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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. NAPSNet

1. US on DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap News (Kim Hyun, "OBAMA NOT TO ACCEPT N. KOREA'S NUCLEAR STATUS; EX-ENVOY", 2009/02/18) reported that the new U.S. administration will not recognize the DPRK as a nuclear state, but will instead push stalled negotiations forward through tough, experienced officials, a former envoy to the ROK said Wednesday. Hubbard, who was the U.S. ambassador to the ROK from 2001-2004 under the Bush administration, and who advised the Obama campaign on the DPRK, said the new administration will seek both direct and multilateral talks with Pyongyang in a break from Bush's approach.

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2. ROK on DPRK Missile Program

Reuters (Jack Kim, "NORTH KOREA FACES SANCTIONS IF TESTS MISSILE: SOUTH", Seoul, 2009/02/18) reported that DPRK will face U.N. sanctions if it goes ahead with a long-range missile test that would be seen as a threat to the region, ROK's foreign minister said on Wednesday. "Whether the North launches a missile or a satellite, it is still a violation of a U.N. Security Council resolution," Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan told a group of diplomats and journalists. "It will inevitably be followed by sanctions."

Associated Press ("REPORT: N. KOREA MISSILE LAUNCH MAY BE READY IN 2 WEEKS", Seoul, 2009/02/18) reported that DPRK could complete preparations to fire a missile within the next two weeks at the earliest, Seoul's defense chief reportedly said Wednesday. Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee made the prediction during a closed-door report to ruling Grand National Party leaders, Yonhap news agency said, citing unnamed participants.

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3. DPRK Leadership

United Press International ("KIM JONG IL 'NOMINATED' FOR ANOTHER TERM", Pyongyang, 2009/02/18) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il is thanking the people of his country for nominating him as a candidate for re-election next month. "Voters' meetings held in all constituencies of the country to nominate candidates for deputies to the 12th Supreme People's Assembly ... nominated me," Kim said. "I extend my ... thanks to the entire electorate of the country for expressing their deep trust in me."

Voice of America ("NORTH KOREAN LEADER ENCOURAGES VOTERS IN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS", Pyongyang, 2009/02/18) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong Il is urging citizens to vote in next month's parliamentary election. In an open letter released Wednesday by DPRK's state media, Mr. Kim says the election will "exalt the dignity and authority" of the communist state. He says the vote is being held in a period "where a fresh revolutionary upsurge" will lead to a more prosperous DPRK. Observers say the elections could lay the groundwork for Kim's successor.

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4. Inter-Korean Relations

Xinhua News ("DPRK SAYS IT´S FULLY READY FOR "ALL-OUT CONFRONTATION" WITH ROK", Pyongyang, 2009/02/19) reported that the army of the DPRK was fully ready for "an all-out confrontation" with South Korea, the official KCNA news cited a military spokesman as saying. The Lee Myung-bak administration of the ROK, who was escalating the confrontation with the DPRK in a bid to find a way-out of its serious inner crisis, will meet "the merciless and stern punishment by the army and people of the DPRK," a military spokesman for Korean People's Army (KPA) said.

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5. US-ROK Security Alliance

Yonhap News (Sam Kim, "S. KOREA, U.S. TO HOLD ANNUAL DEFENSE DRILL NEXT MONTH AMID N. KOREA WOES", Seoul, 2009/02/18) reported that the ROK and the United States will go ahead with a joint annual defense exercise next month, their combined forces command said Wednesday, as tension rises on the divided peninsula. The U.S. will mobilize 26,000 troops and a nuclear-powered carrier this year to test its ability to quickly deploy forces in case of DPRK invasion, Kim Yong-kyu, a CFC spokesperson, said. The DPRK was informed of the upcoming exercise, but no return comment was expected.

