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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Christian Science Monitor (Donald Kirk, "DPRK RAISES TENSIONS AHEAD OF CLINTON VISIT", Seoul, 2009/02/10) reported that the United States appears willing to accept the reality of DPRK as a nuclear power. "I'm not going into terminology," Gen. Walter Sharp, commander of US forces in ROK, said Monday, but acknowledged DPRK had "successfully" conducted a nuclear test while proclaiming its desire to be a nuclear power. "This is typical North Korean tactics," says Kim Sung-han, professor of international studies at ROK University. "When North Korea is interested in negotiating a certain issue, they need to create tensions." Its central interest now, he says, is "sending a message to the US, and to South Korea too, before the Obama administration finishes its policy review."

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2. US Policy Toward the DPRK

Yonhap News (Lee Chi-dong, "OBAMA ADVISED TO BROADEN ENGAGEMENT WITH PYONGYANG ", Seoul, 2009/02/09) reported that the new US administration of President Barack Obama should broaden its scope of engagement with the DPRK to cover a variety of issues, taking lessons from the "politically fragile" approach of its predecessor, an American expert said. Joel S. Wit, a former State Department official, pointed out that resolving the DPRK problem is far more difficult now than eight years ago. "The Obama administration should broaden the scope of engagement through establishing new venues for bilateral and multilateral talks ... on setting up a peace regime and relocating the remains of U.S. soldiers," he said. "That will create a much more stable and stronger engagement process."

Bloomberg (Dune Lawrence, "U.S. NEEDS MORE DIRECT TALKS WITH DPRK, EX-OFFICIAL SAYS", 2009/02/09) reported that the U.S. should increase bilateral negotiations with DPRK, with the six-nation talks on nuclear disarmament serving as “a useful supplement,” former U.S. diplomat Stephen Bosworth said after visiting Pyongyang. Kim Jong-Il’s regime is waiting for President Barack Obama’s administration to make its first move, said Bosworth, part of a seven-person private delegation that left the DPRK yesterday. The U.S. needs to handle relations “in a more straightforward manner,” he said in Beijing today.

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3. Inter-Korean Relations

Agence France Press ("DPRK WARNS OF COLLAPSE IN INTER-KOREAN TIES", Seoul, 2009/02/08) reported that Minju Joson, the official daily of the DPRK's government, called ROK's unification minister-designate Hyun In-Taek a "confrontational fanatic and sycophantic traitor." "If he is allowed to hold the post of the minister of 'unification,' the inter-Korean relations will grow worse and be pushed to collapse," the Minju Joson said .

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4. DPRK Space Program

Daily Tech (Michael Barkoviak, "DPRK ACTIVELY SEEKING SPACE PROGRAM", 2009/02/08) reported that DPRK also wants to launch its own space program, which will not ease international concern regarding the country's ability to launch missiles. "The DPRK's policy of advancing to space for peaceful purposes is a justifiable aim that fits the global trend of the times," government officials said in a state-run newspaper. "There is no power in the world that can stop it. As long as developing and using space are aimed at peaceful purposes and such efforts contribute to enhancing human beings' happiness, no one in the world can find fault with them."

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5. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("ASYLUM-SEEKING DEFECTOR RECEIVES NEW SEOUL PASSPORT", 2009/02/09) reported that DPRK defector Ma Young-ae received an ROK passport Wednesday five years after seeking asylum in the United States. Ma said that at the time she had been persecuted by the Roh Moo-hyun government for her speeches denouncing the DPRK's human rights conditions. “I wrote a letter to President Lee Myung-bak and National Intelligence Director Kim Sung-ho in December to explain what I had experienced and to ask for recovery of my honor through the issuance of the passport,” she said.

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6. DPRK Economy

Chosun Ilbo ("REFUGEES' REMITTANCES TO N.KOREA 'GROWING'", 2009/02/09) reported that the number of DPRK refugees who remit money to their families in the DPRK is rising. "Some 15,000 North Korean refugees have settled in the country, and over 6,000 of them are remitting money to North Korea," a government official said. "We understand the size of the remittances is also growing." If some 6,000 DPRK refugees here send money to the DPRK, and a refugee remits US$1,000 a year, some $6 million is sent to the DPRK per year. To that should be added 20,000-30,000 of the 100,000 North Koreans estimated to live in the PRC.

