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1. Six Party Talks

Joongang-Ilbo ("NORTH'S 6-PARTY DELAY SHOULD END NEXT WEEK", 2007-09-20) reported that the six-party nuclear talks originally scheduled for this week are likely to resume late next week, a government official said. Speaking anonymously, the official said that Beijing, the host for the talks, was consulting with the nations involved in the negotiations and that a consensus had almost been reached among the participants. Washington also confirmed that Beijing has proposed a a new timeline to restart the nuclear talks.

(return to top) Kyodo ("6-WAY TALKS DATE NOT YET SET, CHINA SAYS", 2007-09-20) reported that the PRC said a date for the six-party talks has yet to be set, even as some delegations began preparations for the possible start of the negotiations next week. "I have yet to hear about when the next round of the six-party talks will be held," PRC Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu told a regular press conference. "The related parties are currently in consultations" over the schedule, she said. (return to top)

2. DPRK Nuclear Program

Yonhap ("N.K. SHOULD NOT PROLIFERATE IF IT WANTS SUCCESS AT SIX-PARTY TALKS", 2007-09-20) reported that US President George W. Bush said that the DPRK should not proliferate nuclear weapons if it wants six-party denuclearization talks to succeed. Refusing to comment on the alleged nuclear cooperation between the DPRK and Syria, Bush said he expects Pyongyang to honor its commitments to give up its atomic weapons and weapons programs.

(return to top) Agence France-Presse ("SKOREAN PM SEES "BRIGHT" PROSPECTS FOR PYONGYANG DENUCLEARISATION", 2007-09-20) reported that the ROK Prime Minister Han Duck-soo said he was optimistic for the outcome of behind-closed-doors negotiations on the denuclearisation of neighbouring DPRK. Speaking on a visit to Oslo, Han said: "The prospect of progress and result at the six-party talks is, I think, bright." (return to top)

3. DPRK Drug Trafficking

Bloomberg News ("NORTH KOREA IS TAKEN OFF U.S. DRUG-TRAFFICKING COUNTRIES LIST", 2007-09-20) reported that the DPRK was dropped from the US list of countries producing illicit drugs, a sign of further relief of tensions between the two countries. "North Korea is not affecting the United States as much as the requirements on the list," Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Christy McCampbell said. The DPRK was first mentioned in the annual presidential report on "major illegal drug transit and drug-producing countries" in 2003, when President George W. Bush said the US would fight the country's suspected drug trafficking.

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4. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap ("SEOUL SEEKS NEARLY W1.3 TLN FOR JOINT PROJECTS WITH N. KOREA NEXT YEAR", 2007-09-20) reported that the ROK government plans to ask the National Assembly to significantly increase its budget for inter-Korean cooperation projects and aid programs for the DPRK, the Ministry of Planning and Budget said. Seoul hopes to increase the fund for its cross-border projects to 750 billion won (US$812 million) next year from 500 billion won this year, according to the ministry. The amount of money allocated for its humanitarian projects will also increase 14 percent

to some 530 billion won, the government said.

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5. ROK-EU Trade Relations

Chosun Ilbo ("EU HARDENS STANCE IN TRADE TALKS WITH KOREA", 2007-09-20) reported that free trade talks between the ROK and the EU have hit an unexpected snag after the EU turned from a generous negotiating partner in the first two rounds into a stubborn, picky one in the third round. In the first and second rounds of trade talks, the EU made an exceptional proposal to open up all markets within seven years. But as the two sides confer again in Brussels, the EU is now demanding that the ROK offer a trade package equal to the trade treaty with the US.

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6. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo ("SPECULATION GROWS JAPAN GAVE KITTY HAWK MORE OIL THAN DECLARED", 2007-09-20) reported that a Japanese peace group said Thursday it believes that Japan gave a US naval ship involved in the Iraq war much more fuel than it initially declared, effectively providing illegal logistic support for the war. Peace Depot said that the logbooks of the US oil ship Pecos show it had received nearly 800,000 US gallons of fuel from Japan's Maritime Self-Defense Force replenishment ship Tokiwa on Feb. 25, 2003, although the Japanese government earlier said the amount was 200,000 gallons.

