



NAPSNet Daily Report 11 April, 2008

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report 11 April, 2008", NAPSNet Daily Report, April 11, 2008,
<https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-11-april-2008/>

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I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("U.S. ENVOY EXPECTS 6PT ACTIVITIES IN COUPLE OF WEEKS ", Washington, 2008/04/10) reported that the top US nuclear envoy said there will be a flurry of activities in the "next couple of weeks" to implement various elements agreed with his DPRK counterpart in Singapore this week. Christopher Hill, assistant secretary of state, said the current phase of six-party talks involves a "package" of different steps. "I think we have an understanding on how to put that package together. We will be working very hard on that in the next couple of weeks," he told reporters. He expressed satisfaction with the results of the meeting. "We've had a tough problem, and I think we've been able to figure out a way forward on this," he said.

Xinhua ("CHINA SAYS CONDITIONS "MATURING" FOR SIX-PARTY DPRK NUCLEAR TALKS ", Beijing, 2008/04/10) reported that the PRC said that conditions for holding a new round of meetings among the chief negotiators to the six-party nuclear talks were maturing, with all parties being positive toward the meeting. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu made these comments in response to a media question about the talks on the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. Jiang said that both the DPRK and the US had informed the PRC that they had reached a consensus on the relevant issues on the nuclear declaration.

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2. DPRK Energy Working Group Meeting

Yonhap ("KOREAS, CHINA IN TALKS ON ENERGY AID TO PYONGYANG ", Beijing, 2008/04/10) reported that buoyed by reports of progress in the latest nuclear talks between the DPRK and the US, senior diplomats from the two Koreas and the PRC resumed talks on supplying energy-related equipment to the DPRK under a six-way deal signed last year. The one-day meeting at the ROK embassy in Beijing, the third of its kind, is to discuss details on ways of providing the DPRK with energy-related equipment and materials, officials said. About 30 percent of the total fuel and facilities has been shipped to the DPRK so far in return for its ongoing work to disable the plutonium-producing reactor in Yongbyon.

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3. Alledged DPRK-Syrian Nuclear Cooperation

The Financial Times (Daniel Dombey, Demetri Sevastopulo, Richard McGregor, "US SEES PROGRESS WITH N KOREA", 2008/04/10) reported that Washington and Pyongyang have come closer to resolving US questions about possible nuclear ties between Syria and the DPRK, a senior US diplomat indicated. Speaking to journalists, Christopher Hill was asked about the significance of DPRK-Syrian co-operation. "The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's nuclear co-operation with other countries has been a major issue ... We did make progress," he said. Mr Hill said a "key" remaining issue to be agreed would be "the amount of plutonium that the DPRK declares". But he added: "We have been able to have very good discussions on some of the other key factors that have allowed us to go forward."

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4. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("U.S. GOVERNOR'S AIDE TRAVELS TO N.K. ", Washington, 2008/04/10) reported that New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson's senior advisor is visiting the DPRK from Wednesday to April 12 to discuss Pyongyang's nuclear program, the governor's office said. Dr. K.A. Namkung, the senior advisor to the governor, was invited by the DPRK's foreign ministry and is traveling with several other Asia policy experts from the U.S., the office said in a statement.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Joongang Ilbo (Ser Myo-ja, "NORTH KOREA EXPELS CONSTRUCTION SUPERVISOR", 2008/04/10) reported that the DPRK kicked out a ROK supervisor of an inter-Korean construction project site at Mount Kumgang resort yesterday evening, the second such expulsion in less than a month. "At the request of North Korea, we withdrew an official from the Public Procurement Service who has supervised the construction site around 5 p.m.," a ROK government official said. "It appears Pyongyang has kept its warning that no South Korean official should be allowed to cross the inter-Korean border."

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6. US on DPRK Human Rights

Korea Herald ("RICE WELCOMES SEOUL'S STANCE ON N.K. HUMAN RIGHTS", 2008/04/10) reported that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice welcomed ROK speaking up more against DPRK human rights violations, a problem she said deserved continued attention, according to Yonhap News Agency. "Yes, the human rights situation in North Korea is something that we have spoken to, should try to speak to," the secretary said at a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing. "We have noticed that the new South Korean government is speaking to this issue more now."

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7. Japanese Sanctions on DPRK

Associated Press (Chisaki Watanabe, "JAPAN EXTENDS NORTH KOREA SANCTIONS", Tokyo, 2008/04/11) reported that Japan extended for six months Friday the economic sanctions imposed on the DPRK for conducting a test of a nuclear weapon in 2006. The Cabinet approved the extension because the North has failed to make good progress on dismantling its nuclear weapons programs, Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura said.

