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Preceding NAPSNet Report

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I. NAPSNet

1. Sino-DPRK Relations

Associated Press (Hyung-jin Kim, "NKOREA'S KIM JONG IL SENDS NUCLEAR ENVOY TO CHINA", Seoul, 2010/02/09) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il reportedly dispatched his top nuclear envoy Kim Kye-gwan to Beijing on Tuesday to discuss restarting nuclear disarmament talks. Kim pledged Pyongyang 's commitment to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula during a meeting Monday with top Chinese Communist Party official Wang Jiarui. "The sincerity of relevant parties to resume the six-party talks is very important," Kim said according to Xinhua News Agency.

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2. Inter-Korean Relations

The Associated Press ("N. KOREA ISSUES STERN WARNING TO SOUTH", 2010/02/08) reported that the DPRK warned the ROK that any attempt to bring down the DPRK would draw "strong measures" from its military, a threat issued even as Pyongyang embarked on a flurry of diplomacy with Seoul, Washington and Beijing. Pyongyang is poised to mobilize troops to defend itself, including a "world-level ultramodern striking force" that has not yet been publicly revealed, the DPRK's Ministry of People's Security and the Ministry of State Security said in a statement.

Yonhap News ("S. KOREANS SAY INTER-KOREAN EXCHANGES REDUCE TENSION: POLL ", 2010/02/08) reported that about 34 percent of South Koreans think increasing exchanges with the DPRK is the best way to lower tension on the Korean Peninsula, a survey conducted by a local defense think tank showed. In the nationwide poll of 1,261 adults, including 60 DPRK experts, over 60 percent said expansion of inter-Korean exchanges would have a positive influence on changes in the DPRK. The Research Institute on National Security Affairs, part of the Korea National Defense University, conducted the survey from September to October last year.

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3. Inter-Korean Economic Relations

Xinhua News ("S KOREA, DPRK FAIL TO REACH AGREEMENT ON RESUMING CROSS-BORDER TOURS: GOV'T", 2010/02/08) reported that the ROK and the DPRK held working-level talks on resuming cross-border tours but failed to narrow differences on major issues including ensuring security for ROK tourists, Seoul's Ministry of Unification said. "We made it clear that we want the three conditions -- an investigation, prevention of recurrences and safety measures -- to be met, and strongly urged North Korea (the DPRK) to respond to our demands," Kim Nam-sik, the head of the Seoul delegation, told reporters. But the DPRK said the issues Seoul has brought up were already resolved and suggested resuming tours to Kaesong on March 1 and tours to a resort at Mount Kumgang on April 1, he said.

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4. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Xinhua News ("S KOREAN FM: IMMEDIATE RESUMPTION OF SIX-PARTY TALKS UNLIKELY", 2010/02/08) reported that the ROK's top diplomat said prospects of resuming the stalled six-party talks on nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula are unclear. Whether or when the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) would return to the negotiations is still unclear, Seoul's foreign minister Yu Myung-hwan told a meeting with ministry officials. "The North is taking an active position when seeking its practical interests, but it is showing contradictory attitudes by designating no-sail zones and firing artillery shells into waters near the (disputed sea border called) Northern Limit Line," Yu added.

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5. ROK Space Program

Xinhua News ("S KOREA CITES FAIRING ASSEMBLY FOR "HALF SUCCESSFUL" SPACE ROCKET LAUNCH", Seoul, 2010/02/08) reported that the ROK'a "half successful" launch of the Korea Space Launch Vehicle-1 (KSLV-1) last year, its first locally developed space rocket, was caused by problems in the fairing assembly, an independent private panel said. The Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), said its research showed a structural error in the fairing assembly's separation explosive mechanism, as they concluded it may have been the main cause of the two-stage rocket's failure to launch properly in its first attempt on Aug. 25.

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6. ROK PKO Haiti Dispatch

Yonhap News ("PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE APPROVES SEOUL'S PLAN TO DISPATCH PEACEKEEPING TROOPS TO HAITI", Seoul, 2010/02/08) reported that the ROK's parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee endorsed a government plan to send 240 peacekeeping troops, comprised mostly of engineers, to Haiti this month to aid in the reconstruction of the quake-stricken nation. ROK peacekeeping troops, including 120 military engineers, will be stationed in Leogane, 40 kilometers west of the capital Port-au-Prince, until the end of this year, the Foreign Ministry said.

The contingent will also include 22 medics, the ministry said.

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7. USFJ Base Relocation

New Zealand Herald ("JAPAN BAULKS AT $2.9B TROOP BILL", 2010/02/08) reported that in a country where land is a precious commodity, many US bases in Japan boast golf courses, football fields and giant shopping centres whose food courts offer everything from Taco Bell to Subway and Starbucks. They are the most visible point of grievance in a sharpening debate about the cost to Japan of supporting the 47,000 American service members here - about US$2 billion a year. That's nearly a third of the total, and about three times what Germany pays to host United States forces on its soil. At the same time, the US is shifting about 8000 troops from Okinawa to the US territory of Guam and expects Japan to pay an estimated US$6 billion of the moving costs.

