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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. Napsnet

1. Alleged DPRK-Syrian Nuclear Cooperation

Joongang Ilbo ("BUSH GAVE NORTH A WARNING IN LETTER", Seoul, 2008/04/28) reported that in a letter to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il at the end of last year, U.S. President George W. Bush urged Pyongyang to come clean about helping Syria to develop a secret nuclear program, a senior ROK government source said. Another source said a U.S. envoy delivered photographic evidence with the letter to prove the charge. According to the source, U.S. officials consulted with Seoul before delivering Bush's letter to Kim.

Donga Ilbo ("U.S. PUSHING N. KOREA ON NUKE REGISTRATION", Seoul, 2008/04/28) reported that U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said that the US shared data on the nuclear cooperation between the DPRK and Syria with parties to the six-way nuclear talks and debated over it. “We briefed this information to China, South Korea, Japan and Russia at the end of last year and also shared it with North Korea. We are unable to disclose to what extent the information was shared (including whether the video was shown), but the substance and background facts are no surprise to the parties of the six-party talks. Since this issue has been discussed for several months within the frame of the six-party talks and the information was sufficiently shared, North Korea has an understanding that we are aware of what went on.” He also said President George W. Bush will decide whether to proceed with the process when the DPRK’s nuclear registration is reported.

Los Angeles Times (Nicole Gaouette, "TIMING OF NORTH KOREA REVELATIONS QUESTIONED ", Washington, 2008/04/28) reported that Rep. Peter Hoekstra of Michigan, the ranking Republican on the House Intelligence Committee, assailed the Bush administration Sunday for the timing and nature of its charges that the DPRK helped Syria build a secret nuclear weapons facility. "The administration has handled this very badly" and "has a credibility problem," Hoekstra said. "The timing of it, what information they released, what information they did not release and who they released it to, is going to make it more difficult for them to reach an agreement [with the DPRK] that will be supported by Congress and supported by the American people," Hoekstra said.

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2. ROK, US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Chosun Ilbo ("U.S., S. KOREAN NUCLEAR ENVOYS TO MEET IN WASHINGTON ON MONDAY", Seoul, 2008/04/28) reported that ROK top nuclear envoy Kim Sook has left for Washington to discuss restarting the six-party talks with his U.S. counterpart, Christopher Hill. The two nuclear envoys are

expected to discuss the results of a U.S. delegation's visit to Pyongyang last week.

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3. Inter-Korea Relations

Dong-A Ilbo ("N. KOREA REJECT INTER-KOREAN LIAISON OFFICE", Seoul, 2008/04/28) reported that the DPRK's official daily Rodong Sinmun in its Saturday editorial rejected the inter-Korean liaison office that ROK President Lee Myung-bak had proposed. The newspaper criticized, “President Lee’s proposal is a gimmick to avoid his responsibility for worsening the North-South relationship and divert public attention to somewhere else.” ROK presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said in a written briefing, “As (the president’s) proposal was not part of our North Korea strategies, we do not need to be affected by the North’s rejection.”

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4. DPRK Defectors

Associated Press (Kwang-tae Kim, "NKOREAN OFFICER DEFECTS TO SKOREA", Seoul, 2008/04/29) reported that a DPRK soldier defected to the ROK for the first time in a decade across the heavily fortified border dividing the countries, an Joint Chiefs of Staff official said Monday. A 28-year-old second lieutenant, identified only by his surname Ri, approached an ROK guard post Sunday on the western part of the frontier, and told the ROK guards he was seeking asylum.

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5. Olympic Torch Relay on Korean Peninsula

Associated Press ("FREE OF PROTEST, OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY BEGINS NORTH KOREA LEG", Pyongyang, 2008/04/29) reported that the Olympic torch made its first-ever relay run Monday in the DPRK. An attentive and peaceful crowd of thousands watched the start of the relay in Pyongyang, some waving PRC flags, footage from broadcaster APTN showed. The event was presided over by the head of the country's parliament, Kim Yong-nam. DPRK leader Kim Jong-il was not seen at the event but was "paying great interest to the success of the Olympic torch relay," said Pak Hak Son, chairman of the North's Olympic committee, according to a report by Japan's Kyodo News Agency from Pyongyang.

Joongang Ilbo ("CRIES OF 'GO CHINA' GREET TORCH'S CHAOTIC JOURNEY ", Seoul, 2008/04/28) reported that minor injuries were reported as pro-China demonstrators scuffled with protesters as the Olympic torch completed its journey yesterday through Seoul. About an hour into the relay, DPRK defector Son Jong-hoon tried to set himself on fire before being stopped by police. An unidentified man sprinted toward the torch about 2:50 p.m. but the police quickly dragged him out of the way. About an hour later, two members of an interest group for DPRK refugees were arrested carrying a case of paint thinner. Scuffles broke out between a group of Chinese students studying in the ROK and demonstrators criticizing PRC policies. The students threw stones and water bottles toward the demonstrators as police intervened.

