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I. United States

1. ROK Plutonium Experiment Disclosure

The Associated Press ("SOUTH KOREA EXTRACTED PLUTONIUM IN 1982", 2004-09-09) reported that the ROK said Thursday that it extracted a tiny amount of plutonium in a nuclear experiment in 1982, a revelation that followed an acknowledgment last week that it enriched a small amount of uranium in 2000. The ROK also said it had "lost" some nuclear material from the 1982 experiment, and acknowledged differences with the UN nuclear agency over the ROK's report on the matter. The plutonium-based experiment was conducted in April and May 1982 at a Seoul research reactor belonging to the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, the ROK said in a statement. "This experiment was conducted by a small group of scientists to analyze the chemical characteristics of plutonium," the Ministry of Science and Technology said. "We have no written data left on the result of the experiment and the amount of plutonium extracted, but we estimate that a very minute amount in the range of milligrams was extracted," the ministry said.

Yonhap ("S. KOREA ADMITS TO EXTRACTING PLUTONIUM IN 1982 ", 2004-09-09) reported that adding fuel to suspicions over its nuclear ambitions, the ROK said Thursday it extracted a minimal amount of plutonium during a research experiment in 1982. "Several milligrams" of the fissile material were extracted from about 2.5 kilograms of spent nuclear fuel rods at a 2-megawatt research reactor in a state-run research center, officials at the Foreign Ministry and the Science and Technology Ministry said. A small number of scientists at the Korean Atomic Energy Research Institute conducted the experiment between April and May of that year without reporting to the government, officials said. The chief scientist of the experiment is already dead, but other participants said they wanted to study "post-irradiation characteristics" of material and that the purely academic experiment had nothing to do with nuclear weapons, according to officials. Officials also said the amount of extracted plutonium was too small to be related to nuclear weapons. They said at least 4-5 kilograms of plutonium are necessary to make an atomic bomb.

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2. US on ROK Plutonium Program

Agence France-Presse ("US EXPOSES MORE ILLICIT NUCLEAR ACTIVITY BY SOUTH KOREA", 2004-09-09) reported that the ROK may have been involved in illicit nuclear activity even before its recently disclosed experiment to enrich uranium, the US said. "Our understanding is that over 20 years ago, the South Koreans did experiments involving trace amounts of plutonium," a senior US

official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Asked whether the US had been talking to the ROK on any activity beyond the uranium enrichment experiment, specifically involving plutonium, US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said: "I think I'd just have to say in general terms we are in touch with the South Korean government." He said Washington was aware of what the ROK had reported to the IAEA on nuclear experiments conducted in past years. On whether the ROK had indulged in illicit nuclear activity other than what it had already admitted, Boucher said: "Our understanding is that all these activities were in the past and some of them quite a while back in the past." Boucher reiterated that the US was satisfied the ROK was reporting its nuclear activities to the IAEA.

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3. Japan on ROK Plutonium Experiment Disclosure

Kyodo News ("JAPAN WANTS IAEA INSPECTIONS ON S. KOREA'S PLUTONIUM TEST", 2004-0-09) reported that Japan on Thursday described the plutonium extraction experiment conducted by the ROK in the early 1980s as "inappropriate" and called for strict inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency. "We cannot connect this with the development of nuclear weapons but it is considered inappropriate in the context that the purpose of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the IAEA is to fully inspect any amount of such material regardless of whether it is slight," top government spokesman Hiroyuki Hosoda said in a press conference. "We want to wait for the South Korean government to announce why the IAEA failed to inspect the experiment or if other elements were involved. And we expect strict IAEA inspections," the chief Cabinet secretary said.

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4. PRC on ROK Uranium Enrichment Disclosure

Kyodo News ("CHINA HOPES S. KOREA'S NUKE EXPERIMENTS WILL NOT IMPACT TALKS", 2004-09-09) the PRC said Thursday it hopes the ROK's recently revealed uranium enrichment and plutonium experiments will not have an impact on the next round of six-way talks on the DPRK's nuclear programs. "We hope it won't (affect the talks)," Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan told a regular press briefing. "We hope relevant parties can display patience, restraint and pragmatism for the joint push to hold the six-party talks by the end of September as agreed earlier," he said. "We hope that a full investigation and all-round cooperation between South Korea and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) can clarify all activities, including those in the 1980s and that concerning uranium," Kong said.

