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Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Yonhap ("SEOUL CONFIDENT N. KOREA WILL ATTEND NUKE TALKS", 2004-08-19) reported that the ROK remains confident that the DPRK will eventually come to the negotiating table with the US and other regional players to discuss dismantling its suspected nuclear weapons program. "The North will attend the talks, but the question is when the North will come forward," Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo told Yonhap News Agency.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Issue

Korea herald ("U.S.-N.K. NUCLEAR STANDOFF INTENSIFIES AHEAD OF TALKS", 2004-08-19) reported that with no headway in setting a date for the next round of six-party talks, the DPRK and the US are locked in a psychological war on how to resolve their 22-month long nuclear standoff. U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell described the DPRK as one of the toughest countries in negotiations. "Trust me on this one. It is one of the toughest, toughest nuts in the negotiating game," he said in an interview posted on the official Web site of the US State Department Wednesday. "I don't mean that they're nuts. They're quite rational in their own world and the way they look at things, but in terms of a problem to crack open, a nut to crack open."

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3. Australia on DPRK Nuclear Issue

The Australian ("DOWNER N KOREA MISSION FAILS ", 2004-08-19) reported that the international effort to end the DPRK nuclear crisis is at a cross roads, after Foreign Minister Alexander Downer's high-profile mission to the DPRK. The DPRK declined to commit to even attending the next round of scheduled six-nation talks on nuclear disarmament, and gave Mr Downer only negative messages to convey to the US. Mr Downer emerged from four hours of talks with DPRK counterpart Paek Nam-

sun and National Assembly president Kim Yong-nam declaring his much-hyped mission to Pyongyang to be "highly productive" and the DPRK "interested and reflective". But there appeared to be no positive outcomes. Mr Downer said it "remains to be seen" whether the DPRK will attend the next round of six-nation talks in Beijing, which had been scheduled for September or October. And the DPRK remained "pretty negative" about a June deal offered by the US, asking him to "relay messages about areas of disagreement".

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4. DPRK Defectors

Yonhap ("DESPITE PYONGYANG'S PROTEST, SEOUL TO KEEP ACCEPTING N.K. ESCAPEES ", 2004-08-19) reported that the DPRK is showing signs of leniency toward its citizens fleeing the DPRK country but the ROK will continue to accept them as long as they want to defect here, officials said Thursday. In what appeared to be a policy shift, the DPRK on Wednesday pleaded to DPRK defectors in the ROK and elsewhere to return home, saying that it would not punish them if they do so. On Wednesday, the DPRK, apparently softening its stance, said it would "forgive even betrayers" if they return home. It urged them to wage a pro-unification struggle in the ROK if they choose to stay there. On Thursday, the ROK confirmed its policy of accepting all DPRK escapees in third countries if they want to come here, but said abetting the escape of DPRK citizens from their homeland is not in line with its policy.

Yonhap ("FIFTEEN PEOPLE CLAIMING TO BE FROM N.K. SEEK ASYLUM IN SOUTH KOREA", 2004-08-19) reported that fifteen people, claiming to be DPRK citizens, forced their way into the ROK's consulate in Beijing on Thursday and requested asylum, officials said. The alleged defectors, including six children, pushed away a security guard to enter the consulate around 3:30 p.m., consulate officials said.

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5. DPRK Food Aid

Donga Ilbo ("TWO-YEAR LOSS FROM RICE AID TO NORTH KOREA: 1.2 TRILLION WON ", 2004-0--18) reported that it turns out that a loss of some one trillion won was generated during the past two years that the ROK provided rice aid to the DPRK. Also, it was found that the accumulated deficit amount of the foreign exchange market stabilization fund that the government manages was close to three trillion won as of the end of last year. According to the report on the analysis of the annual revenue and expenditures in 2003 by the National Assembly Budget Office (NABO) on August 18, the government sold 400,000 tons of rice in 2002 and 2003 respectively at a low price of 25,000 won for each 80 kilograms from the special account for grain management to the Inter-Korea Cooperation Fund, resulting in a 1.2237 trillion won loss.

