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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. Napsnet

1. DPRK Nuclear Program

Joongang Ilbo ("REPORT: PYONGYANG HAS 'SMALL' NUCLEAR ARSENAL'", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that a report published by the Council on Foreign Relations stated, “North Korea has already built a small nuclear arsenal and shows no signs of being willing to negotiate it away.” But the country “may not have the ability to deploy nuclear weapons,” it said.

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "'PYONGYANG LIKELY TO CONDUCT NUCLEAR TEST' ", 2009/05/04) reported that Gary Samore, U.S. policy coordinator for weapons of mass destruction, said that the DPRK is likely to conduct a nuclear test before it is forced back to the six-party talks. "It's very clear that the North Koreans want to pick a fight," he said at an event at the Brookings Institution on Friday. "They want to kill the six-party talks."

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2. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Program

Korea Herald (Kim So-hyun, "SEOUL LAUNCHES TASKFORCE ON N. KOREAN NUKE TECH", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the ROK has organized a technological task force to analyze Pyongyang's nuclear activities. "We expanded and reorganized an existing task force that includes nongovernmental experts on North Korean nukes to examine the technological part more closely," said an official of the Foreign Ministry. "The team will deal with all the technological aspects; share information on the North's movements regarding reprocessing and nuclear tests, analyze their technological meaning and prepare countermeasures." The task force consists of officials from the foreign, defense and unification ministries, plus the National Intelligence Service, Cheong Wa Dae and nongovernmental experts. The team will be led by Hwang Joon-kook, ROK vice envoy to the six-party talks.

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3. DPRK on UNSC Statement

Yonhap ("N. KOREA BLASTS U.N. OVER 'UNFAIR' PUNISHMENT FOR ROCKET LAUNCH", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the DPRK on Monday accused the United Nations of being unfair to countries not aligned with the United States. The Security Council "continues to adopt unjust documents under U.S. instigation," and its April 13 presidential statement condemning the DPRK launch is "obvious evidence" of its unfairness, the Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Arirang News ("N.KOREA DEEPENING INVESTIGATION ON S. KOREAN DETAINEE", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the DPRK says it is deepening its investigation into a detained ROK national. An unnamed DPRK spokesman was quoted by the Korean Central News Agency as saying the situation could worsen if Seoul continues to question the detention's legitimacy. The spokesmen said such a scenario would not benefit the inter-Korean Kaesong industrial complex.

Yonhap ("N. KOREA RENEWS WARNING ON SEOUL'S PSI PLAN", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the on Monday the Rodong Sinmun blasted ROK President Lee Myung-bak's recent remarks at a meeting with security-related Cabinet ministers that despite the repeated postponements, Seoul will eventually join the PSI. "For traitor Lee Myung-bak to speak of full participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative is a public declaration of military confrontation against us and of war provocation to invade the North," the paper said in a commentary. "Should the South Korean authorities take such an action, basic common sense dictates that it will lead to military clashes between the two sides and escalate to a full-blown war," the paper said.

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5. DPRK Defectors

Arirang News ("19% OF N.KOREAN DEFECTORS WANT TO GO TO U.S", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that Marcus Noland of the U.S.-based Peterson Institute for International Economics found that nearly one-fifth of the 1,600 DPRK defectors in the ROK and the PRC would like to move to the U.S. Noland said it was surprising that despite lifelong exposure to anti-U.S. propaganda, young DPRK defectors still want to go to the U.S., showing that foreign media reports are gradually penetrating the isolated country. 64 percent of defectors wanted to live in the ROK and 14 percent in the PRC while a few wanted to go to other countries.

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6. DPRK Human Rights

Voice of America ("DEFECTORS SAY N.KOREA'S HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WORSENING", Washington, 2009/05/04) reported that a group of DPRK defectors has told the U.S. Congress that DPRK's human rights situation has worsened in recent years. They say tens of thousands of people held in political prison camps have little food or water and face torture and abuse.

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7. ROK Anti-Piracy Dispatch

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN UNIT SAVES N.K. SHIP FROM SUSPECTED SOMALI PIRATES", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that an ROK naval unit has rescued a DPRK vessel from being hijacked by suspected pirates in Somali waters, a Joint Chiefs of Staff official said Monday. "As soon as our destroyer received a call for help from the North Korean vessel, it dispatched its Linx helicopter," the official said. Having come as close as 3 km to the DPRK ship, the suspected pirates turned away after seeing the ROK attack helicopter arrive.

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8. ROK Role in Afghanistan

Hankyoreh ("U.S. ASKS S. KOREA TO DECIDE ON DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the U.S. government recently requested that the ROK government re-examine the deployment of soldiers from the ROK army as part of support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, sources indicate. A government official said Sunday, “The U.S. said that increasing South Korean financial support for Afghanistan was a pressing issue at this time.” "If we ultimately do have to deploy troops to Afghanistan, it will be in the form of humanitarian non-combatant troop support,” a government official said. “There is a possibility that it will mean the redeployment of the Dongui and Dasan units that were withdrawn from Afghanistan in late 2007 or the Zaytun unit in Irbil in Iraq,” the official predicted.