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6. DPRK on US-ROK War Drill

Yonhap News ("N. KOREA WARNS S. KOREA, U.S. WILL PAY 'EXPENSIVE PRICE' FOR JOINT WAR

DRILL ", Seoul, 2009/02/18) reported that the DPRK blasted a planned ROK-US war drill as a "war preparation maneuver" and warned the two countries will pay an "expensive price" for the annual training exercise. "The war preparation maneuver by the United States and the South Korean government that will bring in the wind of fire of war to the Korean Peninsula will be forced to pay a expensive price as it is against peace and against the era," the Korean Central News Agency said.

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7. Russo-DPRK Relations

Moscow Times ("NORTH KOREA PRESSED OVER SHIP", 2009/02/18) reported that Russian diplomats requested an explanation from the DPRK on Wednesday for the detention of a Russian vessel as it traveled across the Sea of Japan, Itar-Tass reported. The ship, the Omsk-122, was en route from the South Korean port of Pusan to the Far East port of Vladivostok when it was boarded off the Cape of Musudan, Itar-Tass reported. There was no immediate information on the number of crew onboard or the formal reason for its detention.

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8. Japanese Politics

Kyodo News ("SUPPORT RATE FOR ASO CABINET HITS NEW LOW AFTER MINISTER'S RESIGNATION", Tokyo, 2009/02/18) reported that public discontent with the already shaky Cabinet of Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso has grown after the resignation of his finance minister with the support rate for Aso's Cabinet down to 13.4 percent, results of a Kyodo News survey showed Wednesday. The support rate in the survey, conducted hours after Finance Minister Shoichi Nakagawa stepped down Tuesday, represents a decline of 4.7 percentage points from the previous poll carried out Feb. 7 to 8. The disapproval rate was up 5.7 percentage points to 76.6 percent.

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9. Japan UNSC Role

Kyodo News ("JAPAN TO RENEW BID FOR PERMANENT U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT", Tokyo, 2009/02/19) reported that Japan is preparing to renew its bid to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council when intergovernmental negotiations on reforming the body begin on Friday at the U.N. headquarters in New York. Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations Yukio Takasu has indicated he wants the world body to enter substantive negotiations on a proposed expansion of the Security Council in March and hinted at the possibility that Japan may again cooperate with countries such as Germany and Brazil in its bid.

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10. Japan Environment

Kyodo News ("BICYCLE USE GROWS IN POPULARITY AMID RECESSION", Tokyo, 2009/02/18)

reported that while automakers are suffering from slumping sales amid the global economic downturn and accelerating efforts to develop green cars to spur new demand, a traditional green vehicle—the bicycle—is becoming more popular. ‘‘Usually, bicycles sell well in the high season of summer and business is slow when it gets colder, but this year we remain so busy,’’ said Daisuke Nishikoori, manager of the Y’s Road bicycle chain’s outlet in Tokyo. A survey by the Japan Bicycle Promotion Institute on 100 designated retailers across Japan showed sales of sporty bicycles had double-digit or sometime triple-digit percentage growth rates every month through December in 2008 compared with year-earlier levels.

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11. Russo-Japanese Energy Trade

Agence France-Presse ("RUSSIA LAUNCHES MAJOR GAS PROJECT NEAR JAPAN", Korsakov, Russia, 2009/02/18) reported that Japanese Premier Taro Aso and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday inaugurated Russia's first Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) plant that will supply Japan with millions of tonnes of gas annually. Five percent of the world's total LNG supply is eventually expected to come from the massive complex on the icy shores of Sakhalin Island, located about 150 kilometres (90 miles) from Japan's northern island of Hokkaido . Around 65 percent of the plant's annual production of 9.8 million tonnes of LNG will go to Japan, with the rest roughly split between South Korea and the United States, according to Sakhalin Energy , the consortium behind the project.

