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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Reuters (Arshad Mohammed, "N.KOREA TO COOPERATE ON NUCLEAR VERIFICATION: U.S.", Washington, 2008/05/13) reported that the DPRK has agreed to "cooperate fully" on verifying its nuclear declaration, a U.S. official said as he showed some of the thousands of nuclear documents Pyongyang gave Washington last week. Sung Kim, said U.S. and DPRK officials had "productive" talks about elements of the declaration Pyongyang is required to make under the so-called six-party agreement. "The North Koreans acknowledged the requirement for verification and indeed agreed to cooperate fully with verification activities," Kim said.

The Associated Press (Matthew Lee, "NKOREAN NUKE DOCUMENTS APPEAR COMPLETE ", Washington, 2008/05/12) reported that a preliminary review of thousands of nuclear documents turned over to the United States by the DPRK indicates they appear to be a complete accounting of their plutonium production, U.S. officials said. While translation and analysis of the 18,822 Korean-language documents is still under way, officials said an early look indicates they include full details of the DPRK's plutonium program dating back to 1986. The officials cautioned, however, that a full assessment is not done and experts are still poring through the files.

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2. US Food Aid to the DPRK

The Financial Times (Demetri Sevastopulo, "US TO SEND FOOD TO N KOREA UNDER NEW DEAL", Washington, 2008/05/13) reported that the US has agreed to give the DPRK 500,000 tonnes of food aid under a new deal that would allow monitors unprecedented access to oversee distribution in the DPRK. Washington will supply 400,000 tonnes via the World Food Programme while US non-governmental organisations will distribute another 100,000 tonnes. President George W. Bush is expected to approve the deal “within days,” according to one official. US officials said the DPRK had agreed to provide unprecedented access to monitors to ensure the food reached the population and

not just elites. Pyongyang will allow random inspections and more monitors into the country than under previous aid programmes.

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3. ROK Food Aid to the DPRK

Yonhap (Shim Sun-ah, "GOV'T DENIES RICE AID TO BE SENT TO N. KOREA VIA INT'L BODY ", Seoul, 2008/05/13) reported that the ROK government is not considering sending rice aid to the DPRK via an international organization, a senior official of the Unification Ministry said. The denial followed media reports that the government may soon provide humanitarian rice aid to the DPRK indirectly via the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) or the United States. "We can consider sending the average amount of aid through an international body if there is a request from the body," the official said, "But the possibility that we will provide rice through the WFP is scant."

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4. DPRK Food Supply

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA PRISONERS STARVING TO DEATH: AID GROUP ", Seoul, 2008/05/13) reported that more and more prison inmates in the DPRK are dying of starvation as the DPRK grapples with a food crisis, a ROK aid group said. Prisons in the DPRK are already jammed with inmates due to a surge in crimes driven by hunger, said Buddhist aid group Good Friends, which works in the DPRK. "The number of people dying of starvation in prisons has been increasing. They are most vulnerable to a food shortage," it said in its latest newsletter. In April it said that even elite citizens in the capital have had state rations cut off for six months.

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5. ROK, PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "TOP NUCLEAR ENVOY TO MEET CHINESE OFFICIALS", 2008/05/13) reported that the ROK's chief nuclear envoy arrived in Beijing for consultations with his PRC counterpart on the resumption of six-party talks over the DPRK's nuclear weapons program and the release of a long-delayed list of its atomic programs, a government official said. ``Kim and his Chinese counterpart Wu Dawei will discuss a range of pending issues including the nuclear declaration in a final stage and resumption of six-party talks,'' the official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade said. Diplomats here expect the six-party negotiations to resume next month.

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6. Sino-DPRK Economic Relations

IFES NK Brief ("CHINESE BUSINESSES WANT DPRK LABOR", 2008/05/13) reported that small and mid-sized PRC companies are now looking toward the DPRK. The PRC press reported on May 5 that the industrial union of Dungta, a small city of just over 500,000 located south of Sunyang in Liaoning Province, recently spent seven days looking into opportunities in the DPRK on the invitation of the

Choson Bongwha Company. The purpose of this recent invitation appears to be that the DPRK is looking to improve small and mid-sized industrial activity by allowing foreign entities to set up shop. The reason PRC businesses are looking toward the DPRK is that even in the PRC wages have been growing sharply, and as labor laws are amended it has become more difficult to hire employees, driving up production costs and lowering the competitiveness of exports. Cheap and easy labor in the DPRK is turning the eyes of many PRC companies.

