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I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Agence France-Presse ("US ENVOYS IN ASIA IN BID FOR NKOREA NUCLEAR DECLARATION ", Seoul, 2008/05/06) reported that two senior US State Department officials arrived Wednesday in the ROK as part of a new diplomatic effort to persuade the DPRK to come clean on its nuclear weapons programmes. The department's ROK office director Sung Kim, who traveled on the same plane as Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, is due Thursday to head by land to Pyongyang for his second trip in less than a month. Negroponte is visiting the ROK and will go on to Japan and the PRC for talks on the nuclear disarmament drive and other issues. Kim, who made no comment to reporters, last visited the DPRK some two weeks ago to discuss Pyongyang's long-promised nuclear declaration, and both sides reported progress.

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2. Australia on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("NO ECONOMIC AID FOR NUCLEAR-ARMED N. KOREA: CANBERRA", Seoul, 2008/05/06) reported that Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said that his country will not resume development assistance for the DPRK unless it takes "substantial" steps towards denuclearization. The minister, on a three-day trip, however, said Canberra will continue providing humanitarian aid without attaching any conditions. "President Lee's firm position on the DPRK - making economic assistance conditional on progress towards denuclearization and an improvement in the DPRK's human rights record, while keeping humanitarian aid unconditional, aligns closely with our own policy approach," Smith said. "Australia has suspended development assistance until the DPRK makes substantial progress towards denuclearization," he added.

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3. Sino-DPRK Relations

Korea Herald ("CHINESE LEADER EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO KIM JONG-IL", 2008/05/06) reported that the PRC's President Hu Jintao has thanked DPRK leader Kim Jong-il for sending a message of sympathy following a train accident which claimed huge casualties in east PRC, Yonhap

News Agency reported, quoting a DPRK radio report. "Hu showed his profound gratitude" for Kim's message in a reply dated on Sunday, the DPRK's Central Broadcasting Station said.

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4. Japan-DPRK Relations

Kyodo ("LEADERS OF RIGHT-WING GROUP VISITED N. KOREA", Tokyo, 2008/05/06) reported that two leaders of a Japanese right-wing group visited the DPRK in late April and met with executive members of the Korean Workers' Party, the two leaders told a press conference. The two are Mitsuhiro Kimura, the chief of Issuikai, and Kunio Suzuki, adviser to the group. Kimura and Suzuki said they called for the DPRK to return the remains of Japanese who died in the DPRK during World War II and sought explanations regarding the DPRK's past abductions of Japanese nationals. The DPRK side responded that it will look into the issue of the remains while reiterating the DPRK's stance on the abduction issue, according to the two leaders.

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5. Cambodia on Inter-Korean Relations

Xinhua ("PM: CAMBODIA COULD MEDIATE BETWEEN DPRK, S KOREA", 2008/05/06) reported that Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen has suggested that Cambodia could mediate between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and ROK, as unlike most countries it enjoys good relations with both, local newspaper the Mekong Times said. Speaking at the inauguration of a ROK-funded project to revitalize National Road 3, Hun Sen revealed that the recently-elected president of ROK, himself a former advisor to Hun Sen, had asked him to relay a message to the DPRK Prime Minister during a recent official visit. Political analysts have said Cambodia is in a unique position to mediate between the two as Hun Sen has a good relationship with the ROK while former King Norodom Sihanouk has held close links with the DPRK and PRC for decades.

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6. ROK-Australian Relations

Yonhap ("S. KOREA, AUSTRALIA TO UPGRADE RELATIONS ", Seoul, 2008/05/07) reported that Foreign Ministers of the ROK and Australia agreed to upgrade the level of their relations through practical cooperation in various fields, the ROK Foreign Ministry said. The foreign ministers reached the agreement after sharing the view that bilateral relations have improved on the basis of democracy and the market economy. ROK Minister Yu Myung-hwan suggested further exchanges of high-level officials and bilateral consultations, while his Australian counterpart, Stephen Smith, hoped that current economic cooperation will expand to strategic areas such as diplomacy, security and defense, the ministry said. Smith also said that a free trade agreement between Seoul and Canberra, when concluded, will deepen bilateral relations and hoped that Seoul expand import of liquefied natural gas from Australia.

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7. ROK Bird Flu Outbreak

Yonhap ("NO ONE IN SEOUL INFECTED WITH BIRD FLU: GOV'T ", Seoul, 2008/05/07) reported that ROK health officials said that all people who have been checked for possible human bird flu infections have tested negative for the avian influenza virus. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) said five people checked in the Gwangjin ward of eastern Seoul for symptoms similar to bird flu were found to have the common cold. The KCDC said blood serum tests showed conclusively that none were affected.

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8. US-Japan Relations

Kyodo News ("YOKOSUKA RESIDENTS CALL FOR REFERENDUM ON NUCLEAR-POWERED FLATTOP ", Yokosuka, 2008/05/07) reported that a group of residents in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, filed a request Wednesday with Yokosuka Mayor Ryoichi Kabaya for a local referendum on whether to support the planned local deployment of a nuclear-powered U.S. aircraft carrier, group members said. The group's plea for the city authority to set up an ordinance authorizing such a referendum is believed unlikely to be realized because the majority of municipal assembly members is against holding the plebiscite.

