NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, September 13, 2004

Recommended Citation

"NAPSNet Daily Report Monday, September 13, 2004", NAPSNet Daily Report, September 13, 2004, https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-daily-report/napsnet-daily-report-monday-september-13-2004/

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United States

- 1. DPRK Blast Reported
2. US on DPRK Blast
3. Japan on DPRK Blast
4. ROK on DPRK Blast
5. DPRK on DPRK Blast
6. DPRK Blast Speculation
7. DPRK on DPRK Blast Speculation
8. DPRK Nuclear Talks
9. ROK - Russia on DPRK Nuclear Talks
10. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks
11. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks
12. ROK Nuclear Disclosure and Multilateral Talks
13. ROK Nuclear Disclosure
14. DPRK on ROK Nuclear Disclosure
15. IAEA on ROK Nuclear Disclosure
16. Kerry on DPRK Nuclear Issue
17. Inter - Korean Infrastructure
18. Sino - DPRK Relations
19. DPRK Mass Games
20. Jenkins Case
21. DPRK Cultural Events
22. US Troop Redeployment

23. US - ROK on Troop Realignment
24. US - Japanese Relations
25. ROK on Free Trade Agreement with Japan, PRC
26. Gando Historical Revisionism
27. BSE in Japan
28. WHO Conference in Shanghai
29. Hong Kong Elections
30. PRC Human Rights
31. PRC Religious Freedom
32. PRC Anti-Terror Exercises
33. PRC Terror Crackdown
34. PRC Leadership
35. Taiwan Assassination Attempt
36. US on PRC Currency Policy
37. PRC Foreign Trade
38. Sino - Venezuelan Relations
39. PRC Corruption Crackdown

II. CanKor

- 40. CanKor # 179

Preceding NAPSNet Report

I. United States

1. DPRK Blast Reported

Washington Post ("SUSPICIOUS BLAST SEEN IN N. KOREA NUCLEAR TEST HAS NOT BEEN RULED OUT, U.S. OFFICIAL SAYS", 2004-09-12) reported that a massive explosion on the DPRK's northern border with the PRC generated an expansive mushroom cloud on an important commemorative anniversary of the Pyongyang government on Sept. 9. The blast came as concerns have been recently mounting in US intelligence circles that the DPRK was about to conduct a nuclear test. However, the official said the explosion did not take place at the location that had been closely monitored in recent weeks by US intelligence agencies involving suspicious movement of vehicles that some analysts believed indicated preparation for a nuclear test. The location of the blast also led some analysts to discount a nuclear test, given that it took place so close to the DPRK's border with its closest ally, the PRC.

(return to top)

2. US on DPRK Blast

The Associated Press ("U.S.: KOREA CLOUD NOT FROM NUCLEAR BLAST", 2004-09-13) reported that ROK and US officials had already ruled out a nuclear explosion but said the cause of the smoke was a mystery. The huge size of the explosion on Thursday, the 56th anniversary of the foundation of the DPRK, had raised speculation that it might be a nuclear test. US Secretary of State Colin Powell

said there was no indication it was. On "Fox News Sunday," Powell expressed skepticism that the DPRK would stage a nuclear test. The DPRK "know this would not be a sensible step for them to take," he said. "And it is not just the reaction that they might see in the United States; it's their own neighbors."

(return to top)

3. Japan on DPRK Blast

Kyodo ("JAPAN DOUBTS N. KOREAN BLAST NUKE-RELATED, NO SEISMIC WAVES DETECTED", 2004-09-13) reported that Tokyo does not think the DPRK conducted nuclear tests last week since no seismic waves were detected within Japan, top government spokesman Hiroyuki Hosoda said Monday. "We don't think (nuclear tests) took place as we have not observed any seismic waves that we probably would have detected at seismological stations if a nuclear test had been conducted," Chief Cabinet Secretary Hosoda told a press conference. "We have no knowledge of the blasts either," he said, clarifying that Japan has received no information from the PRC and has not observed any satellite images. According to ROK media reports, quake-related facilities in the ROK and PRC observed seismic waves twice on Wednesday night. The Japan Meteorological Agency said it has not observed seismic waves in Japan so far. "It probably depends on the distance to Japan and the scale of the explosion," an agency official said.

(return to top)

4. ROK on DPRK Blast

Donga Ilbo ("GOVERNMENT STATES: "IT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE A NUCLEAR-RELATED TEST" ", 2004-09-13) reported that the ROK government held an emergency standing committee of the National Security Council (NSC) and discussed the nature of the explosion. A top government official stated, "It is presumed that the explosion took place late at night on Wednesday or early in the morning of Thursday. The site of the explosion is surrounded by mountains with a railroad track passing through the area." On this matter, Unification Minister Chung Dong-young stated, "Since the site of the explosion was near the North's border with China, it is unlikely that N.K. ignored China and conducted a nuclear-related test. There were some reports by foreign news agencies, indicating a possible nuclear test by N.K., but the explosion is found to be irrelevant with the report." Presidential spokesman Kim Jong-min said, "Considering the aftermath from the explosion, the NSC reported the matter to the President. It does not appear to be a nuclear-related test, but it looks like an accident."