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5. DPRK on ROK Uranium Enrichment Disclosure

The New York Times ("NORTH KOREA SAYS SEOUL'S NUCLEAR EXPERIMENTS STOKES ARMS RACE", 2004-09-09) reported that the DPRK warned on Wednesday that a recently disclosed ROK experiment with uranium enrichment could "accelerate a northeast Asia nuclear arms race," and accused the US of applying a "double standard" to the nuclear programs of the two Koreas. In the DPRK's first public reaction to reports last week of the clandestine experiment four years ago, Han Song Ryol, deputy chief of the DPRK's mission to the UN, lambasted the US. But he did not specifically rule out attending a new round of regional talks aimed at ending the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. "We view South Korea's uranium enrichment program in the context of an arms race in northeast Asia," Mr. Han told the Yonhap news agency of the ROK. "It has become difficult to

prevent expansion of a nuclear arms race because of South Korea's test."

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6. US on Inter-Korean Relations

Agence France-Presse ("N KOREA MISFIRES WITH NUCLEAR ARMS RACE CLAIM", 2004-09-09) reported that the DPRK was wide of the mark with its claim that secret nuclear-related research conducted by rival the ROK could spark a nuclear arms race in northeast Asia, according to analysts. Scott Snyder, Washington-based senior associate with the Asia Foundation, said Pyongyang has missed the point about the revelations which demonstrate closer co-operation between the ROK and the international arms control agency that will reduce the risk of proliferation and increase security in the region. "It shows that the additional protocol is working," he said. However, Seoul's admissions do give an indication of the potential for worrying nuclear developments in the region, he said. "The fact of the matter, that we all know in the back of our minds but don't like to talk about, is that any country that is a large user of a peaceful program probably has the technical capacity to be able to pursue a weapons program. And that is particularly the case in northeast Asia," he said.

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7. Japan on Inter-Korean Relations

Kyodo News ("JAPAN URGES N. KOREA TO ADDRESS OWN NUKE ISSUE, NOT S. KOREA'S", 2004-09-09) reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda urged the DPRK on Thursday to address its own nuclear problem as one of its officials harshly criticized the ROK's uranium enrichment experiment the day before. "I'm kind of dubious about the criticism against South Korea given the development so far," the top government spokesman told a press conference. "I want it (North Korea) to deal with its own problem first at the six-party talks." The six parties addressing Pyongyang's nuclear ambitions -- the two Koreas, the US, Japan, PRC and Russia -- agreed in their third round of talks in June in Beijing to meet again by Sept. 30, but they have yet to set a date for their next round.

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8. ROK on DPRK Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("SEOUL REMAINS CONFIDENT ON SIX-WAY TALKS OVER PYONGYANG'S NUKES ", 2004-09-09) reported that despite the DPRK's harsh anti-US rhetoric recently, the ROK has put a positive spin on the six-party negotiations aimed at resolving the DPRK's nuclear ambitions. "I don't think Han Song-ryol's remarks indicate that North Korea will not attend the fourth round of the six-way talks," Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo said at a weekly press briefing.

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9. DPRK on Nuclear Talks

Yonhap ("N.K. CRITICISM INCREASES DOUBTS ON SIX-PARTY TALKS AMID NUKE EXPERIMENT CONTROVE ", 2004-09-09) reported that the prospect of a new round of six-party talks on the DPRK's nuclear program was in further doubt on Thursday as the state began sustained criticism of a nuclear experiment by the ROK. The DPRK drew attention to what it called "double standards" by the US, accusing Washington of overlooking Seoul's uranium enrichment experiment while trying to

pressure Pyongyang over its "non-existent" nuclear arms program.

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10. PRC on DPRK Nuclear Issue

The Associated Press ("CHINESE DELEGATION TO VISIT NORTH KOREA THIS WEEK", 2004-0-09) reported that a delegation of top PRC government and Communist Party leaders will travel to the DPRK on Friday for talks on issues including the DPRK's nuclear program, the PRC's Foreign Ministry said. Li Changchun, a senior party leader, and Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei will meet with high-ranking officials in the DPRK during their four-day visit, timed to commemorate the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations, ministry spokesman Kong Quan said Thursday. Kong refused to say if the delegation would meet with DPRK leader Kim Jong Il or whether Li will try to persuade the DPRK to return to the negotiating table for six-nation nuclear talks with the US. Earlier this week, Kong urged "patience, cool-mindedness and pragmatism" to work around difficulties in order to hold the next round of discussions as planned.

