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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Donga Ilbo ("SIX-PARTY TALKS TO RESUME EARLY NEXT MONTH ", 2008/05/12) reported that the DPRK nuclear issue faces a new phase as Sung Kim of the Office of Korean Affairs at the US Department of State and his company came back from Pyongyang with documents detailing the DPRK's nuclear program. It is expected that the six-party talks will be resumed early next month to discuss the composition of a unit to verify the DPRK's nuclear declaration and its related methods.

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2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters (Sue Pleming, "U.S. SAYS NORTH KOREA DOCUMENTS DATE BACK TO 1986 ", Washington, 2008/05/10) reported that the US said documents handed over by the DPRK detailed its weapons-grade plutonium program as far back as 1986 and were an "important first step" in getting a full declaration of the DPRK's nuclear activities. In a "fact sheet" providing limited details of the documents, the State Department said the 18,000 pages covered three major periods when plutonium was produced by the DPRK for nuclear weapons. "These operating records date back to 1986 and are expected to cover reactor operations and all three reprocessing campaigns undertaken by North Korea," the State Department said of the plutonium logs. "Review of the operating records provided on May 8 will be an important first step in the process of verifying that North Korea's declaration is complete and correct," it added.

Yonhap ("N.K. TO MAKE NUCLEAR DECLARATION WITHIN WEEKS: SOURCES", Seoul, 2008/05/10) reported that the DPRK is expected to submit a 40 to 50-page report within a few weeks to the PRC, the host of six-nation talks on ending the DPRK's nuclear program, for official disclosure of its atomic activities after months of delay, sources said. The expected move comes after the DPRK handed over boxfuls of documents on its highly secretive nuclear activities to the United States for verification.

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3. DPRK Terror List Status

Kyodo News ("N. KOREA WARNS WON'T COMPLETE NUCLEAR DISABLEMENT UNTIL DELISTING ", Washington, 2008/05/12) reported that the DPRK has warned the US that it will not complete the disablement of its key nuclear facilities as promised under a six-party deal unless the country is removed from a U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism, sources familiar with the six-way process said. Pyongyang's warning appears aimed at prodding Washington into making concessions in a dispute over a declaration the DPRK is required to produce under the accord, despite its handing over of documents relating to its plutonium-based nuclear program to the US.

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4. Alledged DPRK-Syrian Nuclear Cooperation

The Washington Post (Robin Wright and Joby Warrick, "PURCHASES LINKED N. KOREAN TO SYRIA", 2008/05/11) reported that when DPRK businessman Ho Jin Yun first caught the attention of German customs police in 2002, he was on a continental buying spree with a shopping list that seemed as random as it was long. According to U.S. officials, European intelligence officials and diplomats, Yun's firm -- Namchongang Trading, known as NCG -- provided the critical link between Pyongyang and Damascus, acquiring key materials from vendors in the PRC and probably from Europe, and secretly transferring them to a desert construction site near the Syrian town of Al Kibar. It was the company's suspicious buying habits -- and the branch office it opened in Damascus -- that inadvertently contributed to the alleged reactor's discovery and later destruction in a Sept. 6 Israeli bombing raid, US officials say.

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5. US, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France-Presse ("US DEPUTY SECRETARY OF STATE IN CHINA FOR NKOREA TALKS ", Beijing, 2008/05/12) reported that US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte met with the PRC's foreign minister on Monday as he began a one-day visit that was expected to focus on the DPRK nuclear issue. "We attach great importance to this visit and we also value your contribution to the development of constructive and cooperative relations between China and the US," Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told Negroponte. "Shall we focus on China-US relations and also an issue of great interest to you, that is the Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism?" Wang asked Negroponte at the beginning of their meeting.

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6. Inter-Korean Relations

Yonhap ("SEOUL SET TO APPROVE 10 BLN WON IN AID FOR N. KOREA: OFFICIAL ", Seoul, 2008/05/11) reported that the ROK government is set to approve a 10 billion won (US$9.6 million) aid package for impoverished DPRK, an official said Sunday, despite its chilled relations with the communist state amid the DPRK's protests against Seoul's new conservative government. The money, if approved, will be spent throughout the year to match funds raised by civic organizations

spearheading various aid projects, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. However, whether the money will actually find its way to the DPRK remains to be seen as Seoul's new conservative administration has vowed to link any non-humanitarian assistance for the DPRK to progress in international talks aimed at ridding the DPRK of its nuclear programs.