(return to top)

5. DPRK on DPRK Blast

The Associated Press ("REPORT: N.KOREA SAYS EXPLOSION WAS PLANNED", 2004-09-13) reported that the DPRK said Monday that a huge cloud caused by an explosion near its border with the PRC several days ago was the planned demolition of a mountain for a hydroelectric project, British media reported. DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun said the blast was intentional, responding to a request for information from British Foreign Office minister Bill Rammell, who is visiting the DPRK, the British Broadcasting Corp. quoted Rammell as saying. The DPRK told Britain's ambassador in Pyongyang, David Slinn, that he can visit the blast site as soon as Tuesday to verify its claims that the explosion was part of a construction project, the Press Association of Britain reported. Rammell had asked that ambassadors be allowed to visit the site. In an interview with the

BBC, Rammell said Paek told him "that it wasn't an accident, that it wasn't a nuclear explosion, that it was a deliberate detonation of a mountain as part of a hydroelectric project."

(return to top)

6. DPRK Blast Speculation

Chosun Ilbo ("IS NORTH KOREA HIDING SOMETHING ABOUT EXPLOSION?", 2004-09-13) reported that despite the explanation of DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun, some analysts have said questions still remain. The ROK government did not seem to believe the DPRK's explanation perfectly. A ROK high ranking official said, "I wonder if it was really necessary to detonate such a huge quantity of explosives in building a small dam?" DPRK defectors think the DPRK has not given a correct explanation to conceal its military factories. It is highly likely that the DPRK is worried about the possibility that a crowd of military plants near the explosion site would be uncovered if it acknowledged that the explosion was large-scale. Korea University professor Yoo Ho-yeol said, "South Korea needs to focus on the possibility that North Korean Foreign Minister Paek Nam-sun diplomatically made the explanation without knowing core information."

Reuters ("N.KOREA BLAST CAUSE UNCLEAR BUT MANY THEORIES", 2004-09-13) reported that an accident at an underground munitions depot or a weapons factory was the likely cause of a huge explosion in the DPRK last week, and there were possibly two blasts, ROK media reports said on Monday. "There is a possibility of an accident at a military factory or a munitions depot dug underground," the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper reported. Another ROK daily, Chosun Ilbo, said the explosion left marks as if a blast set off by an equivalent of 1,000 tonnes of dynamite had hit a munitions depot or a military cargo train carrying explosives. "Considering the existence of various missile bases near the area, it is possible that chemical materials exploded," the daily quoted a DPRK defector familiar with the area as saying. The time sequence of the explosion followed several hours later by a smoke cloud supports a theory that the blast took place under ground, the paper quoted several sources as saying.

(return to top)

7. DPRK on DPRK Blast Speculation

Yonhap ("N.K. BLAMES FOREIGN JOURNALISTS FOR BELATED EXPLANATION OF BLAST ", 2004-09-13) reported that the DPRK did not give an earlier explanation of last week's huge explosion in the country because "all foreign journalists are liars," Britain's BBC television network quoted the DPRK's foreign minister as saying on Monday. But local experts gave mixed responses to the DPRK's explanation of the blast. A local construction official, who participated in building local dams, said massive smoke like the alleged mushroom-shaped cloud from the explosion could not occur when blasting rocks to make dams. He also said that satellite pictures showed no signs of rivers, which are needed for a hydropower plant, running through the area, adding that it is not a suitable site for a dam. But Yoo Chang-ha, a research fellow at the Korea Institute of Geoscience and Mineral Resources, said massive smoke can occur when large amounts of dynamite are used to completely clear some portion of a huge mountain. "There is no basis to link the blast to a test of nuclear weapons as reported by the foreign media," Chung told lawmakers at the National Assembly, adding that the case is not something that should cause concerns.

(return to top)

8. DPRK Nuclear Talks

Korea Times ("NUCLEAR TALKS UNLIKELY BEFORE US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS", 2004-09-13) reported that faced with back-to-back complications, the likelihood of another round of nuclear dismantlement negotiations taking place before the US presidential race in November is looking grim, according to sources Monday. Despite neighboring nations' efforts to keep the stalled six-party talks on track, a huge blast rocking the mountainous area of Kimhyongjik County in Yanggang Province, the DPRK on Sunday has fueled doubts over the talk's prospects. The ROK's admittance to conducting two separate laboratory experiments in 1982 and 2000 that resulted in the production of small amounts of enriched uranium and plutonium, the two main types of fissile material used in nuclear weapons, also added to the tense situation. The DPRK has been widely understood to be seeking postponement of the nuclear negotiations until after the US presidential race, hoping that President George W. Bush is voted out, according to diplomatic sources.