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11. Russia, PRC on Relations with the DPRK

Yonhap ("RUSSIAN, CHINESE LEADERS VOICE CONFIDENCE IN TIES WITH N. KOREA ", 2004-09-09) reported that Russian and PRC leaders have sent congratulatory messages to DPRK leader Kim Jong-il on the occasion of the 56th anniversary of the DPRK's foundation, DPRK and PRC media said. In the message dated Sept. 4, Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed confidence in the countries' strong ties and his support for the DPRK's efforts to improve relations with ROK, according to the Korean Central Broadcasting Station, monitored here.

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12. Inter - Korean Economic Cooperation

Yonhap ("WOORI BANK SELECTED AS S. KOREA'S FIRST COMMERCIAL BANK IN N.K. ", 2004-0-09) reported that the ROK's No. 2 lender, Woori Bank, has been selected as the country's first commercial bank to operate in the DPRK, the Unification Ministry said Thursday. The bank is scheduled to begin operations around November in the pilot site of a huge industrial park being built in the DPRK's border town of Kaesong, said the ministry, adding that the branch will mainly deal with remittances and foreign exchange services for southern firms.

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13. Inter - Korea Relations

Kyodo News ("S. KOREA TO START SHUTTLE BUSES TO N. KOREAN BORDER CITY", 2004-09-09) reported that the ROK said Thursday it plans to start shuttle bus operations to an industrial park in the DPRK border city Kaesong this month. The Unification Ministry said in a statement two shuttle buses will make two round trips a day on weekdays, linking Seoul to an industrial park in Kaesong, about 80 kilometers north of Seoul. Test operations are scheduled to start Sept. 20. The shuttle buses will carry construction workers, developers and others involved in the construction of the industrial park. The statement said bus operations will likely increase in the future as more people visit the industrial park, which is expected to begin production operations in November. The

construction of an industrial park in Kaesong, which began in 2003, has been a major part of an inter-Korean economic cooperation that has been accelerated since the 2000 inter-Korean summit.

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14. Korean War Historical Revisionism

Chosun Ilbo ("'NORTHERN INVASION THEORY' UPLOADED AT LEFTIST WEBSITES ", 2004-09-09) reported that DPRK publications like histories claiming the Korean War started with an invasion of the DPRK have been uploaded onto the material bulletin boards of the homepages of Minjung 21 and National Alliance for Democracy and Reunification of Korea. The two websites ran four collections of anti-American materials, such as DPRK writings like the 1993 "The Historical Korean War" and "Accusations of History" that give accounts of the Northern version of the Korean War and the "Anti-MacArthur White Paper" composed of things like Korean Workers Party Central Committee materials. In particular, the "Historical Korean War" claims that the US, in order to turn Korea into an anti-communist outpost and resolve its economic crisis through war, conspired with the Syngman Rhee administration, which wanted to overcome political confusion and crisis resulting from an election defeat, to invade the DPRK first. This has been the DPRK's invariable position concerning the Korean War.

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15. ROK Security Law

Korea Times ("GNP ALL OUT TO KEEP SECURITY LAW", 2004-09-09) reported that Rep. Park Geun-hye, chairwoman of the main opposition Grand National Party (GNP), vowed Thursday that her party would mobilize all possible means to prevent President Roh Moo-hyun and his Uri Party from abolishing the controversial National Security Law. "President Roh will face strong resistance from the people if he adheres to his plan to scrap the country's anti-communist law," Park said during a news conference at the party headquarters in Yomchang-dong, western Seoul. Adding to the verbal war over the move for fact-finding into pro-Japanese collaborators, the partisan conflict over the security law has further intensified. The Uri Party has decided to push for the abolition of the security law as the party's official stance, heralding fierce political wrangling with the GNP. Instead of the outright abolishment of the law, Park told reporters that she hoped to revise the law in a rational and future-oriented way. She also demanded Roh step back from his "mistaken" stance.