Yonhap ("PYONGYANG WAITING FOR POSITIVE GESTURE BY SEOUL: N.K. OFFICIAL ", Seoul, 2008/05/10) reported that the DPRK is willing to resume dialogue with the ROK if Seoul's new conservative government makes a positive gesture and pledges to uphold previous agreements between the two sides, a ranking DPRK official was quoted as saying. "The current chill in relations between the South and the North will go away if the South's highest-ranking official promises to uphold the June 15 Joint Declaration" from the 2002 inter-Korean summit, Ri Chung-bok, a DPRK deputy chairman of an inter-Korean body, the Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation, was quoted as saying.

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7. DPRK Military

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREAN LEADER STRESSES MILITARY TRAINING: STATE MEDIA ", Seoul, 2008/05/11) reported that the DPRK's reclusive leader Kim Jong-Il urged "all efforts on military training" during a recent visit to an army unit, according to state media monitored here on Sunday. The Korean Central News Agency reported Kim's visit without disclosing its location and time, for what was the sixth military inspection by the all-powerful leader this month -- much more frequent than usual. "He (Kim) underscored the need to concentrate all efforts on military training, saying that the revolutionary duty of soldiers is to conduct training effectively before anything else," the agency said.

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8. DPRK Economy

Xinhua ("KIM JONG IL: DPRK MUST RELY ON ITSELF TO DEVELOP ECONOMY", Pyongyang, 2008/05/12) reported that the DPRK's top leader Kim Jong Il has called on its people to depend on themselves to develop the country's economy, the official news agency KCNA reported. The DPRK people should develop the economy with their own efforts, technology and resources to make the country richer and more powerful, Kim said while inspecting a goat farm and a newly built plastic tube factory in Chongjin, the capital city of the northeastern province of North Hamgyong. He urged employees of the farm to develop a modern stockbreeding industry and steadily increase the production of quality milk products, it said.

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9. DPRK-Singapore Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA, SINGAPORE SIGN COOPERATION PACT: REPORT", Seoul, 2008/05/12) reported that the DPRK has agreed to forge closer cooperation with Singapore, its state media reported. The agreement was reached in Pyongyang after a meeting between DPRK Foreign Minister Park Ui-cheon and his Singaporean counterpart, George Yeo, the (North) Korean Central

News Agency said in a brief report, without elaborating on details.

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10. DPRK-Vietnamese Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA, VIETNAM AGREE TO PROMOTE TRADE, INVESTMENT ", Hanoi, 2008/05/10) reported that the DPRK and Vietnam have signed an agreement to boost trade and investment as well as exchanges in culture and sports, Vietnam's official news agency reported Friday. The agreement was made during talks that day between Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Vu Dung and his DPRK counterpart, Kim Yong-il, the Vietnam News Agency said.

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11. DPRK Bird Flu Prevention Measures

Yonhap ("N. KOREA ON ALERT FOR FURTHER BIRD FLU OUTBREAKS IN S. KOREA ", Seoul, 2008/05/12) reported that the DPRK is intensifying efforts to prevent the spread of bird flu from the ROK by placing quarantine officials on high alert against possible outbreaks of the deadly disease, a pro-Pyongyang newspaper reported. The Chosun Shinbo quoted a DPRK government veterinarian, Tak Sung-choon, as saying that all state quarantine agencies have been vigilant since early April, when the ROK reported a bird flu outbreak in Gyeonggi Province, an area near the border between the two Koreas. The remarks come as the ROK is struggling to contain the spread of bird flu after the first case of avian influenza was confirmed in the country's southwestern area.

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12. ROK Bird Flu Outbreak

Yonhap ("S. KOREA COMPLETES POULTRY CULL IN SEOUL ", Seoul, 2008/05/12) reported that ROK quarantine officials said Monday they completed slaughtering tens of thousands of poultry in Seoul after a fresh case of bird flu was reported in the nation's capital. The Seoul Metropolitan Government said it had started the culling process on Sunday and completed killing and burying around 15,000 chickens, ducks and other poultry being raised outdoors across the city by Monday morning. "This is an inevitable measure to contain the spread of avian influenza in large cities," a government official said. "We do not expect any further report of bird flu within the Seoul area."

