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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, Jung Ha-won, "NORTH KOREA ANNOUNCES ARMS DEAL", 2008/04/09) reported that the DPRK said it has struck a deal with the United States to move forward with long-stalled negotiations to rid Pyongyang of its nuclear arms programs. "As a result of the talks a consensus was reached on the U.S. measure to make political compensation and the [DPRK's] nuclear declaration essential for winding up the implementation of the agreement," the DPRK's Foreign Ministry said. Pyongyang, however, gave no specific details on what the compensation will be for disclosing a full list of its nuclear programs. Washington's position was not immediately available.

Korea Herald (Lee Joo-hee , "NUKE NEGOTIATORS FOLLOW UP ON RECENT PROGRESS", 2008/04/09) reported that nuclear negotiators from the US, the two Koreas, the PRC and Japan gathered in Beijing for bilateral talks over the latest progress on Pyongyang's declaration list. Top negotiators Christopher Hill of the US and Kim Kye-gwan of the DPRK arrived in the PRC capital after lengthy bilateral discussions in Singapore. While the two sides reached a provisional agreement, it was contingent on further deliberation by their respective governments. The two envoys were joined by their counterparts, Chun Yung-woo from Seoul, Wu Dawei from Beijing, and Akitaka Saiki from Tokyo. Hill said he had had "good discussions" with his PRC, Japanese and ROK counterparts, but said more work was needed despite "definite" progress toward a final resolution.

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2. PRC on Six Party Talks

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA: N. KOREA NUKE PROGRESS THIS FALL? ", Beijing, 2008/04/09) reported that a breakthrough in DPRK nuclear talks may have to wait until this fall, the PRC's top negotiator said. Wu Dawei said the six-nation talks on ending the DPRK's nuclear program were experiencing ups and downs. "We are gradually overcoming these ups and downs," Wu told reporters. Asked how long that would take, Wu replied, "Around the autumn."

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3. DPRK Military

Yonhap ("N.K. LEADER VISITS MILITARY UNIT: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/04/09) reported that DPRK's leader Kim Jong-il has visited a unit of the country's Navy, the DPRK's state-run media

reported, continuing a series of military inspections amid Pyongyang's growing discontent with the new ROK government. His visit to Navy Unit 152 was his fourth military inspection reported by the Korean Central News Agency since April 5. "He set forth tasks to be fulfilled by the unit to increase its combat capability in every way, satisfied to learn that the servicepersons of the unit are carrying out their guard duties in a responsible manner," the KCNA said in its English edition.

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4. DPRK Economy

Yonhap (Shim Sun-ah, "N. KOREA SETS UP FIVE-YEAR SCIENCE-TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN ", Seoul, 2008/04/09) reported that impoverished DPRK announced a five-year plan to develop the nation's science and technology capabilities by 2012, when the state will mark the centennial of its late leader Kim Il-sung's birth. "From this year we will start implementing the new five-year plan for the development of national science and technology ending in 2012," the DPRK's Premier Kim Yong-il said in a report to a one-day parliamentary session. "We will systematically increase state investment in this field, increasing the responsibilities and roles of scientists and technicians, so as to successfully carry out assignments under the plan and thus put the country's science and technology on an advanced level in the shortest possible period," Kim said.

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5. ROK Elections

The Financial Times (Song Jung-a and Raphael Minder, "KOREAN VOTE OPENS WAY TO ECONOMIC REFORMS", Seoul, 2008/04/09) reported that Lee Myung-bak, the new president of the ROK, strengthened his prospects for pushing through business-friendly economic measures when his conservative party won a majority of seats in a parliamentary election. His Grand National Party on Wednesday won 155-178 seats of the 299 seats in parliament, according to preliminary results. However, the GNP's win was dampened by a record low turnout of 46 per cent, suggesting that Mr Lee will still struggle to gain public support for some of his more disputed economic plans, including the construction of a cross-country canal. It was also short of the two-thirds victory that some analysts forecast after Mr Lee's election, confirming that his popularity has declined amid concerns that a global economic downturn would derail his growth forecast, and after some of his cabinet members were forced to resign for alleged improprieties.

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "RULING PARTY GAINS ASSEMBLY CONTROL", 2008/04/09) reported that the ruling Grand National Party yesterday won a majority in parliamentary elections, further empowering President Lee Myung-bak in his push to revive the economy and reform the government. About 20 of candidates close to GNP minority leader Park Geun-hye were elected. They left the party after being denied candidacy. Park's faction in the GNP also won about 30 seats. Leftist parties received low support, with the Democratic Labor Party earning five and the New Progressive Party getting none.

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6. Japan Politics

The Asahi Shimbun ("FUKUDA ACCUSES MINSHUTO OF ABUSING ITS DIET POWER", 2008/04/09) reported that opposition leader Ichiro Ozawa found himself on the defensive as Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda took him to task for his party's stand on recent issues that stalled Diet proceedings. Fukuda blasted Ozawa, leader of Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), for throwing up obstacles to key issues, such as the appointment of a new governor of the Bank of Japan and government moves to keep road-specific tax rates in place. The prime minister, hardly stopping for breath, then accused Minshuto of "abuse of power" for repeatedly blocking government attempts to fill the vacancy for governor at the central bank.