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7. Food Aid to the DPRK

KBS News ("SURVEY: MOST NK PEOPLE UNAWARE OF OUTSIDE FOOD AID", 2009/02/09) reported that a survey finds that most DPRK people are not aware of the fact that their nation is receiving food aid from other countries. The survey was conducted by the Peterson Institute for International Economics last November on 300 DPRK escapees living in the ROK. According to the survey, 56 percent of the respondents did not know Pyongyang was getting outside provisions.

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8. ROK Civil Unrest

Arirang News ("POLICE LABELS 1,800 CIVIC GROUPS 'ILLEGAL AND VIOLENT'", 2009/02/09) reported that the National Police Agency submitted to government ministries Friday a list of organizations involved in illegal protests and violence. This includes more than 1,800 civic organizations including members of the People's Association for Measures Against Mad Cow Disease and a number of minor opposition parties such as the ROK Democratic Labor Party. The ministries will review the list to decide whether to continue government subsidies for them.

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9. ROK Energy Supply

Asia Pulse ("S. KOREA SPENDS RECORD $4 BILLION TO DEVELOP OVERSEAS OIL FIELDS IN 2008", 2009/02/09) reported that ROK companies spent a record $4.02 billion last year to develop

overseas oil and gas fields in an effort to better insulate the country from sudden surges in global energy prices, the government was quoted as saying by Yonhap News Agency. The increase marks a 57.6 percent on-year gain and helped push up the country's self-sufficiency in oil and gas to 5.72 percent of total demand, the Ministry of Knowledge Economy said.

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10. US-ROK Trade Relations

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "SEOUL PICKS U.S. LOBBYIST FOR FTA PASSAGE", 2009/02/09) reported that the Seoul government has signed a contract with a U.S. lobbying firm in efforts to facilitate the U.S. Congress's ratification of the ROK-U.S. free trade agreement, diplomatic sources said yesterday. The ROK embassy in Washington sealed a six-month deal in December with Parven Pomper Strategies, a renowned American lobbying group, for help in persuading U.S. officials and members of Congress critical of the FTA.

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11. US-Japan Security Alliance

Agence France-Presse ("PROTESTS AS US WARSHIP DOCKS IN NAGASAKI", Tokyo, 2009/02/05) reported that a US warship docked in Nagasaki to the protests of residents and a boycott by local leaders who said the visit was in poor taste in a city obliterated by a US atomic bomb. The USS Blue Ridge, which is stationed in Yokosuka near Tokyo, sailed to Nagasaki with a stated goal of promoting friendship between Japan and the United States. Hundreds of residents including atomic bomb survivors chanted, "We are opposed to the port call!" as the 19,600-ton vessel arrived in the southwestern city.

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12. Japan Government

Agence France Press ("JAPAN RULING PARTY 'LIKE TITANIC': EX-MINISTER", Tokyo,) reported that Japan's long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party is looking "like the Titanic" as it cruises towards potentially devastating elections in the coming months, said former minister Yoshimi Watanabe. "The LDP is like the Titanic, which is moving towards a great iceberg called 'a snap election,'" Watanabe told the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. "So I can understand their feeling that they want to delay the election," he said. "But the later the snap election comes, the fewer seats the LDP will get."

Kyodo News ("SUPPORT RATE FOR ASO CABINET DOWN FURTHER TO 18.1%", Tokyo, 2009/02/09) reported that t he support rate for the Cabinet of Prime Minister Taro Aso has plunged further to 18.1 percent, down 1.1 percentage points from a survey last month, according to the results of the latest Kyodo News survey released. The outcome of the telephone survey conducted Saturday and Sunday raises the possibility that Aso will have an even tougher time running the government. The disapproval rate for the Cabinet of Aso, who took office last September, was 70.9 percent.

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13. Japan Environment

Kyodo News ("ENVIRONMENT MINISTRY ISSUES ALERT ABOUT CONTAINERS IN SEA OF JAPAN", Tokyo, 2009/02/09) reported that t he Environment Ministry issued an alert Monday about polyethylene containers washed up on the Sea of Japan coast, warning that some of them contain hazardous substances such as hydrochloric acid, ministry officials said. The ministry warned residents not to touch the containers, saying that about 13,000 of them were found washed up in 18 of Japan's 47 prefectures during January.

