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I. United States

1. DPRK Visit to National Assembly

International Herald Tribune ("NORTH KOREA ATTENPTS A CHARM OFFENSIVE ", 2005-08-17) reported that leaders of the DPRK's Workers Party visited the National Assembly on Tuesday. The representatives of Pyongyang's Parliament, were not seen taking notes on the workings of a multiparty democracy. Instead, the visit, the first by the DPRK to the National Assembly, was the latest stop in a four-day tour that is designed to woo the ROK's public opinion.

(return to top) Korea Herald ("NK DELEGATES STRESS ROLE OF ASSEMBLY FOR UNIFICATION", 2005-08-16) reported that in their unprecedented visit to the ROK's National Assembly Tuesday, DPRK officials expressed their hope for the legislature to play a significant role in the reunification of the two Koreas. "The role of the National Assembly is very important for inter-Korean cooperation, Kim Ki-nam, secretary of the DPRK's Workers Party, told the ROK's Assembly Speaker Kim Won-ki.
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2. Korean Unification

Korea.net ("UNIFIED KOREA LIKELY IN 10-20 YEARS", 2005-08-16) reported that the ROK and DPRK will likely achieve reunification in 10 to 20 years, according to an informal survey of foreign experts on Korean Peninsula issues and overseas-based Korean scholars. Conducted by an English daily in Seoul on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Aug. 15 Liberation Day, the survey showed that 31 of the 34 respondents think the two Koreas will ultimately be reunified.

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3. Ban Ki-Moon to Visit US

Associated Press ("S. KOREAN FM TO VISIT US OVER NORTH NUCLEAR IMPASE ",) reported that DPRK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon will visit Washington this week to discuss the impasse in six-party talks, the ministry said. The exact date has not yet been fixed but Ban was expected to meet his US counterpart Condoleezza Rice and Christopher Hill around August 20.

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4. Kim Dae-Jung to Visit DPRK

Korea Times ("KIM DJ INVITED TO N. KOREA ", 2005-08-16) reported that former President Kim Dae-jung Tuesday officially accepted an invitation from the DPRK leader Kim Jong-il to visit Pyongyang. Senior DPRK officials visiting Seoul for the joint 60th Aug. 15 Liberation Day celebrations made the invitation during a courtesy call on the former president, who has been in a Seoul hospital with pneumonia-like symptoms since last Wednesday.

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5. Turner Visits DPRK

Associated Press ("TED TURNER PAYS VISIT TO NORTH KOREA ", 2005-08-16) reported that CNN founder Ted Turner was greeted by senior DPRK government officials in the capital Pyongyang on Monday, the DPRK's official KCNA said. Turner met with Kim Yong Dae, vice president of the Presidium of the DPRK Supreme People's Assembly, at the Mansudae Assembly Hall.

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6. Virtual Reunification of Korean Families

Korea.net ("VIDEOCONFERENCING LINKS SEPERATED FAMILIES", 2005-08-15) reported that long-buried emotions flooded out as separated family members from the ROK and DPRK were reunited through a video linkup on Aug. 15, a part of joint celebrations marking the 60th anniversary of liberation. "I think the video reunions will have to eventually lead to face-to-face meetings," Chung, the unification minister, said. Pointing out time limits placed on face-to-face reunions, however, Chung pledged to pursue the video reunions throughout the year.

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7. Inter-Korean Military Hotline

Korea Times ("2 KOREAS START RUNNING MILITARY HOTLINE ", 2005-08-16) reported that the Koreas put into operation a military hotline Saturday aimed at easing tension along their disputed western sea border, officials said. "The hotline came into operation at 9 a.m. as scheduled," an official at Seoul's Defense Ministry said. The operation of the communication offices, comprising two telephones and two fax machines, is designed to facilitate inter-Korean communication to avoid accidental armed clashes off the west coast.

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8. Inter-Korean Cooperation on Science and Technology

Asia Pulse ("S.KOREA AIMS TO BOOST SCIENCE COOPERATION WITH N.KOREA", 2008-08-16) reported that the ROK is seeking to boost cooperation with its rival the DPRK in "non-political" science projects, officials said. The ROK's effort comes after the two sides agreed to step up government-level cooperation in the field of technology and science during their latest economic talks held in Seoul on July 9-12.

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9. ROK Historical Revisionism

Korea Times ("HISTORY TEXTBOOKS UNDERGO SIGNIFICANT CHANGES", 2005-08-16) reported that ROK school textbooks have changed tremendously since 1956 when the nation established a modern educational system after its liberation from Japanese colonial rule. "In the past, history education focused on the memorization of facts and on instilling patriotism, while it now mainly concentrates on helping students set up proper historical views," said Choi Sang-hoon, president of the Korean Association of History Education.

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10. Japan on relations with ROK, PRC

The New York Times ("KOIZUMI APOLOGIZES FOR WAR; EMBRACES CHINA AND SOUTH KOREA", 2005-08-16) reported that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi observed the 60th anniversary of Japan's defeat in World War II on Monday by apologizing for the country's past militarism in Asia and pledging to uphold its postwar pacifism. In a speech at a government-sponsored memorial service at the Nippon Budokan hall, Mr. Koizumi also reached out directly to the PRC and ROK by saying that the three nations should work together "in maintaining peace and aiming at development in the region."

