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I. United States

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1. ROK-DPRK Talks

The Associated Press ("KOREAN OFFICIALS TO MEET IN BEIJING," Seoul, 04/07/98) and Reuters ("N.KOREA FIRM ON BEIJING FOR TALKS VENUE WITH SOUTH," Seoul, 04/07/98) reported that the ROK agreed Wednesday to send officials to Beijing for the first ROK-DPRK talks Korea in four years. On Tuesday, the DPRK sent a message from the head of the DPRK Red Cross by telephone through Panmunjom which stated, "Considering all things, we feel it is most suitable to hold the

talks in Beijing as proposed before, and hope for your positive response." The ROK said it will send a five-member delegation to the talks, led by Deputy Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun. ROK officials said they would attempt a broad approach aimed at easing tension on the peninsula.

State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, APRIL 6, 1998," USIA Transcript, 04/07/98) said that the US has long supported meaningful bilateral dialogue between the ROK and the DPRK, and hopes that these discussions will achieve progress in inter-Korean relations. He stated, "we believe that improvement of relations between North and South Korea can only contribute to the achievement of the goals of the four-party talks. We believe that progress in that forum, four-party and better relations between North and South Korea are mutually reinforcing. So we welcome the development."

The Associated Press (Paul Shin, "N. KOREA MAY SEND ENVOYS TO SOUTH," Seoul, 04/06/98) reported that the ROK's semiofficial Naewoe Press said Tuesday that the DPRK announced its willingness to exchange special envoys with the ROK and discuss other measures to reduce tensions. Naewoe quoted Kim Yong-sun, a secretary of the DPRK's ruling Workers' Party, as saying Monday, "We admit that North-South dialogue must be held as soon as possible...." Kim added that his government is willing to push exchanges and cooperation "regardless of formality." ROK officials termed the statement as a "hopeful sign" that ties between the two peninsula neighbors would improve significantly with the new ROK government.

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2. World Day of Fast for DPRK Famine

United Press International ("POPE TO FAST FOR KOREA'S FAMINE VICTIMS," Vatican City, 04/07/98) reported that the Vatican announced that Pope John Paul II will join a day-long fast on April 25 in support of famine victims in the DPRK. The pope decided to join in the fast after hearing about the event through the Roman Catholic cardinal of Seoul.

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3. Food Aid to DPRK

State Department Deputy Spokesman James Foley ("STATE DEPT. NOON BRIEFING, APRIL 6, 1998," USIA Transcript, 04/07/98) stated that the US is confident in the World Food Program monitoring system "as it exists currently and as it applies to US-delivered assistance" to the DPRK. He added, "I think that we can always hope for more in the way of transparency, but we have to recognize that North Korea is an opaque society -- maybe the most opaque society on Earth." Foley also pointed out that the DPRK accepted a visit last October by the first US Government needs assessment team, which "saw no evidence of diversion or significant problems with the monitoring system." He noted that the US changed its approach to food aid this year, and decided to make a contribution on the basis of a year-long effort. He stated that the first shipment of approximately 22,000 metric tons of rice and corn arrived in the DPRK last Friday, April 3.

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4. DPRK Defector Report Denied

Reuters ("HONG KONG DISMISSES NORTH KOREAN DEFECTOR REPORT," Hong Kong, 04/06/98) reported that the Hong Kong Security Bureau said on Tuesday that an ROK citizen had asked for help in reaching the DPRK, and it dismissed reports published last weekend that a DPRK official had sought political asylum in Hong Kong. The government studied his request and concluded there was

no case to help him travel to the DPRK, with which Hong Kong has no direct air links. The bureau said that the man left Hong Kong on Monday after the government turned down his request.

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5. ROK Financial Crisis

The Dow Jones Newswires ("S. KOREA COMPLETES \$21.75B SHORT-TERM DEBT RESTRUCTURING," New York, 04/08/98) reported that Citibank vice chairman William Rhodes said Wednesday that the ROK has completed its exchange offer covering US\$21.75 billion of the short term debt of the country's banks. Under the terms of the program, international creditor banks exchanged their short-term debt and non-trade credits to the ROK banking system for new loans with maturities of one, two and three years, guaranteed by the ROK government.

The Dow Jones Newswires ("S. KOREA ASKS U.S. TO HASTEN RELEASE OF PROMISED \$5B LOAN," Seoul, 04/08/98) reported that the ROK Foreign Ministry said that Vice Foreign Minister Sun Joun-yung on Wednesday asked Thomas Pickering, US undersecretary of state for political affairs, for an early release of US\$5 billion the US has promised in special loans to help the ROK economy. Pickering did not make any clear response, the Ministry said. Pickering also met Wednesday with President Kim Dae-jung and reaffirmed US support for ROK efforts to reopen government-level talks with the DPRK. ROK officials quoted Pickering as saying that the US has keen interest in the talks, which could lead to an easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula. Earlier in the day, Pickering met Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Park Chung-soo, Unification Minister Kang In-duk, and national security adviser Lim Dong-won, and also discussed President Kim's planned state visit to Washington in June.

