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Preceding NAPSNet Report

MARKTWO

I. Napsnet

1. Six-Party Talks

Korea Herald (Jin Dae-woong, "WILL 2009 SEE TURNAROUND FOR NUKE TALKS?", Seoul, 2009/01/02) reported that ROK experts say this year will mark a turnaround in the six-party talks. "Obama will return to the two-way negotiation of the Bill Clinton era for addressing the North's nuclear issue. By ameliorating bilateral relations, the Obama administration will embrace North Korea into a normal state group and spur the communist country's abandoning of nuclear programs," said Cho Seong-ryoul, an analyst at the Institute for National Security and Strategy affiliated with the National Intelligence Service. "The main negotiation will be conducted through the bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea. In that case, the six-party frame would play the secondary role of endorsing the Washington-Pyongyang deal," said Cho.

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2. Inter-Korea Relations

Joongang Ilbo ("BUDDHIST LEADER GETS NORTH'S SOUTH POLICY SPOT", Seoul, 2009/01/05) reported that Yu Yong-sun, the 68-year-old head of the Korean Buddhists Federation, has become the DPRK's senior ROK policy maker, a top Seoul official said Sunday. Choe Sung-chol, deputy director of the United Front Department of the DPRK Workers' Party, was in charge of Pyongyang's ROK affairs until early last year. "Yu succeeded Choe in March last year," the source said. "Choe was once deeply trusted by leader Kim Jong-il, but he stepped down because he had failed to accurately assess the outcome of the 2007 presidential election in the South, the Lee Myung-bak administration's North Korea policy and the outlook for inter-Korean relations."

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "LEE SEEKS UN HELP FOR INTER-KOREAN TIES", Seoul, 2009/01/04)

reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak during a telephone conversation Saturday asked United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to help improve strained inter-Korean ties, Cheong Wa Dae spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said. Ban said he would make efforts to help mend inter-Korean ties in cooperation with Seoul's foreign ministry, the spokesman said.

Korea Times (Michael Ha, "SEOUL HAS NOT CHANGED NK POLICY", Seoul, 2009/01/02) reported that in his New Year speech Friday, ROK President Lee Myung-bak stated, ``South-North relations should be resolved smoothly with a more flexible and mature attitude." He added, `` It is about time the South and North overcame confrontation and conflict and opened a new age of cooperative coexistence and co-prosperity. I hope that North Korea will be able to read the change of the times and forge ahead with us for a bright future. I am willing to engage in dialogue with the North at any time and am ever ready to cooperate with it as a partner. It is my earnest wish that the North will unshackle itself from old, outmoded tactics of instigating conflict within the South and will come forward with a cooperative attitude.''

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3. DPRK Refugees

BBC News ("BURMA FREES NORTH KOREAN REFUGEES", 2009/01/01) reported that Burmese authorities released 19 DPRK refugees at the border with Thailand, an ROK diplomat said. The diplomat, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the move would pave the way for their travel to the ROK. The Burmese government had detained the refugees for a month on charges of illegal entry.

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4. ROK-Japan Territorial Dispute

Korea Times (Kim Rahn, "JAPANESE DOCUMENT SHOWS DOKDO IS KOREAN TERRITORY", Seoul, 2009/01/04) reported that the Korea Maritime Institute said Saturday that it discovered a Japanese document, ``Prime Ministerial Ordinance No. 24,'' issued on June 6, 1951, which stated that Japanese territory was Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and nearby islands and excluded Jeju Island, Ulleung Island and Dokdo. ``According to the document, Japan recognized Korea's sovereignty over Ulleung Island and Dokdo until just before the [San Francisco Peace] treaty was made. It is also significant that the Japanese government acknowledged so in its own ordinance,'' Yoo Mi-rim, a senior researcher of the Korea Maritime Institute's Korea Dokdo Research Center, said.