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6. ROK on DPRK Food Aid

Yonhap ("S. KOREA FORMS PANEL TO BOLSTER AGRICULTURAL AID TO N. KOREA ", 2004-0--19) reported that the ROK formed a 14-member panel to bolster agricultural support for the DPRK, the government said Thursday. The panel, headed by Agriculture and Forestry Minister Huh Sang-man, is aimed at improving public and private agricultural assistance to the DPRK, the ministry said in a statement.

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7. Japan on DPRK Food Aid

Asia Pulse ("JAPAN, WFP TO SEND FOOD AID MONITORS TO N KOREA", 2004-08-19) reported that the government plans to dispatch a joint team with the World Food Program (WFP) to the DPRK in October to ensure that Japanese humanitarian aid, such as food and medical supplies, is delivered to the people of that nation. There have been rumors that aid to the DPRK from foreign countries is redirected by communist party and military officials to the black market. At his meeting with DPRK leader Kim Jong-il in May, Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi agreed to provide the DPRK with humanitarian aid. Japan will provide the assistance by financing a WFG food aid program. The joint monitoring team will consist of government officials and private-sector experts.

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8. DPRK Self-Sufficiency

Yonhap ("KIM JONG-IL VISITS SEVERAL ARMY FACILITIES IN RECENT DAYS: REPORT ", 2004-0--19) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il has made frequent visits to farms, power plants and other facilities attached to military units in recent days in an apparent effort to encourage the military's self-sufficiency of food and war supplies. Kim recently visited four army units and their logistic bases, according to reports by the (North) Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

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9. US - DPRK Trade

Yonhap ("U.S. DOES LITTLE TRADE WITH NORTH KOREA, SEOUL TRADE AGENCY SAYS ", 2004-08-19) reported that US reports show its exports to the DPRK have jumped this year, but there is actually little trade between the two countries because the US exports were mostly donations, not sales, a state-run trade agency here said Thursday. "The U.S. exports to North Korea were found to be donated items for humanitarian assistance, like corn and rice, not regular trade items," an official of the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) said.

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10. DPRK Economic Reforms

Chosun Ilbo ("NORTH KOREA HAS SUSPENDED ECONOMIC REFORMS: QUINONES", 2004-08-19) reported that former US State Department DPRK analyst Kenneth Quinones said that the DPRK has suspended market-style economic reforms from this fall and re-imposed socialistic state controls on the economy. Quinones, the director of the International Center's Korean Peninsula Project who was the only American to attend the Second World Congress of Korean Studies held in Pyongyang from August 4~5, said Thursday that the DPRK had decided to give up negotiating on the nuclear issue with the Bush administration and wait for the results of the US presidential election. He also claimed that since there was the high possibility for a conflict owing to the complete stalemate between the DPRK and the US, the ROK government urgently needed to seize the initiative in order to prevent a conflict and solve the nuclear issue. About the controversy surrounding DPRK economic reforms, Quinones mentioned that DPRK Workers Party leaders said that because many had complained that economic reforms had brought inflation without any real gains, economic reform measures had been suspended from this spring.

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11. US - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("N. KOREA ACCUSES U.S. OF BLOCKING INTER-KOREAN ECONOMIC PROJECT", 2004-08-19) reported that the DPRK accused the US Thursday of blocking an inter-Korean project to set up an industrial complex in the DPRK. The accusation came amid reports that the US plans to restrict the inflow of such goods as high-tech computers and precision machinery into the industrial zone being built in the DPRK city of Kaesong, just across the border from ROK.