Yonhap ("KOREA RULES OUT REDEPLOYING TROOPS TO AFGHANISTAN", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the ROK is not considering the redeployment of its troops to Afghanistan, Foreign Ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said Monday. "The U.S. government has presented no such demand to South Korea," he stated.

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9. ROK-US Security Cooperation

Yonhap ("KOREA, U.S. TO JOIN FORCES TO FIGHT CYBER TERRORISM", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the ROK and the United States have forged a tentative agreement to bolster cooperation in fighting cyber terrorism against their defense networks, the defense ministry in Seoul said Monday. The April 30 deal is aimed at "enhancing the interoperability of the information systems used by the militaries of the U.S. and South Korea," the Ministry said.

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10. ROK Demographics

Yonhap ("YOUTH POPULATION IN KOREA CONTINUES TO DECLINE", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that according to a report by the National Statistical Office, the population of ROK people aged between 9 and 24 is estimated to be 21.3 percent, or 10.38 million, of the total this year, down 1 percent from a year earlier. The year-on-year decline in the nation's youth contrasts with an estimated 0.3 percent growth in the overall population, which is currently estimated to be around 48.74 million, the report showed. The ratio of the cited age group to the total population has been on a steady decline since peaking at 36.9 percent in 1978, the report noted.

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11. ROK Overseas Aid

Korea Times (Do Je-hae, "KOREA TO PLAY GREATER ROLE IN INT'L SOCIETY", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the ROK will spend 1.08 trillion won on aid to developing countries in Central Asia, Africa and South America, among others, this year, a 16.4 percent increase from 2008. Prime Minister Han Seung-soo stated, ``Our unique experience in national development should be transmitted to underdeveloped countries through a system that prioritizes their needs.'' The ROK will also work more closely with the United Nations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in reaching out to underdeveloped countries and will aim to become a member of the latter's Development Assistance Committee (DAC).

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12. ROK Pandemic Response

Chosun Ilbo ("FLU PANDEMIC 'COULD STRIKE UP TO 40% OF KOREANS' ", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the government fears 20 to 40 percent of the ROK population could be infected within eight weeks if a new variant of influenza were ever to turn into a pandemic. A government action plan for new flu strains says an average of 37 percent of the population over 65, 11 percent of those between 19 and 64, and 4 percent of under-18s could become infected by an epidemic. It points out that segregation of infected patients become meaningless in a global pandemic, and it is more important to treat the disease to minimize the spread of the virus and protect the life of citizens.

Joongang Ilbo ("FLU FEAR SUBSIDES AS OUTBREAK SLOWS, DEATHS DON'T RISE", Seoul, 2009/05/04) reported that the ROK's health officials Sunday reported another "presumed" case of the "H1N1" influenza yesterday but the patient improved quickly throughout the day. The latest patient, identified only as a 62-year-old woman, traveled on the same passenger plane as Korea's first confirmed H1N1 patient, a 51-year-old Catholic nun.

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13. US-Japanese Influenza Response

Asahi Shimbun ("ORIGINS OF SWINE FLUE UNCOVERED", Tokyo, 2009/05/04) reported that U.S.

and Japanese researchers say the new swine flu strain is a complex virus that evolved from four other viruses--a bird flu virus, a human flu virus and two swine flu viruses. Their finding was based on information from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization about the genetic make-up of the new strain. The finding is expected to bolster efforts to devise an effective means to prevent the transmission of the virus between people, and also to treat sufferers, they added.

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14. Japanese Swine Flu Response

Asahi Shimbun ("BARBS TRADED AFTER NEGATIVE SWINE FLUE TEST", Tokyo, 2009/05/04) reported that Yokohama city officials criticized Yoichi Masuzoe, the minister of health, labor and welfare, for announcing in an early Friday morning news conference that a high school student, who had returned from a school trip to Canada last month, could be Japan's first swine flu case. "We hold grave doubts about conducting a news conference when test results had not been obtained," a Yokohama city official said. However, Masuzoe criticized that telephone contact could not be made with Yokohama officials at one point between late Thursday and early Friday. "Did information reach the Yokohama mayor and Kanagawa prefectural governor?" Masuzoe asked. "I hope a review will be conducted if there arise problems in crisis management."

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15. Japanese Constitutional Revision

Asahi Shimbun ("64% OPPOSE REVISING ARTICLE 9", Tokyo, 2009/05/04) reported that,according to an Asahi Shimbun survey of 2,094 eligible voters, 64 percent said it was better not to change Article 9, while 26 percent supported its amendment. Even among those who saw a need to revise the Constitution itself, accounting for 53 percent of all respondents, opponents to changing Article 9 surpassed supporters, 49 to 42 percent. Among respondents in favor of change, 50 percent said the change should only go as far as the incorporation of the current Self-Defense Forces into the article, while forty-four percent said the article should clearly stipulate that the SDF is a military force. 56 percent approved of SDF troops' overseas missions if they did not use force, while 9 percent oppose any overseas missions.