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5. US Military in ROK

Korea Herald (Kim Ji-hyun, "U.S. BASE RELOCATION MAY BE POSTPONED", Seoul , 2009/01/05) reported that the ROK Defense Minstry's project management office, which manages the planned relocation of U.S. bases, called for the Yongsan Eighth Army headquarters to be moved by 2014 as scheduled. But it suggested delaying the relocation of the infantry division by two years to 2016. The Defense Ministry said the proposal was as of yet just an idea that has to be further negotiated by the

United States and the ROK. "We hope to produce a final conclusion outlining an official deadline and costs by the end of this month," said one ministry official close to the matter.

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6. ROK on Gaza Crisis

Yonhap (Lee Chi-dong, "S. KOREA OFFERS $300,000 IN AID FOR WAR-TORN GAZA STRIP", Seoul, 2009/01/05) reported that the ROK said Monday that it would provide US$300,000 worth of emergency humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people as Israeli ground troops continued attacks on the Gaza Strip. "The government expresses deep concern that the armed conflict in the Gaza Strip and nearby areas is expanding, leading to many casualties including civilians," foreign ministry spokesman Moon Tae-young said in a press briefing. "The government urges the related parties to immediately halt the use of force and respond to the international community's call for a truce," he added.

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7. ROK Weapons Sales

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "DEFENSE EXPORTS OF $1.3 BILLION PLANNED", Seoul, 2008/12/31) reported that the Ministry of National Defense in its 2009 policy briefing to President Lee Myung-bak on Wednesday set the goal of exporting defense goods and weapons systems worth $1.2 billion next year. The ministry said it would spearhead the establishment of a pan-governmental council to support the country's defense exports. The ministry said it would raise the ratio of private firms' participation in defense research and development programs by 10 percent to 60 percent.

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8. ROK Politics

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "SKOREA'S OPPOSITION PARTY SUES PARLIAMENT SPEAKER", Seoul, 2009/01/04) reported that the ROK's main opposition Democratic Party filed a criminal lawsuit Sunday against the country's parliament speaker, Kim Hyong-o, and police chief over a scuffle that left about 100 party members and security guards injured. About 150 parliamentary security guards tried Saturday to clear opposition lawmakers who have been staging a sit-in inside the National Assembly to prevent the Grand National Party from ramming through scores of bills including a free trade deal with the U.S. "(Kim's) right to keep order ... doesn't include the rights to exercise physical force," the party said in a statement.

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9. ROK Ideological Conflict

Korea Times (Park Si-soo, "COMMUNIST SYMPATHIZERS, STRIKERS FACE CRACKDOWN", Seoul, 2009/01/04) reported that ROK Prosecutor General Lim Chae-jin said Friday in his New Year's message that the prosecution will eradicate leftists spreading communist ideology. ``Those who

deny the nation's pro-democracy identity and attempt to destabilize society are to be punished,'' Lim stated. The chief prosecutor stressed harshness in punishing laborers organizing or participating in illegal collective actions such as unauthorized strikes.

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10. ROK Historical Disputes

Korea Times (Jung Sung-ki, "US AMBASSADOR VISITS KIM KOO MUSEUM", Seoul, 2009/01/04) reported that U.S. Ambassador to Seoul Kathleen Stephens visited a Seoul museum Saturday that honors Kim Koo, president of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea in Shanghai, during the Japanese colonial period, the Ministry of Patriots and Veterans Affairs said Sunday. Stephens dismissed speculation that her visit had something to do with a recent row over the legitimacy of the Korean government-in-exile. A group of independence fighters and their descendants recently filed complaints with the authorities, claiming that a government brochure denies the legitimacy of the provisional government.

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11. ROK Textbooks

Korea Herald (Cho Ji-hyun, "TEXTBOOK DETAILING GWANGJU UPRISING WINS APPROVAL", Seoul, 2009/01/02) reported that The Gwangju Metropolitan Office of Education said Thursday two textbooks detailing the 1980 Gwangju pro-democracy uprising would be distributed to four schools in the city in March. The textbooks were written by 11 teachers in a three-year project led by a private foundation based in the city commemorating the uprising. The textbooks look at its development, historical background, significance and influence on the pro-democracy movement in Asia and the rest of the world, they said.