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12. US Troop Realignment

Joongang Ilbo ("SHAPE OF U.S. MILITARY IN ASIA EMERGES ", 2004-08-19) reported that a picture of the new US military posture in Northeast Asia emerged yesterday as a number of high-ranking military officials in the ROK told the JoongAng Ilbo about what is slated for the region. The US Forces in Japan will function as the hub of US troops in Northeast Asia, while the US combat troops in the ROK will be reconfigured, the officials said. The redesigned military structure was described to ROK officials at last month's Future of Alliance Talks between the ROK and the US, the officials said. After the transformation of the US troops in Korea, the US 8th Army headquarters will likely move to the US Army's Pacific Command in Hawaii, the sources said. According to the US restructuring of its forces in the region, the US plans to maintain a division-level unit in Korea by transforming the current US 2nd Infantry Division here.

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13. ROK on US Troop Realignment

Yonhap ("S KOREA, U.S. OPEN TALKS ON U.S. TROOP CUT PLAN ", 2004-08-19) reported that the ROK and the US opened two-day talks on Thursday which ROK officials said would focus on their request for the US to delay its plan to scale back its military presence. The US has proposed cutting by one-third its 37,500 troops in the ROK by the end of next year. The plan has stoked security concerns in the ROK which faces a nuclear-armed DPRK. "At today's talks, we plan to request for the postponement of the U.S. troop cut by more than one year or until we complete our self-reliant defense posture," said an official at the ROK Defense Ministry, speaking on condition of anonymity.

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14. Kerry on US Troop Realignment

Donga Ilbo ("KERRY 'USFK REDUCTION SHOULD NOT TAKE PLACE NOW'", 2004-08-19) reported that John Kerry, the US Democratic presidential candidate, renounced President George W. Bush's plan to reduce one-third of US troops deployed abroad, saying, "This is the wrong signal to send at the wrong time." Speaking to the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Cincinnati, Ohio on the morning of August 18, Kerry said as much, asking, "Why are we unilaterally withdrawing 12,000 troops from the Korean Peninsula at the very time that we are negotiating with North Korea, a country that really has nuclear weapons?" Senator Kerry had agreed to the stance that US troops abroad should be reduced in the long term. Kerry's comments this day seem to stem from the belief that even if the withdrawal or reduction of USFK takes place, it should be used as a negotiating chip in nuclear talks with the DPRK or discussions of troop reduction on the Korea Peninsula.

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15. Rice on Troop Realignment

Agence France-Presse ("RICE SAYS US WILL BE STRONGER IN KOREA AFTER TROOP WITHDRAWAL", 2004-08-19) reported that US national security advisor Condoleezza Rice said US military power on the Korean peninsula would be stronger even if 12,000 troops are withdrawn under a controversial troop withdrawal plan. "The American commitment to the Korean peninsula remains strong and the alliance between the United States and South Korea could not be stronger," Rice told Fox News Channel in response to criticism of the administration plan. "Yes, the numbers will come down but that is more than made up for with the capability that we have in air capability, in land, in sea capability, and in the fact that our ground forces are now more capable technologically than they were 50 years ago," she added. "As a matter of fact, I think we strengthen those capabilities once we achieve these changes," Rice told CNN in a separate interview.

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16. DPRK - ROK Military Capability

Yonhap ("S. KOREA'S MILITARY CAPABILITY STILL INFERIOR TO N. KOREA'S: REPORT ", 2004-08-19) reported that the ROK has spent 71 trillion won (US$61.4 billion) to improve its weapons systems over the past 30 years, but its military capability still lags behind the DPRK's, a report said Thursday. Quoting data by the Defense Ministry, the National Assembly's budget office said in a report that the ROK's military strength is less than 90 percent of the DPRK's.

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17. USFK Security

Korea Times ("US MILITARY BEEFS UP SECURITY AGAINST TERRORISM", 2004-08-19) reported that amid increasing concerns over the possibility of terrorist acts against US military installations here, the US is stepping up anti-terrorism measures, according to US Forces Korea (USFK) on Thursday. In a bid to increase security for the families of US servicemen, school buses transiting US military bases here will be equipped with Mobile Digital Recorders by the end of this year at the order of the US Pentagon. Camp Humphreys, about 70 kilometers south of Seoul, completed a year-long security upgrade last week to its CPX gate, a heavily-traveled transit point for commercial truck traffic and other civilian vehicles doing business on the 1,230-acre base, according to American military newspaper The Stars and Stripes. ROK and the US had earlier agreed to relocate the Yongsan base by 2008 and the frontline division after 2006.