Reuters ("U.S., KEY ALLIES WANT N. KOREA NUKE TALKS IN SEPT.", 2004-09-10) reported that the US, Japan and the ROK agreed on Friday to try to arrange a fresh round of six-party talks this month on dismantling the DPRK's nuclear programs despite growing concerns it might be tough to do so. "Japan, the United States and South Korea confirmed that it is important to hold a fourth round of six-party talks by the end of September," a Japanese Foreign Ministry official said after senior diplomats from the three countries met in Tokyo. Seoul has been aiming at a Sept. 22 start for the talks, which bring together the US, Russia, the PRC and Japan as well as the two Koreas.

(return to top)

9. ROK - Russia on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("SOUTH KOREA'S TOP NUCLEAR NEGOTIATOR LEAVES FOR RUSSIA", 2004-09-13) reported that the ROK's top nuclear negotiator left for Russia on Monday as part of efforts to salvage stalled multilateral talks on the DPRK's nuclear arms program. During his four-day visit, Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuck will meet his Russian counterpart, Ambassador Alexander Alexeyev, to discuss ways to break the deadlock in efforts to organize a new round of six-way talks on the nuclear dispute.

(return to top)

10. Japan on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Kyodo ("JAPAN THINKS 6-WAY TALKS CAN STILL BE HELD LATER THIS MONTH", 2004-09-13) reported that Japan thinks six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear ambitions can still be held later this month, despite comments to the contrary from a senior US official over the weekend, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda said Monday. "We don't think about it that way at this moment as we still have nearly 20 days remaining this month," the top government spokesman said at a news conference. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said, "I think work and efforts are under way." Koizumi made the comment to reporters at his office, referring to holding the next round by Sept. 30.

(return to top)

11. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA THROWS SUPPORT BEHIND N. KOREA AMID PRESSURE FOR

NUCLEAR TALKS", 2004-09-13) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao has promised to strengthen relations with the DPRK as his special envoy returned from Pyongyang amid a flurry of diplomatic activity aimed at securing another round of nuclear talks. In a message conveyed by envoy Li Changchun to the DPRK's leader Kim Jong-Il, Hu said the PRC was willing to work with its neighbor to "strengthen and deepen" friendly cooperative relations, the Xinhua news agency said Monday. The PRC also wanted to "strengthen coordination and cooperation in regional and international affairs, with both countries understanding and supporting each other, and seek mutual development and mutual benefit to both peoples". Li, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's powerful nine-strong top committee, returned to Beijing after the four-day "official goodwill visit", Xinhua said.

(return to top)

12. ROK Nuclear Disclosure and Multilateral Talks

Agence France-Presse ("SEOUL SAYS ITS NUCLEAR EXPERIMENT NO BARRIER TO NKOREA TALKS", 2004-09-12) reported that the ROK said that its controversial nuclear experiments should not be seen as an obstacle to multilateral talks on the DPRK's nuclear weapons drive "Our nuclear issue and the opening of six-nation talks are essentially of a different nature," Unification Minister Chung Dong-Young told reporters Sunday. Chung, however, said the DPRK could discuss the ROK's nuclear experiments at the next round of talks due this month between the two Koreas, Japan, the PRC, Russia and the US. "North Korea's allegation that these incidents are manifestly of military nature is absolutely not true," the South's foreign ministry said in an English statement. "Other parties of the six-party talks generally share the view these incidents should not affect the six-party talks process," it said.

(return to top)

13. ROK Nuclear Disclosure

Washington Post ("S. KOREA NUCLEAR PROJECT DETAILED WORK CALLED NEAR WEAPONS GRADE", 2004-09-12) reported that as the Bush administration tries to ratchet up pressure on Iran, emerging details of clandestine nuclear work in the ROK indicate that the US ally was more successful than Tehran in producing the key ingredient for a bomb and used deception to conceal the illegal activity from UN inspectors for years. In interviews late last week, diplomats with knowledge of both covert programs disclosed that ROK scientists enriched uranium to levels four times higher than did their counterparts in Iran. Seoul conducted those experiments, in violation of the nuclear nonproliferation treaty, two years before Iran did and kept them secret for nearly two years after Iran's came to light, said the diplomats, who would discuss the investigation by the International Atomic Energy Agency only on the condition of anonymity. The ROK revelations have thrown the Bush administration's efforts on Iran and the DPRK into turmoil. Over the weekend, US officials said they were forced to scale back plans to refer the Iran issue to the UN Security Council by month's end.