Agence France Press ("JAPAN PM TO DRAFT 'GREEN NEW DEAL'", Tokyo, 2009/02/08) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso will order his ministries to draft a "Green New Deal" this week to counter the twin threats of climate change and the economic downturn, a report said on Sunday. Aso will order a stimulus package focusing on slashing greenhouse gases at a meeting of his global warming advisory panel on Wednesday. His government will present various plans to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 15 percent from 1990 levels by the year 2020. The panel will then canvass opinions from a range of people including business leaders before making formal recommendations to the premier in June.

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14. Russo-Japanese Territorial Dispute

Kyodo News ("ASO VOWS TO RESOLVE ISLAND ROW WITH RUSSIA, CALLS FOR PUBLIC SUPPORT", Tokyo, 2009/02/06) reported that Prime Minister Taro Aso called on the government and the Japanese people to work together to solve the territorial dispute with Russia at an annual rally calling for the early return of the Northern Territories (Kurils). "Russia is an important neighbor for building peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region," Aso said. "And in order to raise our relations with Russia to a higher dimension, it is essential to reach a final solution to the issue of the Northern Territories, which is the biggest pending issue."

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15. Japan Space Program

Space.com ("BELEAGUERED JAPANESE ASTEROID PROBE HEADED HOME", 2009/02/07) reported that Japan's beleaguered space probe Hayabusa , which may or may not have collected samples of an asteroid, fired up its engine to resume its trip back to Earth. After more than a year coasting through space, Hayabusa reignited its ion-powered engine to begin the second leg of what has become an extra-long trek home from the asteroid Itokawa, said officials with the Japanese Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA). The spacecraft is expected to return in June 2010 to deliver a sample canister that will plunge through the atmosphere and land on Earth.

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16. Sino-Indian Trade Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA EXPRESSES 'SERIOUS CONCERN' OVER TOY BAN, OTHER INDIA MOVES", Beijing, 2009/02/06) reported that the PRC voiced "serious concern" over India's decision to impose a ban on imports of toys and other measures and said the moves threaten to severely affect bilateral trade relations. "The Chinese government expresses serious concern that the Indian side has imposed... import restrictions in such a short time period," the ministry of commerce said in a statement on its website. But some Indian analysts have suggested the move was aimed at shielding India 's struggling toy industry against a flood of PRC imports.

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17. PRC Latin American Diplomacy

BBC News (Shirong Chen, "CHINA PURSUES LATIN AMERICA TIES", 2009/02/08) reported that two top PRC officials have started visits to Latin America as part of an intensified effort to strengthen ties with the region. PRC Vice-Premier Hui Liangyu is to visit Argentina, Ecuador, Barbados and the Bahamas. Vice-President Xi Jinping is visiting Jamaica, Colombia, Venezuela and the PRC's two biggest trading partners in the region, Brazil and Mexico. The PRC has stepped up its efforts to strengthen ties with Latin America.

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18. Sino-US Military Relations

Honolulu Advertiser (Richard Halloran, "NO THAW IN U.S.-CHINA MILITARY EXCHANGES", 2009/02/07) reported that military exchanges between the PRC and the US remain frozen despite a seemingly cordial telephone conversation between President Obama and PRC President Hu Jintao and the forthcoming port call in Hong Kong of the U.S. aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis. Said a U.S. officer: "It's still a work in progress." Indeed, the PRC underscored its displeasure with the US with not-so-subtle warnings last week. Two generals signed an essay lauding the increased capability of the PRC's nuclear forces, including long-range missiles that could strike the U.S.

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19. Cross-Strait Relations

Agence France Press ("TAIWAN, PRC MUSEUMS SET FOR EXCHANGE", Taipei, 2009/02/09) reported that Taiwan's most famous museum announced Monday the first high-level exchange visit in 60 years with officials at its counterpart in Beijing, as part of the island's efforts to improve relations with PRC. Chou Kung-shin, director of Taipei National Palace Museum, said she would lead a delegation to Beijing on Saturday, while her counterpart at the Forbidden City's Palace Museum would visit Taiwan on March 1. In a gesture of goodwill, the Beijing museum has agreed to lend its Taipei counterpart 17 artifacts for an exhibition slated for October on Emperor Yongzhen (1678-1735), Chou said. The Taipei museum is not likely to lend its collection to Beijing for the moment, given the existing sovereignty disputes between the two governments.