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6. Asian Economic Recovery

The Associated Press ("STUDY: NO ASIAN RECOVERY TIL 1999," Hong Kong, 04/08/98) reported that a study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development released Wednesday said that economic recovery in Asia is not likely to begin until next year, and serious reforms are necessary before investors regain confidence in the region.

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7. PRC-Taiwan Relations

Reuters (Alice Hung, "TAIWAN INVITES CHINA TO HELP SOUTHEAST ASIA," Taipei, 04/07/98) reported that Taiwan Premier Vincent Siew on Tuesday invited the PRC to join a drive to help Southeast Asia out of its economic crisis. Siew stated, "I would like to use the opportunity to propose both sides of the (Taiwan) strait to jointly invite Southeast Asian countries to discuss how to stabilize the region's financial situation and promote regional economic growth. (The sides) can meet to try to find a solution." He said the move would allow Taiwan and the PRC to make a "positive" contribution in Southeast Asia and help improve bilateral ties. In Beijing, PRC foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said he had not heard of Taiwan's proposal. He added, "The Taiwan authorities have no right to participate in meetings convened by sovereign states."

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8. Alleged PRC Missile Sales to Pakistan

United Press International ("CHINA DENIES MISSILE AID TO PAKISTAN," Beijing, 04/07/98) and the Associated Press ("CHINA DENIES PAKISTAN MISSILE HELP," Beijing, 04/07/98) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said Tuesday that allegations that the PRC helped Pakistan develop its new medium-range missile are groundless. He added that it would be "unreasonable for the United States to investigate" the alleged development link. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry likewise denied any link with the PRC.

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9. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The Associated Press (Barry Schweid, "SENATE URGED TO RATIFY NUCLEAR PACT," Washington, 04/07/98) reported that US Undersecretary of State John Holum on Tuesday urged the Senate to ratify a treaty banning all nuclear weapons tests by the fall. Declaring that the US can rely on simulated tests for its nuclear program, Holum said that the Senate has "a historic opportunity" to make it harder for non-nuclear nations to develop the weapons. He stated, "Without testing, it's an insurmountable barrier." Holum said that polls indicate that only 13 percent of the US public opposes a ban on nuclear weapons tests and that the administration has the votes in the Senate for ratification if the Senate Foreign Relations Committee would act on the treaty. He added that, if there is delay past the fall, when the Senate is due to recess for the year, the US may be unable to participate in a conference in the fall of 1999 that would consider ways to prod India, Pakistan, and the DPRK into signing the treaty.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. ROK-DPRK Talks

The DPRK on Monday announced its willingness to accept the ROK's offer to proceed with inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation under the principle of separation of politics from economics, Secretary Kim Yong-sun of the DPRK Workers Party said through the DPRK's Central Broadcasting System. Kim, who is in charge of unification and ROK affairs in the DPRK, stressed during a mass rally in Pyongyang that the DPRK government will not stick to formalities if the ROK's policy of promoting inter-Korean exchanges on the basis of separation of politics and economy is for national unification. (Korea Times, "NK TO PURSUE INTER-KOREAN ECONOMIC EXCHANGE," 04/08/98)

ROK and DPRK government officials will meet in Beijing this Saturday for the first bilateral inter-Korean talks in nearly four years following the DPRK's adherence to the PRC capital as the venue. The ROK had already indicated that it would accept Beijing if the DPRK insisted. ROK Unification Minister Kang In-duk on Monday told the press that venue would not be a source of contention. (Korea Herald, "INTER-KOREAN TALKS TO BEGIN IN BEIJING SATURDAY," 04/08/98)

The ROK Monday made a counterproposal to hold a vice minister-level meeting in the truce village of Panmunjom or anywhere on the Korean peninsula on April 11 to discuss a wide range of inter-Korean issues, including the shipment of fertilizer and the reunion of separated family members. "Our side will send a five-member delegation, represented by the vice unification minister, to launch consultations on issues of mutual concern, including how to improve inter-Korean relations and how to send fertilizer," said Chung Won-shik, president of the ROK National Red Cross. (Korea Times, "SEOUL PROPOSES PANMUNJOM AS S-N TALKS VENUE," Son Key-young, 04/07/98)