(return to top)

14. DPRK on ROK Nuclear Disclosure

The Associated Press ("NORTH KOREA WON'T ABANDON NUCLEAR PROGRAMS", 2004-09-11) reported that the DPRK said Saturday that the ROK's secret nuclear experiments involving uranium and plutonium make the DPRK more determined to pursue its own nuclear programs, a news report said. A spokesman for the DPRK's Foreign Ministry condemned the ROK nuclear experiments,

conducted in 1982 and 2000, as "clearly of military nature," according to Pyongyang's official news agency KCNA, monitored by the ROK's national news agency Yonhap. "We strongly suspect that the United States may have masterminded the experiments that were clearly of military nature," he was quoted as saying. "We cannot but link these developments with the issue of holding six-party talks." "Under these circumstances, it is only natural that we should never give up our nuclear program," the DPRK spokesman said.

(return to top)

15. IAEA on ROK Nuclear Disclosure

Reuters ("U.N.: S.KOREA NUKE RESEARCH IS OF 'SERIOUS CONCERN'", 2004-09-13) reported that the head of the U.N. nuclear watchdog said Monday the ROK's failure to promptly report research on the enrichment of uranium and plutonium separation to the U.N. agency was deeply worrying. "It is a matter of serious concern that the conversion and enrichment of uranium and the separation of plutonium were not reported to the agency as required by (the ROK's) safeguards agreement," International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed ElBaradei said in the text of a speech to the IAEA board. Speaking to reporters after the closed-door morning session of the IAEA board of governors, ElBaradei said he hoped to quickly wrap up his probe of the ROK's experiments with two substances that could be used to fuel nuclear weapons. Speaking on condition of anonymity, several diplomats close to the IAEA doubted the experiments were accidents. "It looks as if the planning and preparation (for the experiments) went back much further and appears to have been far more calculated than the South Koreans would like the agency to believe," a diplomat said.

(return to top)

16. Kerry on DPRK Nuclear Issue

The New York Times ("KERRY SAYS BUSH HAS IGNORED NORTH KOREAN THREAT", 2004-09-12) reported that Senator John Kerry on Sunday accused the Bush administration of letting "a nuclear nightmare" develop by refusing to deal with the DPRK when it first came to office. In an interview, he argued that President Bush's preoccupation with Iraq let the DPRK crisis fester to the point that there were now indications that the country might be preparing to test a plutonium bomb. Mr. Kerry insisted that the fact that the DPRK was threatening a test was a sign of failed diplomacy. Mr. Kerry's basic argument, that the Iraq war has diverted attention from more dangerous nations like the DPRK, is one he has often used on the campaign trail and in interviews over the past several months. But his language on Sunday, calling the situation "a nuclear nightmare" and directly accusing Mr. Bush of leaving the US more vulnerable to the DPRK, was far harsher and more incendiary than the language he has used before.

(return to top)

17. Inter - Korean Infrastructure

Yonhap ("S. KOREAN TECHNICIANS TO STAY IN N.K. FOR BORDER RAILWAY STATIONS ", 2004-09-12) reported that ROK technicians will stay in the DPRK beginning this week to help build modern railway stations on the northern side of the heavily fortified inter-Korean border, ROK officials said Sunday. The unspecified number of technicians, who will stay during the week and return to the South on weekends, will be in charge of providing technical assistance in the building and repairing of railway stations in the DPRK.

(return to top)

18. Sino - DPRK Relations

Yonhap ("CHINA TO GIVE FREE AID TO NORTH KOREA: REPORT ", 2004-09-13) reported that the PRC has decided to give free aid to its impoverished ally the DPRK, the DPRK's state-run news agency said Monday. In a short dispatch from Pyongyang, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said visiting PRC official Li Changchun informed the DPRK's Premier Pak Pong-ju of the PRC's decision on Saturday.

(return to top)

19. DPRK Mass Games

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA'S MASS GAMES A METAPHOR FOR LIFE", 2004-09-13) reported that DPRK schoolgirl Pak Hyon-sun lobs a grapefruit-sized ball high into the overcast Pyongyang sky. "I long for the day when I perform for the General, so I train through the pain." The "General" is DPRK leader Kim Jong-il, and Pak is preparing to take part in Mass Games, the world's biggest choreographed extravaganza -- a spectacle involving thousands of performers that puts the Super Bowl halftime show to shame. The Mass Games are part circus act and part rhythmic gymnastics floor show, involving as many as 80,000 gymnasts. Up to 12,000 more kids occupy an entire side of the stadium flipping colored cards in unison to create images of missile launches, landscape scenes, giant slogans and portraits of Kim Jong-il and his father, the late Great Leader Kim Il-sung. "Group power develops and individualism completely disappears," Pak says. No one is a star, but everyone must perform with total dedication for it to work.