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7. Sino-ROK Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("LEE SCHEDULES SUMMIT WITH CHINA", 2008/05/13) reported that President Lee Myung-bak chose the PRC as his third destination overseas. He will head for Beijing on May 27 for a summit with PRC President Hu Jintao, the Blue House announced yesterday. Lee's visit will last until May 30 and is intended to promote peace and stability in Northeast Asia. The leaders will discuss bilateral issues involving economic ties.

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8. ROK-Japan Relations

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("GOVT RELEASES DOCUMENTS ON JAPAN-S. KOREA NORMALIZATION", 2008/05/13) reported that the Foreign Ministry has disclosed about 50,000 pages of diplomatic documents detailing the Japan-ROK diplomatic normalization talks from 1951 to 1965 to a civic group that requested them, The Yomiuri Shimbun learned. The ministry released the documents to Nikkan Kaidan Bunsho Zenmen Kokai o Motomeru Kai, on April 28, May 2 and May 9. The group, based in Isehara, Kanagawa Prefecture, was established with the aim of having all documents relating to the talks released. However, many of the released documents had been partially redacted, apparently in response to government concerns that disclosure of the hidden parts might affect relations between Japan and the DPRK.

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9. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("AUTOS A TOUGH PILL FOR EU TO SWALLOW", Brussels, 2008/05/13) reported that chief trade negotiators from the ROK and the European Union met to iron out sticky issues as the two sides work toward a free trade agreement. They discussed tariff concessions and auto-related technical standards, but failed to make much headway. The negotiations have made little headway as both sides have been reluctant to accept each other's demands on tariff reductions, auto trade and auto-related technical standards, one of the most divisive issues in the talks.

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10. US-Japan Security Alliance

Kyodo News ("REFERENDUM ON CARRIER DEPLOYMENT PROPOSED TO YOKOSUKA ASSEMBLY

", Yokosuka, 2008/05/13) reported that a proposed ordinance to hold a referendum on the deployment of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier at the U.S. Navy's Yokosuka base in Kanagawa Prefecture was submitted to the Yokosuka city assembly. The proposal, which Mayor Ryoichi Kabaya submitted during an extraordinary session of the assembly, is likely to be voted down as the majority of assembly members are said to be against holding a referendum on whether to allow the deployment of the George Washington.

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11. Japan Weapons in Space

The Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "JAPAN LOWER HOUSE OKS SPACE DEFENSE BILL ", Tokyo, 2008/05/13) reported that Japan's powerful lower house of parliament voted Tuesday to allow the country's space programs to be used for national defense, the latest move by Tokyo to give more freedom to the tightly controlled military. The legislation, which is expected to be approved by the upper house as well, is primarily aimed at letting the military use Japan's civilian-controlled spy satellite network for defense as defined by the pacifist constitution. The bill does not specify what the programs will be used for, but the satellite network and other assets could be used for surveillance, planning and for a missile defense shield Japan is building with the United States.

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12. PRC Earthquake

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "DEATH TOLL FROM CHINA QUAKE SOARS PAST 12,000 ", Dujiangyan, 2008/05/13) reported that the number of dead in the PRC's earthquake climbed past 12,000 on Tuesday with the toll expect to soar further after state media said nearly 19,000 people were buried under rubble in one city alone. Rain hampered rescue efforts in the mountainous area around the epicenter of Monday's 7.9-magnitude quake that jolted the southwestern province of Sichuan, the country's worst earthquake in three decades. State media reported scenes of devastation as rescuers gradually filed into villages near the epicenter in Wenchuan, a remote county cut off by landslides about 100 km (60 miles) northwest of the provincial capital, Chengdu.

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13. PRC Income Disparity

The Associated Press (Bradley S. Klapper, "WTO: CHINA MUST ADDRESS RICH-POOR GAP ", Geneva, 2008/05/13) reported that the PRC must address a widening gap between its rich and poor if Beijing wants a "harmonious society," the World Trade Organization will report in a trade review of the Asian nation, according to a copy obtained Tuesday by The Associated Press. The global commerce body also urges the PRC to increase spending on health, education and pensions so that people rely less on savings and consume more in the report. This would "reduce China's reliance on exports for growth, and hence its vulnerability to economic slowdowns abroad," it says.