Bloomberg News ("CHINA, TAIWAN TO TRIPLE FLIGHTS IN JULY, CHINA TIMES REPORTS ", 2009/02/07) reported that the PRC and Taiwan plan to more than triple the number of flights across the Taiwan Strait as part of efforts to normalize their transportation link, the China Times reported. Services will increase to 357 flights a week starting in July from 108, the Taipei-based, Chinese-language newspaper said, citing Lee Lung-wen, head of the Civil Aeronautics Administration. The regular commercial flights will help cut ticket prices, the report said.

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20. PRC Tibet Issue

Reuters ("SECURITY FORCES PATROL TIBETAN TOWN IN NW CHINA", Xiahe, 2009/02/07) reported that security forces put on a show of force in the important Tibetan monastery town of Xiahe in the foothills of the Tibetan plateau before a sensitive Tibetan anniversary. Riot police marched through Xiahe's tense main street at regular intervals on Saturday morning, while vehicles were stopped and checked at military road blocks about 200 km (120 miles) from Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu province. "Last year, because of the Olympics, people were confident China could not be too harsh with us. But this year, nothing much will happen because people are much more afraid," a monk told Reuters.

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21. PRC Human Rights

Agence France Press (Hui Min Neo, "PRC SIGNALS 'FIRST' HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN", Geneva, 2009/02/09) reported that PRC dismissed allegations of repression of Tibetans and Uighur Muslims during a UN hearing on Monday, and said it was preparing a "first of its kind" human rights action plan. "At this moment, about 50 governmental agencies are working on a human rights action plan which would soon be made public," said Li Baodong, PRC's ambassador to the UN. "It is the first of its kind in China and will set targets for all departments, in a major move to advance human rights protection in China," he told the UN Human Rights Council during a universal periodic review session.

Associated Press (Frank Jordans, "PRC DENIES CENSORSHIP, PERSECUTING ACTIVISTS", Geneva, 2009/02/09) reported that PRC officials on Monday told the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva that citizens are free to express their opinions in the press without fear of retribution. The statements contrasted starkly with claims by rights groups that the government in Beijing persecutes those who speak out against it in public. It also contradicts ample evidence that PRC has blocked foreign and domestic Web sites, including those of The New York Times, the British Broadcasting Corp., and Ming Pao, a Hong Kong newspaper. The Foreign Correspondents Club of PRC has recorded more than 335 cases of violence, detention and other harassment of reporters and their contacts since the beginning of 2007.

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22. PRC Environment

LA Times (Peter Spiegel, "PRC ORDERS $13-BILLION DROUGHT RELIEF FOR WHEAT GROWERS",

Beijing, 2009/02/08) reported that the three northern provinces that account for more than half the PRC's wheat production have seen winter rainfall levels as much as 80% lower than normal. The Finance Ministry has allocated nearly $13 billion for drought relief, most of which will fund direct grants to farmers. "The direct cause is months of lack of rainfall, but it definitely is connected with climate change," Xu Yinlong, a researcher at the PRC Academy of Agricultural Sciences, said.

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23. PRC Energy

Xinhua News ("PRC'S LARGEST WIND POWER FACILITY R&D CENTER TO BE ESTABLISHED IN XI'AN", 2009/02/09) reported that PRC Northern Locomotive and Rolling Stock Industry Corporation would invest another six billion yuan in western PRC's Xi'an city to build the largest wind power facility research center, the company has said. According to the agreement between the company and the municipal government of Xi'an of Shaanxi Province, four billion yuan will be invested first in six wind power product manufacturing projects to be completed in 2011. The second phase involves an investment of two billion yuan to build railway transportation and develop wind power system by 2015.