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12. Russo-Japanese Territorial Dispute

The Financial Times ("RUSSIA AND JAPAN MAKE PROGRESS ON ISLANDS", 2009/02/18) reported that Japan and Russia agreed to adopt an “outside the box” approach to resolve a bitter territorial dispute over contested islands seized by Moscow in the second world war. However, a summit meeting between Taro Aso, Japan’s prime minister, and Dmitry Medvedev, the Russian president, yielded no narrowing of their differences over ownership of four islands near Japan’s northern island of Hokkaido, a dispute that has long clouded ties between the Asian neighbours.

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13. US on PRC Nuclear Program

Asahi Shinbun ("CLINTON TO PRESS CHINA ON NUKES", Tokyo, 2009/02/18) reported that visiting U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Tuesday the United States would attempt to engage the PRC in discussions about nuclear nonproliferation and arms reduction. Clinton made the comments in an exclusive interview with Yoichi Funabashi, editor in chief of The Asahi Shimbun. Clinton is expected to discuss such issues with her counterparts in Beijing, the last stop on a four-nation Asian tour. She indicated a willingness to start up a discussion process much like the one the United States had with the then Soviet Union during the Cold War.

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14. Sino-US Military Cooperation

International Herald Tribune (Mark McDonald and Keith Bradsher, "HOPES FOR U.S. MILITARY TIES WITH CHINA", Hong Kong, 2009/02/18) reported that the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific said Wednesday that he hoped a visit to the region by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would lead to a resumption of high-level military exchanges with the PRC. "We hope she gets some traction, and we're hoping for a resumption of that dialogue," Admiral Timothy Keating, head of U.S. Pacific Command, said at a small briefing in Hong Kong. The PRC, angered over a major U.S. arms deal with Taiwan, broke off senior-level military exchanges with Washington last October. A defense white paper issued last month by the PRC military said the arms sale had done "serious harm" to bilateral relations.

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15. Sino-US Detainee Rendition

Los Angeles Times (Peter Spiegel and Barbara Demick, "UIGHUR DETAINEES AT GUANTANAMO POSE A PROBLEM FOR OBAMA", Beijing, 2009/02/18) reported that sixteen Chinese Uighurs at Guantanamo Bay are presenting problems for the Obama administration as he moves to close the military prison. The PRC is insisting that the Uighurs be sent home to face trial for separatist activities. It has further intimated that any country that offers them political asylum will in effect be harboring dangerous terrorists. How the Uighurs are handled could play a role in defining what kind of relationship the Obama administration forges with Beijing in its early months. Beijing has made it clear that it wants to be considered an ally in the battle against terrorism, which is coming closer to PRC's borders as the administration shifts focus from Iraq to Afghanistan.

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16. PRC Foreign Relations

Bloomberg News (Dune Lawrence , "CHINA PUSHES 'SOFT POWER'", 2009/02/18) reported that the US secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton, has touted her approach to diplomacy as "smart power." That's nothing new for the PRC, which has employed economic, political and cultural persuasion under President Hu Jintao to build its image as a responsible world leader. Hu's "peaceful development" strategy - the pillar of foreign policy since he took power in 2003 - reflects an attempt to overcome lingering image problems created by the Tiananmen Square crackdown on student demonstrators in 1989. It's also meant to neutralize perceptions of the PRC as a military threat, spurred by territorial aggression in the South China Sea in the 1990s and defense spending that rose an average of 15.9 percent a year between 1998 and 2007, according to the PRC government.

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17. PRC Security

The Associated Press ("POLICE MAINTAIN ORDER IN CENTRAL CHINA AFTER CLASH ", Taipei, 2009/02/18) reported that security forces are maintaining order in central Hebei province one week

after a major clash erupted between PRC Muslims and ethnic Han majority villagers, an official said. The dispute, triggered Feb. 10 by a quarrel between children from two villages over New Year's fireworks, escalated into a massive brawl that drew hundreds of villagers, said an official with the Mengcun County propaganda department who declined to give his name. The spokesman, who refused to give his name as is customary in the PRC, said the situation had "calmed down" but that some police officers and county officials are remaining in Meng village to keep order.