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18. ROK Foreign Relations

Deutsche Presse-Agentur ("SEOUL'S FOREIGN MINISTER TO VISIT THAILAND, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND", 2004-08-19) reported that ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ban Ki Moon, will next week embark on a week long trip to Thailand, New Zealand and Australia aimed at strengthening the ROK's ties with the three countries, his ministry said on Thursday. During each of his visits Ban will meet his respective counterparts to talk about the political situation surrounding the Korean peninsula, including the DPRK nuclear issue, and ways to boost cooperation in the areas of economy and trade as well as in international fora, the foreign ministry in Seoul said. His first

stop will be in Thailand August 24-25 where he will meet foreign minister Surakiart Sathirathai . Both sides are expected to sign an agreement on cooperation in the field of culture and education. In New Zealand, August 26 to 28, and Australia, August 28 to 31, Ban will have talks with foreign ministers Phil Goff and Alexander Downer, respectively.

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19. ROK Domestic Politics

Chosun Ilbo ("URI PARTY CHAIRMAN RESIGNS", 2004-08-19) reported that Uri Party lawmaker Shin Ki-nam resigned Thursday as Uri Party leader, and non-lawmaker Lee Bu-young took over as chairman of the party's steering committee. Shin, who had been under much pressure both within and outside the Uri Party due to controversy arising from his belated admission that his father had served with the Japanese military police during the colonial period, expressed his intention to resign his party chairmanship during a snap extended party executive meeting held at Uri Party headquarters in Yeongdeung-po on Thursday morning. Following the meeting, Shin held a special press conference and officially resigned. In the press conference, Shin said, "I resign as head of the [Uri] party so that no one can defame -- not even a little -- the great cause of eliminating the vestiges of Japanese imperialism and restoring the spirit of the [Korean] race... Now is the time to reveal the truths of history, so I ask that we [review] our painful family history and do our historical duties."

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20. ROK Typhoon Damage

Yonhap ("EIGHT DEAD OR MISSING AS TYPHOON PASSES SOUTH KOREA", 2004-08-19) reported that eight people are dead or missing after Typhoon Megi hit the ROK's southern provinces with strong wind and heavy rain, officials said. The powerful typhoon forced more than 2,400 people to be evacuated in Kwangju and other southwestern towns due to flooding early Thursday, government anti-disaster officials said. It also destroyed or damaged 98 houses and flooded 1,408 others in the region as well as grounded 106 domestic flights at nine airports, the National Disaster Prevention and Countermeasures Headquarters said. However, officials predicted that property damage will be less than expected as government ministries and agencies worked closely to brace for the typhoon and to rescue victims.

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21. Japan Typhoon Damage

Kyodo News ("TYPHOON DEATH TOLL RISES TO NINE IN WESTERN JAPAN", 2004-08-19) reported that Typhoon Megi killed nine people after bringing heavy rains to western Japan and may hit northern part of the country early Friday (20 August), authorities said Thursday. The Japan Meteorological Agency warned of more heavy rains, strong winds, rough seas and mudslides. With the discovery of the bodies of two missing people in Kagawa Prefecture, the death toll in Kagawa and Ehime prefectures on Shikoku Island rose to nine Thursday. More than 600 people were evacuated from around 300 homes in the prefectures, while blackouts hit around 2,000 homes in Hyogo Prefecture on the main island of Honshu. Air, rail and ship services linking western Japan cities were disrupted.

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22. Japanese Earthquake

The Associated Press ("EARTHQUAKE RATTLES NORTHERN JAPAN", 2004-08-19) reported that a strong earthquake shook northern Japan on Thursday, but no damage or injuries were immediately reported. The quake had a preliminary magnitude of 5.1 and was centered about 50 miles beneath the ocean floor off the coast of Fukushima prefecture (state), the Meteorological Agency said. The quake was felt strongest in the town of Naraha - about 140 miles northeast of Tokyo - in Fukushima. Japan, which rests atop several tectonic plates, is among the most earthquake-prone countries in the world.

