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I. Napsnet

1. Six-Party Talks

Associated Press ("CHINA, NORTH KOREA PLEDGE TO PROMOTE 6-NATION NUCLEAR TALKS", Beijing, 2008/04/28) reported that the PRC and DPRK pledged to work together to kick-start stalled six-nation talks. PRC Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi told Pak Ui Chun, his DPRK counterpart, that "it was in everyone's interest" to implement the next phase of talks, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. Washington recently accused the DPRK of trying to help Syria build a nuclear reactor. However, US Ambassador to the ROK Alexander Vershbow said that he did not expect the revelations to affect the disarmament negotiations because the DPRK's alleged cooperation with Syria has been an issue in the nuclear talks for months.

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2. Olympic Torch in DPRK

Associated Press ("OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY BEGINS NORTH KOREA LEG FREE OF PROTEST", Pyongyang, 2008/04/28) reported that the Olympic torch made its first-ever relay run in the DPRK. An attentive and cheering crowd of thousands watched the start of the relay which began beneath the Juche Tower, in Pyongyang, footage from broadcaster APTN showed. At the start of the run, Kim Yong Nam passed the torch to Pak Du Ik, who played on the DPRK's 1966 World Cup soccer team that made a historic trip to the quarterfinals. UNICEF had been asked to participate in the relay but withdrew in March, saying it wasn't sure the event would help its mission of raising awareness of conditions for children.

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3. Japan-PRC Relations

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN SAYS TORCH PROTESTS WON'T AFFECT HU VISIT", Tokyo, 2008/04/28) reported that although protesters hurled rubbish and flares as the Olympic torch passed through the mountain resort of Nagano, where brawls between Chinese supporters and protesters left four people injured, Japan said that it did not expect protests to affect a landmark visit next week by Chinese President Hu Jintao. Hu is due on May 6 until May 10 marking only the second visit ever by a Chinese president to Japan and the first such trip in a decade. Japan and the PRC have been trying to repair uneasy ties dating to the legacy of Japanese aggression before World War II.

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4. Japan Oil Tax

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN GOVERNMENT VOWS TO PRESS ON AFTER ELECTION BLOW",

Tokyo, 2008/04/28) reported that Japan's government pledged to push ahead with its plans to reinstitute a special petrol tax, which expired at the start of April because the opposition was against it. Fukuda's government says that ending the tax, which adds 25 yen (25 US cents) to each litre at the pump, will cost heavily indebted Japan some 2.6 trillion yen (26 billion dollars) a year. The opposition, arguing that the tax hurts ordinary people, has threatened that if the government rams the bill through it will pass a censure motion urging Fukuda to call early elections.

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5. Japan Bird Flu

Reuters ("JAPAN DETECTS BIRD FLU IN FOUR WILD SWANS", Tokyo, 2008/04/28) reported that Japan has detected a strain of bird flu in four wild swans after stepping up checks following major outbreaks of the disease in neighboring ROK. Inspectors detected the H5 strain of bird flu in the swans, the prefectural government said, but they were still checking whether it was the highly virulent H5N1 strain. There are no chicken farms within a 10 km radius of the area where the swans were found, and no unusual incidents were noted at other farms. The official said Japan's last case of bird flu was found in a wild bird in March 2007 in Kumamoto prefecture on Japan's southern island of Kyushu.

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6. PRC Deadly Train Crash

Associated Press ("SOME SLEPT, SOME STOOD BEFORE DEADLY DERAILMENT IN CHINA", Zibo, 2008/04/28) reported that a high-speed train derailed, toppling into a ditch and slamming into another train. At least 70 people died and more than 400 were injured. Some 1,000 soldiers and armed police were sent to the crash site to seal it off and help with the rescue work, Xinhua said. Officials seemed to be in a rush to get the line functioning again ahead of the May Day holiday weekend, when Chinese flock to resort cities like Qingdao. Trains are the most popular way to travel in the PRC, and the country's overloaded rail network carried 1.36 billion passengers last year. While accidents are rare, the government is trying to extend and upgrade the state-run rail network and introduce more high speed trains.

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7. Tibet Unrest

Reuters ("TIBETANS MARK DEATHS OF PROTESTERS IN CHINA", New Delhi, 2008/04/28) reported that thousands of Tibetan exiles in India and Nepal, including their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, marked the deaths of protesters during last month's violent upheaval in Tibet with prayers and traditional funeral rituals. In Dharamsala, the northern headquarters of the Tibetan government-in-exile in India, around 3,000 Tibetan monks and others attended special prayers called by the Dalai Lama in memory of those killed in Tibet. Many Tibetans laid food in the courtyard from biscuits to bananas in memory of those killed, witnesses said. In New Delhi, hundreds prayed and

chanted till nightfall on Monday. Some angry protesters wearing "Free Tibet" T-shirts shouted anti-China slogans, officials said.

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8. PRC Viral Outbreak

Associated Press ("20 CHILDREN DEAD, 1,200 SICKENED BY INFECTION IN EASTERN CHINA", Beijing, 2008/04/28) reported that a viral outbreak in eastern PRC has sickened almost 1,200 children, killing 20 of them. Hospitals in Fuyang started to take in patients with fever, blisters, ulcers in the mouth, or a rash on their hands and feet, the official Xinhua News Agency said. It was not immediately clear what triggered the outbreak, but the bureau said it is the season when the virus is prevalent. The illness mainly strikes children below age 10 and is not related to foot and mouth disease, which infects cattle, sheep and swine. The World Health Organization's Beijing office said there didn't appear to be an epidemiological link among the cases although most of the children lived in rural areas. "We believe the situation is still of concern, especially because of the current high reported case fatality rate compared to previous years," said Dr. Cris Tunon, the acting PRC representative.

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9. Russia-Iran Relations

Associated Press ("IRAN, RUSSIA DISCUSS NUCLEAR PROPOSALS", 2008/04/29) reported that Iran discussed with Russia the general outlines of a package of proposals aimed at defusing concerns that Iran is using its nuclear program as a cover for weapons development. Top Iranian nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili said Tehran would soon unveil the proposals publicly and claimed that they would help assure the international community that Iran's nuclear program was peaceful. Iran has denied pursuing nuclear weapons, saying its program is geared toward generating electricity.

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II. ROK Report

10. DPRK Nuclear Program

Munhwa Ilbo (Jae Sung-Ho, professor of law at Joongang University, ""DPRK-RUSSIA NUCLEAR COLLABORATION TO BE METICULOUSLY VERIFIED" ", 2008/04/29) wrote that it is predicted that from now on, the doubt of a nuclear collaboration between DPRK and Syria is going to move from the stage of "proposal of suspicion" to the stage of "verification." Why does US administration disclose such information on "nuclear proliferation" with "assurance" now? One fact for sure is that DPRK has lied and that has been revealed. Lately, the six-party talks are at a crucial point. A serious review of the structure of six-party talks is necessary. Regarding the most urgent problem of the

DPRK's nuclear report, the role of powerful countries including the PRC and Russia should be further emphasized.

Hankyoreh (Jang Jung-Su, "MYSTERIES OF DPRK-SYRIA NUCLEAR CONNECTION", 2008/04/29) wrote that the problem is whether the DPRK-Syria nuclear collaboration proclamation can be approved by DPRK. Until now, the DPRK does not display its official reaction to the white house's declaration. Besides this, other problems remain. If the the top leaders of the US—President Bush and vice-president Cheney—demand additional compromise from the DPRK for complete exhibition and verification of UEP, there is a high possibility of DPRK nuclear issue entering a critical situation.

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