. KOREA ", Seoul, 2008/04/07) reported that the ROK's new President Lee Myung Bak and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin agreed to push ahead with efforts to link the trans-Korean railway with the trans-Siberian railway and other tripartite economic cooperation projects involving the DPRK, according to local media. Lee and Putin exchanged views on the matter in a telephone conversation in which Lee also sought greater Russian efforts to persuade the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons program, Yonhap News Agency quoted presidential spokesman Lee Dong Kwan as saying.

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8. PRC Food Aid to the DPRK

The Hankyoreh ("N.K. ASKS CHINA FOR MASSIVE RICE AID: REPORT", 2008/04/07) reported that the DPRK recently asked the PRC to provide massive rice aid for its hungry people amid a flare-up in tensions with the ROK, a news report said. Pyongyang has also decided not to request rice and fertilizer aid from the ROK until Seoul moves to improve ties, the report by the vernacular daily Hankyoreh said. But Beijing has yet to respond to Pyongyang's request, the report said.

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9. DPRK Ambassador to the UN

Yonhap ("N. KOREA APPOINTS NEW AMBASSADOR TO U.N. ", Seoul, 2008/04/07) reported that the DPRK has tapped Sin Son-ho as its new ambassador to the United Nations, replacing current envoy Pak Kil-yon, the DPRK's official media reported. "Sin Son-ho was appointed as the DPRK permanent representative at the United Nations according to a decree of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly," said the Korean Central News Agency, monitored in Seoul. Sin's profile has yet to be revealed, except for his service as deputy representative to the U.N in the past.

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10. US-ROK Relations

Korea Times (Kim Yon-se, "'34 PERCENT OF ARMY CADETS REGARD US AS MAIN ENEMY'", 2008/04/07) reported that a poll shows that 34 percent of first-year army cadets called the United States the main enemy of the ROK, a former superintendent of the Korea Military Academy (KMA) said. Kim Choong-bae, president of the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, disclosed a past survey of 250 KMA entrants to single out "the country's main enemy" while serving as the military academy's superintendent in 2004. Kim was quoted by a newspaper as saying, "While the majority ? or 34 percent ? picked the U.S., 33 percent said they regarded North Korea as the main enemy."

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11. US-Japan-Australia Security Relations

Agence France-Presse ("US, JAPAN, AUSTRALIA TO HOLD SECURITY TALKS IN HAWAII: REPORT ", Tokyo, 2008/04/07) reported that the US, Japan and Australia will hold senior working-level talks on security issues on April 18 in Hawaii, a report said Friday. The three nations would discuss how to better strengthen mutual cooperation in international peacekeeping missions, Kyodo News said, citing sources close to Japan-US relations. The delegates from the three countries also planned to discuss how better to fight terrorism, secure sea lane safety, and deal with the problems of the DPRK's nuclear programmes and ballistic missile development, it said.

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12. Japan Climate Change

Agence France-Presse ("FUKUDA CALLS FOR PEOPLE'S EFFORT TO FIGHT GLOBAL WARMING ", Tokyo, 2008/04/07) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda urged the Japanese people to join his government's initiative in fighting climate change. He sent the message as he attended a meeting of business leaders and government officials to discuss measures to stop global warming. "Efforts by only the government and the industry are not good enough for measures against global warming," he said after the meeting in Toyako. "We want all the people to participate. We want them to seek a change in lifestyle," he added.

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13. Tibet Unrest

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "FOREIGN MEDIA IN CHINA HARASSED ON TIBET ", Beijing, 2008/04/07) reported that Western reporters in the PRC have received harassing phone calls, e-mails and text messages, some with death threats, supposedly from ordinary Chinese complaining about alleged bias in coverage of recent anti-PRC protests in Tibet. The harassment began two weeks ago and was largely targeted at foreign television broadcasters, CNN in particular. But the campaign broadened in recent days after the mobile phone numbers and other contact information for reporters from The Associated Press, The Wall Street Journal and USA Today were posted on several Web sites, including a military affairs chat site. "The Chinese people don't welcome you American running dog. Your reports twist the facts and will suffer the curse of heaven," said one e-mail received by the AP.