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23. Japan Nuclear Accident

Yomiuri Shimbun ("KEPCO: 11 PIPES NEVER INSPECTED", 2004-08-19) reported that Kansai Electric Power Co. said Wednesday it had never inspected 11 water or steam pipes at three nuclear power plants in Fukui Prefecture and it had suspended operations of one of them as a precautionary measure. This brings to 17 the number of such pipes at nuclear power plants that KEPCO has never inspected. Since the death of four workers in the Aug. 9 leakage of steam from a ruptured pipe at KEPCO's Mihama No. 3 nuclear power facility, the company has been checking whether pipes at other nuclear power plants have been inspected.

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24. Fischer Case

Reuters ("EX-CHESS CHAMP FISCHER'S MARRIAGE PLANS HIT SNAG", 2004-08-19) reported that a Japanese chess great who plans to marry former world champion Bobby Fischer and help him avoid deportation home to the US declared herself on Thursday to be a pawn seeking to become a queen. Miyoko Watai appealed for help to wed her king after their plans to marry appeared checkmated by a bureaucratic glitch. Fischer's lawyer said the marriage plans had hit a legal snag. The marriage has yet to take place, Suzuki told the news conference, adding that officials at a local government office had not accepted a marriage application signed by the couple. "They said more documents were needed for an international marriage," Suzuki said.

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25. US - Russian Energy Trade

The New York Times ("DEAL TO SHIP RUSSIAN GAS TO U.S. IS SAID TO BE CLOSE", 2004-08-19) reported that Russian liquefied natural gas would be shipped across the Pacific to help power California under a contract that is in "very, very advanced" negotiations, according to a corporate executive on Sakhalin Island, Russia's new energy production center in the Pacific. The gas would go to a terminal in Northern Mexico from a plant on Sakhalin that is to open in 2007, becoming Russia's first plant to chill natural gas for shipping. "We are prepared to ship gas and oil directly to the United States," Alexander Losyukov, Russia's ambassador to Japan, said Tuesday, alluding to the gas contract, which received official Russian approval last month. "We want to be a reliable supplier, probably more reliable than the Middle East."

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26. PRC Energy Consumption

Reuters ("OIL HITS RECORD ON CHINA, INDIA DEMAND", 2004-08-19) reported that oil prices struck a fresh record high above $47.50 a barrel on Thursday as fresh evidence of demand growth in the PRC and India underlined how rising appetite for oil is straining the world's supply system. Rising demand in emerging economies the PRC and India have shaken up the oil market this year, intensifying competition for supply with established consuming giants such as the US. The PRC's refineries have processed 17.2 percent more crude so far this year than in 2003, the county's State Statistical Bureau said on Thursday. Crude imports have soared nearly 40 percent from last year. India's biggest refiner, State-run Indian Oil Corp. Ltd. , said it expected India's crude oil imports to rise by 11 percent in 2004/05 as demand rises by nearly 4 percent.

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27. Sino - US Relations

Reuters ("CHINA SAYS TAIWAN PRESIDENT'S U.S. STOP 'A TRICK'", 2004-08-19) reported that the PRC urged the US on Thursday not to allow Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian to set foot on US soil, describing his stopovers en route to Latin America as a trick to sabotage Sino-US relations. Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian is to stop briefly in the US on his trip to and from Latin America from late August, further angering teh PRC at a time of high tension between the arch-rivals. "The use of 'stopovers' by the Taiwan authorities as an excuse to conduct activities splitting China and sabotaging China-U.S. relations is a trick they have consistently been using," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said in a statement. "We urge the U.S. side...not to conduct any official dealings and contact with Taiwan, not to allow important Taiwan political figures to use 'stopovers' as an excuse to engage in splittist activities," the ministry said.