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9. Sino-Japanese East Sea Gas Dispute

Reuters (Chris Buckley , "JAPAN, CHINA MAKE PROGRESS ON GAS FEUD AT SUMMIT ", Tokyo, 2008/05/07) reported that Japan and the PRC announced progress towards settling a feud over gas in the East China Sea in a sign of warming ties between the big Asian rivals, and agreed at a summit on Wednesday that cooperation was their "only option." "Prospects for settling the dispute are already in view and I'm happy about this," Hu said. "We have decided to continue consultations and reach an agreement as soon as possible." Fukuda echoed Hu's upbeat comments, and Jiji news agency, quoting a senior Japanese official, said an agreement could be announced before the summer, when Hu is due to return to Japan for a G8 meeting.

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10. Sino-Japanese Relations

The Asahi Shimbun ("FUKUDA, HU PROMOTE 'STRATEGIC' INTERESTS", 2008/05/07) reported that Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and visiting PRC President Hu Jintao signed a joint statement promoting a mutually beneficial strategic relationship without referring to "apologies" or "reflection" over Japan's wartime actions in the PRC. During their meeting, By not directly mentioning Japan's atonement for its military activities in China before and during World War II, the joint statement signed by Fukuda and Hu sets the stage for a future-oriented approach toward improving ties. Instead, the statement said both countries will "continue to explore a new phase of bilateral relations by squarely facing history." The statement also said Beijing "thinks much of Japan's standing and role in the United Nations," but it did not include a direct expression pointing to the PRC's support

of Japan's bid to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council.

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11. PRC Viral Outbreak

Reuters (Lindsay Beck , "CHINA CHILD VIRUS CASES HIGH BUT NO CAUSE FOR PANIC ", Beijing, 2008/05/07) reported that the PRC should expect more cases of hand, foot and mouth disease, but there is no sign it is facing a new or more virulent strain despite an unusually high number of child deaths, officials said. Hand, foot and mouth is a common childhood illness, but the current outbreak has led to 28 fatalities in the PRC, mostly when linked with enterovirus 71 (EV71), which can cause a severe form of the disease characterized by high fever, paralysis and meningitis. "There is no indication of a change or a more virulent virus," World Health Organisation PRC representative Hans Troedsson told a news conference.

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12. Tibet Unrest

The Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "CHINA WARNS DALAI LAMA NOT TO OBSTRUCT BEIJING GAMES ", Tokyo, 2008/05/07) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao vowed to continue a recently begun dialogue with the Dalai Lama, though he offered veiled accusations the Tibetan spiritual leader is causing more problems than he is solving. Hu, speaking at a news conference with Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, demanded the Dalai Lama stop trying to divide the PRC, incite violence and harm the upcoming Olympic Games in Beijing. The Dalai Lama has denied these accusations, which China makes repeatedly, saying he seeks only autonomy for Tibet, not independence. He has also denied any involvement in March protests in the region that turned violent.

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13. PRC Transparency

The Australian (Rowan Callick, "CHINESE FOI ACT TIED BY RED TAPE", 2008/05/01) reported that a version of freedom of information legislation takes effect in the PRC. This does not mean, however, that the Government has conceded the citizen's right to know; only that it has accepted that, to improve governance, its officials should be prompted to release more information. The new national disclosure regulation in theory requires the PRC's governments at every level to provide information that affects the immediate interests of individual citizens and organisations. In these four years, in cities whose combined population is almost twice that of Australia, there has been only one request formally lodged by a journalist: Ma Sheng, a writer on legal affairs for Liberation Daily in Shanghai, a newspaper owned by the city's Communist Party. His bid was rejected.

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II. ROK Report

14. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News ("DPRK NUCLEAR ISSUE IS MORE URGENT THAN ABDUCTEES IN DPRK", 2008/05/08) wrote that to finally solve the issues of the DPRK nuclear report, Sung Kim, director of the Office of Korean Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, visited Pyongyang. The Japanese hostage issue is being discussed as the last variable. Japan is maintaining its position of "not deleting DPRK from the State Department list of sponsors of terrorism without the solution of abductee problem." It will be difficult for the US to completely ignore its ally Japan's standpoint. However, it does not mean that solution of Japanese hostage issue is the condition for removal from the list. To solve the hostage problem through negotiation between DPRK and Japan is the most effective. It is proper for DPRK to let even a part of hostages go so that Japan would more willingly come forth.

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15. Inter-Korea Relations

Naeil Shinmun (Jin Jing-yi , "WHERE DOES INTER-KOREAN RELATION FLOW TO? ", 2008/05/07) carried an article by a professor at Beijing University who wrote that although the complete structure of Lee Myung-bak administration is not revealed yet, how trust is going to be built is not clear. The problem now is that we are mistaking the new paradigm as the old one we experienced. Because the DPRK policy is a pragmatic one, the process and result of the new DPRK policy aims can be difficult even if denuclearization is achieved. The new DPRK policy should begin at least from giving trust to DPRK.

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16. DPRK Internal Situation

goodfriends ("INCREASE IN NUMBER OF CHILDREN'S DEATH BY HUNGER AT BONGSAN-GOON, COOPERATION FARM", 2008/05/08) reported that the food crisis at Bonsang-goon cooperation farm in Hwanghaebuk-do is facing its worst stage. According to a worker there, eight out of ten working families are suffering from lack of food. These people are eating a porridge made out of 70% rice root powder mixed with 30% corn powder. From eating this food, which can barely be called so, children and the aged are exposed to malnutrition and various diseases.

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