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "SEOUL REGRETS CHINESE VIOLENCE", Seoul, 2008/04/29) reported that ROK Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Yong-joon delivered a message of regret to PRC Ambassador to Seoul Ning Fukui Monday over Chinese students' violent behavior during Sunday's Olympic torch relay in Seoul, ROK Foreign Ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said. "Ambassador Ning visited the ministry to express thanks for Seoul's support for the torch relay on behalf of the Chinese prime minister and foreign minister," Moon said. "Minister Lee expressed hope for Beijing's successful hosting of the Olympic Games, while expressing strong regret over violent Chinese demonstrators during the relay." "What I want to stress is that Chinese people, especially Chinese students here, have good feeling toward South Koreans,'' the ambassador told Korean journalists after the meeting with Lee. "I will continue efforts not to damage the public sentiment of both nations. I think it requires joint efforts by the two governments."

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6. Olympic Torch Relay in Japan

Asahi Shimbun ("6 ARRESTED DURING TORCH RELAY", Nagano, 2008/04/28) reported that six people were arrested during the Japanese leg of the Olympic torch relay here Saturday, police said. A 63-year-old self-employed man from Aichi Prefecture was arrested after hurling tomatoes at a torch bearer around noon. A 33-year-old company employee from Kanagawa Prefecture was also arrested after tossing at least one unlit flare.

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7. US Military in Japan

Agence France-Presse ("MARINE TO FACE COURT-MARTIAL IN JAPANESE RAPE CASE", Tokyo, 2008/04/25) reported that the United States military announced Friday that a marine accused of raping a 14-year-old girl in Japan would face a court-martial. A United States Marines statement said that commanders decided to send Sergeant Hadnott to a general court-martial for five violations of the military code ”as a result of a Marine Corps investigation.”

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8. Japanese Politics

Reuters (Linda Sieg, "BELEAGUERED JAPAN PM IN PINCH AFTER BY-ELECTION LOSS", Tokyo, 2008/04/28) reported that calls to replace Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda are emerging in the Liberal Democratic Party after the ruling bloc suffered a by-election defeat, former chief cabinet minister Kaoru Yosano said on Monday. In a vote widely seen as a referendum on Fukuda's struggling administration, former opposition Democratic Party lawmaker Hideo Hiraoka defeated the LDP's Shigetaro Yamamoto in Yamaguchi, central Japan, in Sunday's contest for a lower house seat. "I think we should continue this administration until as close as possible to the end of term in September next year and wait for the support rate to rise," Yosano said.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHIEF OF TAIWAN'S INCOMING RULING PARTY TO VISIT CHINA: REPORT", Taipei, 2008/04/28) report that the Taipei-based China Times said Sunday that Wu Poh-hsiung, the chairman of Taiwan's incoming ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) is planning to visit the PRC and meet President Hu Jintao in June. "Chairman Wu has said he did not rule out visiting the mainland," KMT spokesman Huang Yu-chen told AFP in response to the report. However, he said: "As of now, no schedule has been drafted as such a visit involves a further arrangement with the mainland side."

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10. Tibet Unrest

Associated Press ("DALAI LAMA SAYS TALKS WITH CHINA MUST BE MEANINGFUL", Dharmsala, 2008/04/27) reported that the Dalai Lama welcomed the PRC's offer to meet his envoy. "We need to have serious talks about how to reduce the Tibetan resentment within Tibet," the Dalai Lama said. "But just mere meeting some of my men in order to show the world that they are having dialogue, then it is meaningless."

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II. ROK Report

11. DPRK Internal Situation

Goodfriends ("FOOD CRISIS LEADES TO FAMILY DISPERSION: 'LET'S PLEASE SURVIVE, AND MEET' ", 2008/04/26) reported that family dispersion issue has arisen again in Pyeongannam-do as the food crisis occurred. As the number of families that cannot afford even one meal per day increases, family members are leaving for different places. Family members respectively leave for some place to get the food from—either their parents' home or siblings' home. When leaving, parents each take care of their children. They separate as they promise to survive and meet when they gather some money. Although the government was busy preparing for April 15 th "Day of the Sun," farmers and average citizens showed a stark contrast with their face full of apprehension.

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12. Inter-Korean Relations

Hankyoreh ("BUILDING TRUST IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE FOR BOTH ROK AND DPRK", 2008/04/28) reported that as DPRK rejected President Lee Myung-bak's suggestion for an inter-Korean contact office, inter-Korean relations will inevitably stay in the deadlock for the time being. We who hoped for improvement in inter-Korean relations since the inauguration for the new administration, such counter-moves of the DPRK are disappointing. However, the ROK government is more responsible for the current situation. In order to solve the current situation of deadlock,

trust building of both the ROK and DPRK need to make effort.

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13. Inter-Korean Relations

Seoul Shinmun ("DISAPPOINTMENT FOR DPRK'S REFUSAL FOR CONTACT OFFICE", 2008/04/28) reported that the DPRK mentioning "the perpetuation of division" as the reason for refusal of contact office is illogical. For conflict between the DPRK and ROK, which have conflicting systems, solving it with regular and occasional conversation is beneficial and effective for both sides. That is one reason the DPRK must withdraw its strategy of "open to US, isolate ROK." Whatever the reason, severance of conversation is inappropriate. We believe that it is necessary to take the initiative for reopening conversation by government activating its unofficial conversation channels. Rice aid to DPRK is also an option to be reconsidered.

Kukmin Ilbo ("DPRK MUST NO LONGER CLING TO THE PAST", 2008/04/28) reported that the DPRK being unable to realize changes in inter-Korean relations makes us sigh. As the DPRK refused ROK government's hand, the deadlock in inter-Korean diplomatic situation will continue, and it will be no help for either the ROK or DPRK. The DPRK must come out for conversation as soon as possible.

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