Korea Times ("ROH STANDS FIRM ON SECURITY LAW", 2004-09-09) reported that President Roh Moo-hyun renewed his firm stance for the abolition of the National Security Law despite strong resistance from conservative forces. "The security law should be abolished as I have said before," deputy presidential spokesman Kim Man-soo quoted Roh as saying. Roh made the remark during a dinner meeting with a group of Uri Party leaders at Chong Wa Dae to discuss pending political issues, including the anti-communist law. "We told President Roh of our intention to push some bills, including one concerning the security law, during the ongoing regular session of the National Assembly," Lee Bu-young, chairman of the governing party, said. The liberal party is strongly pursuing the scrapping of the law, as it has been abused by former authoritarian governments to crack down on pro-democracy student activists and opposition leaders. During a televised interview last weekend, Roh said the law should be dismantled, despite the Grand National Party's opposition to the idea.

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16. US Troop Realignment

The Associated Press ("CHIEF OF U.S. FORCES IN SOUTH KOREA SEEKS TO EASE CONCERNS OVER PLAN TO CUT TROOPS", 2004-09-09) reported that the commander of US forces in the ROK on Thursday sought to ease concerns over Washington's plan to reduce US forces on the divided Korean Peninsula, saying there would be "no security vacuum." The redeployment of some 12,500 troops away from the ROK has raised concerns that the ROK's defense against the DPRK will be weakened. Gen. Leon J. LaPorte tried to allay those fears. "The troop reduction and relocation on the Korean Peninsula does not mean less US commitment or capability," LaPorte told reporters in Seoul. He noted the US pledge to spend more than US\$11 billion over the next three years in the ROK to improve capabilities. "In short, there is no security vacuum as we go through our transformation," he said. Washington has said it wants to complete its plan to cut back troops in the ROK by the end of 2005. But the ROK asked the US last month to delay the plan. Asked whether the timeline can be adjusted, LaPorte said the US and the ROK have agreed to consider "all aspects of the challenges relative to the security of the Republic of Korea."

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17. US - ROK Relations

Yonhap ("U.S. APOLOGIZES FOR OMISSION OF SOUTH KOREA IN BUSH CONVENTION SPEECH ", 2004-09-09) reported that a high-ranking US official on Thursday expressed regrets over the omission of the ROK from a list of allies in the US-led war in Iraq during US President George W. Bush's Republican convention speech last week, a spokesman for Cheong Wa Dae, the presidential office, said. In a telephone conversation with the ROK's National Security Adviser Kwon Chin-ho, Condoleezza Rice, the US National Security Adviser, said the omission was not intentional and the US is grateful for the ROK's contribution to the US-led war on terror, presidential spokesman Kim Jong-min said. The telephone call between the top security advisers of the two countries came at Rice's request, according to Kim.

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18. Fischer Case

Los Angeles Times ("COURT ALLOWS FISCHER TO STAY WHILE IT HEARS CASE", 2004-09-09) reported that former chess champion Bobby Fischer won a reprieve from the threat of deportation when a court ruled that he could stay in Japan until it considered a lawsuit he filed to block the move, his supporters said. Fischer is wanted by the US on charges of violating international sanctions against Yugoslavia in 1992 when he played a rematch there against longtime Russian rival Boris Spassky. Fischer advisor John Bosnitch said it could take the court up to a year to rule on the case.

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19. Japanese Economy

The Associated Press ("JAPAN SAYS ITS ECONOMY IS ON THE MEND ", 2004-09-09) reported that Japan's economic recovery is "solid" but export growth is losing some steam, the government said in a monthly report released Thursday. "The economy is recovering at a solid pace," with industrial output healthy and joblessness on the decline, the Cabinet Office said in its September report. But it

added that exports - the economy's main engine of growth - are now only "rising slowly." That was a change from its description in August that exports were "increasing." The Cabinet Office's assessment was echoed in a central bank monthly report, also released Thursday, which said the economy is on the mend but the pace of growth in exports and industrial production is slowing.