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8. DPRK Military Maneuvers

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "N. KOREAN JETS APPROACH BORDER", Seoul, 2008/04/11) reported that DPRK fighter jets approached the military border with the ROK, a Seoul official said Friday. "Two North Korean jet fighters crossed the Tactical Action Line three times on Tuesday. They approached airspace 10 kilometers north of the Military Demarcation Line," said the military official who spoke on condition of anonymity. "This is the first time the North's aircraft have flown such a close route to the MDL," he said.

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9. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK COAL BRIQUET EXPORT PRICES JUMP THIS YEAR", 2008/04/10) reported that the DPRK, in keeping with rising international coal prices, appears to have hiked up the export price of heating briquettes twice in the last three months. A DPRK insider in Shenyang, PRC recently reported, "North Korea's Trade Bureau Price Control Division raised export prices at least twice as this month came around, so the export price soared up to 50 USD per ton," and, "As the rising international coal price trend continues, there is a high probability that North Korean heating briquette prices will also rise further." These charcoal briquettes are the DPRK's largest export item, with the PRC importing 170 million USD-worth in 2007 alone.

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10. DPRK Refugees

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "N. KOREANS ON HUNGER STRIKE IN BANGKOK", Seoul, 2008/04/11) reported that a group of DPRK refugees detained in Thailand has launched a hunger strike and demanded to be sent to the United States, an ROK activist said Friday. The 12 men and 17 women stopped eating Thursday evening, the Rev. Chun Ki-won, head of Seoul-based missionary group Durihana Mission, said.

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11. ROK Role in Afghanistan

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "'NO REDEPLOYMENT OF KOREAN TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN'", 2008/04/10) reported that ROK officials expressed negative views about the idea of redeploying forces to Afghanistan to support U.S.-led stabilizing operations in the central Asian nation. "We've just pulled our troops out of Afghanistan. I think it will be impossible to send them again," a senior military source said on condition of anonymity, responding to a report that Washington wants to discuss Seoul's troops redeployment to Afghanistan with the Lee Myung-bak government.

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "U.S. REQUESTS SEOUL TO SEND AID, POLICE TO AFGHANISTAN", Seoul, 2008/04/11) reported that the United States requested the ROK to send up to 300 civilian aid workers and a small police force to Afghanistan, ROK diplomatic sources said. "The U.S. government has asked Korea to play a large role in the Afghan reconstruction program after the inauguration of Lee Myung-bak government. Discussions are ongoing between the two governments over the matter," a source in Washington said Thursday.

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12. US-ROK Free Trade Agreement

Korea Times (Kim Sue-young, "GOVERNING PARTY WANTS FTA RATIFICATION IN MAY", Seoul, 2008/04/11) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak and the governing Grand National Party agreed Friday to ratify the ROK-US free trade agreement (FTA) at an extra session in May. However, the main opposition United Democratic Party (UDP) opposed the idea, saying that it is inappropriate because of the time gap with the current Assembly. The 17th Assembly is to end its term on May 31. "More than 50 percent of incumbent lawmakers failed to seek re-election. We should think about whether they would appear in the session," said Kim Hyo-seuk, floor leader of the UDP.

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13. ROK Elections

Yonhap (Shin Hae-in, "REGIONALISM STILL HOLDS SWAY IN S. KOREAN POLITICS ", Seoul, 2008/04/10) reported that regional split has persisted for so long in ROK's politics that it became a conspicuous ideological cleavage -- between the conservative southeast and the liberal southwest. Despite the efforts that the country has made to snap out of its regional rift, it emerged again --

perhaps widening -- in Wednesday's parliamentary elections, poll results showed. The ruling Grand National Party (GNP), which won a majority of seats in the 299-member parliament on the back of conservative President Lee Myung-bak's popularity, took 46 of the 68 seats that were up for grabs on its home turf of Gyeongsang, the conservative southeastern region. In Jeolla, the opposite side of the country, the main opposition United Democratic Party secured 25 of the 31 seats in the area, while the ruling party failed to win even one seat.

The Los Angeles Times (Bruce Wallace, "VOTER APATHY RISES IN SOUTH KOREA", Seoul, 2008/04/10) reported that despite incentives, just 46% of the ROK's 37 million eligible voters bothered to cast ballots on a rainy election day, the lowest turnout by far since the country held its first genuinely democratic election about 20 years ago. The low turnout exposed the deep apathy that now characterizes politics in a country that had fought bloody battles to wrest democracy from dictatorship. Analysts had several explanations for the lack of excitement: no compelling issues, disgust with politicians obsessed with internecine feuds, and fatigue after a long presidential election campaign that concluded in December with the victory of Lee Myung-bak.

