



KOREA DIGEST

Korea Digest is a monthly publication of the Korea Centre, School of International Relations and Politics, Mahatma Gandhi University, that compiles major political, security, economic and diplomatic developments in the Korean Peninsula. Korea Digest aims to track, highlight and provide brief analysis of important developments in the Korean Peninsula for the Indian audience.

Korea Digest No. 1

April 15- 30, 2023

Contents

- **China Expresses Disapproval over South Korean President's Remark on Taiwan**
- **Kim Jong-un Orders Launch of North Korea's First Spy Satellite**
- **Russia Warns South Korea on Supply of Weapons to Ukraine**
- **Government Initiative to Address 'Hikikomori' Phenomenon in South Korea**

Prepared by

**Mirash Cherian Kurian
Research Associate, Korea Centre**

1. China Expresses Disapproval over South Korean President's Remark on Taiwan

The Chinese government issued a diplomatic protest against the South Korean President's reference to Taiwan. In an interview given to Reuters, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol referred to the issues between China and Taiwan as a "global issue". President Yoon also added that the issue between China and Taiwan is similar to the dispute between North and South Korea. Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of China, Sun Weidong, summoned the Korean ambassador and expressed the ministry's strong dissatisfaction. The Korean President's reference to Taiwan is a significant development. The past Korean administrations have been noted for their silence on matters on Taiwan and have maintained a policy of strengthening relations with China. Under President Yoon, Seoul has revisited its China policy with strategic clarity and mutual respect as the two principles of South Korea-China relations.

2. Kim Jong-un Orders Launch of North Korea's First Spy Satellite

On April 19, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un announced that Pyongyang had finished building its first military spy satellite and the preparations were underway for its launch. Building a military satellite is part of North Korea's efforts to advance surveillance technology, including drones, to improve its ability to strike targets in the event of a conflict. In December last year, North Korea conducted what it called the "final phase" test for the spy satellite and declared that preparation for the launch of the spy satellite would be complete by April.

However, experts from South Korea and the rest of the world have already raised their doubts about North Korea's capability to launch the spy satellite. They argue that North Korea lacks the capability to build its military satellite. Critics have accused China of transferring technology and its role in developing this mission. Launching a spy satellite will further deteriorate the security tension in the Korean Peninsula. In the past, North Korea had launched two observational satellites into space and has

been placed under sanction by the United Nations for the testing of its nuclear and missile technology. Of late, economic sanctions on North Korea have not been working because of the non-compliance policy of China and Russia.

3. **Russia Warns South Korea on Supply of Weapons to Ukraine**

On April 19, Kremlin Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov warned South Korea on its plan to supply military weapons to Ukraine. He further said that Seoul had taken an 'unfriendly' stance towards Russia on the Ukraine issue, which would be interpreted as an intervention in the conflict. Kremlin's warning came in response to a press interview by the South Korean President, where he mentioned that South Korea is considering the supply of weapons to Ukraine in the ongoing conflict with Russia. The press announcement of President Yoon came on the background of a news leak from the Pentagon that revealed that the Republic of Korea was planning ammunition to Ukraine regardless of their policy not to arm countries at war. South Korea-Russia relations have undergone a significant deterioration following the outbreak of the Ukraine crisis, with Seoul condemning the Russian military action.

4. **Government Initiative to Address 'Hikikomori' Phenomenon in South Korea**

South Korean family ministry announced a scheme to find a solution to the hikikomori situation in South Korea. Hikikomori is a Japanese expression that refers to people, often adolescents and young adults with severe social withdrawal symptoms, who often become recluses in their parents' homes, unable to work or go to school for months or years. More than three hundred thousand people are cited as "Hikikomori" in South Korea, according to the Korean Institute of Health and Social Affairs statistics. People from the age group of 9-24 of age are eligible for a monthly allowance, according to reports. The state will provide \$500 to start a new life, like continuing their education, finding jobs, etc.