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12. ROK Environment

Korea Times (Kang Hyun-kyung, "'GREEN GROWTH' PROJECT TO START", Seoul, 2009/01/02) reported that ROK President Lee Myung-bak vowed to jump start what he called a ``Green New Deal'' through a $10 billion project in the neighborhoods of four major rivers. ``Now that we have to take the path for green growth, what is needed is action in earnest,'' Lee said in a New Year policy address. Of the $10 billion, some $6 billion will be spent dredging the rivers, which will bolster their banks and thus prevent neighboring areas from flooding during the monsoon season. The remaining cash will be spent on dams and water reservoirs near the rivers.

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13. Japanese Politics

Kyodo ("ASO NOT TO CALL GENERAL ELECTION UNTIL PASSAGE OF FY 2009 BUDGET", Tokyo, 2009/01/04) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso said Sunday he will not consider

dissolving the House of Representatives for a snap general election until the Diet passes the fiscal 2009 budget and related bills. ''The prime minister will make a decision on when to hold a snap election. This means I, Taro Aso, will decide,'' Aso said. Ichiro Ozawa, leader of the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan, hinted at the possibility that Aso could be driven to dissolve the lower house as early as in the spring. He said the governing coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and the New Komeito party is ''no longer necessary for the people'' as it failed to protect people's livelihoods, exacerbated gaps between the rich and the poor, and could not find ways to tackle the recession.

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14. Japanese Nuclear Power

Asahi Shimbun ("NISHIMATSU USED SLUSH FUND TO WIN N-FACILITY ORDERS", Tokyo, 2009/01/03) reported that an affiliate of Nishimatsu Construction Co. apparently extended bogus loans worth more than 100 million yen to a construction company in Fukushima Prefecture to win lucrative contracts to construct nuclear-related facilities. Investigators with the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office are questioning officials and others with ties to the Fukushima company, which is said to have served as a receptacle for funds from contractors used to appease local residents affected by the construction of nuclear-related facilities, the sources said.

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15. US Military in the Pacific

Associated Press (Eric Talmadge, "GUAM, FOCUS OF NEW US STRATEGY, FACES HURDLES", Anderson Air Force Base, 2009/01/03) reported that over the next six years, nearly 25,000 U.S. Marines, soldiers, family members and civilian Defense Department employees are scheduled to be deployed to Guam. The move will cost at least $15 billion — with Japan footing more than $6 billion of the bill — and put some of the U.S. military 's highest-profile assets within the fences of a vastly improved network of bases. But Guam is smaller than some Hawaiian islands, with a population of just 155,000, and many of its officials are worried that the military influx could leave the island's infrastructure — water, highways, and seaport — overwhelmed and underfunded.

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16. PRC on Gaza Crisis

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU CONCERNED ABOUT 'HUMANITARIAN CRISIS' IN GAZA: STATEMENT", Beijing, 2009/01/05) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao expressed concern about the " humanitarian crisis " in Gaza while talking to US President George W. Bush , according to a statement on the PRC foreign ministry's website. "We hope that the relevant parties will immediately stop their military activities and armed clashes and relax the situation in order to create the conditions for a solution to the conflict by political means," Hu said.

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17. PRC Separatist Movements

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA ARRESTED ALMOST 1,300 IN MUSLIM WEST LAST YEAR: REPORT", Beijing, 2009/01/04) reported that the PRC arrested almost 1,300 people for terrorism, religious extremism or other state security charges in Xinjiang last year, the Procuratorial Daily said Sunday. It said the arrests came as the government made "maintaining social stability" a priority last year. The paper said 1,295 people were arrested on suspicion of endangering state security in the first 11 months of 2008, and that 1,154 were formally charged and faced trials or administrative punishment. Judicial authorities were ordered to "strike hard on the three forces of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism that endanger state security," it said.

