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I. NAPSNet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("N.K. TO DESTROY NUCLEAR FACILITY AS SYMBOLIC GESTURE", Washington, 2008/05/20) reported that the DPRK is expected to destroy a part of its nuclear installations as a symbolic gesture around the time it submits a declaration on its nuclear stockpile, a ROK envoy said. The destruction of the cooling tower marks the beginning of the dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear programs, said Kim Sook, the chief ROK representative to the six-party talks. "It has the symbolic meaning of giving impetus to the denuclearization process," he told reporters.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Xinhua ("HILL: U.S. STEPPING UP INT'L CO-OP ON DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUES", Washington, 2008/05/20) reported that the US is "stepping up cooperation" with Japan and the ROK over negotiations to realize denuclearization on the Korean peninsula, US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said. "We're really stepping up our cooperation not only bilaterally but trilaterally. We have a lot to discuss here. We'll work out our work plan ahead," Hill told reporters without giving any details. Hill's talks with Kim and Saiki focused on how to verify the DPRK's declaration and the possibility of a next round of disarmament talks, State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said.

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3. DPRK Economy

IFES NK Brief ("ORASCOM AND DPRK TO COMPLETE RYUGYONG HOTEL CONSTRUCTION", 2008/05/20) reported that sources recently returning to the PRC from Pyongyang have reported that the DPRK has resumed efforts to complete the 105-story Ryugyong Hotel. With only 20 buildings in the world taller than the 330-meter structure, it would be by far the largest building in all of the DPRK. Traders in Shenyang, PRC with ties to Pyongyang say the DPRK has now found that funding,

partnering with Egypt's Orascom Group. This deal followed on the heels of Orascom's first venture into DPRK investment, announced in mid July, 2007, when Orascom Construction Industries purchased a 50 percent stake in the DPRK's Sangwon Cement Factory near Pyongyang.

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4. ROK Food Aid to the DPRK

Chosun Ilbo ("SEOUL MAY SEND UNSOLICITED FOOD AID TO N.KOREA ", 2008/05/20) reported that the government could send food aid to the DPRK even if the DPRK does not explicitly ask for it, it said after a policy coordination meeting of the Unification Ministry with the Grand National Party at the National Assembly on Monday. Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan, who chairs the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy Council, told reporters separately, "If North Korea's food condition is confirmed to be very serious or a severe natural disaster occurs there, we will consider sending food aid even if there is no such request" from the DPRK.

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5. DPRK Food Supply

Yonhap ("FARMERS STARVING TO DEATH IN N. KOREA'S BREADBASKET: AID GROUP ", Seoul, 2008/05/20) reported that farmers are dying of starvation in many regions of the DPRK's main grain-producing province amid a worsening food shortage, a local aid group said Tuesday. Famine has caused deaths in almost all except one or two regions of South Hwanghae Province, the breadbasket of the DPRK, said Good Friends, a Buddhist aid group working to help hungry North Koreans. The province near the DPRK's west coast, which was the least affected in the previous food crisis that hit the country in late 1990s, is now the most vulnerable to food shortages, the group said. Approximately 70 to 80 percent of children in rural villages of the province do not attend school, but rather forage for grass roots or wild greens for their family, it said.

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6. ROK, Russia on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap (Yoo Cheong-mo, "LEE, MEDVEDEV AGREE TO COOPERATE ON N. KOREA NUCLEAR ISSUE ", Seoul, 2008/05/20) reported that President Lee Myung-bak and Russia's new president, Dmitry Medvedev, talked over the telephone on Tuesday evening and agreed to closely cooperate to settle the DPRK's nuclear weapons problem, Lee's office said. The two leaders also agreed to expand practical economic and commercial cooperation by visiting each other's country in the near future, said the office.

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7. Sino-DPRK Relations

Xinhua ("DPRK LEADERS MOURN CHINA EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS ", Pyongyang, 2008/05/20) reported that some leaders of the DPRK visited the PRC embassy to the country on Tuesday to

mourn the victims of the massive earthquake that hit southwest PRC's Sichuan Province last week. On behalf of the National Defense Commission, the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of the DPRK, and the cabinet, they also laid wreaths to the quake victims. DPRK leaders and officials have expressed their deep sympathy and condolences over the earthquake victims and hoped the PRC people would defeat the disaster and rebuild their homes at an early date.

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8. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

Joongang Ilbo (Jung Ha-won, Limb Jae-un, "TERRITORIAL DISPUTES HEAT UP IN DOKDO ISLETS", 2008/05/21) reported that the territorial row between the ROK and Japan over small East Sea islets reached new heights yesterday. Officials said that an official document drafted in 1877 by the Japanese government stated that the Dokdo islets belong to the ROK. Officials were also busy yesterday drafting an English-language version of ROK claims to the Dokdo islets so the world will understand its position. After the ROK government showed an unusually firm stance by reiterating that Seoul would "sternly respond" on "any attempt to ruin Korea's territorial sovereignty," the Japanese government sought to calm the diplomatic waters. "We have no intention of significantly politicizing the Takeshima issue," Japan's chief cabinet secretary Nobutaka Machimura said.

