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Contents in this Issue:

- I. NAPSNet
  - 1. Inter-Korean Relations
  - 2. DPRK Nuclear Program
  - 3. DPRK on Six Party Talks
  - 4. US on Abductee Issue
  - 5. US on DPRK Human Rights
  - 6. ROK Conventional Arms
  - 7. ROK Swine Flu Outbreak
  - 8. ROK Politics
  - 9. PRC-ROK Environmental Cooperation
  - 10. Japan Politics
  - 11. Japan Food Security
  - 12. Sino-Japanese Relations
  - 13. Sino-Japanese Economic Relations
  - 14. Cross Strait Relations
  - 15. Sino-Russian Military Cooperation
  - 16. Sino-Russian Energy Trade

- 17. Sino-Peruvian Trade Relations
- 18. PRC Climate Change

- II. PRC Report
  - 19. PRC Environment
  - 20. PRC Environment

Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. Inter-Korean Relations

JoongAng Ilbo ("SEOUL ISSUES WARNING ON DETAINEE CONTROVERSY", 2009/04/28) reported that Seoul's chief DPRK policy maker railed at Pyongyang over the drawn-out detention of a ROK engineer, linking the issue with the stability of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and future negotiations between the two Koreas. Hyun said Yu's detention is a fundamental problem for the Kaesong project. "Such a situation could have happened to anyone from any company [there], so this is an issue for the entire Kaesong Industrial Complex," he said. The minister said for the sake of future development at the Kaesong project, the DPRK must not control the border unilaterally or infringe upon human rights.

(return to top)

2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("NKOREA THREATENS TO CONDUCT NUCLEAR TEST", Seoul, 2009/04/29) reported that the DPRK threatened to conduct a second nuclear test and to test-launch ballistic missiles unless the United Nations apologises for condemning its recent rocket launch. "Unless the UN Security Council offers an apology immediately, we will be forced to take additional self-defence measures to protect the highest interests of our republic," a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency . "They will include a nuclear test and ballistic missile tests ," the spokesman said.

(return to top)

3. DPRK on Six Party Talks

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "N. KOREA RAPS JAPAN OVER STALLED NUCLEAR TALKS ", Seoul, 2009/04/28) reported that the DPRK blasted Japan on Tuesday for passing the blame over stalled nuclear disarmament talks, insisting Tokyo is responsible for the deadlock by not fulfilling its

obligations. The criticism came in response to Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura, who a day earlier denounced Pyongyang's reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel rods as "not constructive" and urged the country to return to the six-party talks. "The Japanese reactionary forces... are pointing their finger at us and seriously provoking the Korean military and the people," the paper said, warning, "This is not empty talk."

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA REAFFIRMS BOYCOTT OF NUCLEAR TALKS", 2009/04/28) reported that the DPRK will make good on its pledge to quit the multilateral disarmament talks and bolster its nuclear deterrence despite sanctions from the United Nations, the DPRK's leading newspaper said. "We state again that our country will no longer enter into the six-way talks and will strengthen nuclear deterrence power in every way," the Rodong Sinmun, published by the DPRK's powerful Workers' Party, said. "In the unjust and unstable world today, whose international law, relations, and order are swayed by power, we can defend our sovereignty and show dignity and prowess only through defensive nuclear deterrence capability," it added.

(return to top)

4. US on Abductee Issue

Agence France-Presse ("US SAYS FULLY BACKS JAPAN ON NORTH KOREA KIDNAPPINGS", Washington, 2009/04/28) reported that the US said it fully supported Japan's efforts to account for civilians kidnapped by the DPRK, an issue that has caused past rifts between the two allies. Stephen Bosworth and Sung Kim, the two key U.S. policymakers on the DPRK, met Monday with relatives of some of the kidnap victims, whose plight enjoys wide sympathy in Japan. "The United States wholeheartedly supports Japan's position on the abductee issue. We have not forgotten and will never forget the suffering of the abductees and their families," said State Department spokesman Robert Wood.

(return to top)

5. US on DPRK Human Rights

Yonhap News ("U.S. URGES N. KOREA TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD", Washington, 2009/04/28) reported that t he US expressed concerns about the human rights condition in the DPRK, urging the reclusive communist state to improve its rights record. "We remain deeply concerned about the human rights situation in North Korea," State Department spokesman Robert Wood said. "We will continue to press North Korea to improve its human rights record."

