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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. DPRK on Nuclear Program

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA TO INCREASE NUCLEAR DETERRENT BY BO-MI LIM", 2005-04-14) reported that the DPRK's No. 2 leader said the DPRK will increase its nuclear deterrent to defend against the alleged threat of a US invasion, and ordered citizens to defend the regime "at the cost of their lives." "We will continue increasing our self-defensive nuclear deterrent against the enemies' policy to isolate and stifle the republic," Kim Yong Nam, head of the DPRK's legislature, said at a meeting honoring the birthday of founding President Kim Il Sung.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Wall Street Journal ("RICE PLAYS DOWN IRAN, NORTH KOREA NUCLEAR THREATS", 2005-04-14) reported that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice played down the immediate urgency of the nuclear threats from both Iran and the DPRK. "I do think the North Koreans have been, frankly, a little bit disappointed that people are not jumping up and down and running around with their hair on fire because [they] have been making these pronouncements," she said. Ms. Rice made clear that the US is still depending on the PRC to persuade the DPRK to return to the so-called six-party talks, as the PRC assured her they would do during her visit to Beijing last month. "I did have good discussions with the Chinese while I was there about the fact that the North Koreans cannot be allowed just to continue to string the world along," she said.

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3. US on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Joongang Ilbo ("U.S. CALLS 6-WAY TALKS FREE OF OTHER DISPUTES", 2005-04-14) reported that the US has dismissed concerns that Tokyo's diplomatic conflicts with Beijing and Seoul have impeded cooperation in the six-nation talks aimed at ending the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. Richard Boucher, spokesman of the US State Department, said in a daily press briefing on April 13 that the dispute had not affected the approach to the nuclear issue. Asked to comment about President Roh Moo-hyun's recent remarks on the ROK playing a role of balancer in Northeast Asia he replied obliquely that the US-ROK alliance was a fundamental part of the Asian security picture.

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4. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap news ("ROH URGES N.K. TO RETURN TO SIX-WAY TALKS WITHOUT CONDITIONS", 2005-04-14) reported that ROK President Roh Moo-hyun urged the DPRK to return to the six-party talks on ending its nuclear weapons programs without any preconditions. In an interview with the German daily Die Welt dated Thursday, Roh said, "We've been persuading the United States not to use emotional or hostile expressions toward North Korea."

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5. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Chosun Ilbo ("ROH OPPOSES SANCTIONS ON N. KOREA", 2005-04-14) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun has come out against economic sanctions on the DPRK to force it back to stalled six-party nuclear disarmament talks. "In some quarters, they want to put pressure on North Korea," Roh told the edition of the German daily Die Welt. "But we don't believe that sanctions on North Korea would make it suspend its nuclear development." "We can talk about sanctions only when there appears to be no hope," he added. Asked what the chances were of a resumption of the talks without sanctions, Roh said, "We have hope because China is working hard... The real issue is the lack of trust between North Korea and the US."

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6. Inter-Korean Relations

Reuters ("ROH: N.KOREA COLLAPSE UNLIKELY AND UNDESIRABLE", 2005-04-14) reported that the DPRK is unlikely to collapse any time soon and such an event should not be encouraged, the ROK President Roh Moo-hyun said on a trip to Germany. "The possibility of a sudden collapse is very low," Roh said Wednesday after meeting ROK residents in Germany. "And we don't intend to encourage it either."

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7. ROK on Unification

Korea Times ("ROH SEES PHASED UNIFICATION", 2005-04-14) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun said that unification of the Korean Peninsula will become possible after undergoing "national confederation." Under the confederation, the two Koreas will maintain separate systems in the intermediary stage in preparation for reunification while institutionalizing cooperation. Roh forecast the possible reunification of the Korean Peninsula will be different from that of Germany. "Germany paid a high price to realize national unification and is still suffering from the it (the unification). I hope Korea will not undergo the same," Roh said.

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8. Russia on DPRK Nuclear Program

Interfax ("N. KOREA NUCLEAR WEAPONS STILL AN OPEN QUESTION - EXPERT", 2005-04-14) reported that Russian military expert and former head of the Defense Ministry's 4th Research Institute Gen. Vladimir Dvorkin doubts that the DPRK has nuclear weapons. "Only tests can confirm

the existence of nuclear weapons. Pyongyang has not made such tests," Dvorkin told Interfax on Thursday. He was referring to a statement by the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly Presidium President Kim Yong Nam, who said the nation would enlarge its nuclear potential in response to US' hostile policy.

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9. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Interfax ("CHINESE LEADER LIKELY TO VISIT N. KOREA IN MAY - SOURCE", 2005-04-14) reported that the PRC and the DPRK are holding consultations through diplomatic channels on preparing a visit by PRC President Hu Jintao's to the DPRK, a DPRK diplomatic source told Interfax. The date of the visit has not been set, but under a preliminary agreement it is likely to take place in May, he said. The source denied reports circulated by the DPRK mass media saying that Hu's visit to Pyongyang may be delayed "over North Korea's nuclear problem."