(return to top)

20. Jenkins Case

Reuters ("DESERTER RETURNS TO FACE CHARGES AFTER 39 YEARS", 2004-09-12) reported that nearly 40 years after he allegedly defected to the DPRK, US Army Sgt. Charles Jenkins was back in uniform Saturday, billeted on this US military post and preparing to face charges against him. Looking solemn, Jenkins arrived with his wife and two DPRK-born daughters at the gate of Camp Zama, the US Army's headquarters in Japan, and gave a long salute as he was received by Lt. Col. Paul Nigara. Jenkins's surrender is a big step toward resolving a diplomatic headache for the US and its close ally Japan. Japanese officials have urged leniency for the American, whose case has attracted broad sympathy here due to his long marriage to Hitomi Soga, a Japanese woman who was kidnapped and taken to the DPRK by force. At Camp Zama, Jenkins changed from civilian clothes into a short-sleeved Army uniform and signed paperwork to return to active duty. He has been assigned to an administrative unit. He is not under arrest, but may not leave the camp.

(return to top)

21. DPRK Cultural Events

Korea Herald ("PYONGYANG BUSTLES WITH FOREIGN VISITORS; NORTH KOREAN CAPITAL BUSY WITH POLITICAL, ARTS AND SPORTS EVENTS", 2004-09-13) reported that the DPRK's capital Pyongyang is playing host to a number of foreign diplomats and guests for a film festival and book fair. The DPRK's official mouthpiece, the Korean Central News Agency, said Kim appeared Sunday for the first time since Sept. 4, meeting in Pyongyang with a delegation of PRC government

officials including Li Changchun, a senior official of the PRC's Communist Party. An international film festival which opened Sunday in the capital has also attracted many foreign guests. The Sept. 12-20 Pyongyang International Festival will show about 100 films from 40 nations, including Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, Spain, Russia, Japan and Nepal, KCNA said. The event has been held every two to three years since 1987. Kim Jong-il is known to be a movie buff, and reportedly possesses about 20,000 films. Foreign officials from the Goethe Institute and the Frankfurt Book Fair, as well as PRC and Russian book officials, have been participating in a Pyongyang book affair. And, starting tomorrow, about 900 martial arts performers will compete in the first Pyongyang international martial arts competition.

(return to top)

22. US Troop Redeployment

Donga Ilbo ("U.S. PLANNING TO STATION ADDITIONAL AEGIS DESTROYERS IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN ", 2004-09-10) reported that the US Department of Defense stated on Thursday that it is planning to station 15 Aegis destroyers and three cruisers in the Pacific Ocean by the end of 2006, following the new missile defense (MD) system. The first step the US will take is to station two warships at the naval base in Yokosuka, Japan, and three warships at the naval base in Hawaii this year, said the official on the condition of anonymity. The two Aegis destroyers which will be stationed in Yokosuka will also serve as a defense system in the East Sea and the Pacific Ocean area against the DPRK's missile attack. The official added that the 15 destroyers can track down long-range missiles and one of the three vessels will be equipped with the newly developed Standard Missile 3 (SM3) sea-to-air interception missiles.

(return to top)

23. US - ROK on Troop Realignment

Yonhap ("S.K., U.S. TO BEGIN TALKS ON SEOUL'S CONTRIBUTION TO USFK EXPENSES ", 2004-09-13) reported that the ROK and the US will soon begin negotiations on the former's contribution to next year's cost of stationing US troops on the Korean Peninsula, Foreign Ministry officials said Monday. The ROK and US agreed to hold the talks to reflect changes in the peninsula's security environment, according to the officials. They said the changes include the ROK's dispatch of 3,600 troops to Iraq at the request of the United States and relocation of US troops in Seoul and near the Demilitarized Zone, which separates the ROK and the DPRK, to areas south of the Han River which bisects Seoul. The ROK is supposed to pay US$700 million for support of 34,000 US troops on the peninsula in 2005.

(return to top)

24. US - Japanese Relations

Los Angeles Times ("OKINAWA RESIDENTS RALLY AGAINST U.S. BASE", 2004-09-13) reported that about 30,000 people gathered on the Japanese island of Okinawa to demand the closure of a US base in the biggest protest against the US military in the area since 1995. The protesters also demanded an apology and compensation for the crash of a US helicopter last month. Three crew members were injured but no one on the ground was hurt when the CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopter from Futemma Air Station crashed at Okinawa International University.

(return to top)

25. ROK on Free Trade Agreement with Japan, PRC

Asia Pulse ("SCHOLARS QUESTION BENEFITS OF FTA BETWEEN S. KOREA, CHINA, JAPAN", 2004-09-13) reported that the ROK is feared to benefit the least from an envisioned trilateral free trade agreement (FTA) with the PRC and Japan, a state-run institute said Monday. The ROK's economic benefits from the three-nation FTA have been estimated at US$17.8 billion, significantly lower than that for the PRC and Japan with $47.3 billion and $61.6 billion, respectively, Rhyu Kwang-yeong, an analyst at the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade, said at a seminar. The increase in the gross domestic product's growth rate from the agreement was estimated to be 1.74 percentage points in the ROK, compared with the PRC's 5.91 percentage points. The figure is slightly lower than that of Japan with 0.61 percentage point. Scholars attributed the low benefits to a possible worsening of the trade balance in the manufacturer and agricultural sectors with the Asian countries. Sandwiched between the PRC and Japan, the ROK is expected to see massive inflows of Japanese electronics and other manufactured goods, and cheap PRC products.