(return to top)

6. ROK Conventional Arms

Korea Herald ("S. KOREA RANKS AS BIGGEST CONVENTIONAL ARMS IMPORTER IN 2008 ", 2009/04/28) reported that the ROK was the world's largest importer of conventional weapons from 2007-2008, a Sweden-based think tank has reported. The ROK would rank third if its entire arms imports from 2004-2008 were factored in, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute said. The United States was the world's biggest supplier of conventional weapons from 2004-2008,

the report said, adding it accounted for 73 percent of the ROK's arms imports during the same period.

(return to top)

7. ROK Swine Flu Outbreak

Xinhua News ("S KOREA'S MILITARY ELEVATES ALERT AGAINST SWINE FLU ", 2009/04/28) reported that the ROK military said that it raised the alert against swine flu as the country's health authorities reported the first suspected case early Tuesday morning. "The military authorities have ordered that any soldier suspected of showing flu symptoms be reported to them immediately," Won Tae-jae, spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, said. Health officials said earlier in the day that a 51-year old woman from a recent trip to Mexico was suspected of human infection of swine influenza for the first time in the ROK.

(return to top)

8. ROK Politics

The Los Angeles Times (John M. Glionna , "SOUTH KOREA EX-LEADER TO FACE PROSECUTORS", 2009/04/28) reported that Ex-President Roh Moo-hyun will enter familiar territory for a former ROK head of state this week when he is grilled by prosecutors over his alleged role in a national bribery scandal. The onetime human rights lawyer and judge is the third ROK president since 1995 to face a corruption probe after leaving office. He is suspected of soliciting $6 million in bribes from a shoemaking magnate that were allegedly paid to his wife and son. Roh, 62, has acknowledged that his wife accepted $1 million from footwear manufacturer Park Yeon-cha but denied involvement in any influence-peddling. He has characterized the $5 million his son got from Park as an investment loan.

(return to top)

9. PRC-ROK Environmental Cooperation

Chosun Ilbo ("CHINA THANKS KOREA FOR HELP WITH YELLOW DUST", 2009/04/28) reported that weather experts in the PRC have thanked the ROK government for helping minimize damage from the worst sandstorms in decades in the country's northwestern regions. The PRC's Xinhua News Agency said a local meteorological administration was able accurately to predict the coming yellow dust and prevent damage with the help of the ROK government. Since 2003 the ROK has invested US$1.3 million to build about 10 sandstorm observatories in the PRC as part of efforts to track them before they head to the Korean peninsula.

(return to top)

10. Japan Politics

Mainichi Daily News ("ASO HINTS HE WILL NOT DISSOLVE LOWER HOUSE IN MAY", 2009/04/28) reported that Prime Minister Taro Aso has suggested that he will not dissolve the House of

Representatives for a snap general election in May in order to place priority on Diet deliberations on outstanding bills. "Besides the supplementary budget, there are other important bills. (Even if the supplementary budget is approved), we can't say it's perfect," Aso told reporters. His remarks have been widely interpreted by ruling coalition politicians as suggesting that approval of the extra budget will not be the only condition for calling a general election, giving rise to speculation that the prime minister may not dissolve the Lower House in May.

Kyodo ("ASO CABINET APPROVAL RATING RISES 5.9 POINTS TO 29.6%: KYODO POLL", Tokyo, 2009/04/29) reported that the approval rating for the Cabinet of Prime Minister Taro Aso stands at 29.6 percent, up 5.9 percentage points from the previous poll in late March, a Kyodo News survey showed Wednesday. The disapproval rating came to 56.2 percent, down 7.3 points from the March survey. The latest poll also showed that 65.5 percent of respondents said main opposition Democratic Party of Japan leader Ichiro Ozawa should step down because his secretary was indicted over illegal fundraising, compared with 66.6 percent in the previous survey. Asked whether they would prefer Aso or Ozawa as prime minister, 39.8 percent said Aso, up 6.7 points from the March poll and 13.7 points higher than the percentage preferring Ozawa.

(return to top)

11. Japan Food Security

The Financial Times ("JAPANESE JITTERS GROW OVER FOOD SECURITY ", 2009/04/28) reported that the Japanese government is drawing up plans to finance investments in agricultural production in developing countries, in the latest sign of nervousness about food security among countries that import agricultural commodities. Munemitsu Hirano, director for international trade policy negotiations at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, the Japanese government was not considering investing in Africa, where the local population faces food shortages, but was looking at regions such as South and Central America and eastern Europe.

