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1. Inter-Korean Summit

Associated Press ("S. KOREA WANTS MORE TRADE WITH NORTH", 2007-08-14) reported that the ROK will seek a joint economic community with the DPRK as part of efforts to ensure peace on the divided peninsula. President Roh Moo-hyun made the announcement just weeks ahead of the second-ever summit between the North and South, planned for Aug. 28-30 in Pyongyang.

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2. DPRK Floods

Reuters ("NORTH KOREA SEEKS HELP AFTER MASSIVE FLOODING", 2007-08-14) reported that the DPRK is seeking foreign help after massive flooding left hundreds dead or missing and swept away many buildings. Paul Risley, Asia spokesman with the U.N. World Food Program (WFP), said: "If the figures are borne out by our own assessment, then we are very concerned that this is a significant emergency crisis." A UN assessment team left the capital Pyongyang on Tuesday, headed for flood-hit areas.

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3. Russia, ROK, DPRK Relations

RIA Novosti ("S. KOREA WELCOMES COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA, N. KOREA - AMBASSADOR", 2007-08-14) reported that Russia has proposed setting up commissions in various areas of cooperation with both RO and DPR Korea, including a possible link-up of the Trans-Korean Railroad with the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Seoul backs Russia's proposal to set up tripartite intergovernmental commissions with the DPRK to discuss major joint economic projects, ROK's ambassador to Russia said Tuesday.

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4. DPRK Invites New York Philharmonic

Playbill Arts ("NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC RECEIVES INVITATION TO PERFORM IN NORTH KOREA", 2007-08-14) reported that the DPRK has extended an invitation to the New York Philharmonic to give a performance in Pyongyang. In its 77-year touring history, the New York Philharmonic has given concerts in hundreds of cities all over the world, including a number of performances in South Korea, but never in the DPRK. "We appreciate any invitation to the New York Philharmonic," Philharmonic director of public relations Eric Latzky told the Reuters yesterday, "and will explore the possibility of this as we would any other invitation."

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5. Film about US Defector to DPRK

Associated Press ("LAST US DEFECTOR IN NORTH KOREA ALIVE BUT AILING, FILM DIRECTOR SAYS", 2007-08-14) reported that the latest film by Daniel Gordon, "Crossing the Line" reveals the life of James Dresnok, the last US defector still living in the DPRK. The film opens for wider release this month in the U.S. and ROK. The movie opened last year at the Busan International Film Festival, and has been shown at other events. The producers of Gordon's documentary hope to screen it next

year in the DPRK at the Pyongyang film festival.

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6. ROK Hostages in Afghanistan

Korea Herald ("TALIBAN SAY TALKS WILL RESUME SOON", 2007-08-14) reported that a day after releasing two of the 21 ROK hostages, the Taliban said negotiations with the ROK side will resume within days and that their demand for a prisoner swap remains. The negotiations will be conducted via telephone or in a face to face meeting.

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7. Japan MSDF Indian Ocean Mission

Agence France-Presse ("US SEES RELATIONS HIT IF JAPAN ENDS AFGHAN SUPPORT", 2007-0--14) reported that the US ambassador to Japan has warned that ending support to US forces in Afghanistan, as advocated by Japan's resurgent opposition party, would damage relations between the allies. In an interview published Tuesday, Ambassador Thomas Schieffer voiced hope the countries' close ties would not become a "political football" after conservative Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's coalition lost elections last month.

(return to top) Kyodo ("U.S. TO GIVE CONFIDENTIAL INFO TO JAPAN LAWMAKERS ON INDIAN OCEAN OPS", 2007-08-14) reported that the US is ready to disclose to all lawmakers in Japanese parliament classified information on its antiterrorism operations in the Indian Ocean, the Asahi Shimbun quoted US Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer as saying. Schieffer told the Asahi the United States is willing to provide any information that is necessary for the opposition party to make a decision, the report said. (return to top)

8. Yasukuni Shrine Issue

Kyodo ("VISITS TO YASUKUNI UP TO EACH MINISTER: ABE", 2007-08-14) reported that the decision to pay tribute to the war-related Yasukuni Shrine on the anniversary of Japan's surrender at the end of World War II would be up to each Cabinet minister, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. "Visiting Yasukuni Shrine would be a matter of freedom of individuals even for Cabinet ministers. I think this should be decided based on each other's opinion," he told reporters at his office.

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9. PRC-Central Asia Relations

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA'S HU STARTS THREE-COUNTRY TOUR IN KYRGYZSTAN", 2007-0--14) reported that PRC President Hu Jintao arrived in Kyrgyzstan at the start of a three-nation tour of ex-Soviet neighbours, Kyrgyz government spokeswoman Roza Daudova told AFP. Hu was to meet senior officials including President Kurmanbek Bakiyev ahead of a summit on Thursday of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a six-nation security and economic group.

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10. US-PRC Trade Relations

Bloomberg ("U.S. REQUESTS WTO RULING IN PIRACY COMPLAINT AGAINST CHINA", 2007-0--14) reported that the Bush administration has asked the World Trade Organization to rule in a complaint against the PRC over the piracy of copyrighted movies, music, software and books, escalating a dispute that has roiled commercial relations. The US Trade Representative's office took the formal step Monday of asking the WTO to decree that the PRC's laws fall short of international agreements, after consultations failed to resolve differences over what the US says are weak PRC laws to safeguard patents and copyrights.

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11. PRC Leadership

Reuters ("CHINA'S EX-PRESIDENT JIANG SUFFERS POLITICAL BLOW", 2007-08-14) reported that former PRC president Jiang Zemin suffered a political blow when his son and the security chief were left out of the running for seats in the Communist Party Central Committee, sources with ties to the leadership said. The setback, coupled with the arrest of a former secretary to a late vice premier and a son of Shanghai's disgraced party boss, strengthened the hand of incumbent President Hu Jintao ahead of the party's five-yearly 17th congress in the autumn.

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12. PRC Environment

Reuters ("CHINA RIVER POLLUTION KILLS 88,000 POUNDS OF FISH", 2007-08-14) reported that waste water dumped by factories into a river in southwest PRC has poisoned and killed about 40,000 kg (88,180 lb) of fish, media said. Eighty government officials went door to door in Chongan town, Guizhou province, to warn villagers not to eat, sell or transport the fish, state radio and news portal www.sina.com.cn reported.

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