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14. US-ROK-Japan Security Cooperation

Korea Times (Kim Yon-se, "US, KOREA, JAPAN STUDYING JOINT REGIONAL SECURITY ENTITY", Seoul, 2008/04/11) reported that the United States and Japan are moving to launch a joint security entity, which might also include Australia and New Zealand in the Asia-Pacific region. The idea, which is still in the initial stages of discussion, may take shape when President Lee Myung-bak meets U.S. President George W. Bush next week, according to sources. Once the proposed plan takes shape, they said, the two leaders could meet with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda before the first half of the year. The three leaders are likely to fine-tune a trilateral summit in the upcoming summit between Lee and Bush at Camp David, U.S. presidential retreat, on April 18-19 and between Lee and Fukuda in Tokyo on April 21, they said.

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15. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

Chosun Ilbo ("JAPAN CLAIMS DOKDO IN FOREIGN MINISTRY DOCUMENT", 2008/04/10) reported that a document on the website of the Japanese Foreign Ministry, reportedly posted earlier this year, claims that the Dokdo Islets, or Takeshima in Japanese, belong to Japan. Dated February 2008, the document claims that Takeshima is "clearly" Japanese territory from the standpoint of both history and international law. It says the ROK is illegally occupying the islands, against which Japan has been consistently protesting. The document outlines 10 reasons why the islands belong to Japan. It claims that Japan used the islands as a fishing base and anchorage en route to Ulleung Island and thus "established its sovereignty over Takeshima by the mid 17th century at the very latest."

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16. ROK Peacekeeping Operations

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "SEOUL CONSIDERS TROOP DISPATCH TO DARFUR", Seoul,

2008/04/11) reported that the ROK government dispatched an on-site inspection team Friday to Sudan's Darfur region to prepare for the possible deployment of peacekeeping troops there, an official of the Ministry of National Defense (MND) said. "The team will meet with officials of the Sudanese government and the U.N.-African Union peacekeeping force (UNAMID) to discuss South Korean troops' presence in the region," the official told reporters. "Nothing has been decided yet. The government will make a decision on the troop deployment on the basis of the results of the on-site inspection," he added.

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17. ROK Bird Flu Outbreak

Joongang Ilbo (Park Sang-woo, "SIX POSSIBLE NEW CASES OF AVIAN FLU REPORTED", 2008/04/10) reported that six new suspected cases of bird flu were reported yesterday in southwest ROK, including the first possible outbreak in South Jeolla, a government body said. The Ministry for Food, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries announced yesterday in a release that it has begun to slaughter about 183,000 chickens after getting reports of possible outbreaks of the highly contagious H5N1 strain at five chicken farms in Gimje in North Jeolla. Officials also reported another suspected outbreak of the bird flu at a chicken farm in Yeongam, South Jeolla, 144 kilometers south of Gimje farms.

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18. Japan SDF Role

The Asahi Shimbun ("JAPAN TO USE SDF TO BRING HOME JAPANESE DURING FLU EPIDEMIC ABROAD", 2008/04/10) reported that Japan will mobilize all available aircraft and ships, including those of the Self-Defense Forces, to bring home Japanese from overseas areas hit by a potentially devastating new influenza strain. However, Japanese nationals suspected of being infected will be denied repatriation, and the entry of foreigners from countries where the virus is spreading will be strictly limited. These policies were included in a package of government measures compiled Wednesday to deal with an outbreak of a much-feared new influenza strain abroad.

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19. Cross Strait Relations

Associated Press (TAIWAN LEADER ON MISSION TO RIVAL CHINA, "", Sanya, PRC, 2008/04/11) reported that Taiwan vice president-elect Vincent Siew is to meet PRC President Hu Jintao on Saturday 20 minutes on the sidelines of an economic forum in the southern Chinese resort of Boao, Siew's spokesman, Wang Yu-chi, said Friday. Siew would be the highest-ranking elected Taiwanese figure to meet with the PRC's president.

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20. US-PRC Military Relations

The Associated Press ("US, CHINA TEST NEW CRISIS 'HOT LINE' ", Washington, 2008/04/10) reported that Defense Secretary Robert Gates and his counterpart in Beijing on Thursday tested for the first time a "hot line" designed for consultations in times of crisis. The line is similar to one created decades ago between Washington and Moscow. Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said Gates and Gen. Liang Guanglie spoke briefly about advancing military-to-military relations, and Gates noted the importance of having a direct telephone link. "It demonstrates that overall the U.S.-China defense relationship continues to improve," Whitman said.