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18. PRC Food Safety

Associated Press ("PARENTS OF KIDS IN CHINA MILK SCANDAL RELEASED", 2009/01/03) reported that five parents whose children were sickened by tainted milk have been released by PRC police after being detained for a day in an apparent move to prevent them from meeting with journalists, a lawyer said Saturday. The parents were unhappy about a compensation plan made public this week, saying the amounts were too low and the plan was formulated without any input from families. They were released Friday evening after other parents who were not detained managed to meet with a few journalists.

BBC ("CHINA DAIRIES OFFER TEXT APOLOGY", 2009/01/02) reported that Chinese dairy companies involved in the tainted milk scandal have apologised in a New Year text message sent to millions of mobile phone subscribers. "We are deeply sorry for the harm caused to the children and the society," the text message said. "We sincerely apologise for that and we beg your forgiveness."

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19. PRC Human Rights

The Observer (David Stanway, "BEIJING STRIKES AT CHARTER 08 DISSIDENTS", Shanghai, 2009/01/04) reported that the PRC has launched a countrywide crackdown on a new network of political activists, writers and lawyers who signed Charter 08, which called for democracy and the rule of law in the PRC and was named after the famous Charter 77 dissident group formed in cold war Czechoslovakia. At least 70 of the original signatories have been summoned or interrogated by the police. Prominent dissident Liu Xiaobo has been put under house arrest. The writer Wen Kejian has been detained. Police have also ransacked the home of Zhang Zuhua, one of the main authors of the charter, confiscating his passport as well as his computers, books and notebooks.

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20. PRC Renewable Energy

Reuters ("BIG SOLAR POWER PLANT PLANNED FOR NORTHWEST CHINA", Los Angeles,

2009/01/02) reported that China Technology Development Group Corp and privately held Qinghai New Energy Group will begin building a 30 megawatt solar power station in the PRC's Qaidam Basin this year with an initial investment of $150 million, they said in a joint statement. The project, which will combine thin-film and traditional silicon-based technologies, ultimately will produce 1 gigawatt of power, the companies said, without giving a timeframe.

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II. PRC Report

21. PRC Corporate Responsibility

Xinhua Net (Liu Puquan, "MATERNAL AND CHILD BRAND ENTERPRISE ALLIANCE ESTABLISHED", 2008/12/28) reported that on December 28, some of the PRC's famous enterprises which produce milk, children's clothes and so on, jointly established the Maternal and Child Brand Enterprise Alliance in Beijing. This is a non-profit organization formed by domestic companies who produce maternal and child essentials. They will care about the health of mother and children, guarantee the quality and safety of their products, and take the social responsibility.

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22. PRC Tourism

People's Daily online ("TIANJIN TO BETTER PLAY THE SERVICE CARD FOR FLOURISHING TOURISM", 2008/12/31) reported that recently the Tianjin Municipal Bureau of Tourism organized a meeting for the restaurant branch, tourism agency branch, and scenic spots branches of the Tianjin Tourism Association. The meeting focused on how to play the role of each branches, to improve the service level of enterprises, and to promote the tourism industry of Tianjin city. Representatives of each branch brought many suggestions and reached consensus on a series of issues such as tourism accommodation, shopping, entertainment, traffic and so on.

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23. PRC Internet

Xinhua Net (Zhang Xiaosong, Bai Jiechun, "ADVERTISING ASSOCIATION MAKES NEW STANDARDS FOR INTERNET ADVERTISEMENT", 2008/12/31) reported that China Advertising Association has created new standards for China internet advertisement which will be tried out on January 1, 2009. The director of Internet Committee of China Advertising Association Chen Yong said this aims to gradually make uniform the standards of internet advertisement, and thus make the internet advertisement easier.

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