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14. PRC Viral Outbreak

The Associated Press ("5 MORE CHILDREN DIE OF VIRUS IN CHINA ", Beijing, 2008/05/13) reported that five more children have died of hand, foot and mouth disease in the PRC, bringing the death toll to 39 since late March, the official Xinhua News Agency said Monday. A girl died in eastern Anhui province from enterovirus 71, a virus that causes a severe form of the disease, Xinhua said. Another child died on the southern tropical island of Hainan and three in southern Guangdong province, but no further details were available about their cases, Xinhua said. Hand, foot and mouth has sickened 24,934 children in six provinces, Xinhua said.

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II. CanKor

15. Report # 307-308

CANADA-KOREA ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SERVICE ("FOCUS: KNOWLEDGE SHARING AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PRIORITY", 2008/05/13) With the Six-Party process more or less back on track, we turn our attention to an urgently needed FOCUS on "Knowledge sharing as economic development priority". Loyal CanKor reader Brad Babson was rapporteur at a fall workshop in Seoul sponsored by KIEP and the Stanley Foundation, and organized by an Informal Working Group on Knowledge Sharing that has promoted urgent attention to this issue over the past several years. His summary of discussions and conclusions open this issue.

CANADA-KOREA ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SERVICE ("FICTION: CONVERSATION WITH THE PATRIOT -- PART 7", 2008/05/13) CanKor editor Erich Weingartner continues his fictional conversation with the DPR Korean "patriot", based on 25 years of close contact with Koreans both north and south of the 38th parallel. In this issue: episode 7.

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III. ROK Report

16. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("WHAT DO ROK-CHINA CHIEF REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSS? STATUS CHECK OF NUCLEAR REPORT AND AGREEMENT OF SCHEDULE FOR RE-OPENING OF SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2008/05/13) wrote that as the DPRK nuclear report issue approaches its conclusion stage, people are paying attention to the agreement contents of the talks in Beijing that the six-party talk chief representatives of the ROK and the PRC plan to have. Firstly will be an evaluation on the DPRK nuclear issue which is now at its conclusion stage with the US receiving and verifying the record of Yongbyon nuclear reactor activity. In addition, it is predicted that there will be a talk on setting the schedule and possible agenda for re-opening the six-party talks.

Saegae Ilbo ("HOPING FOR PROGRESS IN DPRK NUCLEAR REPORT PROCEDURE", 2008/05/13) wrote that we are pleased that a beginning for the DPRK nuclear issue to progress to reporting stage is arranged. However, the accuracy and veracity of the contents in report is a far greater issue. In DPRK nuclear negotiations, it seems that the DPRK has already materialized its strategy of "open to the US, isolate the ROK" in which it attempts to solve the Korean Peninsula problem by dealing directly with US in nuclear negotiation. The ROK government cannot just watch the rapid process of US-DPRK conversation and DPRK nuclear issue. Putting effort into recovering inter-Korean relations by negotiating direct aid method through unofficial contacts seems to be beneficial for both the ROK and DPRK.

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17. DPRK Internal Situation

Goodfriends ("FOOD SUPPLY TO MAIN CITIES AND CORE MANUFACTURERS WITH GOVERNMENT FUND", 2008/05/13) wrote that as the complaints about the food crisis arise nationwide, and different unstable factors that can cause social problems spreads, the DPRK government has hurriedly begun buying food with its government funds. It has provided food for one month to main cities and some of core manufacturers. It has devised different grades in supply because of food available, compared to the areas in need, are very much limited.

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18. Inter-Korean Relations

Seoul Newspaper (Jung Jong-Wook, "METICULOUS MUTUALISM AND ENTHUSIASTIC CONVERSATION POLICY", 2008/05/14) carried an article by a visiting professor at the Graduate School of International Studies, Seoul National University, who wrote that regardless of whether inter-Korean relations progressed or not, improvement of US-DPRK relations will help bringing stability and peace to the Korean Peninsula. In that sense, the ROK should not be anxious or impatient about reconciliation between the DPRK and US. What the ROK wants is not aggravation of US-DPRK relations or regression of PRC-Japan relations. This kind of thinking is a thinking of the Cold War. What is important is that the ROK must take advantage of strategic opportunities, these changes in surrounding regions will bring boldly and enthusiastically. Becoming strategic partners with the PRC will not make some kind of a big hole in the ROK-US alliance.

Hankuk Ilbo (Lee Kye-Sung, "BILL FROM US-DPRK DEAL", 2008/05/14) wrote that the problem is that Lee Myung-bak administration is not ready to properly cope with this rapidly unfolding situation. It is trying to organize a DPRK policy different from that of the former administration that could not overcome the limits of a loose tolerance policy. However, staying within the boundary of boasting without practical method or policy that can change the attitude of DPRK is troublesome.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org