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20. Japan - Australian Relations

Agence France-Presse ("AUSTRALIA, JAPAN WORK ON NEAR ZERO-EMISSION COAL-FIRED ELECTRICITY PLANT", 2004-09-09) reported that Australian and Japanese researchers are working on a prototype "near zero-emission" coal-fired electricity plant in an effort to reduce a major source of greenhouse gas emissions, they said. Announcing the program in the Queensland state capital Brisbane, they said Thursday the oxy-fuel combustion technology could provide a "retro-fit" which could be applied to existing power stations. The Australian Coal Association said the technology would involve the capture and geological storage of carbon dioxide, the leading cause of global warming, after substituting air with pure oxygen in the generating process. "To meet growing energy demand, coal will continue to dominate our electricity mix for the foreseeable future," said executive director Mark O'Neill. "Technologies like oxy-fuel combustion and carbon capture and geological storage will be crucial for reducing emissions in coming decades, along with increased use of renewables and improved energy efficiency."

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21. Cross Strait Relations

Los Angeles Times ("CHINA AND TAIWAN MAKE NICE -- BUT NOT FOR REAL, EXPERTS SAY", 2004-09-09) reported that the PRC's recent decision to cancel a military exercise, followed a few days later by a similar announcement from Taiwan, offered the first ray of hope in months that cross-strait relations were on a modest mend. But a closer look suggests that the moves are driven by political considerations tied to other issues, rather than any warming of ties between Taipei and Beijing, say analysts on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. "Given the lack of political trust, relations between the two sides could explode at any time," said Zhu Xianlong, a Taiwan expert at Beijing Union University. "Both sides know that, though, and don't want to go too far at a time when each faces domestic political concerns." In the PRC, political leaders are preoccupied with the run-up to this month's national Communist Party meeting amid ongoing speculation that former President Jiang Zemin, 78, might step aside. In Taipei, Chen has largely toned down the inflammatory language seen during his reelection campaign early this year. Tactical retreats aside, the cross-strait standoff remains deeply entrenched, with mounting fears in Beijing that Taiwan doesn't believe the PRC will use military force should Taiwanese officials declare independence.

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22. Sino-Russian Relations

United Press International ("CHINA STANDS BY RUSSIA ON TERRORISM", 2004-09-09) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said Thursday that his country firmly stands with Russia in its fight against terrorism. Kong made the statement in response to a question from Interfax concerning a comment made by Richard Boucher from the US State Department about America being prepared to conduct negotiations with Chechen dissenters. "We firmly stand with Russia in its efforts to safeguard their sovereignty and territorial integrity," Kong said. He added, "In

the hard struggle of cracking down on the three evil forces, that is terrorism, extremism, and separatism, the Chinese people stand firmly with the Russian people." When asked by a Spanish reporter about possible Russian pre-emptive strikes against suspected terrorists, Kong again reiterated the PRC's strong support for the country, especially now when it is grieving over the loss of life after the hostage tragedy. "We should convey our solicitude to the Russian government and people with concrete actions," the spokesman said.

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23. Sino - US Trade Relations

The Associated Press ("GROUPS PETITION U.S. ON CHINA POLICIES ", 2004-09-09) reported that a group of industry, farm and labor groups, seeking to put pressure on the Bush administration before the presidential election, petitioned the government on Thursday to file an unfair trade practices case against the PRC. The group accused the PRC of manipulating its currency to gain trade advantages against US firms. Last April the Bush administration rejected a similar case accusing the PRC of unfair labor practices, and said it did not plan to pursue either the labor case or the currency case before the World Trade Organization, arguing that its policy of diplomatic engagement offered greater hope of changing PRC policies. But the China Currency Coalition said Thursday it hoped that the administration would change its position in the face of a swelling PRC trade deficit and no movement by the PRC in recent months to alter its currency practices.

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24. PRC - GCC Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA WANTS STRONGER ENERGY COOPERATION WITH GCC: FM", 2004-09-09) reported that the PRC will work to strengthen cooperation with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in the field of energy, visiting PRC Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said. "We will work together to deepen our cooperation in the field of energy," Li told a press conference here after a meeting with the head of the oil-rich bloc. Li acknowledged discussing the issue of high oil prices with Saudi officials but refrained from giving further details. GCC Secretary General Abdulrahman al-Attiyah said the oil-producing member states were ready to supply the PRC with needed oil and gas "within the strategic partnership" between the two parties. Li also told reporters the PRC would like to participate in the process of reconstruction in Iraq, saying his country pledged to provide aid to the Iraqi people. He said the PRC believes the Iraqi people should be able "to make decisions independently soon," stressing that the UN "should play an important role" in Iraq.

