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1. DPRK Nuclear Test

Yonhap ("KOREAN LEADER 'DETERMINED' TO TEST NUCLEAR WEAPONS: REPORT ", 2006-0--10) reported that DPRK leader Kim Jong-il is determined to conduct an underground test of his country's nuclear weapons and has made his intention clear to Russian and Chinese diplomats in Pyongyang, a British newspaper reported Sunday in a dispatch from the DPRK capital. "Russian diplomats believe it is now highly probable that North Korea will officially join the nuclear club by carrying out its first underground test of an atomic device," the Telegraph reported in its Web site. The report also said the reclusive leader has reportedly "made clear his intention" during a recent meeting with diplomats from Russia and the PRC, the DPRK's closest allies.

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2. US on DPRK Nuclear Test

BBC News ("US WARNS N KOREA ON NUCLEAR TEST", 2006-09-11) reported that a senior US diplomat has warned the DPRK against a nuclear test, saying that it would be a provocative act. Nuclear negotiator Christopher Hill made the comments in Shanghai at the end of a six-day visit to the PRC. He also said the DPRK would receive no further incentives to return to multilateral talks on its nuclear ambitions.

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3. Six Party Talks

Reuters ("U.S. MULLING NUCLEAR TALKS WITHOUT NORTH KOREA", 2006-09-11) reported that countries involved in talks on ending the DPRK's nuclear weapons program plan to hold discussions soon excluding Pyongyang, the chief RO Korean and US envoys to the stalled discussions said on Monday. But US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill said separate meetings should not weaken the six-country talks and called on the DPRK to return to the table and implement a deal reached in September 2005 under which Pyongyang agreed to scrap its nuclear program in return for aid and security assurances. "The United States are considering the idea of holding the meeting on the sidelines of the U.N. Generally Assembly, but I don't believe all the countries have given their replies," the ROK's chief nuclear negotiator Chun Yung-woo told reporters.

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4. ROK on DPRK Policy

Yonhap ("SEOUL CALLS FOR WASHINGTON'S FLEXIBILITY ON PYONGYANG", 2006-09-11) reported that Lee Jong-seok, the ROK's point man on the DPRK, urged the US on Monday to show more flexibility in dealing with the state, Lee's spokesman said, as a senior US envoy warned that Pyongyang will face more economic sanctions unless it rejoins the six-way talks on its nuclear program. During his 50-minute talks with US Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, Unification Minister Lee stressed the need for the US and other concerned nations to have various forms of dialogue with the DPRK, according to the ministry's chief spokesman Yang Chang-seok.

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5. ASEM on DPRK

Kyodo News ("ASEM ENDS WITH CALL FOR N. KOREA'S RETURN TO 6-WAY TALKS", 2006-09-11) reported that leaders of Asian and European nations voiced their concern over the DPRK's July 5 missile launches and urged Pyongyang to return to stalled six-party talks aimed at resolving the standoff over its nuclear arms program as they wrapped up their two-day summit in Helsinki on Monday. In the chairman's statement issued at the end of the sixth Asia-Europe Meeting summit, they ''expressed serious concern over the recent test-firing of missiles by the DPRK that jeopardized peace, stability and security in the region and beyond,'' and urged the DPRK to comply with a UN resolution to prevent it from undertaking further missile testing.

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6. ROK-US Free Trade Talks

Agence France-Presse ("US, SOUTH KOREA WRAP UP ROUND OF TRADE TALKS", 2006-09-11) reported that the third round of trade talks between the US and the ROK wrapped up in Seattle this weekend. Assistant US Trade Representative Wendy Cutler said the week of Free Trade Agreement negotiations were challenging and involved some intense moments that resulted in some movement from both sides. She said some give-and-take was seen in the intellectual property rights group, in the environment group and the investment group. "Frankly I would have hoped to make more progress this week, but I remain determined to press forward and I think my counterpart feels the same way," she said. Both the US and the ROK were disappointed with tariff offers.

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7. ROK-US Relations

JoongAng Ilbo ("AMBASSADOR: TRANSFER TIMING NOT ON SUMMIT AGENDA", 2006-09-11) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun and US President George W. Bush have no plans to discuss the timing of the transfer of wartime control to Seoul at their summit meeting on Thursday, said Lee Tae-sik, theROK's ambassador to Washington, in an exclusive interview with the JoongAng Ilbo recently. "There is no fundamental difference on the transfer between South Korea and the United States. Washington has said that in light of the maturing alliance, it's correct for Seoul to exercise wartime command," Mr. Lee said. "The two leaders will hold talks on this principle. The timing of the transfer is not an issue to be discussed by the leaders."