The DPRK proposed that a vice-ministerial meeting with the ROK be held in Beijing on April 11, to discuss fertilizer assistance and other matters. Lee Song-ho, acting chief of the DPRK National Red Cross, sent a telephone message to his counterpart in the ROK, saying that a five member team, headed by a vice- minister, would be sent to Beijing. The DPRK is learned to have requested 200,000 tons of fertilizer through Professor Kim Sung-kwon of Kyongbuk University, who visited the DPRK at the end of January. A spokesman for the ROK government said a response would be sent after consultation with related departments, with a formal decision made by President Kim Dae-jung. (Chosun Ilbo, "DPRK PROPOSES VICE-MINISTERIAL MEETING," 04/06/97)

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2. Tumen River Development Project

The ROK and the DPRK will team up with the PRC, Russia, and Mongolia for the UN project aimed at conserving the biodiversity and protecting the international waters of the Tumen River Area, to be undertaken hopefully from September of this year. The purpose of the project is to develop a strategic action program and a transboundary diagnostic analysis for the Tumen River Economic Development Area, its coastal regions and related Northeast Asian environs, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding among the five member states signed last September. The project is subject to approval at the board meeting of the UN Global Environmental Fund sometime next month, and is expected to go into effect possibly from August or September and run for two years. (Korea Times, "TWO KOREAS TO PARTICIPATE IN UN-LED ENVIRONMENTAL PROJECT ALONG TUMEN RIVER," 04/07/98)

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3. DRPK Defectors to ROK

Three DPRK citizens, who were reported missing in a Southeast Asian country last November after their applications for defection to the ROK were turned down, finally set foot in the ROK early last month, four months after their odyssey began. Kim Won-chol, Cho Nam-guk, and Hong Kum-chol flew into Seoul on March 7 and March 11 and are under the protection of intelligence authorities. However, four others from the same team are still missing. (Korea Times, "THREE NORTH KOREAN DEFECTORS ARRIVE IN SEOUL," 04/06/98)

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4. DPRK Defector Report Denied

An ROK construction engineer unsuccessfully contacted Hong Kong authorities recently to try to seek political asylum in the DPRK, a Western diplomatic source here said Tuesday. The man in his 40s, identified only as Kim, contacted Hong Kong police last Friday to request that Hong Kong authorities arrange for him to seek political asylum in the DPRK, the source said. Hong Kong authorities, however, refused the request, arguing that he has never been subjected to political persecution in the ROK, Hong Kong does not have a direct air route with the DPRK, and that Hong Kong has no representative office of the DPRK, the source said. Kim was erroneously reported in the media as being a high-ranking DPRK official who sought asylum in the ROK. (Korea Times, "ENGINEER UNSUCCESSFULLY SEEKS ASYLUM IN NK," 04/08/98)

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5. ROK Military Purchases

The ROK Defense Ministry is planning to restrict foreign arms suppliers from future contracts should they be found to have overcharged in previous bidding. Commenting on the military structural reform, ROK Defense Minister Cheon said the ROK Armed Forces format is based on a US model that stresses requirements for an expeditionary mission. He stated, however, "we should be geared more to in-country missions. Thus, we can make more effective use of our scarce resources by realigning our military structure to commandeer civilian assets in time of crisis." (Korea Times, "DEFENSE MINISTRY TO PUNISH ROGUE FOREIGN ARMS SUPPLIERS," Oh Young-jin, 04/06/98)

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6. Student Movement in ROK

Violent clashes are expected to occur between police and radical students as members of the outlawed student organization, "Hanchongnyon," have vowed to hold a rally which has been banned by law-enforcement authorities. In a statement Tuesday, Hanchongnyon demanded that the ROK government allow its students and participating civic group members to hold the rally, asserting that it will be held peacefully. The prosecutors also reaffirmed the outlawed status of the national organization because of its alleged support for the DPRK. The prosecutors have used such public Hanchongnyon statements as "the incumbent Seoul government is a puppet of the US imperialists" as proof that the group is a threat to national security. (Korea Herald, "HANCHONGNYON IGNITES FEARS OVER ANOTHER STUDENT POLICE CLASH", 04/08/98)

The ROK prosecution has decided to demolish the incumbent university student association of Hanchongnyon, reaffirming it as an "enemy-benefiting" organization under the national security law. (Korea Times, "PROSECUTION DECIDES TO CRACK DOWN ON HANCHONGNYON," 04/08/98)

The NAPSNet Daily Report aims to serve as a forum for dialogue and exchange among peace and security specialists. Conventions for readers and a list of acronyms and abbreviations are available to all recipients. For descriptions of the world wide web sites used to gather information for this report, or for more information on web sites with related information, see the collection of [other NAPSNet resources](#).

We invite you to reply to today's report, and we welcome commentary or papers for distribution to the network.

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