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18. PRC Employment

Reuters (""HOSTILE" FORCES STIRRING UP CHINA JOBLESS", 2009/02/18) reported that the PRC must guard against "hostile forces" within and outside the country working to stir up trouble among its masses of newly unemployed workers, a senior trade union official said. Sun Chunlan, vice-chairman of the state-backed All-China Federation of Trade Unions, said police taskforces had been "rushed" to all regions to "understand the situation with regional social stability," the Beijing News paraphrased him as saying during a teleconference with officials. Authorities needed to guard against "hostile forces within and outside China using the difficulties of some enterprises to infiltrate and bring trouble to rural migrant workers," Sun said. He did not elaborate.

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19. PRC Environment

Associated Press ("REPORT: ENVIRONMENT IN BEIJING HAS IMPROVED", Nairobi, 2009/02/18) reported that PRC has fulfilled many of the promises to improve Beijing's air quality that it made after being awarded the 2008 Olympic Games but still relies too much on coal, the United Nations said Wednesday. The UNEP report said Beijing has invested in public transport and renewable energy and phased out hydrochloroflurocarbons -- an ozone-damaging greenhouse gas ahead of a 2030 target. Beijing needs to further reduce its reliance on coal for energy and expand its water conservation measures to the entire city, the report said. It also recommends PRC authorities apply the same environmental standards to the rest of the country.

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20. Taiwan Economy

Financial Times (Robert Kwong, "TAIWAN'S GDP PLUNGES MORE THAN 8%", Taipei, 2009/02/18) reported that Taiwan has entered the island’s worst recorded contraction, officials said on Wednesday as a steep slowdown in global electronics sales slammed the export-reliant economy. Asia's sixth-largest economy saw its gross domestic product shrink by 8.36 per cent in the last three months of 2008 compared to a year before. For the whole of 2008 the island eked out growth of 0.12 per cent despite the fourth quarter debacle. Coupled with the PRC's deceleration, the spreading gloom underlines how this financial crisis that originated in the west is hitting Asia harder than even the region’s own banking and financial crisis of a decade ago.

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21. PRC Space Program

Xinhua News Agency ("CHINA PLANS TO LAUNCH THIRD OCEAN SURVEY SATELLITE IN 2010", Beijing, 2009/02/19) reported that PRC plans to launch a third ocean survey satellite in 2010 to upgrade its capacity for maritime weather forecasting and disaster relief, according to a report in the Science and Technology Daily on Wednesday. The satellite, Haiyang-2A, an ocean dynamic environmental satellite, will be used to monitor ocean wind fields, sea levels and temperatures, said Jiang Xingwei, an official with the National Marine Environment Forecast Center. The color remote sensing satellites (Haiyang-1 series) use infrared remote sensing technology to monitor ocean pollution and topography in shallow waters.

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II. PRC Report

22. PRC Energy

Jianghua Times (Hu Xiaohong, "80% PEOPLE ARE WILLING TO PAY MORE FOR CLEAN ENERGY", 2009/02/18) reported that international environment protection organization Green Peace announced yesterday that IPSOS has been committed to carry out a spot check in PRC. Result shows that near 80% of the interviewed agree with that charcoal burning can bring air pollution, and they can also accept the 19% markup for clean energy such as solar or wind.

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23. PRC Civil Society

Xinhua Net ("SHANGHAI TO ESTABLISH CHARITY THEME PARK", 2009/02/18) reported that the first charity theme park is about to be built in Yanzhong Greenland, Luwan district, Shanghai. Shanghai Charity Funds will work hand in hand with Luwan district in building the park, and the two sides has carried out discussions for ideas of the park. “To celebrate the 15th anniversary of Shanghai Charity Funds, serials of activities have been preparing.” Introduced by Guo Kairong, vice chair of the Funds, besides building the park, they will also hold a forum, make a movie, and publish collections of artworks and stamps.

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