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28. PRC Capital Flight

Reuters ("CORRUPT CHINA OFFICIALS FLEE WITH FORTUNES - MEDIA", 2004-08-19) reported that about 4,000 corrupt PRC officials have fled abroad in the past two decades, taking with them ill-gotten funds totaling more than $600 million. That jaw-dropping figure was part of findings in a report issued by the Ministry of Commerce, details of which the official Xinhua news agency published on Thursday. Mei Xinyu, the leading writer of the report, said the PRC had the world's fourth-most serious problem with capital flight, Xinhua reported. PRC leaders have sounded warnings in recent years that the Communist Party could lose power if it fails to crack down on corruption, the scourge that toppled several imperial dynasties. Graft among government officials is consistently one of the main popular grievances. About 4,000 corrupt officials have fled in the past two decades transferring 5 billion yuan ($610 million) out of the country, the Ministry of Commerce researchers estimated.

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29. PRC Foreign Investment

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA ALLOWS INSURERS TO INVEST FOREIGN EXCHANGE OFFSHORE", 2004-08-19) reported that the PRC will allow domestic insurers to invest forex in offshore debt markets, a step that could pave the way for loosening of the country's tightly

controlled capital account. The provisional rules will allow PRC insurance companies to invest up to 80 percent of their total foreign currency holdings in offshore markets, the Xinhua news agency reported. "It will help insurance companies broaden their investment scope, improve investment returns and better diversify investments," Xinhua cited the China Insurance Regulatory Commission (CIRC) as saying. PRC investors are not allowed to invest in foreign markets, frustrating large holders of foreign currency such as insurance companies, which by the end of June this year had 9.775 billion in foreign currency assets. The long anticipated policy change grants companies the right to invest in overseas government and corporate debt, certificates of deposit and other fixed income products, the report said.

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30. PRC Religious Freedom

Washington Post ("CHINA DETAINS BUDDHIST LEADER AMERICANS EJECTED FROM TEMPLE SITE", 2004-08-18) reported that PRC authorities have detained a prominent, US-based Buddhist leader in connection with his plans to reopen an ancient temple complex in Inner Mongolia province and have forced dozens of his US followers to leave the region, local officials said Wednesday. The US Embassy here said it has requested an explanation from the PRC government and plans to protest the treatment of the Americans, several of whom accused police of physically removing them from the temple and seizing their property. The embassy also urged the Chinese government to respect the rights of the detained spiritual leader, Yu Tianjian, 53, a PRC citizen who holds a US green card and has been the abbot of the Dari Rulai Temple in Los Angeles for nearly five years. Yu's detention is the latest sign of an official crackdown on unauthorized religion in the PRC that appears to have intensified in recent months.

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31. Homosexuality in the PRC

Agence France-Presse ("AT LEAST 80 PERCENT OF CHINA'S 30 MILLION GAYS WILL MARRY", 2004-08-19) reported that at least 80 percent of the PRC's estimated 30 million gays have already married members of the opposite sex or will do so in the near future, health officials said. Of the 30 million, around 20 million are men and 10 million women, Zhang Beichuan, an expert with the Heilongjiang Provincial Health Bureau, told AFP. With a population of 1.3 billion people Zhang estimates that about two to five percent of adult men are gay in the PRC, while lesbians account for half the percentage of homosexual males. Despite a clear preference for same-sex partners most of them will marry at some point, succumbing to the pressure of long-standing conservative cultural traditions that stress the importance of family, experts said. The PRC has never officially published a study on the country's gay community and it was only in 2001 that homosexuality was removed from the list of mental disorders.

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32. PRC AIDS Issue

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA ADMITS ILLEGAL BLOOD COLLECTION STILL A PROBLEM", 2004-08-19) the PRC has admitted that illegal blood sales, one of the main causes of its spiraling AIDS problem, are still rampant despite being outlawed in 1996. "Illegal blood collection still exists in some blood stations and even medical institutions. There is no strict mechanism to ensure the safety of blood sources," said Vice Minister of Health Ma Xiaowei. The PRC claims 20 percent of its

estimated 840,000 HIV/AIDS patients got the disease from selling plasma, although international experts believe the total number of cases and people infected through blood sales is far higher. The China News Service said China has shut down 49 blood collection and provision institutions in a recent campaign to curb the practice in the central province of Henan, the worst affected from the blood-selling scandal.