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21. PRC Unrest

The Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA ALLEGES NEW OLYMPIC TERROR PLOT ", Beijing, 2008/04/10) reported that the PRC said that it had uncovered a plot by members of a Muslim minority group to sabotage the Beijing Summer Olympics with suicide bombings and kidnappings of foreign visitors. PRC officials offered no evidence to back up the allegations, the latest in a series of dramatic terrorism charges against ethnic minorities in the run-up to the Summer Games. Public Security Ministry spokesman Wu Heping said at a news conference that 35 people had been arrested in Xinjiang over recent weeks for plotting to kidnap athletes, foreign journalists and other visitors to the August Olympics.

The New York Times (Jim Yardley and Jake Hooker, "MONKS DISRUPT MEDIA TOUR IN CHINA", 2008/04/10) reported that the PRC suffered another unexpected public relations setback on Wednesday when Buddhist monks interrupted a government-managed news media tour in western PRC by waving a Tibetan flag and protesting that the authorities were depriving them of their human rights. The disruption, in Xiahe, a city in Gansu Province, was the second in which monks had upstaged government efforts to control tours of Tibetan areas for foreign journalists. The outburst on Wednesday occurred as authorities guided reporters through the Labrang Monastery.

Associated Press (Christopher Bodeen, "CHINA OUTRAGED BY US-TIBET RESOLUTION", Beijing, 2008/04/11) reported that the PRC said Friday the U.S. "seriously hurt the feelings of the Chinese people" when Congress passed a resolution calling on Beijing to stop cracking down on Tibetan dissent and talk to the Dalai Lama. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu labeled the resolution anti-Chinese, saying it misrepresented Tibet's "history and modern reality." "The Chinese side expresses its strong indignation and resolute opposition toward this," Jiang said in a statement posted on the ministry's Web site.

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22. Sino-Australian Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA, AUSTRALIA PLEDGE FURTHER COOPERATION, EXPANDED TIES", Beijing, 2008/04/10) reported that Premier Wen Jiabao met with his Australian counterpart Kevin Rudd here on Thursday, calling for greater cooperation and taking bilateral ties to a new high. During the meeting, Wen said that PRC-Australia relations had developed rapidly in recent years, with frequent high-level exchanges and comprehensive dialogues at all levels. Tremendous achievements have been made in trade and economic cooperation, with the PRC becoming the largest trade partner to Australia, said Wen.

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II. ROK Report

23. ROK Policy Toward DPRK

Kyunghyang Newspaper ("ROK GOVERNMENT SHOULD BEGIN RESTORING RELATIONS WITH DPRK NOW",) wrote that the ROK government's decision to deal with relations with the DPRK with consistent silence under the name of patience was largely affected by its awareness of the general election. It is very likely that the government, in order to hang on to votes of its supporting conservative population, made the decision to take the fixed stance. Part of the government fears that the conservative party, with its overwhelming victory from the general election, will employ hard-line DPRK policies. That would only result in deterioration of inter-Korean relations, weakening of the ROK's voice, and even isolation if the ROK falls behind the pace of DPRK-US relations.

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24. DPRK Food Problem

Peacefoundation (Lee Young-hun, "DIAGNOSIS OF NORTH KOREA'S RECENT FOOD CRISIS",) carried an article by the director of the Bank of Korea Institute for Northeast Asia Economy Research, who wrote that recently, a food crisis in DPRK is being talked about again. Reduction in the amount produced and imported is the main reason for the drop in the total amount of crop distributed and stark increase in the cost. The damages from the flood last August had a huge impact on reduction in amount produced, and the reduction of imports has largely been influenced by the global society cutting down aid due to the nuclear experiment. Recent news of an imminent agreement on the nuclear issue between the US and DPRK and fifty thousand tons of rice being sent to DPRK from US do not reduce the possibility of a large-scale food crisis. The ROK must restart its humanitarian aid based on new principles of economic cooperation, and seek for improvement in inter-Korean relations.

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25. Inter-Korea Relations

Hankyoreh (Kang Tae-ho, "ON WORDS NOT TO BE SPOKEN",) wrote that both the DPRK and ROK are talking about ideas from 15-16 years ago. The DPRK criticized ROK government, claiming that ROK policy is the 15-year-old "not shaking hands with those with nuclear weapons" policy of former president Kim Young-sam. However, the ROK government, unlike in the past, does not intend to reject cooperation. On the other hand, president Lee Myung-bak manifested he will look for the spirit of inter-Korean relations in the inter-Korean Basic Agreement that came into effect in 1992. Inter-Korean relations cannot make progress only with the Basic Agreement. Some ROK critics who think the DPRK is trying to tame Lee administration demands resolute measures. However, is taming something to fear? Like the fox from the Little Prince said, the ROK and DPRK have to be tamed to each other.

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