

On January 11 and 12, 2009, Prime Minister Taro Aso visited Seoul, the capital of the Republic of Korea (ROK), as part of “summit shuttle diplomacy” in which the leaders of Japan and ROK periodically visit each other’s country to exchange opinions. On January 12, Prime Minister Aso held talks with Mr. Lee Myung-bak, President of the ROK, at Cheong Wa Dae, Office of the President, where the two countries agreed to strengthen their efforts to overcome the global financial crisis and deal with the problem of North Korea. The two leaders confirmed that both countries will



## PRIME MINISTER ASO VISITS THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

continue to cooperate in providing assistance to Afghanistan, and to develop close bilateral links in order to respond to international issues such as finance and the global economy. They also agreed to launch at an early date the “Joint Research Project on a New Era of Japan-ROK Relations,” for experts from the two countries to conduct research in a wide range of areas. At the joint press conference after the meeting, President Lee emphasized that “ROK-Japan bilateral relations have developed from “countries close and yet distant” to “countries

**TOP:** The Japan-Republic of Korea Summit Meeting.

**BOTTOM:** Prime Minister Aso (left) and President Lee at the joint press conference held after the Japan-Republic of Korea Summit Meeting.

close and intimate.” Prime Minister Aso also stated that, “Through this visit we are firmly establishing our ‘summit shuttle diplomacy.’ In cooperation with President Lee, I intend to make 2009 a year of major progress in Japan-ROK relations.”

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