(return to top)

12. Sino-Japanese Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA CALLS JAPAN FOREIGN MIN'S NUCLEAR COMMENTS "GROUNDLESS"", Beijing, 2009/04/28) reported that the PRC on Tuesday rejected as "groundless" comments by Japan's foreign minister questioning Beijing's commitment to nuclear arms reduction. "China... supports international nuclear disarmament and we have made unremitting major efforts in this regard," foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu said. "The Japanese accusations in this regard are completely groundless."

(return to top)

13. Sino-Japanese Economic Relations

Reuters ("JAPAN, CHINA EYE COOPERATION ON MOBILE SERVICES", 2009/04/28) reported that Japan and the PRC are looking at cooperating on next-generation cellphone services, which would help the PRC develop its wireless technology and Japanese makers expand in the PRC, a Japanese government official said. The Nikkei business daily reported that Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso

and PRC Premier Wen Jiabao are expected to agree on an alliance in new equipment and broadband services, when they meet on Wednesday in Beijing.

(return to top)

14. Cross Strait Relations

Associated Press (Peter Enav, "TAIWAN PRESIDENT: CHINA OKAYS ISLAND WHO ROLE", Taipei, 2009/04/29) reported that Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou announced Wednesday that the PRC will allow the island's participation in the World Health Assembly in Geneva as an observer. "The mainland authorities have made a friendly gesture," Ma said. In Beijing, Taiwan Affairs Office Spokesman Li Weiyi told reporters that the PRC is "optimistic" about Taiwan's participation in this year's assembly.

(return to top)

15. Sino-Russian Military Cooperation

Itar-Tass ("RUSSIA, CHINA DEFENCE MINISTRIES TO STAGE 25 JOINT EVENTS IN 2009", 2009/04/28) reported that the Russian and PRC defence ministries will hold around 25 joint events in 2009, said on Tuesday Russian Defence Minister Anatoly Serdyukov at a meeting with his PRC counterpart Liang Guanglie, now on an official visit to Russia. “We plan this year around 25 joint events,” Serdyukov specified. “This points to a high level of cooperation between the defence ministries of the two countries.”

(return to top)

16. Sino-Russian Energy Trade

Reuters ("RUSSIA STARTS CONSTRUCTION OF OIL PIPELINE TO CHINA", 2009/04/28) reported that Russia started construction of a crude oil pipeline to the PRC, following an agreement between the two countries to exchange loans for oil early this month, a PRC newspaper reported on Tuesday. Construction of the pipeline section in the PRC will begin in May, and the section cutting across the border in the PRC province of Heilongjiang will be started in September, the paper said.

(return to top)

17. Sino-Peruvian Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA, PERU SIGN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT", Beijing, 2009/04/28) reported that he PRC and Peru signed a free trade agreement, state media here said, as Beijing continues to seek new markets and reserves of raw materials to fuel its economy. The deal was signed during a five-day visit to Beijing by Peruvian Vice President Luis Giampietri, who arrived on Monday, and came after a year of negotiations and preparations, the Xinhua news agency reported. "With the global financial crisis looming, the China-Peru deal sends a positive signal of deepening cooperation and tiding over difficulties," said Zhu Hong, deputy head of the PRC commerce ministry's international department.

(return to top)

18. PRC Climate Change

Bloomberg News ("CHINA, INDIA SEEK $200 BILLION IN CLIMATE-CHANGE AID", 2009/04/28) reported that the PRC, India and South Africa, three of the developing world's biggest greenhouse-gas producers, said industrialized nations should contribute at least $200 billion a year to help them fight global warming. The PRC called on industrialized nations also to cut their greenhouse-gas output , setting a reduction target of least 40 percent from 1990 levels by 2020, twice as big a cut as the European Union has pledged to make. That would give developing countries room to raise emissions as they modernize their economies, the world's most populous nation said.

(return to top)

II. PRC Report

19. PRC Environment

People's Daily online (Sun Xiaojing, "SHANGHAI WATER PRICE FOR DOMESTIC USE TO BE INCREASED", 2009/04/28) reported that Shanghai's water price for domestic use is 1.84 RMB per cubic meter. This price has not been changed since 2001. This morning, Shanghai Development and Reform Commission held a hearing for adjusting the water price. It is understood that the price will be increased to 2.8 RMB per cubic meter. The final adjustment plan will be further perfected and increased step by step.

(return to top)

20. PRC Environment

Xinhua News Agency ("WATER HYACINTH AGAIN INVADE MINJIANG RIVER", 2009/04/28) reported that since entering into spring, affected by the higher temperature, water hyacinth have grown rapidly and poured into Minjiang River of Fujian province. Now shipping has been affected, as well as the electric generation of nearby hydropower station. Related sectors have taken action to clean them.

(return to top)

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