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25. Hong Kong Elections

Reuters ("BEIJING ACCUSED OF MEDDLING IN HK ELECTIONS", 2004-09-09) reported that Hong Kong media and a rights group accused Beijing on Thursday of meddling in this weekend's election, saying publicity about a pro-democracy candidate jailed for hiring a prostitute was timed to influence the result. Such interference would damage confidence in the PRC's promise of a high degree of autonomy for the freewheeling financial hub, newspapers and political commentators said. Amid rising aspirations for more democracy, a record turnout is expected on Sunday with pro-democracy forces likely to make huge gains and win close to half the 60 seats in the Legislative Council, a research group said. In a new report on Hong Kong, Human Rights Watch said 2004 was "shaping up to be the worst year for civil and political rights in Hong Kong since the 1997 transfer."

"The toxic political climate created by Beijing's patriotism campaign is increasingly the backdrop of threats of violence," the rights group said. The PRC retaliated, saying it painted a distorted picture. "The report once more revealed the wicked nature of the Human Rights Watch of being hostile to China," the Hong Kong office of the PRC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

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26. PRC Mass Arrests

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA ROUNDS UP MORE THAN 30,000 PROTESTERS AHEAD OF COMMUNIST PARTY MEETING", 2004-09-09) reported that more than 30,000 petitioners -- many of whom were brutally beaten and herded into a gymnasium -- have been detained in Beijing before a major meeting of the PRC's communist party, a human rights group and witnesses said. Some 36,000 people have been rounded up during the past week in an apparent move to ensure public order before the fourth plenary session of the party's elite 198-member Central Committee, New York-based Human Rights in China (HRIC) said Thursday. Citing unnamed sources, it said police had been seen storming into petitioner settlements and breaking down makeshift structures, confiscating and destroying personal belongings. "Many of them were brutally beaten or otherwise abused," the right groups said. Police could not immediately be reached for comment.

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27. PRC Energy Supply

The Associated Press ("CHINESE OIL GIANT BEGINS PIPELINE PROJECTS", 2004-09-09) reported that the PRC's largest oil producer has begun construction of two pipelines in the country's western region valued at 14.6 billion yuan, state media reported Wednesday. State-owned China National Petroleum Corp., parent company of New York and Hong Kong-listed PetroChina Co. Ltd., will build the pipelines as are part of a national strategy of developing western oil and gas basins as production from the PRC's depleted eastern oil fields dwindles. A key crude oil pipeline, with an annual capacity of 20 million tons, will span 970 miles from Shanshan city in the northwestern region of Xinjiang to Lanzhou, the capital of Gansu, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

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28. PRC Seasonal Labor

The Associated Press ("S. CHINA FACES SHORTAGE OF MIGRANT LABOR", 2004-09-09) reported that despite the PRC's army of surplus labor, some manufacturers are struggling to find workers as rural migrants begin to shun low pay and poor working conditions, a government report said. Foreign companies flooding into the PRC have counted on what was believed to be a nearly inexhaustible pool of young workers from the countryside eager to take low-paying factory jobs that still pay far more than they could earn back home. But even poor migrants from the countryside have their limits, and in recent months, some manufacturers have been struggling to keep jobs filled, according to a Labor Ministry report. The report, issued Wednesday and covered by state media Thursday, acknowledged trends that suggest the PRC may be slowly losing some of its competitive advantage in low-cost labor. The report recommended improved working conditions and better protection of workers' rights. But it said the shortages were unlikely to derail the PRC's robust economic growth, given the huge surplus of workers overall.

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29. PRC AIDS Issue

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA TO INCLUDE AIDS PREVENTION CLASSES IN ALL UNIVERSITIES", 2004-09-09) reported that the PRC will include AIDS prevention classes in the curriculum of all universities and secondary schools throughout the country from 2005. Students will be taught about HIV/AIDS in order to raise their awareness about the disease and to dispel misunderstandings and discrimination, the PRC News Service reported Thursday. The guidelines were issued by the State Council AIDS prevention work committee. Years of official denial and public ignorance have fuelled the spread of AIDS in the PRC. Until recently, the PRC denied it had a serious problem but national leaders have now begun acknowledging that urgent action was needed to curb its spread. The PRC says it has an estimated 840,000 HIV/AIDS patients, although international activists say it is much higher.

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org