(return to top)

26. Gando Historical Revisionism

Korea Times ("'BEIJING ASKED FOR DEAL ON GANDO'", 2004-09-13) reported that the PRC asked the ROK to promise it will not stake a claim on Gando, a disputed region north of the DPRK border, when it held talks with Seoul last month to patch up the history dispute over the ancient kingdom of Koguryo, sources said. Beijing has been very concerned about the recent move by a group of ROK lawmakers to nullify the Gando Convention, signed in 1909 between the PRC's Qing Dynasty and imperial Japan, which ruled Korea until 1945, a government official said. "When China's Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei had negotiations with his South Korean counterpart Choi Young-jin last month, he mentioned the Gando problem, which he said was arousing concerns of the Chinese government," the official said on condition of anonymity. "Beijing wanted Seoul to agree that South Korea would never mention the territorial dispute," he said. "But Seoul rejected the call, saying the claims are just being made on a non-government level, including private media, lawmakers and historians."

(return to top)

27. BSE in Japan

The Associated Press ("JAPAN CONFIRMS CASE OF MAD COW DISEASE", 2004-09-13) reported that Japan has confirmed a new case of mad cow disease, the third discovery of the brain-wasting illness in the country this year, an official said Monday. The 5-year-old dairy cow tested positive for bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, on Friday at a slaughterhouse in Shisui town, in southern Kumamoto prefecture (state) about 565 miles southwest of Tokyo, prefectural spokesman official Toshinori Takano said. More precise tests at a state-run infectious disease research institute confirmed the finding on Monday, Takano said. It was Japan's 12th case of mad cow. The announcement comes as Japan and the US are negotiating over mad cow testing standards aimed at lifting Tokyo's ban on American beef imports imposed last December.

(return to top)

28. WHO Conference in Shanghai

The Associated Press ("WHO REGIONAL CONFERENCE OPENS IN SHANGHAI", 2004-09-13) reported that the head of the World Health Organization called on Monday for steps to narrow growing inequality in medical care between rich and poor, saying the gap is undermining health security for all, especially in efforts to combat AIDS. Tackling challenges ranging from the new - avian flu and SARS - to the familiar - tuberculosis, AIDS, smoking - WHO opened its annual regional session in Shanghai with a call for more robust spending on public health. The meeting follows warnings that avian flu could spark a global pandemic if more is not done to detect and eradicate it. The five-day WHO regional conference is also due to discuss the need for more cooperation to ensure food safety, including regulations on the sale of live animals for food. It will also discuss prospects for eliminating measles from the Western Pacific region, along with expanding vaccinations for Hepatitis B.

(return to top)

29. Hong Kong Elections

Washington Post ("HONG KONG ELECTIONS A BLOW TO DEMOCRATS RESULTS SET BACK SUFFRAGE CAMPAIGN", 2004-09-13) reported that pro-democracy candidates gained seats in Hong Kong's legislature but failed to take control of the body despite winning a large majority of the popular vote in elections Sunday. The outcome represented a setback for the campaign to persuade Beijing to allow universal suffrage here. The democrats won 18 of the 30 council seats filled by direct elections, according to results announced Monday, but they won only seven of the other 30 seats filled by small constituencies of special interests, most of which favor candidates who support the PRC government. A record 1.7 million people turned out for the election, and several voting stations ran short of ballot boxes, prompting complaints from pro-democracy candidates who said many voters frustrated by long delays gave up and went home.

The New York Times ("HONG KONG DEMOCRACY FORCES EARN MODEST GAINS IN VOTE", 2004-09-13) reported that with most of the vote counted, advocates of greater democracy appeared to have scored modest gains in elections here on Sunday, but fell short of winning a majority in the legislature. The loss of several seats in the 60-member Legislative Council still leaves Beijing fairly able to retain control of legislative developments in this former British colony, although local leaders may have to make more concessions to prevent defections. A series of irregularities marred the election. Ballot boxes overflowed early and long lines formed as more boxes had to be dispatched to polling places. Election workers in some polling places reportedly opened boxes that were supposed to stay sealed in order to compress the ballots and allow more to be inserted. Embarrassed election officials said they had failed to take into account the greater size of ballots this year in estimating how many ballots would fit in each box. The turnout set a record, with 55.6 percent of registered voters casting ballots. Before the scandals, democracy advocates had hoped for a turnout of 60 percent or higher.