(return to top) Reuters ("U.N. RENEWS NATO TROOP MANDATE IN AFGHANISTAN", 2007-09-20) reported that the UN Security Council authorized NATO-led troops to stay in Afghanistan for another year and gave the Japanese government support in its domestic dispute over refueling US and other ships in the Indian Ocean. New in the resolution is a sentence expressing appreciation to NATO and contributions from many nations to ISAF, which includes Japan, "including its maritime interdiction component." (return to top) Kyodo ("DPJ TO REINTRODUCE BILL TO END JAPAN'S AIRLIFT SUPPORT FOR IRAQ", 2007-09-20) reported that the main opposition Democratic Party of Japan decided to reintroduce a bill to parliament aimed at terminating the deployment of Japanese troops currently providing airlift support for supplies and personnel for Iraq, party lawmakers said. It will be the party's first attempt to end the mission since the DPJ-led opposition secured a majority in the House of Councillors election in July. (return to top)

7. Japan Government

Reuters ("WHOEVER BECOMES PM, JAPAN FISCAL CONTROL MAY SUFFER", 2007-09-20) reported that whoever becomes prime minister of Japan next week will inherit an unpopular administration and face pressure to boost rural spending to revive support, despite high government debt. Analysts see no big difference in economic thinking between frontrunner Yasuo Fukuda and Taro Aso in the race to lead the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, and hence the country, and their focus on rural issues has raised fears about budget discipline.

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8. Russia on US - Japan Relations

Agence France-Presse ("MILITARY LINKS BETWEEN AUSTRALIA, JAPAN, US WORRY RUSSIA:

OFFICIAL", 2007-09-20) reported that growing military cooperation between Australia, Japan and the United States is worrying Moscow, as is work on US-Japanese missile defence cooperation, a top foreign ministry official said. "The strengthening of US-Australian-Japanese ties has got our attention.... Narrow alliances, especially tight military-political unions, are a worry," Deputy Foreign Ministry Alexander Losyukov told daily Vremya Novostei newspaper.

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9. Cross Strait Relations

The Associated Press ("TAIWAN'S BID FOR U.N. SEAT REJECTED", 2007-09-20) reported that a key General Assembly committee rejected Taiwan's bid to join the United Nations, the 15th straight year the island has been thwarted in its attempt to become a member of the world body. The General Committee met behind closed doors for the first time in years to vote on 167 recommendations — including Taiwan's application — for inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly's 62nd session. The committee "decided not to recommend this (Taiwan) item as part of the agenda," said Janos Tisovszky, spokesman for the assembly president.

(return to top) International Herald Tribune ("CHINA HAILS UN REBUFF TO TAIWAN", 2007-0--20) reported that the PRC welcomed the United Nations' rejection of Taiwan's bid to re-enter the world body, saying that the decision reaffirmed the PRC's claim of sovereignty over the island. "It proves again that no one could change the fact that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China," the Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Jiang Yu, said in a statement on the ministry's Web site. (return to top)

10. PRC, India Missile Technology

International Herald Tribune ("CHINA AND INDIA LEADING ASIAN MISSILE BUILDUP", 2007-0--20) reported that two decades after developed nations agreed to halt the proliferation of strategic missile technology, the PRC and India are leading the most significant modernization of nuclear-capable ballistic missile and cruise missile forces in Asia since the Cold War, according to arms control analysts. "We are on the cusp of a new level of strategic rivalry in the region," said Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association. "India and Pakistan are about to move beyond short and intermediate missile range capabilities. China too is slowly exploring more advanced intercontinental ballistic missiles."

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11. PRC - DP Congo Mining Deal

Financial Times ("ALARM OVER CHINA'S CONGO DEAL", 2007-09-20) reported that mining companies, the International Monetary Fund and other donors were scrambling for clarification of a planned deal between PRC and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The deal would tie up mineral resources in exchange for $5bn (¤3.6bn, £2.5bn) in infrastructure projects and loans. A preliminary agreement was signed this week just as an IMF mission landed in Kinshasa to review progress towards the resumption of budget support for Congo. IMF, World Bank and African Development Bank officials seem to have been caught offguard by the scale and timing of the PRC's plans.

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12. PRC Religious Freedom

The Associated Press ("CHINA DEFENDS ITS RECORD ON RELIGION ", 2007-09-20) reported that the PRC defended its record on religious freedom, saying all Chinese can worship as they choose with no restrictions, and it blasted a US government report that said Beijing persecutes some believers. The State Department said last week in its annual report on religious freedom that the PRC continued to repress Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, Muslim Uighurs and the Falun Gong spiritual group over the past year.

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