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11. PRC on Sino-Japanese Relations

Bloomberg ("CHINA PROTESTS JAPANESE VISITS TO TOKYO WAR SHRINE", 2005-08-16) reported that the PRC protested visits made by Japanese Cabinet members and lawmakers to a Tokyo war shrine during the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, saying their actions could hamper relations between the two countries. "A correct view of Japanese militarism is a prerequisite to Japan improving its relationship with Asia and China," PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said in a Web site statement. The visits show "Japan does not have a correct view of history."

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12. Sino-Indian Resource Competition

The New York Times ("CHINA AND INDIA VIE FOR COMPANY WITH OIL FIELDS IN KAZAKHSTAN", 2005-08-16) reported that the PRC and Indian state-owned oil companies are trying to buy a Canadian company with oil fields in Kazakhstan, in the most direct competition yet for energy between Asia's most populous countries. A joint venture of the China National Petroleum Corporation, the PRC's biggest oil company, and PetroChina, its publicly traded subsidiary, offered roughly $3.2 billion late Monday for PetroKazakhstan, a person close to the negotiations said. The Oil and Natural Gas Corporation, India's main state-owned oil company, has already reportedly submitted a bid of $3.6 billion in cooperation with the steel maker Mittal Group.

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13. Sino-Central American Relations

Xinhua ("CHINA HOPES TO FURTHER SINO-CENTRAL AMERICAN TIES", 2005-08-16) reported that the PRC hopes to further relations with Central American countries by strengthening communication and cooperation, Wang Jiarui, a senior official of the Communist Party of China (CPC), said here Tuesday. Wang Jiarui, head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks during a meeting with a delegation of the Central American Parliament (CAP), headed by Vice President Dayra Castillero De Carrizo.

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14. Cross Strait Relations

Taipei Times ("ANALYST SAYS US COULD CONSIDER TAIWAN A LOST CAUSE", 2005-08-16)

reported that since the Taiwanese government has failed to get the NT$480 billion (US$15 billion) special arms budget approved in the legislature, some analysts have begun to warn that Taiwan could lose its status as a place of major strategic importance for the US in East Asia. Some experts are saying that the US could withdraw its security commitments to Taiwan if the people of the democratic nation decide not to take visible steps to defend their country against the possibility of a military attack from the PRC.

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15. Cross Strait Trade Relations

Reuters ("CHINA SEEKS POLITICAL HARVEST IN TAIWAN'S ORCHARDS", 2005-08-16) reported that farmers in the mango capital of Yuching in Tainan County have seen their profits dwindle over the years due to overplanting and a saturated domestic fruit market. That may change this month as the PRC opens its doors wide to Taiwan produce, axing import tariffs on 15 fruits from August 1 to curry favor with farmers in the island's South, many of whom are staunch supporters of pro-independence President Chen Shui-bian.

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16. PRC Social Instability

International Herald Tribune ("CHINA'S LEADERS BEGIN A CRUCIAL DEBATE ", 2005-08-16) reported that three recent developments provide subtle signals that a major debate has started within the Beijing leadership on the PRC's social, economic, cultural and political future. On July 28, the People's Daily ran a front-page commentary warning PRC citizens to obey the law, saying that any threats to social stability would not be tolerated by the authorities. On Aug. 3, the Culture Ministry's Web site announced that Beijing would bar new foreign television channels from entering the PRC and step up censorship of imported programming, in order to "safeguard national cultural safety." Then on Aug. 5, Health Minister Gao Qiang was quoted in the China Daily criticizing the PRC's hospitals for being greedy and putting profit ahead of their social function, thus adding to the burdens on patients and undermining the image of medical personnel and public health departments. These three statements are an indication that the authorities no longer refuse to discuss the PRC's growing social instability in public.

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17. PRC Coal Mining

The Los Angeles Times ("COST OF CHINA'S COAL: MINERS' LIVES", 2005-08-16) reported that the PRC produces 35% of the world's coal but accounts for 80% of coal-mining deaths. That added up to 6,027 dead fathers, husbands and brothers last year. The rate of deaths relative to production is 10 times that of India, 30 times that of South Africa and 100 times that of the US. "How Many More Must Die in Perilous Mines?" asked a recent headline in the government-run China Daily.

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18. PRC Environment

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA CHOKED BY POLLUTION BUT SIGNS EMERGE IT IS ADDRESSING THE ISSUE", 2005-08-16) reported that the PRC, the factory of the world, is being slowly choked by

the pollution brought on by its unrelenting economic transformation and the government is starting to realize it needs to do something about it. Environmentalists describe the situation as extremely serious, but they say a window of opportunity still exists to reverse a worsening trend.

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19. PRC Streptococcus Suis Outbreak

Kyodo ("DEADLY SWINE-BORNE BACTERIA FOUND IN CHINA'S HENAN PROV.", 2005-08-16) reported that the PRC's Agriculture Ministry has confirmed that a deadly swine-borne bacteria has been found in the eastern province of Henan, the official Ta Kung Pao newspaper reported Tuesday. Pigs in Henan Province have been found infected with the deadly bacteria known as streptococcus suis, which killed about 40 farmers in Sichuan Province in June and July, the ministry said, according to the report.

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