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1. US-DPRK Working Group Meeting

The Associated Press ("U.S. DENIES N. KOREA OFF TERROR LIST", 2007-09-04) reported that the DPRK remains on a list of states that sponsor terrorism, a senior US diplomat said, dismissing DPRK

claims that Washington decided to remove the designation. "No, they haven't been taken off the terrorism list," Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill told Japanese reporters. Hill suggested that the DPRK first needs to go further in dismantling its nuclear programs before the US will take it off the terrorism list.

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2. DPRK Flood Aid

Yonhap ("U.S. MEDICAL AID ARRIVES IN FLOOD-STRICKEN N. KOREA: REPORT", 2007-09-04) reported that the DPRK's foreign minister met with a US delegation bringing emergency medical supplies to help DPRK victims of recent floods, the DPRK's official news outlet said. "Foreign Minister Pak Ui-chun met with guests from the United States who visited with emergency medical aid equipment donated by the U.S. administration and the non-governmental organization Samaritan's Purse with regard to flood damage at the Mansudae Assembly hall," said the one-sentence report carried by the Korean Central News Agency.

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3. Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation

Korea Times ("N. KOREA-RELATED STOCKS EXTEND GAINS", 2007-09-04) reported that shares of companies engaging in an array of inter-Korean economic cooperation projects have shot up this week, following the news that the DPRK agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons development program by the end of the year. Most firms, which will take part in sending electricity to the DPRK in return for the dismantlement of its nuclear reactors, saw their stocks rise to their daily limit up over the past two trading sessions. Also, shares of those companies operating in the Gaesong Industrial Complex have rallied on expectations that easing of geo-political tensions associated with the DPRK will further boost economic cooperation between the two Koreas.

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4. ROK Diploma Fraud

The New York Times ("REVELATIONS OF FALSE CREDENTIALS SHAKE SOUTH KOREA", 2007-0--04) reported that the ROK has been shaken as one prominent person after another has been exposed as having exaggerated, or fabricated, academic accomplishments. The exposes have prompted prosecutors, the police, the Education Ministry and regional education authorities to announce plans to combat academic record fraud. Legislators have introduced a bill calling for a verification system.

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5. Japan SDF Indian Ocean Mission

Kyodo ("MACHIMURA VOWS TO DO UTMOST TO EXTEND ANTITERRORISM LAW", 2007-09-04) reported that Japanese Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura said during talks with his Australian counterpart Alexander Downer in Sydney that the Japanese government will do its utmost to gain the understanding of opposition parties to extend the antiterrorism law although the situation now is rather difficult, a Japanese official said.

(return to top) Kyodo ("KOMURA TO SEEK WAY TO RESTART SDF MISSION IF ANTITERROR LAW EXPIRES", 2007-09-04) reported that Defense Minister Masahiko Komura said the government will try to find a way to resume Japan's refueling mission in the Indian Ocean even if it is temporarily suspended because parliament fails to extend the law authorizing support for antiterrorism operations beyond its expiration on Nov. 1. With the opposition set to vote down the extension bill in the House of Councillors, where it holds a majority, Komura reiterated in an interview with Kyodo News and other media that Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government is considering "all possible options" that will enable the support for U.S.-led antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan to continue. (return to top)

6. Japan Government

The New York Times ("JAPAN OPPOSITION CALLS FOR ELECTIONS", 2007-09-04) reported that Japan's main opposition party pressed Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to dissolve the lower house of Parliament and call a general election after Mr. Abe's government became embroiled in a fresh round of scandals. The scandals dealt severe blows to Mr. Abe, who had staked his political future on a new cabinet to replace one remembered for its scandals, gaffes and general incompetence. The main opposition Democratic Party, which won control of the upper house of Parliament in late July, said it was considering introducing a censure motion against Mr. Abe.

(return to top) The Asahi Shimbun ("LDP IN MORE DISARRAY AFTER NEW EXIT", 2007-09-04) reported that in yet another blow to the beleaguered Liberal Democratic Party, Upper House lawmaker Yutaka Kobayashi resigned from the Diet on Tuesday to take responsibility for the indictment of his aides over alleged election law violations. Kobayashi's announcement follows the departure Monday of farm minister Takehiko Endo, who became the fifth minister in Abe's Cabinet to leave his post over corruption. Endo was also the third farm minister in just over four months to be embroiled in a scandal over money. (return to top) Reuters ("JAPAN PM'S RIVALS WARY OF GRABBING POISON CHALICE", 2007-09-04) reported that ruling party stalwarts in the town of Furukawa in northern Japan are fed up with the string of scandals that have cost Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's cabinet five ministers in less than a year, and want the premier to step down. Despite such mutterings, no one in the LDP seems ready to challenge Abe now for what could be a poison chalice, given the risk of a snap election that the ruling camp could well lose. "If a general election were held in the near future, the LDP would definitely lose," said Toru Umemoto, a chief currency strategist who analyses politics for Barclays Capital. "To avoid this, the consensus is that Abe should stay on as long as possible," he added. "If time passes, something could happen that would be positive for the LDP." (return to top)

7. PRC Cyberattack

Agence France-Presse ("CHINA HACKED INTO PENTAGON COMPUTER NETWORK", 2007-09-04) reported that the PRC's military successfully hacked into the Pentagon's computer network, it was reported, although the PRC government dismissed the accusation as groundless. The PRC military's cyber-attack was carried out in June following months of efforts, the London-based Financial Times said, citing unnamed current and former US officials. While denying the accusations, PRC foreign ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu countered that there were some in the US who were seeking to damage improving Sino-US military relations.

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8. PRC Judiciary

Reuters ("VERDICT STILL OUT ON JURY SYSTEM IN CHINA", 2007-09-04) reported that the jury system in the PRC, where a defendant's guilt is often presumed before cases come to court, is a work in progress after a year's trial but reforms are needed, senior officials said. Juries have been on trial for just over two years in the PRC, where media regularly report details of a defendant's guilt before a trial has even started and courts are commonly viewed as venues merely for passing sentence.

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9. PRC Environment

The Associated Press ("CHINA ASKS LEEWAY ON GREENHOUSE GASES ", 2007-09-04) reported that the PRC said it was working hard to increase its use of renewable energy, but needs to be given some leeway in the global effort to reduce greenhouse gases. He said the PRC shouldn't be held overly accountable because its has only recently become a major producer, contributing only 9 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions between 1950-2000.

(return to top) The Associated Press ("CHINA CLOSES 400 COMPANIES FOR POLLUTION", 2007-09-04) reported that the PRC's environmental watchdog has closed down 400 factories since it started a national campaign in July to tackle water pollution, an official said. The PRC's waterways are dangerously polluted after decades of rapid economic growth and lax enforcement of pollution controls. Tian Weiyong, deputy environmental supervision chief of the State Environmental Protection Administration, said another 762 companies and projects had been suspended or fined due to environmental violations. He did not give details about the affected companies or their alleged violations. (return to top)

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