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7. Tibet Unrest

The Associated Press (Jim Abrams, "HOUSE CRITICIZES CHINA ON TIBET", Washington, 2008/04/09) reported that the House criticized the PRC for its "disproportionate and extreme" response to protests in Tibet, and urged the Beijing government to hold direct, unconditional talks with the Dalai Lama on the future of Tibet. The House resolution, sponsored by Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., called on the PRC to end its crackdown on nonviolent protests in Tibet, release Tibetans imprisoned in peaceful demonstrations, and allow international monitors and journalists unfettered access to the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of the PRC. It passed 413 to 1.

Agence France-Presse (Pratap Chakravarty, "TIBETAN TASK FORCE SEEKS TALKS WITH BEIJING", New Delhi, 2008/04/09) reported that a Tibetan exile group set up by the Dalai Lama to push for greater autonomy for the Himalayan region offered to travel to Beijing to resume a dialogue about their homeland's future. "We want to reopen the talks to resolve the Tibetan issue through the process of dialogue and whenever it is convenient for the Chinese authorities our special envoys could travel to Beijing," said spokesman Thubten Samphel. The Tibetan task force, which has held six rounds of inconclusive talks with Beijing through special envoys since 2002, said there had been no change in its desire to pursue "the Middle Path" approach advocated by the Dalai Lama. Such an approach refers to "meaningful autonomy" to preserve Tibet's language, culture and environment within the PRC and does not seek independence.

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8. PRC Unrest

The Associated Press (William Foreman, "CHINA FACES MUSLIM RESENTMENT IN WEST", Hotan, 2008/04/09) reported that resentment against the PRC has long simmered in this traditionally Muslim western region, which borders Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia. The problems in Xinjiang came on top of nearly a month of anti-government riots and protests in Tibet and other provinces with sizable Tibetan populations. The PRC blame last month's protest in the jade-trading Silk Road town of Hotan on Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, a radical group that wants to create a worldwide Islamic state. But human rights groups and US-government funded Radio Free Asia said demonstrators were protesting against a ban on head scarves in the workplace and demanding political prisoners be freed.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN PRESIDENT-ELECT CAUTIOUS ON SWIFT CHINA TIES: REPORT", Taipei, 2008/04/09) reported that Taiwan's president-elect Ma Ying-jeou has cautioned against a rapid rapprochement with the PRC, despite hopes from supporters of swift moves to improve cross-Strait ties, a report said. Ma told the Financial Times he would not personally engage in dialogue with PRC leaders because such a move would be too controversial in Taiwan, where the outgoing ruling Democratic Progressive Party has alleged Hong Kong-born Ma would sell out the island to the PRC. But Ma, who takes office on May 20, was hopeful vice president-elect Vincent Siew could start building mutual trust with Beijing when he attends a regional forum in the PRC this weekend. "I think this is a very natural opportunity for the two sides to exchange views on a relatively high level on our disagreements," Ma said.

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10. Sino-Indian Relations

IANAS ("INDIA NOT IN RACE WITH CHINA IN AFRICA: PM", New Delhi, 2008/04/09) reported that India is not 'in competition' with the PRC for Africa's resources, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, as the first India-Africa summit ended with the two sides declaring their support for each other in an expanded UN Security Council. 'We are not in any race or competition with China or any other country. The desire of India and Africa to work together is not new,' Manmohan Singh told reporters at a joint press conference with leaders and representatives of 14 African countries who participated in the India-Africa Forum Summit. 'We share a colonial past and have been partners for a long time,' he said.

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11. Sino-Pakastani Relations

The Financial Times (Farhan Bokhari, "MUSHARRAF HEADS TO CHINA AMID DEFENCE TALKS", Islamabad, 2008/04/09) reported that Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's president, leaves for the PRC on his first overseas trip since a new government led by his opponents took charge of the country, further weakening him politically. The PRC's role as a key defence supplier for Pakistan's armed forces is expected to be the focus of Mr Musharraf's visit. While Beijing has supplied the Pakistan military with hardware for decades, analysts say the relationship is growing stronger. "Pakistan's defence relationship with China is growing both quantitatively and qualitatively," said a western defence expert based in Islamabad. "While Pakistan is a close US ally in the war on terror, the relationship with China has never been compromised."

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II. ROK Report

12. DPRK Nuclear Problem

Joongang Ilbo ("[editorial] IN ORDER FOR PROVISIONAL AGREEMENT ON DPRK NUCLEAR TO BEAR FRUIT", 2008/04/10) wrote that although a complete agreement on UEP and relocation of nuclear to Syria have not been reached, the different opinions have considerably come closer. However, it seems that the issue of the level of "acknowledgement" was an obstacle to the agreement. The DPRK nuclear problem has to be solved even if it takes time. In order to achieve the solution, "a sincere abandonment of the nuclear program" from DPRK is required more than anything else. The fundamental reason the DPRK nuclear situation gets complicated is the DPRK's unrealistic hope to "attempt normalization of US-DPRK relation while holding nuclear weapons." The DPRK must quickly let go of this decision. The DPRK should not only report the nuclear weapons but also show its sincerity in following verification process. It should not be foolish to dismantle the provisional agreement because of "acknowledgement" issues.

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13. DPRK Internal Situation

Good Friends ("[opinion] HOPING TO HEAR MORE NEWS LIKE SPRING SUN", 2008/04/09) wrote that despite the difficulties in resource shortages such as printing paper, the Ministry of Education in North Hamgyeong Province has distributed textbooks. The ministry is known to have distributed from four to seven books evenly to each student. The parents also were satisfied at the sight of their children rejoicing over the new textbooks they received.

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