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24. PRC Government

Xinhua News ("MINISTRY: PRC TO CREATE 775,000 JOBS THROUGH RURAL STORES BY END-2010", Beijing, 2009/02/09) reported that PRC will establish 250,000 rural retail stores by next year to create 775,000 jobs for migrant workers who have lost their jobs as a result of the global economic crisis, a Ministry of Commerce official said Monday.

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25. PRC Unrest

International Heard Tribune (Andrew Jacobs , "A TRADITION, A DRAGON DANCE AND THEN A RIOT", 2009/02/07) reported that a clash between the police and residents in rural Guizhou Province may be the first disturbance inspired by a dragon dance, or at least a thwarted one. According to officials and residents in Dejiang, at least a dozen people were injured during a riot that began when the police tried to stop the traditional Lunar New Year procession from winding through the city's narrow streets. At one point, soldiers were called in to quell the disturbances. Three of the injured were police officers, officials said.

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II. PRC Report

26. PRC Public Education System

Beijing News (Wang Jialin, "BEIJING TO ENCOURAGE VOLUNTEERING AMONG STUDENTS", 2009/02/09) reported that Beijing has decided to promote volunteering among the city's 1.78 million students, mulling to credit their volunteer experiences for reference in academic institutions' enrollment. The move was to help students develop awareness of volunteer work and encourage them to make devotion to society, according to local education authorities on Sunday. The Beijing Municipal Education Commission and the China Communist Youth League Beijing Committee, which formulated the guidelines, requested primary and middle schools to incorporate volunteer service into their curricula.

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27. PRC Energy Supply

Xinhua Net (Zhou Yingfeng, "CHINA BEGINS CONSTRUCTION OF 2ND GAS PIPELINE", 2009/02/08) reported that the PRC started construction of the eastern segment of the country's second West-East gas pipeline in Southern Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province on Saturday. PRC Vice Premier Li Keqiang attended the ceremony and announced the start of the construction. The pipeline, the second after the first West-East natural gas transfer project, will cross 14 provinces and carry 30 million cubic meters of natural gas every year from Turkmenistan to eastern and western areas, including Zhejiang, Shanghai and Guangdong. The 9,102 km pipeline will be made up of one trunk line and eight sub-lines. After completion of the second pipeline, the PRC is expected to save 11.06 million tons of coal every year.

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III. ROK Report

28. Inter-Korea Relations

Ohmynews ("U.S. BLAMED FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT BEHIND SCATTERING LEAFLETS IN DPRK", 2009/02/09) reported that the Busan headquarters of the South Committee for Fulfilling the 6.15 Joint Declaration blamed the U.S. for conservative organizations sending leaflets into the DPRK. It claimed that “scattering leaflets in the DPRK is a way to block North-South relations and that it must be stopped,” and also claimed that “the U.S. is financially supporting the scattering of leaflets in the name of improving human rights in DPRK.” The organization also demanded the withdrawal of Hyun In-taek's nomination as Unification Minister.

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29. ROK, Japan on US DPRK Policy

PRESSian ("ROK-JAPAN, CONCENTRATING ON ‘ANTI-DPRK CAMPAIGN’, INTERVIEWING FAMILLIES OF THE KIDNAPPED, AND PROMOTING DMZ TOUR TO GET HILLARY’S HEART",

2009/02/08) wrote that with U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton making her first tours around Asia in mid-February, the ROK and Japan are trying to put brakes on the Obama administration's positive approach to the DPRK. Japan is interviewing families of the kidnapped in order to spotlight the kidnapping issue, and ROK's Lee administration is also busy looking for ways to get Obama administration's heart. However, it is doubtful whether Hillary might be persuaded despite their schemes.

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30. DPRK Health

Goodfriends ("NORTH AND SOUTH MUST COOPERATE TO CARE AFTER THE EPIDEMIC IN DPRK", 2009/02/10) reported that epidemic hemorrhagic fever is continuously spreading across certain areas in the DPRK. Prisoners who work often in the outside, farmers who are busy harvesting and gathering decayed soil, and the homeless are easily exposed to the epidemic. The DPRK is currently not capable of preventing further infections or of curing the infected patients. Both the DPRK and ROK governments should stop the game to protect their pride that has no winner, and instead cooperate to care after the epidemic affecting people in the DPRK.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org