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16. Japanese Politics

Kyodo ("NATIONAL ELECTION COULD COINCIDE WITH TOKYO ASSEMBLY POLL: ASO ", Prague, 2009/05/04) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso suggested Sunday a general election could be held around the time of the Tokyo metropolitan assembly election slated for July 12. "If asked which should take precedence -- the lower house election or the Tokyo metropolitan assembly election -- then it is the lower house election,'' Aso said. Coalition partner New Komeito Party has insisted the general election should not take place around the time of the Tokyo poll as it wants to concentrate its efforts on the local election.

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17. Sino-Japanese Relations

Asahi Shimbun (Kim Soon Hi, "NISHIMATSU PLANS COMPENSATION FOR CHINESE WARTIME LABORERS", Tokyo, 2009/05/02) reported that Nishimatsu Construction Co. is in talks to settle a compensation claim from Chinese nationals who say they were forced to work for the company during World War II, sources said. The two sides are negotiating the amount of compensation and other terms, even though a court case over the matter ended in 2007, when the Supreme Court rejected the plaintiffs' claims. The court, however, said in the ruling that Nishimatsu must make efforts on its own to give relief to former laborers who "suffered extremely grave pain."

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18. PRC Swine Flu Response

Agence France-Presse (Dan Martin, "CHINA DENIES DISCRIMINATING AGAINST MEXICANS", Beijing, 2009/05/04) reported that the PRC denied discriminating against Mexicans with its strict flu-control measures. "The relevant measures are not directed at Mexican citizens and are not discriminatory," foreign ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said in a statement posted on the ministry's website. A Mexican embassy official said there were nearly 70 Mexicans quarantined across China, including in Beijing , Shanghai and Guangzhou .

Washington Post (Jill Drew, "CHINA CONFIRMS FIRST SWINE FLUE CASE", Beijing, 2009/05/02) reported that PRC authorities confirmed the country's first case of swine flu on Friday evening. The patient, a 25-year-old Mexican man who had flown to Hong Kong on Thursday, developed flu symptoms and went to a local hospital around 8 p.m. that night. As he was undergoing tests to confirm his infection, the government sent police and health workers to quarantine all guests and workers at his hotel. They also began hunting for everyone the patient might have been in contact with.

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III. ROK Report

19. ROK-US Cooperation on DPRK Policy

Chosun Ilbo ("US'S PRESSURE AND IGNORANCE ON DPRK", 2009/05/04) writes that the Obama administration has decided to wait until DPRK realizes that it's smart to come to the table, instead of dealing with DPRK's provocations through UN sanctions. It is sort of a "pressure and ignore" tactic. Before cooperating with the US in its pressure and ignore policy, the ROK government must thoroughly discuss with the US on how to deal with the DPRK's continuous provocations such as another nuclear experiment. If the six-party talks aren't properly working, it is important that the US and ROK come to an agreement on different alternatives.

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20. ROK Role in Afghanistan

Hankyoreh ("MUST REJECT AFGHAN DISPATCH REQUEST AT ONCE", 2009/05/04) writes that US requested ROK government for a military dispatch and economic support for Afghanistan reconstruction. What the government needs to do right now is to state clearly that there will be no dispatch. Barack Obama's Afghan policies are criticized from inside and out of the US. As the government revealed before, the Afghan Reconstruction Support Group could be increased, but this should also be done after deep consideration.

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21. ROK Influenza Response

Kyunghyang Shinmun ("SYSTEMATIC PREVENTIVE MEASURES NECESSARY FOR 'NEW INFLUENZA", 2009/05/04) writes the government showed flaws in its countermeasures both before and after the influenza case was detected. The main tour areas of Mexico were specified as a area of concern for personal safety since last April. The Foreign Ministry recommends travelers to those areas to register before leaving. However, only 5 of all tourists to Mexico last month registered with the Foreign Ministry. The Ministry of Health and Welfare was poor in taking measures, as well. The new influenza could damage both Korean's health and economy greatly.

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22. Asian Monetary Fund

Joongang Ilbo ("WELCOME DISCUSSIONS ON ESTABLISHMENT OF AMF", 2009/05/04) warns the government on a few things while considering a big step toward establishing an AMF (Asian Monetary Fund). In the future, cooperation amongst the three countries of Northeast Asia will be very important. The problem is China and Japan. In order to help these two countries cooperate with each other, the ROK needs to play a role. Also, the ROK government must work hard to have monitoring agencies and investment agencies be built in ROK. There is nothing better than that for growing the finance industry.

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