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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. NAPSNet

1. Six Party Talks

Yonhap ("NEXT 6PT LIKELY AT END OF MAY: OFFICIAL ", Washington, 2008/04/29) reported that the DPRK is showing "unusually" strong will to continue the denuclearization process, a senior ROK official said, and the US is taking it as a positive sign. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the next six-party talks are likely to resume toward the end of next month.

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2. US on DPRK Terror List Status

Kyodo News ("HILL REMAINS POSITIVE ABOUT REMOVAL OF N. KOREA FROM TERROR LIST", Washington, 2008/04/30) reported that the US remains committed to its promise under a six-party deal to cross the DPRK off its list of terror-sponsoring nations once Pyongyang fulfills its obligations to declare and disable all its nuclear programs, chief U.S. nuclear envoy Christopher Hill said Monday. The assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs said after the first talks with the ROK's new top nuclear negotiator Kim Sook at the State Department that Washington is trying hard to finalize with Pyongyang the shape of any declaration by the reclusive state.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Agence France-Presse ("US ENVOY DEMANDS STRICT VERIFICATION OF NKOREA NUCLEAR ACTIVITY ", Seoul, 2008/04/30) reported that the US ambassador to the ROK said that the DPRK's alleged involvement in Syria's covert nuclear program highlighted the risk of atomic technology spreading to other nations. "The fact that they were involved in a covert programme with Syria just

underscores the gravity of the proliferation risk and...puts even more weight on the requirement to achieve an effective verification regime," Alexander Vershbow said. Vershbow called for "very strict verification and strict compliance" to ensure no further nuclear cooperation between the DPRK and a third country.

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4. Alledged DPRK-Syrian Nuclear Cooperation

Reuters (Randall Mikkelsen, "SYRIAN REACTOR CAPACITY WAS 1-2 WEAPONS/YEAR: CIA ", Washington, 2008/04/29) reported that a suspected Syrian reactor bombed by Israel had the capacity to produce enough nuclear material to fuel one to two weapons a year, CIA Director Michael Hayden said. Hayden said the plutonium reactor was within weeks or months of completion when it was destroyed in an air strike last September 6, and within a year of entering operation it could have produced enough material for at least one weapon. The reactor was of a "similar size and technology" to the DPRK's Yongbyon reactor, Hayden said, disputing speculation it was smaller than the Korean facility.

Agence France-Presse (Stephen Collinson, "SYRIA NUCLEAR DISCLOSURE A WARNING TO NORTH KOREA, IRAN: BUSH", Washington, 2008/04/29) reported that President George W. Bush said he disclosed details of an alleged Syrian nuclear drive to send a clear "message" to the DPRK and Iran that they could not hide their nuclear activity. Bush said he did not initially tell Congress about the facility as he did not want to inflame regional tensions. Bush said the briefing was intended to advance "certain policy objectives." "One would be to the North Koreans, to make it abundantly clear that we know more about them than they think," Bush said in the White House Rose Garden.

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5. Inter-Korean Relations

Korea Herald (Hwang Jang-jin , "SEOUL SHOWS FLEXIBILITY TOWARD N. KOREA", 2008/04/29) reported that Unification Minister Kim Ha-joong yesterday indicated that the government will be flexible in implementing inter-Korean summit agreements signed by previous governments. The Lee Myung-bak administration has so far appeared to put the landmark cooperation accords, signed in 2000 and 2007, on the backburner. "There have been agreements between two Koreas, which have not been put into practice," Kim told the parliamentary committee on unification, foreign affairs and trade. "We expect to consider practical measures to implement them through consultation between two Koreas under the spirit of mutual respect," he said. The remark implied willingness to deal with the DPRK. The proposal was Lee's first overture to the DPRK.

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6. ROK, DPRK Malaria Outbreak

Agence France-Presse ("ALERT ON SPREADING MALARIA IN SKOREA ", Seoul, 2008/04/29) reported that Malaria is spreading rapidly from the DPRK and beginning to take root in the ROK, a Seoul research team warned. Soldiers guarding the border were previously the main victims but now

an equal number of civilians are being infected, said Seoul National University team leader Chae Jong-Il, a parasitology professor. "Given that most of the infected civilians reside in villages some 10 kilometres (six miles) or more away from the border, the re-emerging malaria is beginning to be indigenous in South Korea," he told Yonhap news agency.

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7. DPRK Food Supply

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK SEEKS SOLUTIONS FOR SHARP DROP IN FOOD SHORTAGES", 2008/04/29) reported that recently, the DPRK press has been repeatedly reporting on the fall in grain production around the world and the rising international grain prices, displaying concern as all efforts are being put forth to resolve the 'food issue'. North Korea also recently held a cabinet meeting during which discussion of the food supply issue exposed the seriousness of the situation. The Chinese Shinwha News also reported on the 20th that a cabinet meeting had been held in the DPRK and this year's economic issues had been discussed, quoting the 'Democratic Chosun', a publication of the DPRK cabinet.