(return to top)

30. PRC Human Rights

The Associated Press ("CHINA ATTACKS HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT", 2004-09-10) reported that pro-Beijing media launched a scathing attack Friday on a report alleging human rights violations ahead of Hong Kong's weekend election, and a PRC official lashed out at the "wicked" watchdog group that prepared it. Hong Kong's Wen Wei Po newspaper, viewed as a mouthpiece for Beijing, complained New York-based Human Rights Watch was meddling in Hong Kong's affairs. The group said earlier that the PRC has orchestrated a widespread campaign of intimidation in the run-up to Sunday's

polling. "Don't accept foreign intervention," Wen Wei Po said in a banner headline. It showed Beijing's Hong Kong nemesis, pro-democracy lawmaker Martin Lee, in a photo with an American rights worker. Human Rights Watch charged Thursday that the PRC has sought to intimidate some Hong Kong media, as well as voters, through coercive tactics that have lowered the territory's human rights conditions to their worst level since the territory was handed back from Britain in July 1997.

(return to top)

31. PRC Religious Freedom

Reuters ("VATICAN SAYS CHINA 'ONCE AGAIN' ABUSING CATHOLICS", 2004-09-13) reported that the Vatican accused the PRC Saturday of launching a fresh crackdown on Roman Catholics, upping the ante in its war of words against the PRC. Chief Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro Valls said in a statement that eight priests and two seminary students had been detained last month in northern PRC -- the latest in a long line of Catholics seized by PRC police in recent years. "If this news is indeed true, then we would find ourselves yet again facing a grave violation of religious freedom, which is a fundamental human right," Navarro Valls said. The PRC does not allow its Catholics to recognize the Pope's authority and forces Christians to belong to state-backed patriotic associations if they want to worship openly. Those who refuse, worship secretly and are members of the so-called underground Church.

(return to top)

32. PRC Anti-Terror Exercises

Reuters ("CHINA HOLDS ANTI-TERROR EXERCISES IN TIBET", 2004-09-12) reported that the PRC staged anti-terror maneuvers in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, citing a rise in global terrorism since Sept. 11, state media said on Monday. The local garrison of the People's Liberation Army, police, paramilitary forces and militia took part in the joint exercises on Sunday, Xinhua said, noting they took place a day after the third anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the US. Human rights groups have expressed concern that the PRC is using the global war on terrorism as an excuse to crack down on Tibet and in the Muslim region of Xinjiang in the west. "The anti-terrorist maneuvers, in the context of increased terrorist acts around the world, were staged to check the region's response mechanism in case of terror attacks," Xinhua quoted organizers as saying.

(return to top)

33. PRC Terror Crackdown

Reuters ("CHINA CONVICTS 50 TO DEATH IN "TERROR CRACKDOWN"", 2004-09-13) reported that the PRC has sentenced more than 50 people to death this year in the western region of Xinjiang in what the government depicts as a protracted battle against foreign-backed separatists. The Communist Party leader of the predominantly Muslim region, Wang Lequan, said on Monday that despite the tough stance, the PRC saw international "terrorist" forces as gaining ground and vowed no let-up from Beijing in the battle. "Due to the fact that the activities of international terrorist forces are rampant, we believe our fight against the crime of violent terrorists will continue for a long time to come," Wang told reporters visiting the region. Many overseas rights groups criticise the PRC for using the global war on terror, launched after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the US, as a pretext to crack down on Turkic-speaking ethnic Uighurs in Xinjiang who want more autonomy from Beijing, though not necessarily independence.

(return to top)

34. PRC Leadership

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S PRESIDENT HU EYES TOPMOST MILITARY POST TO CONSOLIDATE POWER", 2004-09-13) reported that when PRC President and Communist Party boss Hu Jintao convenes a key party meeting on Thursday he will mark his first two years in power, a period that has been shadowed closely by his predecessor, military supremo Jiang Zemin. In recent months, signs have appeared that Hu is chomping at the bit, eager to see Jiang fully step down and relinquish his grip, similar to the way late paramount leader Deng Xiaoping opened the door for Jiang in 1989. "Although Jiang Zemin has quite a big ego, he is smart enough to know that if he gives up his last post he will not have the same leverage he has today," Frederick Teiwes, a specialist in elite PRC politics at the University of Sydney, told AFP. "But while he sits in one of the three most important positions of the regime, it casts a cloud of uncertainty over the ruling elite, so that is why we can only say that at this point the transition is not over."

(return to top)

35. Taiwan Assassination Attempt

Reuters ("TAIWAN CHARGES 3 IN CONNECTION WITH CHEN SHOOTING", 2004-09-10) reported that Taiwan on Friday charged three men in connection with an election eve assassination attempt on President Chen Shui-bian, the first breakthrough in a mysterious shooting the opposition said was staged to win his re-election. The three were charged with possession of homemade bullets that investigators say matched those used in the shooting of Chen while he campaigned on March 19, the day before the presidential election, prosecutors said. "The structure of the bullet casings found on these three people match those from the March 19 shooting," said Jenny Kuo, a prosecutor in the southern city of Tainan and spokeswoman for a task force investigating the shooting. "The bullets are related to the March 19 shooting but we can't yet prove the individuals themselves have any connection to the shooting," said Kuo.

