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I. United States

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1. US-DPRK Talks

The Associated Press ("U.S., N. KOREA HOLD NUCLEAR TALKS," New York, 08/24/98) reported that the US and the DPRK held another round of talks on Monday, and agreed to continue negotiations on Tuesday. The US State Department refused to give any details about the content of the meetings.

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2. DPRK Floods

The Associated Press ("TORRENTIAL RAINS TAKE HEAVY TOLL ON N. KOREANS," Seoul, 08/25/98) reported that the DPRK's Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday that continuing

heavy rains and strong winds have taken a "heavy toll of lives." The agency said that the rains submerged thousands of hectares of arable land and 1,500 houses and public buildings, and destroyed 50 roads, 90 bridges, and several railways Sunday and Monday.

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3. ROK Unemployment

Dow Jones Newswires ("KOREA EXPECTS NUMBER OF JOBLESS WILL RISE WITH CORPORATE CHANGES," Seoul, 08/25/98) reported that ROK Labor Minister Lee Ki-ho said Tuesday that the unemployment rate will reach about 1.75 million by the end of the year, compared with 1.53 million at the end of June. He attributed the anticipated increase to ongoing corporate restructuring recommended by the International Monetary Fund to resolve the country's economic crisis. Lee said the resolution of the month-long strike at Hyundai Motor Co. Monday would provide more flexibility in the country's labor market. He added, "On the outside, it seems as though only a small number of workers will lose their jobs. But, if you include the number of those who resigned through early retirement programs and those on unpaid leave, the actual number of layoffs at Hyundai Motor is about 10,000 workers." Lee said that the final agreement reached by Hyundai Motor management and labor union was "a well-balanced one that reflected demands made by both parties."

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4. Japanese Weapons Development

The Wall Street Journal ("LOCKHEED REACHES ACCORD WITH MITSUBISHI ELECTRIC," Tokyo, 08/25/98) reported that Lockheed Martin Corp. and Japan's Mitsubishi Electric Corp. have reached a basic agreement to develop and market military equipment to be sold to Japan's Defense Agency. The two companies will jointly develop radar devices for ships and planes, as well as electronic missile-control systems. They will also jointly propose new products to the defense agency.

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5. US-Indian Nuclear Talks

Reuters ("U.S. PRESSES INDIA TO JOIN NUCLEAR TREATY," Washington, 08/25/98) reported that US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott met special Indian envoy Jaswant Singh on Monday as part of an attempt to persuade India to join international arms control treaties. Talbott will follow up his talks by traveling to London Tuesday to meet Pakistani Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad. A US State Department spokesman said, "The goal of the talks with both countries is to explore how the U.S. and the international community can work with India and Pakistan to bring them back into the international nonproliferation consensus, reduce tensions and address their security concerns." Other unnamed US officials said that the outcome of the talks could decide whether US President Bill Clinton goes ahead with a proposed visit to the two countries in November. The Indian embassy in Washington described the talks as "serious and constructive." Singh, in an article published in the latest edition of the US journal Foreign Affairs, repeated India's criticisms of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, but said India was willing to accept a "de jure formalization" of its nuclear test moratorium. Meanwhile, Kushabhau Thakre, president of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), stated, "We will not come under any pressure and sign a treaty that is against the interests of our country."

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6. US-Russian Summit

Reuters ("YELTSIN, CLINTON DISCUSS SUMMIT BY TELEPHONE," Moscow, 08/25/98) reported that Russian President Boris Yeltsin and US President Bill Clinton on Tuesday discussed by telephone the agenda of their planned September 1-2 summit meeting in Moscow. A Russian spokeswoman said the conversation lasted half an hour and covered bilateral and international issues, adding that the two leaders had expressed optimism about the future of US-Russian relations.

II. Republic of Korea

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1. ROK-DPRK Relations

The DPRK has asked the ROK to take the initiative in improving inter- Korean relations by showing a "gesture of reconciliation," an ROK official said Monday. The official said that the DPRK request was conveyed by Chon Gum-chol, vice chairman of the Asian-Pacific Peace Committee, when he met with Han Wan-sang, a former ROK deputy prime minister for unification, in Beijing last Friday. Chon asked Han to convey the message to ROK President Kim Dae-jung, said the official, who declined to elaborate on what the DPRK meant by a "gesture of reconciliation." Instead, the official said that Chon expressed regrets about the breakdown of talks which were held in Beijing in April this year on proposed ROK fertilizer aid to the DPRK. Chon asked if ROK President Kim's "sunshine policy" of engagement and the principle of separating business from politics are the same as the previous government's policy of absorbing the DPRK for unification. Han told Chon that President Kim is earnest in his promotion of inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. (Korea Herald, "NORTH KOREA SEEKS SIGN OF RECONCILIATION FROM SOUTH," 08/25/98)

DPRK leader Kim Jong-il has broken his silence and accused ROK President Kim Dae-jung of having put inter-Korean relations into a worse state than in the past. "Since the inauguration of a new government in the South, it is not reconciliation but confrontation that has intensified, and it is not peace but the danger of a war that has deepened in North-South relations," the DPRK's Radio Pyongyang quoted Kim Jong-il as saying Saturday. However, ROK officials and experts on inter-Korean relations place little weight on the DPRK leader's first public mention of the ROK leader. Kim Jong-il is displaying a hardline stance on the ROK partly to solidify internal coherence in his country ahead of his planned ascension to state president early next month, they said. ROK officials said Kim's accusation is not a surprise given the DPRK's two-faced policy in handling inter-Korean relations, where it pursues economic profits from the ROK while threatening it militarily or politically. (Korea Herald, "KIM JONG-IL BASHES SEOUL'S NORTH KOREA POLICY, BUT CENSURE OF KIM DAE- JUNG'S RECONCILIATION EFFORTS UNLIKELY TO AFFECT RELATIONS," 08/24/98)

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2. ROK Financial Crisis

The ROK ruling coalition is pushing for a parliamentary hearing in October to investigate the alleged economic policy failures under former ROK President Kim Young-sam, a top ruling party official said Thursday. "October would be good for the hearings because the National Assembly will have fewer agenda items in that month than other months during the September-December regular session," Representative Cho Se-hyung, acting president of the National Congress for New Politics (NCNP), said. ROK Prime Minister Kim Jong-pil also reiterated the ruling coalition's commitment to the parliamentary hearings. (Korea Herald, "NCNP PUSHES FOR HEARING IN OCTOBER, EX-

PRESIDENT KIM YOUNG SAM MAY HAVE TO BE TESTIFIED [sic] ON ECONOMIC POLICY FAILURES," 08/21/98)

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3. ROK-Japan Fishing Talks

The ROK and Japan have made "considerable" progress in major fishing issues, although they still need to go through a tough bargaining process for a couple of months to come, ROK officials said Thursday. "We have deepened understanding on each other's positions, especially regarding the protection of marine resources and the guaranteeing of Korea's traditional fishing rights in waters near Japan," an ROK Foreign Affairs- Trade Ministry official said right after the 4th round of three-day fishing talks in Seoul. The two countries are also seeking how to accommodate each other's positions on such issues as the eastern limit line for the ROK's fishing activities and the width of the exclusive fishing zones in the two countries' coastal areas, he said. (Korea Times, "KOREA, Japan MAKE CONSIDERABLE PROGRESS IN FISHING TALKS," 8/21/98)

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