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33. PRC Pro-Democracy Arrest

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA SAYS "INDISPUTABLE EVIDENCE" HK DEMOCRAT CAUGHT WITH PROSTITUTE", 2004-08-19) reported that PRC police said they had "indisputable evidence" that Hong Kong democrat Alex Ho slept with a prostitute and denied he was beaten to extract a confession. "Ho had sex with a woman in a hotel room and a money transaction was involved," Li Zelin, a spokesman of the Dongguan Municipal Public Security Bureau was cited as saying by Xinhua news agency on its website. He refuted claims that Ho, a candidate for the Democratic Party, had been beaten or mistreated and forced to sign a confession after he was detained last Friday. Ho was subsequently jailed for six months. Democratic Party official and fellow candidate Fred Li said Wednesday Ho had been told he would be charged with rape if he failed to sign the confession.

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34. Japan Constitutional Revision

The Japan Times ("ARTICLE 9 CHANGE SIGNALS DESIRE TO WAGE WAR: NGOS", 2004-08-13) reported that Japan should not revise Article 9 of the Constitution because its Asian neighbors would regard such an act as proof that the country intends to wage war, nongovernmental organizations and intellectuals said at a symposium held in Tokyo. Christopher Weeramantry, former vice president of the International Court of Justice in Hague, said the war-renouncing Article 9 is one of the world's most outstanding constitutional provisions. Dennis Lin, member of Peace Time Foundation of Taiwan, a Taiwanese NGO, said Taiwanese remember Japan's occupation until the end of the World War II and oppose its moves to resume its militaristic stance by amending Article 9. Tatsuya Yoshioka, director of Japan-based NGO Peace Boat, said civic groups from Northeast Asia that joined the international initiative regard Article 9 as a significant idea that prevents possible armed conflicts in the region.

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35. Powell on Japan's Constitution

Kyodo ("ARTICLE 9 A UNSC-BID HURDLE: POWELL", 2004-08-14) reported that Japan must consider revising the war-renouncing Article 9 of its Constitution if it wants to become a permanent UN Security Council member, US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Aug. 12. "If Japan is going to play a full role on the world stage and become a full active participating member of the Security Council, and have the kind of obligations that it would pick up as a member of the Security Council, Article 9 would have to be examined in that light," he said. "But whether or not Article 9 should be modified or changed is absolutely and entirely up to the Japanese people to decide, because the United States would not presume an opinion."

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36. Japan-DPRK Abduction Cases

Kyodo ("NORTH KOREA TO ALLOW ABDUCTION TEAM", 2004-08-15) reported that the DPRK will accept a fact-finding team from Japan to investigate the whereabouts of 10 missing people who Japan believes were abducted, a North Korean official said Saturday. Song Il Ho, vice director of the North Korean Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Department, made the remarks at Beijing International Airport on his way back to Pyongyang. He did not comment on when the DPRK will accept such a mission from Japan.

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37. Sino-Japan Wartime Slave

Kyodo ("CHINESE FILE WARTIME SLAVE-LABOR SUIT", 2004-08-11) reported that thirteen Chinese filed a damages suit against the Japanese government and Mitsubishi Materials Corp., seeking a combined 184 million yen for being used as forced laborers during World War II. In their lawsuit filed with the Miyazaki District Court, the 13 -- seven former slave laborers and six relatives of laborers who have died -- also demand that the defendants officially apologize to them. According to the complaint, Shao Changshui, 77, and the others were rounded up by the Imperial Japanese Army in 1944 in China and forced to work in the Makimine copper mines in Miyazaki Prefecture. The mines were operated by Mitsubishi Mining Co., which later merged with another group company to become the present-day Mitsubishi Materials.

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