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BULLETIN

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NORTH ASIA - ASIE DU NORD

based on media surveys in the North Asia region

JAPAN

- The Japanese economy remains in a slump, the Economic Planning Agency said in a monthly survey of statistics. The report said personal consumption is still growing, but ever so slowly, and three major components of it, department stores sales, auto sales and tourism are all in decline. The only encouraging data, EPA said, are housing starts and public spending- and even the housing sector slowed a bit last month.

- D'après un sondage du réseau de télévision publique NHK, un nombre croissant de Japonais semblent prêts à voir la constitution changer sur la question militaire. Le sondage, mené auprès de 1 213 adultes, les 6 et 7 mars, révèle que 38% des répondants sont en faveur d'un changement, soit 7% de plus que lors d'un sondage précédent en septembre, tandis que 34% s'y opposent, une baisse de 13%. L'agence de nouvelles n'a pas donné de détails sur les questions ou les changements particuliers souhaités par les répondants.

- At a state dinner with Prime Minister Miyazawa, Philippines President Fidel Ramos said he supports Japan's bid for a permanent seat at the U.N. Security Council.

HONG KONG

- A political optimism and strong performances on overseas markets sent the Hang Seng index crashing back through the 6,500 point level on March 9. With record highs recorded in London and Wall Street, foreign money flooded into Hong Kong, pushing the Blue Chip index to an all-time closing high of 6,508.

- According to a survey by the association of expatriate civil servants, about two-thirds of expatriate civil servants on contracts would remain in the civil service even if it meant downgrading their terms to those of locals. Government would be pressed to give expats the chance to opt for local pensionable terms when their contracts expire.

- Hong Kong's monetary links with its future sovereign master took another step closer on 10th March with the announcement by Governor Patten that a senior Bank of China official had been appointed to the board which oversees the territory's \$230 billion-plus in foreign currency reserves. The move is seen as significant both in symbol and substance.

CHINA/CHINE

- Le Premier Ministre Li Peng a profité de l'occasion fournie par la visite de la Chambre de Commerce de Hong Kong, le 5 mars, pour réitérer l'engagement de la Chine envers la prospérité future du Territoire et déclarer le consentement de la Chine à discuter les réformes démocratiques proposées par Patten.

- An editorial in the People's Daily has called for reforms to be further accelerated, arguing that economic restructuring problems which appeared over the past year can only be solved by going even further in the direction of reform.

- Les journaux ont abondamment couvert les commentaires faits à l'éditeur en chef du "US News and World Report" par le Secrétaire