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10. Sino-DPRK Trade

The Christian Science Monitor ("NORTH KOREA'S BORDER TRADE GETTING BUSIER", 2005-0--14) reported that the DPRK is or will soon be on the verge of collapse is a cherished hope in influential White House circles. But here at the biggest trading point between the PRC and DPRK, few believe that will happen. The economy across the river is getting better. 225 daily trucks cross into the DPRK from the PRC, making up 70 percent of the DPRK's imports. And the traffic is increasing. DPRK's trade has risen 20 percent a year, to $1.2 billion, and it doubled in the last quarter of 2004. This traffic visible on a recent trip to the border, as well as conversations in Asian capitals and in the US, all suggest that the position of DPRK leader Kim Jong Il is not weakening, and that the uptick in economic activity represents a new lifeline for the regime.

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11. DPRK Economic Reforms

United Press International ("ANALYSIS: N.KOREA SUFFERING REFORM FALLOUT ", 2005-04-14) reported that the DPRK has been crawling toward a capitalist economy, expanding the role of markets and employing reform-minded young technocrats as it strives to rebuild the shattered economy, ROK officials and analysts say. But the three-year-old economic reform measures have fueled the sources of social instability as they created a wider gap between the haves and have-nots in the DPRK and rampant corruption with staggering inflation, experts say.

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12. ROK Defector to the DPRK

Korean Central News Agency ("PYONGYANG REPORTS SOUTH KOREAN DEFECTS TO NORTH BY SHIP", 2005-04-14) reported that Hwang Hong-ryon, a ROK citizen, defected to the DPRK by ship at around 16.30 on Wednesday [13 April]. Hwang had to go through a hail of bullets and shells fired by the ROK army when the ship was crossing the extension of the Military Demarcation Line in the East Sea. Hwang is now under investigation by a competent institution.

(return to top) Korea Times ("DEFECTED FISHERMAN IN NK DRAWS SYMPATHY", 2005-04-14) reported that a DPRK defector living in Seoul on Thursday expressed sympathy for a fisherman who crossed the inter-Korean sea border in the East Sea into the DPRK. But Soek Yoeng-hwan, who came to the ROK in 1998, also said the fisherman will soon feel regret over his "impulsive" action. "(The defection) is understandable because it is difficult to live here," Soek, who is currently working as a herbal doctor in Seoul, told The Korea Times. "He might have crossed the border under the false assurance that the North will treat him really well." (return to top)

13. DPRK Defectors in the ROK

International Herald Tribune ("A NORTH KOREAN INNOVATOR IN SEOUL", 2005-04-14) reported that Jong Su Ban, a defector from the famine-stricken DPRK, is building an entrepreneur's dream with a new product: lean DPRK snacks for image-conscious ROK consumers. Jong's take-out restaurant, which he hopes will grow into a nationwide franchise, is not his only enterprise. Since his arrival in the ROK in 2000, he has acquired eight patents, even though none of his inventions was a commercial success and one nearly drove him to bankruptcy. Jong has also written scripts for pornographic movies and a pornographic Web site. Jong's story reflects the capitalistic aspirations of the estimated hundreds of thousands of North Koreans who have escaped their totalitarian homelands to seek a "South Korean dream."

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14. DPRK Bird Flu Outbreak

Kyodo News ("N., S. KOREA TO HOLD BIRD FLU TALKS NEXT WEEK", 2005-04-14) reported that the DPRK and ROK will hold working-level talks next week to discuss Seoul's offer of aid in fighting an outbreak of bird flu in the DPRK, the ROK's Unification Ministry said. "We (the ROK) conveyed our position that the proposed South-North working-level contact on avian influenza be made on April 22 in Kaesong," the ministry said in a statement. In a telephone message, the ROK also notified the DPRK it will ship medicine and quarantine equipment, including testing kits, to the western port of Nampo to help the DPRK battle the outbreak.

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15. Abductee Issue

Kyodo News ("JAPAN DISMISSES N. KOREA'S CALL FOR RETURN OF ASHES", 2005-04-14) reported that Japan has dismissed the DPRK's call for the return of the cremated ashes, which were provided by Pyongyang as those belonging to abductee Megumi Yokota, but were later found by Japan not to belong to her, Japanese government officials said. Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda indicated at a news conference that Tokyo has no intention of returning the ashes.

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16. DPRK Human Rights

Choson Ilbo ("UNHRC PASSES N. KOREA RIGHTS RESOLUTION", 2005-04-14) reported that a resolution condemning human rights abuses in the DPRK was passed by a comfortable margin by the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, despite abstention from Seoul which is becoming a regular occurrence. Korean Ambassador to Geneva Choi Hyuck cited a “special situation” between the two Koreas as the reason for abstaining. However, he told the meeting the ROK government was

concerned that the DPRK showed no improvement in its human rights situation last year, adding it would continue its efforts to improve the DPRK human rights by supporting reform in the DPRK and providing humanitarian aid and cooperation.