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13. US-Japan Security Alliance

The Associated Press (Shino Yuasa, "JAPAN COURT REJECTS US NUCLEAR CARRIER SUIT ", Tokyo, 2008/05/12) reported that a Japanese court rejected a lawsuit demanding a halt to harbor work to accommodate a U.S. nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that is to be based south of Tokyo starting in August, a court spokeswoman said. The suit by 635 plaintiffs aimed to stop the deepening of the harbor in Yokosuka, site of the US naval base where the nuclear-powered USS George Washington is to be deployed, replacing the aging diesel-powered USS Kitty Hawk. The carrier has

sparked protests among Yokosuka residents who fear it poses a health danger. Many in Japan, the only country to be attacked by nuclear weapons, are also sensitive about any military use of nuclear technology.

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14. Sino-Japanese Relations

The Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "CHINA'S HU ENDS 'SATISFACTORY AND SUCCESSFUL' JAPAN VISIT ", Tokyo, 2008/05/10) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao toured two ancient Buddhist temples and a leading electronics company Saturday on the last day of what he termed a successful Japan visit. "This trip was satisfactory and successful," Hu told Nara Gov. Shogo Arai at a luncheon after the temple visits that was televised in part by public broadcaster NHK. "Exchanges between China and Japan have been successful in many areas, and are expected to develop further," Hu said.

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15. Sino-US Relations

Agence France-Presse ("BUSH: US 'READY TO HELP' CHINA AFTER QUAKE ", Washington, 2008/05/12) reported that US President George W. Bush offered his condolences to the PRC over a devastating earthquake that killed thousands of people and said the US "stands ready to help." "The thoughts and prayers of the American people are with the Chinese people, especially those directly affected. The United States stands ready to help in any way possible," Bush said in a statement. The quake, with a magnitude of 7.8, struck close to densely-populated areas of Sichuan province including the capital Chengdu.

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16. PRC Anti-Corruption Drive

Reuters ("CHINESE WANT TO KNOW HOW MUCH OFFICIALS PAID: SURVEY ", Beijing, 2008/05/12) reported that less than a month after the PRC put into effect a new law supposed to boost government transparency most Chinese want to know one thing -- how much officials get paid, a state newspaper said on Monday. The PRC passed regulations last year demanding the government disclose information about issues affecting the public interest in a bid to combat rampant corruption and discourage cover-ups enabled by often secretive decision-making processes. But money appears to be on the top of many people's minds, the China Youth Daily said, citing to a survey it jointly conducted with popular web portal sina.com.

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17. PRC Protest

The New York Times (Edward Wong, "CHINA: OFFICIALS FIGHT OPPOSITION TO CHENGDU PLANT", 2008/05/10) reported that government officials are stepping up a campaign to quiet dissent

over construction of a petrochemical plant on the outskirts of Chengdu, a provincial capital in western PRC. Last Sunday, hundreds of residents marched through downtown Chengdu to express concern about the plant's environmental impact. This week, several blogs protesting the plant's construction were blocked. Ran Yunfei, a blogger and journalist, said government officials visited his office to discuss the merits of the project. A state-controlled newspaper, Chengdu Business News, published articles laying out its benefits.

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18. PRC Food Supply

The Financial Times (Jamil Anderlini, "CHINA EYES OVERSEAS LAND IN FOOD PUSH ", Beijing, 2008/05/12) reported that PRC companies will be encouraged to buy farmland abroad, particularly in Africa and South America, to help guarantee food security under a plan being considered by Beijing. A proposal drafted by the Ministry of Agriculture would make supporting offshore land acquisition by domestic agricultural companies a central government policy. Beijing already has similar policies to boost offshore investment by state-owned banks, manufacturers and oil companies, but offshore agricultural investment has so far been limited to a few small projects. If approved, the plan could face intense opposition abroad given surging global food prices and deforestation fears. However an official close to the deliberations said it was likely to be adopted.

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