Washington Post (Jill Drew, "IN TIBETAN MONASTERIES, THE HEAVY HAND OF THE PARTY", Beijing, 2008/04/07) reported that in 1997, and about 50 Communist Party workers had come to his monastery to conduct what is called a "patriotic education" campaign -- 45 days of instruction in the PRC version of history and a requirement that all monks sign a document accepting PRC rule in Tibet and rejecting the Dalai Lama as a "separatist." For many followers, that amounts to painful renunciation of their religion's central figure. Such campaigns are now a standard feature of life in Tibetan monasteries and nunneries. They are one of many tools PRC leaders use to tighten party control of the religion.

The Times (Jane Macartney, "TIBETANS WOUNDED AS CHINESE POLICE FIRE ON PILGRIM PROTEST", Beijing, 2008/04/07) reported that ten people were wounded when PRC paramilitary police opened fire on a crowd of Tibetans protesting against limits on a prayer ceremony and demanding the return of the Dalai Lama, witnesses said. The violence was in a remote town in western Sichuan province on Saturday, where monks at the Lingque temple had been joined by several hundred pilgrims for an annual ceremony, the Torgya, which is meant to exorcise evil elements from society. The stand-off lasted for several hours. At one point the police opened fire to try to disperse the protesters and about ten people were wounded.

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14. Sino-Indian Relations

The New York Times (Somini Sengupta, "INDIA TIPTOES IN CHINA'S FOOTSTEPS TO COMPETE BUT NOT OFFEND", New Delhi, 2008/04/07) reported that these days PRC and Indian interests coincide nearly as much as they divide. For one thing, the PRC is on its way to surpassing the United States as India's largest trade partner. Although Indians worry about the trade imbalance — the PRC mostly buys iron ore from India and sells a variety of consumer goods and auto parts — there are clearly now significant commercial stakes in the bilateral relationship. At the same time, India's efforts to modernize its military are clearly done with an eye on the PRC. While Indian officials bristle at any suggestion that their country is being courted by Washington as a bulwark against the PRC, the United States has aided that military buildup.

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II. ROK Report

15. DPRK Nuclear Problem

Hankook Ilbo ("DPRK EXPECTATION IN 'SINGAPORE TALK' ", 2008/04/08) wrote that the talks between the representatives of the six-party talk from DPRK and US today in Singapore are expected to have good prospects, which makes us all hopeful. It has been said that this time, the two sides are going to settle the problems by following the example of the "Shanghai joint communiqué" between the US and China in 1972. This method leaves the possibility of problems due to its vague characteristics, but it is inevitable for progress to take place in solution to the DPRK nuclear problem. However, the fact that ROK government, unlike in the past when it took a regular role in six-party talk, has decreased influence because of the spectator role the new administration has taken must be kept in mind.

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16. Inter-Korean Relations

Saegae Ilbo (Yu Ho-yul, "DEAR CRITIQUE OF RODONG SHINMUN", 2008/04/02) carried an article by a professor of North Korean Studies at Korea University, who wrote, "I write this article hurriedly after seeing your article in Rodong Shinmun through Chosun Center Communication make some comments on what you wrote on April 1st. Are you aware of the fact that it has intensified the tension in areas around the Korean Peninsula and has made the countries very much concerned? The Lee Myung-bak administration only seeks to approach the inter-Korean problem in a global viewpoint in close collaboration with neighboring countries. It is never the subservience to foreign power you have noted in your writing. Rather, it seems as if your country is choosing to depend on foreign powers by annulling the Joint Declaration on Korea Peninsula Denuclearization as it wishes and being anxious to accomplish trade relations with the US, leading toward the road of confrontation."

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Nautilus Institute

2342 Shattuck Ave. #300, Berkeley, CA 94704 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org