IFES NK Brief ("DPRK EYES POTATOES AS ANSWER TO FOOD SHORTAGES", Seoul, 2008/04/30) reported that the DPRK's Rodong Shinmun has introduced potato production as the answer to what it describes as the worsening worldwide food crisis caused by skyrocketing grain prices. The article said, "In order to break free from the worsening food situation, international institutions and a variety of countries around the world" are looking for solutions, and among these, potatoes are receiving much attention. The paper also pointed out that the United Nations labeled this year "International Potato Year."

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8. DPRK Exports to the US

Yonhap ("N.K.-MADE LIQUOR GOES ON SALE IN U.S. ", New York, 2008/04/29) reported that DPRK-made liquor went on sale for the first time in the United States on Tuesday in New York and New Jersey. Pyongyang Soju, made from corn, rice and glutinous rice flour, was imported from North Korea and will soon go on sale in Maryland and Massachusetts as well, the importing company, Pyongyang Trading USA, said. The firm is based in New York and run by Park Il-woo, a Korean-American businessman.

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9. DPRK Media

Yonhap ("N.K. RANKED WORST IN PRESS FREEDOM ", Washington, 2008/04/29) reported that the DPRK again ranked the worst in freedom of the press in a survey of 195 countries in 2007, while the ROK shared 67th place with five other nations, according to an annual release by Freedom House. In a process conducted since 1980, Freedom House scores each nation from zero (best) to 100 (worst) based on 23 questions divided into the legal, political and economic environments for freedom of the press. The DPRK received 98 points, falling in the "not free" category.

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10. DPRK on Development Aid

Yonhap ("N.K. CALLS FOR U.N. ACTION PLAN TO HELP DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: REPORT ", Seoul, 2008/04/29) reported that the DPRK has called on the U.N. to act fast to achieve international goals for assisting developing economies, saying the goals face "a serious challenge" from a widening global economic divide, a report said. "Consistent efforts by developing countries to achieve international development strategies now face a serious challenge by the unequal global economic order," the DPRK's official KCNA quoted the DPRK's Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Ri Myong-san as saying during a U.N. agency meeting. The DPRK will continue to bolster economic cooperation and exchanges with all countries across the world "based on the principles of respect of sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit," the official stressed.

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11. ROK-Japan Defense Cooperation

The Asahi Shimbun (Yoshihiro Makino, "TIGHTER DEFENSE TIES WITH SEOUL EYED", Seoul, 2008/04/29) reported that officials from Japan and the ROK are working on a memorandum designed to establish more systematic exchanges between the Self-Defense Forces and the ROK military, sources said. The two sides hope to sign a memorandum that would have some binding power in order to stabilize such exchanges in the future. According to the sources, the memorandum would cover things like mutual visits of high-ranking officers from the two countries, exchanges between the National Defense Academy of Japan and the ROK Military Academy, as well as joint maritime rescue training exercises.

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12. Japan-Russia Relations

The Asahi Shimbun (Hiroshi Ito, "FUKUDA, PUTIN SHAKE HANDS ON JOINT OIL DEAL", Moscow, 2008/04/29) reported that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed here over the weekend to push forward their countries' first joint oil field development project in Russia's eastern Siberian region, Japanese government officials said. The two agreed to discuss the disputed Northern Territories issue and to sign a peace treaty officially ending World War II hostilities. According to Japanese officials, the joint oil field project will be within the 3,747-square-kilometer Severo-Mogdinsky district, about 1,000 kilometers north of Irkutsk in East Siberia. The project will involve a joint venture company set up between the Kawasaki-based Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corp., which is an independent administrative agency, and Russia's privately owned Irkutsk Oil Co.

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13. Tibet Unrest

Reuters (Ben Blanchard, "CHINA JAILS 30 FOR TIBETAN RIOTS ", Beijing, 2008/04/29) reported

that a PRC court jailed 30 people for terms ranging from three years to life for their roles in Tibet's deadly riots, which triggered anti-PRC protests across the globe ahead of the Beijing Olympics. Lhasa Intermediate People's Court announced the verdicts at an "open trial" that lasted all day and was attended by more than 200 people, including Buddhist monks, medical workers and "masses from all walks of life," state media said.

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14. Cross Strait Relations

The Financial Times (Kathrin Hille, "HARDLINER TO HEAD TAIWAN'S CHINA TALKS", Taipei , 2008/04/29) reported that Ma Ying-jeou, Taiwan's incoming president, has added uncertainty to the prospects for a rapprochement with the PRC by picking a former lawmaker from a pro-independence party to head the cabinet body in charge of relations with Beijing. Lai Shin-yuan, a former lawmaker of the pro-independence Taiwan Solidarity Union, would become chairwoman of the Mainland Affairs Council after Mr Ma took office on May 20, Liu Chao-shiuan, his expected premier, announced. Cross-Strait experts warned that the move could hinder Mr Ma's plans for closer economic links with the PRC.

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15. PRC Olympics

Washington Post (Edward Cody, "FOR CHINESE, A SHIFT IN MOOD, FROM HOSPITABLE TO HOSTILE", Beijing, 2008/04/29) reported that just weeks ago, most Chinese were welcoming foreigners as Olympic guests and partners in the country's meteoric economic development. But as the country enters the final 100 days before the Olympic Games in Beijing, the mood has changed. Many Chinese have begun to regard foreigners as adversaries interfering in domestic affairs or, at worst, bigots unwilling to accept the PRC's emergence as a great power. A recent survey by a Beijing polling group found that more than 80 percent of those questioned believed Western news media were conveying a biased image of the PRC abroad.