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8. ROK-Japan Relations

Bloomberg ("S. KOREA, JAPAN AGREE TO CONDUCT SURVEY NEAR DISPUTED ISLANDS", 2006-09-11) reported that the ROK and Japan agreed to conduct a joint survey around a group of disputed islands that lie between the two nations. The ROK approved Japan's request to conduct a survey on the impact of radioactive waste dumped by the former Soviet Union between the 1950s and 1990s off its eastern port of Vladivostok, the ROK's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. ``South Korea and Japan held working-level talks on Sept. 8 and agreed in principle to conduct a joint survey on radioactive pollution in the East Sea,'' a reference to the waters between the two nations, the ministry said in a statement e-mailed late on Sept. 8.

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9. Japan Constitution Reform

Kyodo News ("PM FRONT-RUNNER ABE AIMS FOR NEW CONSTITUTION IN 5 YEARS", 2006-0--11) reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, who is almost certain to be Japan's next premier, said Monday he aims to enact a new Constitution in about five years to replace the current US-drafted, pacifist Constitution if he becomes prime minister. ''It isn't something that can be done in a year or two, so we should be thinking in terms of a span of about five years,'' Abe said in a debate session with two other contenders in the Sept. 20 ruling party presidential election. ''But if public consensus develops...it's possible to do so earlier.''

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10. Japan Spy Satellite

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN LAUNCHES SPY SATELLITE TO WATCH NKOREA", 2006-09-11) reported that Japan has successfully put into orbit its third satellite to monitor the DPRK, its first launch of a spy craft since an embarrassing failure in 2003. The H-2A satellite can zoom in on objects on the ground as small as cars. With the third satellite, Japan will be able to spy on any spot in the world, officials said.

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11. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Agence France-Presse ("JAPAN'S PM HOPEFUL HINTS AT SHRINE VISITS", 2006-09-11) reported that Shinzo Abe, the front-runner to be Japan's next prime minister, has said he may continue secretly visiting a war shrine opposed by neighboring countries but insisted the trip would be unofficial. "I want to pray for the war dead. I want to keep that feeling from now on," Abe told a nationally televised debate with his two rivals before next week's vote by the ruling party. "Japan has freedom of religion. It is natural to maintain this political value," the chief cabinet secretary said.

(return to top) Kyodo News ("KOIZUMI REITERATES CRITICISM OF CHINA, S. KOREA", 2006-0--11) reported that Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi on Monday reiterated his criticism of the PRC and the ROK for refusing to hold summit talks with Japan. "It is China and South Korea who refuse to have summit talks because they have a different idea only on one issue," Koizumi said at a press conference in Helsinki following the end of the Asia-Europe Meeting summit, apparently referring to his repeated visits to the war-linked Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. (return to top)

12. PRC-UK Relations

Xinhua ("AMBASSADOR: SINO-BRITISH TIES IN GOOD MOMENTUM", 2006-09-11) reported that relations between the PRC and Britain are in a good momentum and will grow stronger, according to Chinese ambassador to Britain Zha Peixin. In a recent interview with Xinhua, Zha said Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's upcoming visit to Britain is expected to promote mutual understanding and further strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. The leaders of the PRC and Britain have exchanged regular and frequent visits since last year, which have greatly enhanced the political mutual trust and deepened the comprehensive strategic partnership, said Zha.

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13. UN on PRC AIDS Policy

Reuters ("CHINA AIDS POLICY MUST BE MATCHED BY ENFORCEMENT: U.N.", 2006-09-11) reported that the PRC has done a remarkable about-face in dealing with HIV/AIDS, but good intentions need wider implementation in a country where eight people become infected each hour, a top UN official said on Monday. Peter Piot, executive director of the United Nations AIDS agency UNAIDS, said there was a mismatch between high-level policy and enforcement on the ground. "I'm seeing a sea change in the policies and the leadership at the central level in the fight against AIDS," Piot told Reuters in an interview. "I think all the right policies are in place. The challenge is of course to make sure across the country they are being implemented," he said on the sidelines of the launch of an initiative to involve business in the PRC's AIDS fight.

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14. PRC Trade Surplus

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TRADE SURPLUS HITS RECORD 18.8 BILLION DOLLARS IN AUGUST", 2006-09-11) reported that the PRC's trade surplus hit a monthly record of 18.8 billion dollars in August, state media said, just days before a key international meeting where the country's currency and trade practices could be in focus. Based on previously released government statistics, the figure, which was made public by the Xinhua news agency, was up nearly 80 percent from a trade surplus last August of about 10.6 billion dollars.

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15. PRC Tunnel Collapse

Associated Press ("TUNNEL COLLAPSE TRAPS WORKERS IN CHINA", 2006-09-11) reported that a highway tunnel collapsed Monday in the southwestern PRC, trapping 25 workers, the official Xinhua News Agency said. The collapse occurred on a highway linking the cities of Guangnan and Yanshan in Yunnan province, Xinhua said. It said 26 workers were in the tunnel at the time but one managed to escape. Rescuers said the trapped workers were "all alive and they should survive," according to Xinhua.

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