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9. US on Japanese Defense Spending

The Associated Press (Tomoko A. Hosaka, "US AMBASSADOR: JAPAN SHOULD EXPAND MILITARY BUDGET", Tokyo, 2008/05/20) reported that Japan should boost defense spending instead of decreasing it as Tokyo's Asian neighbors expand their military budgets, the US Ambassador to Japan said. Over the last decade PRC has increased military expenditures by an average of 14.2 percent annually, and the ROK's defense budget has grown 73 percent, said J. Thomas Schieffer, U.S. ambassador in Japan since 2005. In contrast, Japan's ratio of defense spending to gross domestic product has been declining, he said. "We believe that Japan should consider the benefits of increasing its own defense spending to make a greater, not lesser, contribution to its own security," Schieffer said in a speech at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan.

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10. Japan Politics

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("CABINET APPROVAL RATING HITS RECORD LOW", 2008/05/20) reported that the approval rating for the Cabinet of Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has dropped to a record low 26.1 percent, according to a face-to-face interview survey conducted by The Yomiuri Shimbun over the weekend. The approval rating was down 3.9 percentage points compared with a similar survey in April. The disapproval rate in the May survey was 64.7 percent, up 6.3 percentage points from the previous survey. Among reasons cited for not supporting the Cabinet, 47 percent said they did not know where Fukuda stood on policy issues, and 45 percent said they did not have faith in his economic policies.

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11. Japan Population

The Associated Press (Mari Yamaguchi, "NUMBER OF ELDERLY IN JAPAN HITS RECORD HIGH ", Tokyo, 2008/05/20) reported that the number of elderly in Japan hit a record high of more than 27 million in 2007, the government reported, warning of an imminent pension crisis as the country rapidly ages. The annual report by the Cabinet Office showed Japanese aged 65 or over making up 21.5 percent of the population last year, while the so-called "late-stage elderly" — those 75 or older — accounted for nearly 10 percent. "We have become a full-fledged aged society," the report declared.

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12. PRC Earthquake

The Associated Press ("CHINA: 40,000 DEAD, 5 MILLION HOMELESS AFTER QUAKE ", Chengdu, 2008/05/20) reported that rescuers freed a 60-year-old woman Tuesday who was trapped for more than 195 hours after last week's earthquake and had survived by drinking rainwater, while the confirmed death toll rose to more than 40,000. The tales of survival came after the confirmed death toll from the disaster rose to 40,075, according to the State Council, the PRC's Cabinet. Officials have said the final number killed by the quake was expected to surpass 50,000. Five million people lost their homes in the quake, said Jiang Li, vice minister of civil affairs.

The Associated Press (Anita Chang, "CHINA: EARTHQUAKE BURIED 32 SOURCES OF RADIATION ", Beijing, 2008/05/20) reported that more than 30 sources of radiation were buried by debris from the massive earthquake in central PRC last week and all have either been recovered or safely cordoned off, state media reported. A French nuclear expert said the radioactive sources likely came from materials used in hospitals, factories or in research, not for weapons. All but two have been recovered, and the remaining two have been located, cordoned and will soon be transported to a safer location, Xinhua said.

Washington Post (Ariana Eunjung Cha, "CHINA FACES ECONOMIC AFTERSHOCKS", Shifang,) reported that early assessments of the disaster's economic impact predicted that it would be "minimal," "transient" and "limited." Economists declared that this was a human tragedy, not an economic one. But almost a week after the quake, vast swaths of companies are still shut down and millions of people are still not at back at work. There is evidence that all sorts of resources that the PRC needs to continue fueling its double-digit growth -- including grains, hydroelectric power and chemicals -- are becoming more scarce and more expensive. Energy, water and food supplies are particular concerns, as is the worry that continuing fear among PRC workers could drive the most vulnerable aspect of the economy: inflation.

The New York Times (Edward Wong, "CHINESE FLEE FLOOD THREAT FROM QUAKE", Chengdu, 2008/05/20) reported that thousands of earthquake survivors fled tent camps and villages across the ravaged landscape of southwestern PRC after the government warned that several lakes and rivers were getting dangerously close to overflowing because landslides have blocked water flow. The greatest threat of flooding came from a lake in the far north of Sichuan Province that had already begun to overflow because of a blockage in the Qingzhu River, according to Xinhua, the official news agency, which cited experts at the province's land management department. A rise of only 6 to 10

feet will cause the lake to "threaten more than 2,000 people who are staying in shelters after the earthquake downstream," one expert said.