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II. CanKor

16. Report #305-306

CanKor ("FOCUS: CANADA PROMOTES GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP TO REDUCE WMD THREAT", 2008/04/25) Ted Lipman, Canada's Ambassador to both Koreas delivers a congratulatory speech at a conference at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of Kyungnam University in Seoul. The FOCUS section of this CanKor Report features excerpts of papers presented at the Canadian-sponsored conference whose aim was to promote "Global Partnership" to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

CanKor ("NEWS: DPRK NUCLEAR PROGRAM", 2008/04/25) An overdue declaration by the DPRK of its nuclear activities continues to stall the Six-Party process. In addition to the vexing question as to how the DPRK can satisfy US accusations since 2002 of a uranium enrichment programme, allegations of a nuclear cooperation between the DPRK and Syria are complicating negotiations. The DPRK firmly rejects both claims. Meeting at Camp David in the USA, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and US President George W. Bush unite to urge that North Korea should be given time to cooperate. A US team of experts returns from three days in Pyongyang, apparently pleased with progress achieved.

CanKor ("FICTION: CONVERSATION WITH THE PATRIOT PART 6", 2008/04/25) CanKor editor Erich Weingartner continues his fictional conversation with the DPR Korean "patriot", based on 25 years of close contact with Koreans north and south of the 38th parallel. In this issue: episode 6.

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III. ROK Report

17. DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo (Kang Jungmin, "DPRK NUCLEAR SHOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY SYRIA CONTROVERSY", 2008/04/30) carried an article by a Science Fellow of the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, who wrote that in order to make progress in the solution of the DPRK nuclear problem, regarding the issue of nuclear reactor collaboration of the DPRK with Syria, coming up with a preventive measure for the future is more effectual than referring to the past as the US government is. To abandon the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon—the infrastructure of the DPRK's plutonium program—at an early stage is the most effective way to exterminate the DPRK's nuclear ability. The shortcut to a solution of the DRPK nuclear problem is to conclude the second level measure—the debilitation of the Yongbyon nuclear facilities—by holding the six-party talks, and to advance to level three measure—abandonment of plutonium program.

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18. ROK Policy toward DPRK

Chosun Ilbo (Andrei Lankov, "BLIND POINTS OF 'DENUCLEARIZATION, OPEN, 3000' PLAN", 2008/04/30) carried an article by a professor of history at Kukmin University, who wrote that although Lee Myung-bak's "denuclearization, open, 3000" plan has many advantages, it is not obviously an effectual approach at the current point. There hardly is a possibility that Pyongyang will accept the "3000" plan while giving up its nuclear weapons. Changing the DPRK society is the only way to soothe the threats of the DPRK nuclear program. Now that DPRK has chosen to "incite," it cannot accept the proposal for inter-Korean contact office. However, in one or two years, a condition for accepting the proposal may take shape.

Ohmynews ("PRESIDENT LEE 'REPEATING THE FAILURE OF BUSH'", 2008/04/29) carried an interview with Professor Kim Yeon-Chul, a research professor at Korea University Institute for Asian Studies, who commented that the Lee Myung-bak administration is repeating the "failed diplomacy"

of Bush mentioning “they are similar in their emphasis on moral diplomacy, ignoring the DPRK, and leaving out experienced DPRK specialists.” Professor Kim said “when the ROK can persuade the DPRK, the US faithfully explains the result of US-DPRK contacts to the ROK, because the ROK persuades the DPRK with the position of US in mind.” He added, “however, if there is no inter-Korean channel, the US does not have to explain it all to the ROK. If inter-Korean relations worsen, the information available to the ROK government will decrease, and gradually, its role in six-party talks will lessen.”

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19. Inter-Korean Relations

Kyunghyang Shinmun (Kim Sung-han, Baek Hak-soon, "'SOLUTION OF DPRK NUCLEAR PROBLEM THROUGH ROK-US ALLIANCE,” “SACRIFICING INTER-KOREAN RELATION IS RISKY' ", 2008/04/29) carried an article by a professor of Korea University Graduate School of International Studies, and a Chief researcher at Sejong Institute, who wrote that with the first ROK-US summit talks of the Lee Myung-bak administration, deteriorating inter-Korean relations and the DPRK nuclear issue in a critical situation, people’s attention to diplomatic policies of the ROK government has increased. The evaluation of the first ROK-US summit talk especially shows two extremes: an evaluation that it has recovered damaged ROK-US relations and has established a basis for the future ROK-US alliance, and a negative evaluation that it is becoming ideological diplomacy with an overly pro-American tendency rather than a pragmatic diplomacy. While there is analysis that finds the strong mutualism of the government as the cause for deadlock in inter-Korean relations, there also is comment that sees it as a rite of passage to correct an improper viewpoint well known for the last 10 years.

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