



## PRIME MINISTER ASO VISITS THE WHITE HOUSE

During his visit to Washington, D.C on February 24, Prime Minister Taro Aso, the first foreign leader to visit the White House under the new administration, held talks with Mr. Barack Obama, President of the United States of America. At the meeting, the leaders agreed to further strengthen the Japan-US alliance, and they confirmed that, with the Japan-US

alliance as the cornerstone, they will jointly address global issues faced by both countries, by the Asia-Pacific region and the international community, such as the current financial and international economic situation, the situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan, climate change and energy.

On the current financial situation and the

**FACING:** A scene from the Japan-US Summit meeting.

international economy, Prime Minister Aso and President Obama agreed that as the world's first and second largest economic powers they will make every effort to bring about the recovery of the international economy. They confirmed that it is important to maintain the dollar's credibility as the world's benchmark currency and that both countries hold a grave responsibility to counter protectionism. They also agreed to further accelerate cooperation, toward the London Summit in April, to further stabilize the international financial system and promote growth. On the issue of North Korea, in response to Prime Minister Aso emphasizing that it is important to achieve a comprehensive resolution of the outstanding issues of concern, including abductions, nuclear, and missile issues, President Obama stated that it was important to maintain close cooperation between Japan and the United States.

With regard to global issues, in addition to Prime Minister Aso indicating that Japan will provide greater support toward the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, both leaders agreed to launch consultations to advance Japan-US cooperation in a concrete manner in the areas of clean energy and energy conservation.

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## Prime Minister Aso visits Sakhalin



**ABOVE:** Prime Minister Aso shakes hands with President Medvedev.

On February 18, Prime Minister Taro Aso visited Sakhalin to attend a ceremony for the opening of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant constructed under the Sakhalin-2 project, a project to develop oil and natural gas off the coast of Sakhalin and in which Japanese companies take part. Immediately after his arrival, Prime Minister Aso held talks with Mr. Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, President of the Russian Federation. The leaders discussed matters such as the Northern Territories issue and cooperation in the Far East of Russia and Eastern Siberia. They agreed to aim for the final settlement of the Northern Territories attribution issue with a "new, creative, and unconventional approach". After the meeting, Prime Minister Aso commented on the issue, saying, "We agreed to accelerate concrete work, so that the issue can be resolved within our generation."

Afterwards, the Prime Minister attended the LNG plant opening ceremony, together with President Medvedev. Prime Minister Aso said, "A period of history has begun in which Russia becomes Japan's constructive partner in the Asia-Pacific region." After the ceremony, Prime Minister Aso observed the Grand Aniva, an LNG carrier ship.

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