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8. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

The Yomiuri Shimbun ("HATOYAMA HAILS MSDF CREW AS SHIPS RETURN HOME", 2010/02/08) reported that two Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels returned home from an antiterrorism mission in the Indian Ocean to a rousing welcome led by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, whose administration had decided not to continue the mission. "Our personnel showed maritime forces from other countries our superb operational abilities. Your logistic support was also outstanding," Hatoyama said. "As prime minister, I'm extremely proud of your professionalism [shown during the refueling operations] as SDF and Defense Ministry members," Hatoyama said.

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9. Japan on Non-Proliferation

The Age ("JAPAN OPEN TO NUCLEAR ARMS LIMITS ", 2010/02/08) reported that Japan has boosted calls to restrict the use of nuclear weapons in war - and ultimately eliminate the atomic threat - by finally easing its once-rigid demands to preserve a broad-based nuclear deterrent. The move follows a major international report commissioned by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd that urged countries to adopt a ''sole purpose'' nuclear posture - meaning they would only use atomic weapons in the face of a direct nuclear threat. Japan's Foreign Affairs Minister, Katsuya Okada, cited the Australian-sponsored report in a letter to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, cautiously backing a restricted role for America's nuclear arsenal as a step towards a world without nuclear arms.

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10. Japan Politics

Kyodo News ("LDP DESERTER TO JOIN DPJ, DPJ-LED GROUP GETS MAJORITY IN UPPER HOUSE ", 2010/02/08) reported that House of Councillors member Kotaro Tamura told Democratic Party of Japan Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa on Monday that he will join the ruling party following his

departure from the main opposition Liberal Democratic Party last year, paving the way for the DPJ-led bloc to gain a majority in the upper house.

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN PM STRESSES SUPPORT FOR OZAWA AFTER SCANDAL", 2010/02/08) reported that Japan's centre-left Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said he supported his party's secretary general who days earlier avoided being indicted over a political funds scandal. Hatoyama told reporters that he had confirmed to Ozawa -- a powerful former party president sometimes dubbed the DPJ's "Shadow Shogun" -- in a meeting Monday that he could stay on in the post.

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11. Japan Environment

The Asahi Shimbun ("SEAWEED BEDS, THE 'CRADLE OF THE SEA,' VANISHING", 2010/02/08) reported that t he rich seaweed beds stretching 8,000 hectares and brimming with fish in the western coast of the bay off Shizuoka Prefecture have been transformed into a barren wasteland. The sea grasses began to disappear around 1985; by 1994, almost all were gone. So were the fish and abalones. In 1991, an Environment Agency survey found 200,000 hectares of rich seaweed beds around the nation. The Marine Ecology Research Institute in Tokyo estimates about 20 percent had been lost by 2008. The underwater deforestation is attributed to overgrazing by herbivorous fish, pollution and other factors, but the exact causes have not been determined.

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12. Sino-Japanese Relations

Xinhua News ("CHINA TO STRENGTHEN CO-OP WITH JAPAN TO BOOST MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING", 2010/02/08) reported that PRC premier Wen Jiabao Monday urged the PRC and Japan to strengthen exchange and cooperation to boost mutual understanding and trust. Wen made the remarks while meeting with members of the fifth 21st Century Committee for PRC-Japan Friendship. The committee, an advisory panel to both nations' governments, convened a meeting in Beijing on Sunday to discuss various aspects of PRC-Japan relations and to provide suggestions to the two governments. "The foundation, as well as the hopes for and future of China-Japan friendship, lies in the peoples of the two countries," Wen said.

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13. US Arms Sales to Taiwan

Reuters ("TAIWAN DROPS REQUEST FOR U.S. MILITARY SUBS: SOURCE", Taipei, 2010/02/09) reported that Taiwan has effectively dropped a request for U.S. submarines, a military source said on Tuesday. "Taiwan isn't asking for the submarines anymore," the source told Reuters. "The biggest consideration was the warming of relations with mainland China."

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14. Cross Strait Relations

Agence France-Presse ("TAIWAN TO BUILD BRIDGE OFF CHINA", Taipei, 2010/02/08) reported that Taiwan gave the green light for building a bridge between two small islands that it controls off the PRC, in what officials called a first step towards connecting the islets with the mainland. A bridge linking the Taiwan-held Kinmen group of islands with the PRC would be a powerful symbol of improved ties between Taipei and Beijing. That prospect has now moved closer with the decision by Taiwan's Council for Economic Planning and Development to approve the 5.3-kilometre (3.3-mile) bridge from Kinmen proper to neighbouring Little Kinmen. "The bridge that has now been approved can be seen as a part of the project to connect with the mainland," Kinmen county magistrate Lee Wuo-tu told reporters.