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17. DPRK-Indonesian Relations

Korean Central News Agency ("FORMER INDONESIAN PRESIDENT HAILS TIES AT RECEPTION IN N KOREA", 2005-04-14) reported that a reception was given at the People's Palace of Culture Wednesday on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Kimilsungia, the flower representing the sun. Present there on invitation were former Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri. She said her visit to the venue of the festival opened with splendour provided an opportunity to know well about the DPRK people's veneration for their leader. She stressed that the Indonesian people wish the DPRK people success in their work for accomplishing the cause of national reunification.

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18. DPRK International Friendship Exhibition

Agence France Presse ("AN EXHIBITION OF FANTASY -- 296,000 REASONS WHY THE WORLD LOVES THE KIMS", 2005-04-14) reported that the DPRK's father and son dictators have no limits on the bizarre when accepting tokens of "boundless reverence". Among the other 296,000 gifts to Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il at their "International Friendship Exhibition" are the head of a bear personally shot by former Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and a stuffed white crane from US Christian evangelist Billy Graham. The exhibition, in two enormous marble and granite buildings about 90 minutes' drive from the capital of Pyongyang, is hailed as proof the world does not share US President George W. Bush's loathsome opinion of the Kims.

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19. DPRK Day of the Sun Holiday

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREAN LEADER PROMOTES GENERALS TO CELEBRATE BIRTHDAY OF FATHER", 2005-04-14) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il promoted 34 generals on Thursday as his government geared up for its biggest national holiday, the birthday of his late father. The promotions took place ahead of Friday's celebration of the birth anniversary of DPRK founding President Kim Il Sung. The elder Kim's birthday, known as "Day of the Sun," is the country's biggest national holiday. Three officers were promoted to lieutenant generals and 31 to major general, the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency said.

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20. Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Washington Post ("JAPANESE OIL DRILLING PLAN DRAWS PROTEST FROM CHINA", 2005-04-14) reported that the PRC government responded angrily to a Japanese decision to open a disputed area of the East China Sea to exploratory drilling by Japanese companies, terming it a "provocation" that could fuel a growing dispute between the two countries. The PRC Foreign Ministry has filed a formal protest with the Japanese government and "reserves the right to take further reaction," said Qin Gang, a ministry spokesman. He did not specify what the further action might be.

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21. Japan on Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Reuters ("JAPAN SAYS DIALOGUE NEEDED TO RESOLVE CHINA DISPUTE", 2005-04-14) reported that Japan avoided escalating a war of words with the PRC, saying dialogue was needed to resolve disputes, including one over energy projects in the East China Sea. "As the prime minister said yesterday, it is in the interest of both Japan and China to make the East China Sea a sea of cooperation rather than a sea of confrontation," Japan's top government spokesman told a news conference.

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22. PRC on Sino-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Agence France Presse ("CHINA WEBSITES CALL FOR LARGE WEEKEND ANTI-JAPAN PROTESTS; GOVT IN DILEMMA", 2005-04-14) reported that the PRC's anti-Japanese websites and Internet forums called for a second wave of rallies against Japan this weekend, as the government struggled with how to ensure nationalistic furor does not boil over. In popular instant messaging forums, netizens spread word about the times and locations of planned demonstrations in major metropolises including Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenyang and Chengdu. The protests were being timed for the visit of Japan's Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura, who is scheduled to arrive in Beijing Sunday.

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23. Japan Cyberattacks

Agence France Presse ("JAPAN SUSPECTS CYBER ATTACK ON OFFICIAL WEBSITES AMID CHINA ROW", 2005-04-14) reported that Japan's police and defense agencies said they had come under cyber attack, amid reports a PRC website was calling for the jamming of Japanese servers amid a heated bilateral row. "Access to the homepage of the National Police Agency was hampered from around 9:00 pm to 3:00 am," the national police said in a statement. "We are investigating the cause but it is highly possible that it was a cyber attack in which a large volume of information was sent to the address of the homepage," it said. Japanese media reports said a PRC website had urged Internet users to flood Japanese servers with irrelevant data.

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24. PRC Web Censorship

Washington Post ("WEB CENSORS IN CHINA FIND SUCCESS", 2005-04-14) reported that the PRC government is succeeding in broadly censoring what its citizens can read on the Internet, surprising many experts and denting US government hopes that online access would be a quick catalyst for democratic political reform. Internet users in the world's most populous country are routinely blocked from sites featuring information on subjects such as Taiwanese independence, the Falun Gong movement, the Dalai Lama and the Tiananmen Square uprising in 1989, according to a study to be released today by a consortium of researchers from Harvard University, the University of Toronto and Cambridge University in England.

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25. PRC AIDS Issue

Reuters ("CHINA ARRESTS 15 IN AIDS BLOOD DONOR SCANDAL", 2005-04-14) reported that the PRC has arrested 15 people for involvement in illegal blood-selling schemes blamed for widespread HIV/AIDS infections in the 1990s, the China Daily said. The arrests were linked to 106 cases of unsafe blood collection, illegal organization of people to sell plasma and "serious malpractice" in blood market supervision, the newspaper quoted Vice Minister of Health Ma Xiaowei as saying. It did not say when or where the arrests were made, but in the central province of Henan at least 25,000 people, and perhaps as many as one million, were infected with HIV in the 1990s in a blood-selling scandal initially covered up by the government.

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