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I. ROK Weekly Report

1. Introduction

("ROK WEEKLY REPORT: ROK ELECTIONS", 2007-06-08) This week's issue highlights developments in the presidential election campaign in the ROK, and the attempt by the two major parties to each decide on a unified candidate for December's poll. The main opposition Grand National Party (GNP) is currently divided between the "big two" candidates, for Seoul mayor Lee Myung-bak and party leader Park Geun-hye, daughter of the late President Park Chung-hee, while Hong Jun-pyo has also announced his run for the presidency. In the ruling Uri party, the effort to decide on a single candidate seems to be going nowhere with two of President Roh Moo-hyu's supporters, Han Myung-sook and Lee Hae-chan, deciding to run for the presidency while Yoo Shi-min, who had a falling out with Roh, returns to the party.

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2. Lee Leads Park in Party Polls

Naeil News ("ANALYSIS OF PRO-PARK AND PRO-LEE", 2007-05-23) writes that more GNP members seem to be pro-Lee Myung-bak. Only 42.4% stated they are pro-Park Geun-hye, while 45.7% said they are pro-Lee. Although support for both candidates increased, Lee's side increased more than that of Park. The biggest enemy for GNP was voted as Sohn Hak-kyu by 21.6% followed by Han Myung-sook (5.8%) and Lee Hae-chan (5%).

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3. Hong Poses Challenge to Big Two

Poli News ("HONG JUN-PYO ANNOUNCES HIS RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY", 2007-05-22) writes that Hong Jun-pyo announced his plan to run for the presidency. If so, there are five candidates in the GNP including Park, Lee, Hong, Won Hee-ryong, and Ko Jin-hwa. However, Hong's announcement means more than an increase in the number of candidates. Some say his run will affect the "big 2" candidates, Lee and Park. An anonymous member of the GNP said that Hong has a "professor style" look and incredible talent in speech and debating skills, so he would appeal to the crowds. More importantly, he has many policies that directly relate to many citizens including "half-price housing", "Overseas Koreans Law" and "Nationality Law", which would make Lee's "Korean Peninsula Canal" policy or Park's "Railroad Ferry" policy seem meaningless. A survey institute also said that even before Hong announced his decision to run for the presidency, Won Hee-ryong and Ko Jin-hwa's support reached only about 1%, but that of Hong was already 5%.

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4. Pro-Roh Faction Making Moves

OhmyNews ("LEE HAE-CHAN, IN FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION?", 2007-05-23) writes that the pro-President Roh force is moving to come up with their own candidate for the presidential election since the environment has been made with Yoo Shi-min's return to the party and the "Sohn Hak-kyu, Jung Dong-young, Kim Geun-tae, Chun Jung-bae" anti-President Roh forces are hurrying toward the election. The expected candidates of the pro-Roh forces are Lee Hae-chan and Han Myung-sook, former prime ministers, and Yoo Shi-min, former minister, Kim Hyuk-kyu, Shin Ki-nam, and Kim Dug-wan.

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5. Ruling Party Unification Stalls

Seoul Shinmun ("RULING PARTY FLOODING WITH ONE-TIME SCENARIOS", 2007-05-23) writes that as reunification of the ruling party seems impossible, one-time scenarios just to come up with a presidential candidate are being suggested. Lee Hae-Chan and Kim Geun-Tae suggested making a temporary party but there are many criticisms including worries of the party breaking up after the election and that it's a "shortcut."

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6. Han Announces Candidacy

Yonhap News ("HAN MYUNG-SOOK, FINALIZES HER DECISION TO RUN FOR THE PRESIDENCY", 2007-05-25) writes that Han Myung-sook, former prime minister, while visiting Japan stated that she will be running for the presidency and that this is the right time for a woman to become president. She also added, "Although it is the right time for a woman to become a president, it doesn't mean any woman can be it" and tackled Park from the GNP.

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7. Uri Party Not Ready for Deadline

PRESSian ("RULING PARTY, STILL 'IN THE FOG' AFTER THE 6.14", 2007-05-25) writes that June 14, the deadline date for uniting the party, is coming, but the Uri Party is still not clear on its path. Chairman Jung Se-youn said that June 14 was the date the leaders were given all the rights to unite the party till, so it does not mean after June 14, there will be no more uniting. He also added, there are a lot of rumors of "remodeling" or "withdrawing" from the party, but that is not the path we should take, hinting his disagreement with Park Sang-chun's remodeling idea and Jung Dong-young and Kim Geun-tae's possibility of withdrawing from the party. Park Byung-suk also stated "it is not moral or realistic for everyone to try to become president."

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8. Yoo's Return to Uri Party

Poli News ("YOO SHI-MIN'S RETURN, FOR ROH OR AGAINST ROH?", 2007-05-22) writes that Yoo's return is not welcomed by either anti-Roh or pro-Roh factions. There is a presumption that Yoo's return would work as a bomb that cracks the party into two. There are many guesses on why he returned. Some say it is part of President Roh's idea to hinder the unification of the party, whereas others say it has nothing to do with President Roh and instead, is Yoo's independent step to run for the presidency.

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