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13. Cross Strait Relations

Bloomberg (Tim Culpan, "MA, NEW TAIWAN PRESIDENT, CALLS ON CHINA TO EMBRACE DEMOCRACY ", 2008/05/20) reported that President Ma Ying-jeou urged the PRC in his inaugural speech to move toward democracy and allow Taiwan a larger international role, testing his relationship with a government that claims sovereignty over the island. "We hope that mainland China will continue to move toward freedom, democracy and prosperity for all people," Ma said after being sworn in today in Taipei. "Taiwan doesn't just want security and prosperity. It wants dignity." Ma's comments, which included a pledge to acquire more weaponry, triggered the largest decline in Taiwan's stock market since his March 22 election.

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14. Sino-Russian Relations

RIA Novosti ("RUSSIA, CHINA TO SIGN JOINT STATEMENT DURING MEDVEDEV'S VISIT", Beijing, 2008/05/20) reported that Russia and the PRC will sign a number of documents, including a joint declaration on key international issues, during Russian President Dmitry Medvedev's visit to the PRC, Russia's ambassador in Beijing said on Tuesday. Medvedev is to visit China on May 23-24. "The package of documents is currently being discussed, and work will continue up to the visit," Sergei Razov said. He added that Medvedev would be accompanied by a group of Russian businessmen.

The Associated Press ("RUSSIA FLAGS NUCLEAR ENERGY DEAL WITH CHINA", Beijing, 2008/05/20) reported that top Russian energy officials may sign a cooperation agreement on nuclear power with the PRC during President Dmitry Medvedev's visit this week, Russia's ambassador in Beijing said on Tuesday. Russia has forged close ties with Beijing and is eager to boost exports of oil, gas and nuclear products to the PRC, which is desperate to secure energy for its booming economy. "I cannot disclose what project, because it is under discussion. But it is a big possibility that it will be signed ," Razov said. Razov indicated that little progress, however, would be made on long-running disputes over gas prices that have held up work on two planned pipelines to transport the fuel to the PRC.

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II. PRC Report

15. PRC Earthquake

Red Cross Society of China <http://202.108.59.10/> ("RED CROSS SOCIETY OF CHINA RECEIVED 2.744 BILLION YUAN FROM ALL SECTORS OF THE COMMUNITY", 2008/05/19) reported that as of

11:00 on May 19, the Red Cross Society of China and all the local Red Cross Society has received donations from home and abroad up to 2.744 billion yuan, out of which the Federation 1.062 billion yuan, local Red Cross 1.682 billion yuan. According to the PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs report, as of 13:00 on the 19th, the total donation was 10.834 billion yuan.

Financial Network <http://www.caijing.com.cn> (Lin Jing, "JAPAN TEAM STOPS RESCUE WORK", 2008/05/19) reported that due to the aftershocks which may occur in Sichuan disaster areas, under the PRC government's proposal, the Japanese international emergency rescue team had to suspend the new search and stop the rescue work. Japanese rescue team is the first foreign rescue team accepted by the PRC government since its establishment in 1949. The total scale of the rescue team is 60 people, including super firemen of the Tokyo Fire Department Rescue Team, riot policemen of Tokyo Police Department, and other special rescue team members and divers. The Japanese Government will send another medical team to the disaster areas on May 20.

One Foundation <http://www.onefoundation.cn> ("THE FIRST 'ONE FOUNDATION FAMILY' HELPED CHILDREN RETURN TO THE CLASSROOM", 2008/05/19) reported that on the morning of May 19, Jet Li One Foundation, an independent program set up by a famous PRC Kongfu star Jet Li under the Red Cross of China, and the local Red Cross staff decided to set up a project named "One Foundation Family" in Jiangyou City of Sichuan Province, targeted at the rebuilding of schools. Since the aftershocks had only caused housing collapse, and there were no casualties, so the "One Foundation Family" can help children return to the classroom in the first time.

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III. ROK Report

16. DPRK Nuclear Program

Pressian (Seo Jae-jung, "WHERE IS ROK? WASHINGTON IS CHANGING FOR SURE", 2008/05/21) carried an article by a professor at Johns Hopkins University, who wrote that US-DPRK relations are rapidly changing. The atmosphere in Washington has already changed. The US wants the DPRK nuclear issue to be solved in a peacefully diplomatic way. The administration and the Congress are leading the improvement in US-DPRK relations, and there are also voices calling for cooperation and strengthening the relationship from outside the government. Compared to this, it is rather difficult to see what the Lee Myung-bak administration and the National Assembly are doing. The practical voice rightfully demanding that the ROK, the nation most concerned regarding the issue, take the leading role in Korean Peninsula denuclearization does not seem so powerful.

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