Bloomberg News ("CHINA TRADE DEAL 'VITAL' FIRST STEP FOR TAIWAN, OFFICIAL SAYS", 2010/02/08) reported that Taiwan needs to seal a free trade agreement with the PRC to ensure the island can compete with regional rivals in global markets, according to the island's official who is leading the talks. Taiwan has been unable to join in a wave of bilateral or multilateral free-trade agreements in recent years because the PRC regards the island as a rebellious province. Trade talks with Singapore and Japan in the past had failed because those countries didn't want to offend the PRC, said Chiang Pin-kung , chairman of the Taipei-based Straits Exchange Foundation. A deal "will reduce the political reservations of these countries and they will be more willing to sign free-trade agreements with us," he said.

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15. Sino-Indian Relations

Times of India ("INDIA AID TO BHUTAN, TIES WITH RUSSIA WORRYING CHINA", 2010/02/08) reported that India is "intensifying military penetration" in Nepal and Bhutan, a PRC analyst said in a government-run website. The Himalayan kingdoms have become theatres of conflict between military strategists from India and the PRC, it suggested. T he analyst, Dai Bing, also raised a rare issue saying that the Bhutan Air Force has deployed defense equipment along the border with the PRC after getting them from India. "The struggle between pro-India and pro-China forces in Nepal is at a critical stage and China needs to pay more attention to its interests there," the analyst said while citing a news report that New Delhi was building an air base in Nepal.

Hindustan Times ("CHINA SPURS NAVY FORTIFICATION IN ANDAMAN", 2010/02/08) reported that the PRC's growing influence in the Indian Ocean region appears to have injected new momentum in India's efforts to fortify its farthest military outpost, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Plans are afoot to upgrade airstrips to support fighter operations, induct 5,000 more troops and deploy additional warships, senior officials said. Myanmar's Coco Islands, where the PRC navy has reportedly set up a surveillance post, are barely 40 km from the Andamans' northernmost tip Landfall.

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16. PRC Energy Supply

Press Trust of India ("CHINA MAY REPLACE INDIA IN IPI PROJECT: REPORT", 2010/02/08) reported that the PRC may replace India in the proposed India-Pakistan-Iran (IPI) gas pipeline project as New Delhi has been dithering over the deal, a media report has said. Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki claimed that Tehran was ready to start anytime the IPI “peace pipeline” project, originally conceived to include Iran, Pakistan and India. The PRC might replace India in the proposed project soon as India has been dithering over the deal, Mottaki is reported to have said.

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17. PRC Migrant Labor

The Associated Press ("CHINA WARNS LOCALS TO SETTLE MIGRANT PAY DISPUTES", 2010/02/08) reported that the PRC ordered local governments to settle pay disputes involving migrant workers before the country's biggest holiday - and even step in to pay workers on private construction projects if needed. The rare urgent warning from the State Council comes as tens of millions of migrant workers return to their home villages from the PRC's booming cities to celebrate the Lunar New Year, which starts next weekend. "Recently in a few places there have been mass incidents over migrant worker pay, especially in the area of construction," said the warning, posted on the State Council's Web site. It said officials found responsible for mass protests would be punished.

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II. PRC Report

18. PRC Energy

China News Net ("GIANT OILFIELD FOUND IN LIAONING", 2010/02/08) reported that a giant oil and gas geological zone has been found in Xinmin county of Shenyang city of Liaoning, a northeast province of the PRC recently. According to related geological statistics, the oil reserve of this geological zone reaches 1.46 billion tons, and is conservatively expected to be mined for one hundred years.

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19. ROK-PRC Civil Society Cooperation

People’s Daily ("FIRST CHINA-SOUTH KOREA YOUTH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION FORUM ENDED",) reported that a three-day PRC-ROK Youth Environment Protection Forum dropped the curtain today in the ROK. The Forum is co-sponsored by China Youth Federation and ROK and PRC Youth Communication Association, and aims at promoting youth in the two countries caring about environment protection and enhancing mutual understanding.

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20. PRC Civil Society and the Environment

Xinhua Net ("CHINA AND FOREIGN FUND PUT INTO PROTECTION OF WETLAND OF YALU RIVER", 2010/02/08) reported that Liaoning Provincial Department of Fishery & Ocean, World Wild Fund for Nature, and UNDP/GEF Yellow Sea Large Marine Ecosystem have recently co-developed a project of promoting ecosystem in a 100,000 hectares wetland of Yalu River in Dandong city of Liaoning province. Panasonic and Liaoning government will each invest 1 million RMB for this project and the time limit of the project is five years.

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