(return to top)

36. US on PRC Currency Policy

Washington Post ("LABOR SEEKS PRESSURE ON CHINA INDUSTRY GROUPS JOIN PETITION ON CURRENCY POLICY", 2004-09-10) reported that a coalition of labor and industry groups, seeking to put election-year pressure on the Bush administration, filed a petition yesterday calling for a confrontational US stance against the PRC's currency policies -- and was promptly rebuffed by administration officials. The petition, filed by the AFL-CIO and organizations from the steel and textile industries, accused the PRC of keeping the yuan pegged to the dollar at a rate that makes Chinese products about 40 percent cheaper than they would be with a fairly valued currency. The administration signaled four months ago that it would reject such a petition, however, just as it did to a similar AFL-CIO petition alleging that the PRC reaps unfair competitive advantages by abusing worker rights. While acknowledging that "we have serious concerns" about the PRC's currency peg, Richard Mills, a spokesman for US Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick, said in a written statement: "Today's petition is reckless because the remedy it seeks of a 40 percent across the board tariff would put up walls around America. . . . In April, the administration made it clear that accepting such a petition would be a retreat into economic isolationism. . . . It is a path we will not take."

(return to top)

37. PRC Foreign Trade

Reuters ("CHINA TRADE STRETCHES WORLD'S PORTS TO LIMITS", 2004-09-13) reported that the world's major ports are stretched beyond capacity by a surge in sea transport to feed the PRC's voracious appetite for everything from raw materials to manufactured goods, the head of Singapore's largest container shipping group said on Monday. The trend could worsen as the world's shipping lines take delivery of new ships to handle sea traffic to the PRC and booming exports from the world's seventh-largest economy, said David Lim, president of Neptune Orient Lines Ltd. (NOL), the world's number seven container shipping line. "Almost every major port around the world is experiencing delays and congestion, and this is before the flood of new vessels comes on stream," Lim told a marine insurance conference. "Eventually, this puts stress on the local and global environment," he added.

(return to top)

38. Sino - Venezuelan Relations

Interfax ("VENEZUELA ENDEAVORS TO INCREASE OIL EXPORTS TO CHINA

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39. PRC Corruption Crackdown

The Associated Press ("EX-CHINA JOURNALIST SENTENCED FOR BRIBES", 2004-09-11) reported that the former editor-in-chief of one of the PRC's biggest newspapers, the Guangzhou Daily, has been sentenced to 12 years in prison for taking bribes, the government said. Li Yuanjiang was convicted by the Guangzhou People's Intermediate Court for accepting bribes worth $60,300, the official Xinhua News Agency said Friday. He took the money between August 1991 and June 2001, when he was a city official and then editor-in-chief, Xinhua said. Li was also fined $12,000, it said. Thousands of PRC officials and executives of state companies have been punished in a marathon crackdown on rampant corruption that threatens to undermine public acceptance of communist rule. The colorful paper covers celebrities, business and sports and says it has a circulation of 1.6 million.

(return to top)

40. CanKor # 179

CANADA-KOREA ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SERVICE ("CanKor # 179",) The rumours turn out to be true: a Republican American has been chosen by Kim Jong Il to replace Yang Bin as chief executive of the Sinuiju Special Administrative Region. Julie Rixiang Sha, former mayor of a city in Orange County, California, arrives in Seoul to brief officials and business leaders on developments in the zone and to drum up investment. DPRK envoy to the United Nations, Han Song Ryol tells media that the recent revelation of South Korean scientists' uranium enrichment experiment would spark a "nuclear arms race". Han denounced the US as a "worthless" partner who applies "double standards" to the two Koreas. The United States, South Korea and Japan have agreed to suspend work on the construction of light water reactors in the DPRK for a second year, but stopped short of

scrapping the project. The decision is likely to be formalized at the upcoming meeting of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in New York on 13 October. It is a natural human tendency to seek clarity and a swift end to conflict. Hardline approaches, brinkmanship and assigning blame are strategies intended to force a rapid resolution to end the discomfort of a slow process of untangling a protracted, emotional and dangerous antagonism. This week's CanKor OPINION features three op/ed pieces warning against measures that ultimately produce the opposite of what is intended. Harry Sterling, a former Canadian diplomat who served in the ROK, illustrates why "other countries, including South Korea, have increasingly come to believe Bush's hardline policies are not achieving the desired effect" and that "a more pragmatic approach is far more productive". Dr. Yang, former South Korean ambassador to the USA, argues that both the "siege mentality" in the North and the "curfew mentality" in the South are roadblocks to a peaceful resolution of the Korean division, producing negative and debilitating political, economic and security consequences. The media "should keep its equanimity" in such sensitive issues as the recent discovery of the 0.2 grams of enriched uranium produced by South Korean scientists. Speculative reports can engender "ill effects that draw Northeast Asian countries into nuclear competition" warns an editorial in the South Korean Joong Ang Daily. http://www.cankor.ca

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